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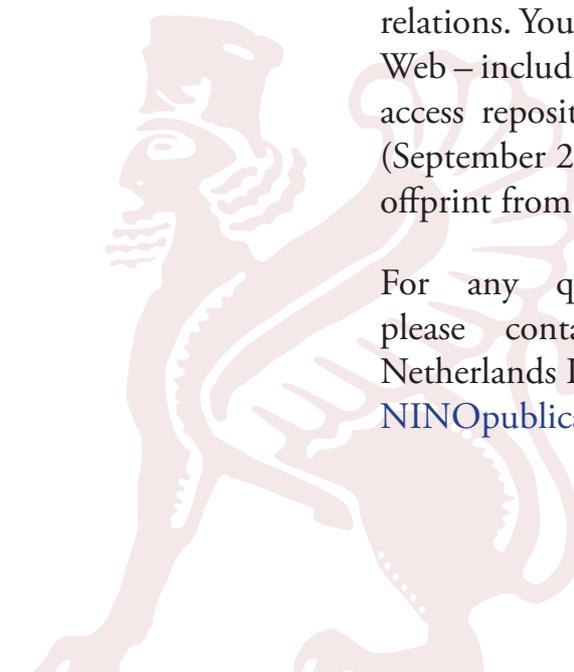
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# IMAGING AND IMAGINING THE MEMPHITE NECROPOLIS

LIBER AMICORUM RENÉ VAN WALSEM

*edited by*

Vincent Verschoor, Arnold Jan Stuart & Cocky Demarée



NEDERLANDS INSTITUUT VOOR HET NABIJE OOSTEN  
LEIDEN

PEETERS  
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2017

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# HERTA MOHR AND THE MASTABA OF HETEPHERAKHTY\*

*Nicky van de Beek*

The mastaba of Hetepherakhty in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden<sup>1</sup> was the start of my love for Old Kingdom elite tombs. Owing to the dedicated talks held by René van Walsem in front of the objects in this museum, his inspired lectures about Egyptian art history, and specialist seminars in an abandoned library after hours, mastabas became the subject of my choice. Hetepherakhty was furthermore the starting point of the Leiden Mastaba Project,<sup>2</sup> which resulted in a CD-ROM publication of the indispensable *Mastabase* in 2008.<sup>3</sup> Recently, work on this database has been rebooted as a project of the Leiden Mastaba Study group, resulting in a freely accessible online version in the near future.<sup>4</sup>

According to the façade and false door of his mastaba, Hetepherakhty was a judge, elder of the court and priest of Ma'at during Egypt's Fifth Dynasty. He served as *wꜥb* priest of the pyramid of king Neferirkare, and *hm-ntr* priest of the sun temple of king Niuserre in nearby Abusir. His offering chapel is small (5.5 m<sup>2</sup>), but handsomely decorated, with fine reliefs and a balanced selection of scenes. These include such themes as fishing, fowling, baking, brewing, boat fighting, cattle rearing, slaughter and the funerary procession, as well as the overseeing of agriculture and marshland activities by the tomb owner. In his official duties, Hetepherakhty is accompanied by his son Nyankhptah, who was a dignitary and scribe, but is often depicted as a little boy clutching a hoopoe bird. No wife is present.<sup>5</sup>

The mastaba was first excavated in Saqqara by Auguste Mariette in the 1860s, and posthumously published in his *Mastabas*.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, the plates that were to be inserted in this work are missing, and on the enclosed map of the necropolis, the location of Hetepherakhty's tomb is not indicated. From a later map, we know that it must have been near Mariette's house and the entrance to the Serapeum.<sup>7</sup> Strangely, an offering table bearing Hetepherakhty's name and titles was discovered by Mariette lying face-down in the mastaba chapel of Ka'aper,<sup>8</sup> in which the famous 'Sheikh el-Beled' statue was also found (CG 34). This offering table has been the subject of some confusion by Margaret Murray, who reopened a number

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\* This paper was first presented at the Netherlands-Flemish Egyptologists' Day in Leuven on 5 November 2016.

<sup>1</sup> Inventory no. F 1904/3.1.

<sup>2</sup> R. van Walsem, 'The Mastaba Project at Leiden University', in S. Schoske (ed.), *Akten des vierten Internationalen Ägyptologen Kongresses München 1985, Band 2: Archäologie, Feldforschung, Prähistorie* (Hamburg, 1989), 143-54.

<sup>3</sup> R. van Walsem, *Mastabase: A Research Tool for the Study of the Secular or 'Daily Life' Scenes and their Accompanying Texts in the Elite Tombs of the Memphite Area in the Old Kingdom* (Leiden/Leuven, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> See also <http://mastabase.org/>, accessed 1 June 2017.

<sup>5</sup> For possible reasons for this phenomenon, see A.M. Roth, 'The Absent Spouse: Patterns and Taboos in Egyptian Tomb Decoration', *JARCE* 36 (1999), 37-53.

<sup>6</sup> A. Mariette, *Les mastabas de l'Ancien Empire: Fragment du dernier ouvrage de A. Mariette* (Paris, 1889), 340-8.

<sup>7</sup> J.J.M. de Morgan, *Carte de la nécropole memphite: Dahchour, Sakkarah, Abou-Sir* (Cairo, 1897), pl. 9-10.

<sup>8</sup> Mariette, *Les mastabas de l'Ancien Empire*, 127-9.

of tombs dug up by Mariette.<sup>10</sup> Judging by the spelling of the name and titles, however, it must have belonged to Hetepherakhty.<sup>11</sup>

The offering chapel itself was acquired by the National Museum of Antiquities in 1902. At that time, Mariette's successor as director of the Antiquities Service, Gaston Maspero, proposed a scheme in which 'entire mastabas' (in fact only their decorated chapels) were to be sold to museums in Europe and the US, in order to prevent their looting and the illegal sale of loose fragments.<sup>12</sup> Thus, several mastaba chapels ended up in museums outside of Egypt.<sup>13</sup> The chapel of Hetepherakhty was the first one to be excavated at Saqqara and was sold for 200 LE (the cost of extraction and transportation to Cairo) to the contractor and amateur archaeologist Adriaan Goekoop from The Hague, who subsequently donated it to the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden. The chapel was dismantled and shipped in seventy crates, one of which fell from a train car during the trip, but apparently survived with its contents unharmed.<sup>14</sup> On 22 June 1904, three new rooms were opened at the museum, one of which housed the mastaba chapel.



Fig. 1. Left side of the façade of the mastaba chapel.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> A.E.J. Holwerda, P.A.A. Boeser and J.H. Holwerda, *De Monumenten van het Oude Rijk* (Beschrijving van de Egyptische verzameling in het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden 1; Leiden, 1905), pl. 6.

<sup>10</sup> M.A. Murray, *Saqqara Mastabas, I* (London, 1905), 4 and pl. III [4]; *id.*, *Saqqara Mastabas, II* (London, 1937), 12-13 [16].

<sup>11</sup> L. Borchardt, *Denkmäler des Alten Reiches (ausser den Statuen) im Museum zu Kairo Nr. 1295-1808* (Berlin/Cairo, 1937), 4-5 and pl. I [1304].

<sup>12</sup> F.L. Griffith, *Egypt Exploration Fund Archaeological Report 1902-1903* (London, 1903), 12.

<sup>13</sup> Notably Sekhemankhptah and Kayemnofret (Boston MFA), Akhethetep (Louvre), Weirenptah (British Museum), Kapure (University of Penn Museum), Neferitenef (Brussels), Unisankh and Netjeruser (Chicago Field Museum), Raemkai and Perneb (New York MMA), Kaemrehu (Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek), Seshemnefer III (Tübingen), Kaninisut (Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna) and Uhemka (Hildesheim).

<sup>14</sup> Based on archival information collected by curator Maarten Raven of the National Museum of Antiquities.



Fig. 2. Setting up the mastaba chapel. Antonie Holwerda, then director of the museum, sits in front.  
Photo courtesy of the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden.

The chapel was first coherently published in black and white photographs in the *Description* of the museum's collection in 1905.<sup>15</sup> It includes a short description of the building materials, but no detailed discussion of the relief scenes. This task was taken up by Herta Mohr in the 1930s.<sup>16</sup> Being Jewish, Mohr's family had fled from Vienna and were living in the Netherlands, where the *pater familias* Adolf Mohr held practice as a physician. Mohr had been enrolled at the University of Vienna, where she studied Egyptology and African languages in her third year of studies.<sup>17</sup> In Leiden, she became a member of student association Augustinus and was baptized as a Catholic on 13 July 1939.<sup>18</sup> She worked at the National Museum of Antiquities on publishing the mastaba chapel of Hetepherakhty, until it became inaccessible in September 1939. Apparently, the whole chapel was removed to the basement at that time.<sup>19</sup> As a result, the new photographs Mohr had intended to make could not be realized, and she had to use the photos from the 1905 *Description* to base her facsimile drawings on. The drawings in Mohr's publication are therefore quite small and scribbly. She did however make about one hundred photos of details of the relief scenes for collation purposes in 1939 that are now in the museum's archives.



Fig. 3. Detail of the decoration of the mastaba photographed by Mohr. Photo courtesy of the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden.

In the preface to her work, written in the summer of 1942 in Eindhoven,<sup>20</sup> Mohr carefully avoids any mention of the war. She presents the book as the result of her studies between 1937 and 1940,

<sup>15</sup> Holwerda, Boeser and Holwerda, *De Monumenten van het Oude Rijk*, 11-18, pl. V-XXI.

<sup>16</sup> H.Th. Mohr, *The Mastaba of Hetep-Her-Akhti: Study on an Egyptian Tomb Chapel in the Museum of Antiquities Leiden* (Leiden, 1943).

<sup>17</sup> Information from the online Memorial Book for the Victims of National Socialism at the University of Vienna in 1938, <http://gedenkbuch.univie.ac.at/>, accessed 1 June 2017.

<sup>18</sup> A.L.M. Arnolds, *Gedenkboek 1940-1945 van de Katholieke Academische Gemeenschap* (Unie van Katholieke Studentenverenigingen in Nederland, 1947), 91-2.

<sup>19</sup> Mohr, *The Mastaba of Hetep-Her-Akhti*, 79.

<sup>20</sup> Where she lived at Prins Hendrikstraat 35, with the 'van Dam' family.

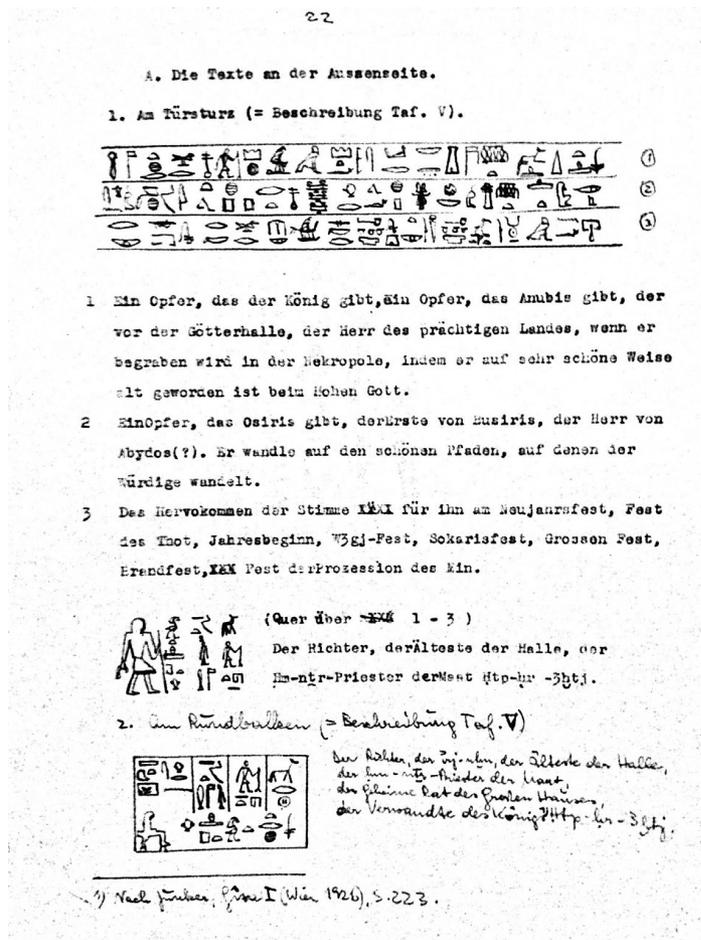


Fig. 4. Page from Mohr's manuscript.  
Courtesy of the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden.

'as circumstances allow'. The new photos could not be taken 'because of the special circumstances of these times'. The work would have been impossible without help from others 'under difficult circumstances'. She explicitly mentions Leiden Egyptologist Jozef Janssen among her Dutch friends. Her manuscript, of which a German copy from 1938 survives in the museum's archives, was worked over by Jozef Janssen and Adriaan de Buck, and edited by B.A. van Proosdij before it was published in 1943.<sup>21</sup>

Regrettably, history caught up with Herta Mohr. In September 1942, shortly after having written the preface to *Hetep-Her-Akhti*, the Eindhoven police issued her arrest.<sup>22</sup> In fact, she had already been interned in barrack 48 of the Westerbork Transit and Assembly Camp on 4 August.<sup>23</sup> At Westerbork, she was granted deferral of transport ('Sperre') because she worked as a translator.<sup>24</sup> A greatly unfortunate incident with a camp official, involving a letter and allegations of corruption, finally caused her transport to Auschwitz on 25 January 1944. Her parents

had been sent to Theresienstadt a few days earlier, but were sent on to Auschwitz at the end of October, where they were killed on arrival.<sup>25</sup> Officially, Herta Mohr died aged thirty in camp Bergen-Belsen.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Book review by Walter Federn (who corresponded with Mohr) in *BiOr* 3 (1946), 57-9.

<sup>22</sup> See 'Herta Theresa Mohr' on <https://www.joodsmonument.nl/>, accessed 1 June 2017.

<sup>23</sup> According to information provided by the International Tracing Service.

<sup>24</sup> Information provided by the Netherlands Red Cross.

<sup>25</sup> D. Giltay Veth and A.J. van der Leeuw, *Rapport door het Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie uitgebracht aan de minister van Justitie inzake de activiteiten van drs. F. Weinreb gedurende de jaren 1940-1945, in het licht van nadere gegevens bezien* (Den Haag, 1976), 1310-15.

<sup>26</sup> When Auschwitz was evacuated in January 1945, part of the inmates were sent to Gross-Rosen. A survivor with the same surname, though not related, claims to have seen Mohr in the camp hospital there. From Gross-Rosen, the inmates were further transported to Bergen-Belsen. No official place and date of death have been established for Herta Mohr. It was presumably determined by a judge that she died in Bergen-Belsen on 15 April 1945. Information provided by the Netherlands Red Cross.

It is a tragic tale that deserves to be told. Being Jewish in an increasingly anti-Semitic environment, but also a woman in a male-dominated field of scholarship, Mohr defied the status quo in more than one way. It is therefore an immense honour to be able to take up her work and complete the publication of the mastaba, and to share this task with my mentor René van Walsem. In order to publish the chapel according to the latest standards, a complete digital photographic record of the relief decoration was made by Hans van den Berg in the summer of 2016. Photographed in such a way that there is as little distortion as possible, and stitching together the overlapping photographs with computer software, extremely high resolution images of the walls can be created. These will form the basis of facsimile drawings made using essentially the digital Chicago House method and a drawing tablet.<sup>27</sup> René van Walsem will take it upon him to collate the drawings. The final publication will appear in the PALMA series of the National Museum of Antiquities. It is to be hoped that by continuing Mohr's work, and by telling her story, we will do a little bit of justice to her courage and perseverance as a scholar and, more importantly, as a human being.



Fig. 5. Herta Mohr.  
Photo from the *Gedenkboek*.

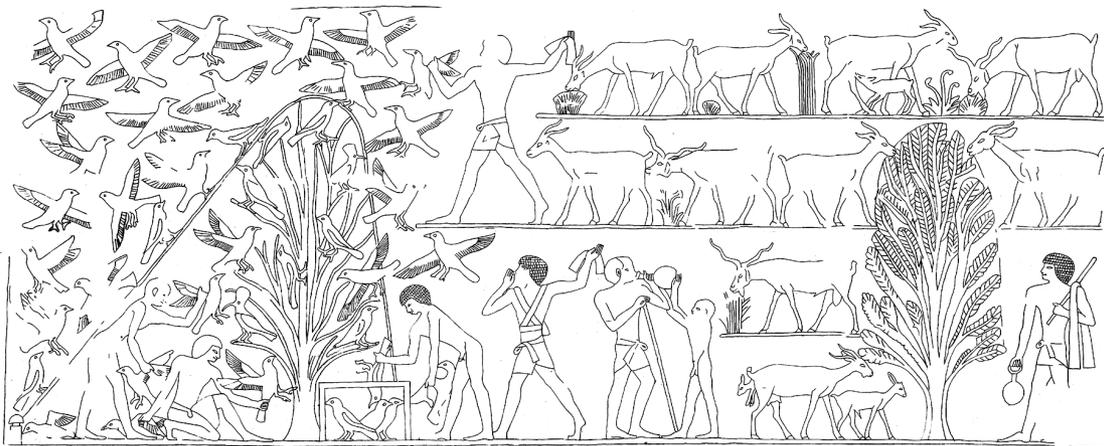


Fig. 6. Pencil drawing of a scene in the mastaba by the author.

<sup>27</sup> K. Vértés and the Epigraphic Survey, *Digital Epigraphy* (Chicago, 2014), <https://oi.uchicago.edu/research/publications/misc/digital-epigraphy>, accessed 1 June 2017.