

American University in Cairo

AUC Knowledge Fountain

Faculty Journal Articles

2013

The Archaeological Context of Jéquier's "Cimitière Araméen" at Saqqara

Lisa Sabbahy Dr.

The American University in Cairo AUC, lsabbahy@aucegypt.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://fount.aucegypt.edu/faculty_journal_articles



Part of the [Archaeological Anthropology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

APA Citation

Sabbahy, L. (2013). The Archaeological Context of Jéquier's "Cimitière Araméen" at Saqqara. *JSSEA*, 40, 57–69.

https://fount.aucegypt.edu/faculty_journal_articles/5088

MLA Citation

Sabbahy, Lisa Dr. "The Archaeological Context of Jéquier's "Cimitière Araméen" at Saqqara." *JSSEA*, vol. 40, 2013, pp. 57–69.

https://fount.aucegypt.edu/faculty_journal_articles/5088

This Research Article is brought to you for free and open access by AUC Knowledge Fountain. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Journal Articles by an authorized administrator of AUC Knowledge Fountain. For more information, please contact fountadmin@aucegypt.edu.

The Archaeological Context of Jéquier's "Cimetière Araméen" at Saqqara

Lisa Sabbahy

Abstract:

In the late 1920's Jéquier discovered a Late Period cemetery in South Saqqara with burials in clay coffins. The coffins were in two parts, a bottom and a full-length lid with the representation of a human head. Fourteen of these coffins had inscriptions in Aramaic, written in ink or incised on the clay, naming the deceased and their father. This article discusses these particular coffins in the light of contemporary archaeological material, and the influence, both Egyptian and possibly foreign, reflected in these burials.

Résumé:

À la fin des années 1920, Jéquier découvrait, à Saqqarah sud, un cimetière datant de la Basse Époque dans lequel les sépultures étaient des cercueils en terre cuite. Ceux-ci se constituaient de deux parties : la partie inférieure ainsi que le couvercle pleine longueur sur lequel était représentée une tête humaine. Quatorze de ces cercueils portaient un texte araméen ; écrites à l'encre ou incisées dans l'argile, ces inscriptions nommaient le défunt et le père de celui-ci. Le présent article traite de ces cercueils à la lumière du matériel archéologique contemporain ainsi que de l'influence, à la fois égyptienne et étrangère, qui s'y reflète.

Keywords/Mots clefs: Clay coffins/cercueils en terre cuite, mummy tags/etiquette de momie, Aramaic/araméen, Persian Period/période perse, Saqqara/Saqqarah

Gustave Jéquier uncovered a rather large cemetery in southern Saqqara, southeast of the Mastabat Faroun and around the north face of the pyramid of Khendjer, in excavation seasons from 1928 to 1930. The cemetery contained poor burials of the Eighteenth Dynasty, and then had been reused in the Late Period for burials in limestone block coffins (although there were only a few of these), wooden anthropoid coffins, as well as clay coffins.¹ He states in the first preliminary report that the coffins were buried about two meters below the surface, did not seem to be arranged in any particular order, and there were no superstructures over any of them.²

Jéquier bases a date of Late to Ptolemaic for the cemetery reuse on the cartonnage decorating the mummies in the rectangular limestone coffins, which was "caractéristique des basses époques", in five separate pieces on the mummy: mask, collar, central piece, long piece on the legs, and piece over the feet. These mummies had their viscera, wrapped in a cloth package, by their side. No

1 G. Jéquier, *Deux pyramides du Moyen Empire* (Cairo: French Institute, 1933), 49-53. There are also two preliminary reports: G. Jéquier, "Rapport Préliminaire sur les Fouilles Exécutées en 1928-1929 dans la Partie Méridionale de la Nécropole Memphite", *ASAE* 29 (1929): 150-161; and G. Jéquier, "Rapport Préliminaire sur les Fouilles Exécutées en 1929-1930 dans la Partie Méridionale de la Nécropole Memphite", *ASAE* 30 (1930): 105-116.

2 Jéquier, "Rapport Préliminaire", *ASAE* 29: 160.

other object of any kind was placed with the body. Jéquier also states that the size and shape of the wooden coffins were "comme en general tous ceux de basse époque",³ with a large head on the cover. Many of them were badly painted with the funerary scenes that would have been expected on cartonnage. The mummies in these wooden coffins, however, did not have cartonnage or viscera packets. Jéquier mentions that at the foot of two wooden coffins, he found wooden boxes, like the ones used for shawabtis, containing viscera packets.⁴

The coffins in clay were anthropoid like the wooden coffins, made in two parts, with the coffin bottom delineating the shape of a human form, and a full-length removable lid depicting the deceased. This is the typical shape of a clay coffin in the Late Period. Anthropoid clay coffins begin in Egypt in the Early New Kingdom when the coffin shape changes from rectangular to anthropoid, and anthropoid coffins are made in stone, wood and clay. The New Kingdom clay coffins, however, are cylindrical, or "slipper-shaped", with a removable faceplate. By the time of the Late Period, they are the same shape as coffins in stone and wood.⁵

The lids of these coffins were divided into two, and sometimes three sections, making them easier to handle. The coffins were all made from very coarse clay with a large number of inclusions, particularly vegetable matter. In the preliminary report, Jéquier states that the bodies in the clay coffins had been mummified, but the bandages had turned black and the bones were in poor condition.⁶ In the final excavation report, Jéquier mentions that although there were no objects of any kind with the mummies in the clay and wooden coffins, in a few cases a "crown", composed of several small twigs wrapped with thin material, had been placed on the head of the deceased.⁷ Such wreaths have been found on more than a dozen mummies from West Saqqara,⁸ and several mummies from a Greek cemetery at Abu Sir,⁹ and would seem to indicate a fourth century date for these particular burials. This fits with the date of the evidence provided by the Cimetière Araméen.

Jéquier describes the clay coffins as being "d'un type qui est sinon absolument nouveau"¹⁰, and divides the coffins into two groups based on the style of the head of the deceased. The coffins with more realistic depictions of the human head he calls the "étroit". The ones in which the hair, done with thumbprint impressions, spread completely across the top of the coffin lid, Jéquier calls "plus grande".¹¹ The lid shapes with the "étroit" heads are rounded like the top of an oval, while the "plus

3 Jéquier, *Deux pyramides*, 49.

4 Jéquier does not say that any of the packets were examined. A contemporary cemetery site at West Saqqara also had mummies with packets. The packets were found empty, full of materials left from embalming, or contained a skeleton of a small animal, such as a shrew. See discussion by A. Kowalska et al., "Catalogue of Burials", in *Saqqara III: The Upper Necropolis Vol. I*, ed. K. Myśliwiec (Varsovie: Editions Neriton, 2008), 56.

5 L.K. Sabbahy, *Catalogue General of Egyptian Antiquities in the Cairo Museum, Anthropoid Clay Coffins* (Cairo: Supreme Council of Antiquities, 2009), 9-10.

6 Jéquier, "Rapport Préliminaire", *ASAE* 29: 160.

7 Jéquier, *Deux pyramides*, 52.

8 Kowalska et al., "Catalogue of Burials", 55.

9 K. Smoláriková, *Greek Imports in Egypt, Abusir VII* (Prague: Czech Institute of Egyptology, 2002), 71-73. Wreaths seem to be associated with Osiris and the Persian-Ptolemaic BD Spell 19, T.G. Allen, "Spells for wreaths of vindication," *The Book of the Dead* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 34; and see discussion, Kowalska et al., "Catalogue of Burials", 56.

10 Jéquier, *Deux pyramides*, 49.

11 Jéquier, *Deux pyramides*, 50.



Plate 1-CG 17067- Full length clay coffin lid with “étroit” head style.

grande” ones tend to be more trefoil, bulging on the sides and top of the head.

Coffin CG 17067 in the Cairo Museum is a good example of an “étroit” coffin from this cemetery (see Plates 1 and 2).¹² The lid was divided into three parts before being fired, but has since cracked into six fragments, including cracks running down along both sides of the face. The hairline of the figure is rather thick, and curves over the top of the head forming the upper edge of the lid; there is a bump at the very bottom of the lid representing the feet. The nose is pointed with rounded nostrils, and a small rectangular beard appears below the chin. Running lengthwise below the end of the hairline on the right side of the coffin lid is an incised line of Aramaic, very difficult to see, which reads: “Heremshezib son of Eshah the priest”.¹³ The matching box part of this coffin is preserved. On the right side of the coffin box is an inked line of Aramaic inscription that reads:

12 Jéquier, *Deux pyramides*, pl. XI; Sabbahy, *Catalogue General*, 34-35, pls. IX-X; L. Cotellet-Michel, *Les Sarcophages en Terre Cuite en Égypte et en Nubie de l'époque prédynastique à l'époque romaine* (Dijon: Editions Faton, 2004), 275.

13 Both of these names are Aramaic. See B. Porten and A. Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt Vol.4* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), D18.2; N. Aimé-Giron, *Textes Araméens D'Égypte* (Cairo: L'Institut Français d'Archéologie, 1931) no. 104. The Aramaic transcription of the names, and all others discussed below, can be found in these two sources. Also see the discussion by J.K. Winnicki, *Late Egypt and her Neighbors: Foreign Population in Egypt in the First Millennium BC*, *Journal of Juristic Papyrology*, Supplement XII (Warsaw: Warsaw University, 2009), 263.



Plate 2- CG 17067- Coffin bottom with Aramaic inscription in ink.

“Heremshezib, son of Eshah”. The names and paleography help date this coffin, as well as the other inscribed ones, to the “end of the fifth or the beginning of the fourth century B.C.”.¹⁴

A clay coffin, extremely close to this one in style, was found at Beni Hasan, in Middle Egypt, and entered into the collection of the Cairo Museum by Garstang in 1924.¹⁵ Although Garstang published no reference to, or picture of, this particular coffin, he did state, in his book on ancient Egyptian burials, that the stone sarcophagus “gives way amongst the poorer classes to the coffin of earthenware, which is characteristic of the latest dynasties and occurs in numerous instances”.¹⁶

CG 17066 is another example of an “étroit” facial style (see Plate 3), but not as carefully modeled as CG 17067.¹⁷ The shape of the lid is trefoil. A small face, tilting slightly to the right, with a curving hairline above, has been modeled in the center of the lid, and the edge of the coffin lid extends well up above the hairline. A large triangular nose projects from the center of the face. The eyes and mouth are marked only by depressions; an upturned beard extends down from the chin. Above the head on the right, where the clay surface is still intact, a fragment of an inked Aramaic

14 Winnicki, *Late Egypt and her Neighbors*, 263.

15 CG 17073. See Sabbahy, *Catalogue General*, 38, and pl. XIII.

16 J.G. Garstang, *The Burial Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* (London, 1907), 207.

17 Jéquier, *Deux pyramides*, pl. XII; Sabbahy, *Catalogue General*, 37, pl. XII.



Plate 3- CG 17066- Upper part of clay coffin lid with face and curving hairline.

inscription is barely visible. The only legible part is “son of”.¹⁸

The “plus grande” style of face and hair is well illustrated by CG 17071 (See Plate 4).¹⁹ This full-length coffin lid is decorated only at the very upper end with a face and spreading hair. There is no bump at the foot end like CG17067. The hair goes across the top of the head, and up almost in

¹⁸ Porten/Yardeni, *TAD*, D18.11.

¹⁹ Sabbahy, *Catalogue General*, 37, pl. XII.



Plate 4- CG 17071 Full length clay coffin lid with "plus grande" hair style.

a point above the head, and then not down along the sides of the face, but down along the edges of the coffin. The hair has been modeled with depressions from fingertips pressed into the clay when it was wet. The facial features are rather flat. Fractures run through both the ears, and also across the beard, and down the middle of the lid. The lid was divided into three parts before firing; one cut is clear below the section with the face and hair, and the second cut is halfway down the lid. The Cairo Museum Journal d'Entrée says the coffin has one inked line of Aramaic. Aimé-Giron copied what he could of the inscription, composed of four words, which ran across the coffin lid right below the beard, but none of it was legible except for the middle part, reading "son of".²⁰

The most noticeable feature of the "plus grande" coffin lids is the hair. This might suggest that there is a gender difference being expressed by the two styles of coffin, with coffins for females having a larger hairstyle. However, of the four "étroit" style coffins in the Cairo Museum, two are inscribed with masculine names, and two with feminine.²¹ Furthermore, the "plus grande" lid, CG 17071, just discussed above, still preserves the word "son" in its otherwise damaged inscription. Aston has pointed out that in the Late Period, coffins with "disproportionally large heads" tend to

²⁰ See Aimé-Giron, *Textes*, no. 95; Porten/Yardeni, *TAD* D18.3.

²¹ CG17066 and 17067 have male names, and CG17068 and 17070 have female.

be later in date,²² so the “plus grande” depiction of the deceased may be a later stylistic development.

Parallels to the “plus grande” style of coffin have been found at West Saqqara. In the upper stratum of sand in the Dry Moat west of the Step Pyramid Complex, hundreds of burials were discovered, for the most part dating to the Ptolemaic Period. Based on the pottery associated with the burials, the cemetery ranged from the “terminal phase” of the Late Period to Roman times.²³ Three clay coffins were found which are stylistically related to the “plus grande” coffins from South Saqqara. The coffin in Burial 29 has a trefoil lid, tapering down to a narrowed end, with no indication of feet. According to Kowalska et al., “Very flat concentric circles around the face could be an imitation of a wig and collar, not separated one from the other.”²⁴ Two other coffins, Burials 345 and 346, have an “étroit” coffin shape, round at the top and squared with a bulge at the foot end, but the wig and collar completely surround the face, spreading out to the edges of the coffin. They are rendered by “grooves made with a finger in the wet clay”,²⁵ a technique similar to that used for the “plus grande” hair.

Because fourteen of the clay coffins Jéquier found were inscribed in Aramaic with the name of the deceased, he named this cemetery Cimetière Araméen. These inscriptions were incised into the clay, or written on the clay in black ink. The inscription can be across the chest area on the lid, on the edge of the lid, on the side of the coffin, or in one case, on the foot end.²⁶ The only other known coffins from Egypt with Aramaic inscriptions are three sandstone sarcophagi found in the vicinity of the Isis temple at Aswan.²⁷ These sarcophagi had painted funerary scenes and hieroglyphs, as well as the name of the deceased in Aramaic on the foot end; the name was incised on two coffins, and written in black on the third.²⁸

Five pottery sherds, or mummy tags, inscribed with the name of the deceased, are associated with the clay coffins in the Cimetière Araméen.²⁹ Three of these sherds are roughly trapezoidal in shape, and two are roughly triangular. In three cases the sherd was placed on the chest of the deceased and the inscriptions on the sherds matched those on the coffins.³⁰ The inscriptions are written in black ink, and name two males, one female, and their fathers. The names are a mixture

22 D. Aston, “Dynasty 26, Dynasty 30, or Dynasty 27? In Search of the Funerary Archaeology of the Persian Period”, in *Studies on Ancient Egypt in Honour of H.S. Smith*, eds. A. Leahy and J. Tait (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1999), 19.

23 T.I. Rzeuska, “The Pottery”, in *Saqqara III: The Upper Necropolis*, ed. K. Myśliwiec (Warsaw: Editions Neriton, 2008), 444.

24 Kowalska et al., “Catalogue of Burials”, 81, and fig. 44. See also K. Myśliwiec, *The Twilight of Ancient Egypt* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), pl. IX.

25 Kowalska et al., “Catalogue of Burials”, 249 and fig. 301.

26 Cairo Museum JE 55247, SR 4366. Only the very end of the coffin with the inscription, which reads “Shara son of Pasi”, was saved and placed in the museum. See Aimé-Giron, *Textes*, no. 108; and Porten/Yardeni, *TAD*, D18.4.

27 W. Kornfeld, “Aramäische Sarkophage in Assuan”, *WZKM* 61 (1967): 9-16.

28 Winnicki, “Aramäische Sarkophage in Assuan”, 10-12. See also G. Vittman, *Ägypten und die Fremden im ersten vorchristlichen Jahrtausend* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 2003) 113-114.

29 Aimé-Giron, *Textes*: 107; Porten/Yardeni, *TAD*, D19.1-5.

30 Aimé-Giron, *Textes*: 110, 111, 112; Porten/Yardeni, *TAD*, D18.7-9. The coffins themselves were not entered into the Cairo Museum collection, but only rectangular pieces cut from them bearing the inscriptions. Their museum numbers are: JE 55219, JE 55220, and JE 55223.



Plate 5- CG 17072 Upper part of clay coffin lid decorated with two faces.

of Aramaic, Egyptian and West Semitic.³¹

Only one of these mummy tag sherds, trapezoidal in shape, had a hole for string at the small end of the sherd.³² The name “Pahe son of Bagadata” is on the sherd’s front side, and the name “Bagafarnah son of Bagadata” is on the backside. What is interesting is that one son has an Egyptian name, Pahe, while the other son and the father have Persian names.³³ This intermingling of names in a family, even among siblings, is also found in the Aramaic papyri from North Saqqara.³⁴ Aimé-Giron suggests that these two sons of the same man must have been young and died at the same time.³⁵

Among the clay coffins in the Cairo Museum from the Cimetière Araméen is a fragmented head end of a lid, CG 17072 (see Plate 5) decorated with two faces.³⁶ Hair, created by fingertips pressed into the clay when it was wet, spreads completely across the piece. In the hair are two

31 See TAD, D19.3-.5, p. 250 for the names and the original Aramaic. There are other mummy tags said to have come from Saqqara, but which have been shown to be modern forgeries. See Porten and Yardeni, *TAD*, 299-300. Porten/Yardeni, *TAD*, D19.6 is a wooden label they say belongs to this group of tags.

32 JE 54159; Aimé-Giron, *Textes*, 105; *TAD*, 19.1, p. 249.

33 J. Tavernier, *Iranica in the Achaemenid Period: Lexicon of Old Iranian Proper Names and Loanwords, Attested in Non-Iranian Texts* (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 132-133 for Bagadata, and 134 for Bagafarna. For this mixture of names, also see B. Porten, “Egyptian Names in Aramaic Texts”, in *Acts of the Seventh International Conference of Demotic Studies*, ed. K. Ryholt (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2002), 300.

34 J.B. Segal, *Aramaic Texts from North Saqqara* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1983), 9.

35 Porten/Yardeni, *TAD*, 249; Aimé-Giron, *Textes*, no. 105, 103-104.

36 Sabbahy, *Catalogue General*, 37, pl. XII. Jéquier did not include a picture of this coffin in any of his reports.

identical, small faces with very pointed chins, perhaps meant to be chins with beards. The ears are very small and set too high on the heads; the eyes are large. Porten and Yardeni suggest that the inscribed sherd with two names originally came from this coffin.³⁷ This coffin is one of only two two-headed coffins known from ancient Egypt. The other double coffin is a wooden one from the Roman period, second century A.D. It was also used to bury two boys.³⁸

The oldest use of mummy tags in ancient Egypt is possibly Saite in date,³⁹ but the majority of ancient Egyptian mummy tags are inscribed in Demotic or Greek, and are dated to the Ptolemaic or Roman Periods. These tags generally have a hole at one end for a string to attach to the mummy for purposes of identification.⁴⁰ Quaegebeur suggests that the tag, which in the Demotic examples has a religious formula written on it as well, can also serve as a kind of memorial; in this way it serves “as a cheap substitute for the grave stela.”⁴¹

There are two examples of stone markers, or very rudimentary stelae, with Aramaic inscriptions from Cimetière Araméen. One, described as a large, flat stone by Aimé-Giron, was said to have been found by Jéquier on the chest of a mummy in the Cimetière Araméen.⁴² It has since been lost. Another roughly round-topped piece of limestone with an Aramaic name also came from this cemetery, although it is not clear if it had been placed in a coffin.⁴³

Borchardt’s excavations at the Old Kingdom pyramid complex of King Neferirkare at Abusir uncovered a comparable cemetery, dating Late Period to Ptolemaic-Roman times, in the sand covering the remains of the funerary temple.⁴⁴ Among the coffins were four in clay, two with large faces on otherwise flat lids, and two with lids that had no faces at all. Borchardt states he also found burials without coffins, as well as mummies with cartonnage in wooden coffins. He mentions no objects from this cemetery except for a piece of limestone, found next to one of the burials, with an Aramaic inscription naming the deceased and father.⁴⁵ There is also a block of limestone preserved in the pyramid’s funerary temple carved with the name of an Aramaic man and his father;⁴⁶ this inscription could have marked a burial as well.⁴⁷

Jéquier states that the clay coffins with Aramaic inscriptions were a small part, perhaps ten

37 Porten/Yardeni, *TAD*, 238.

38 B. Manley and A. Dodson, *Life Everlasting: National Museum Scotland, Collection of Ancient Egyptian Coffins* (Edinburgh: National Museum, Scotland, 2010), A.1956.357 A, no. 61,141-2. There is a depiction of an offering scene with a double coffin in a later Eighteenth Dynasty tomb at Saqqara. See A. Zivie, *La Tombe de Thoutmes* (Toulouse: Caracara Edition, 2013), fig. 10.

39 J. Quaegebeur, “Mummy Labels: An Orientation”, in *Textes Grecs, Démotiques et Bilingues*, ed. E. Boswinkel and P.W. Pestman (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 232-259.

40 For the various shapes, and a discussion of usage, see C. Arlt, *Deine Seele Möge Leben für Immer und Ewig: Die Demotischer Mumienschilder im British Museum* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), xi, and 1-4.

41 Quaegebeur, “Mummy Labels”, 237, mentions a second function of the tags, “that of shipping tag or bill of lading” for mummies who had to be shipped for burial.

42 N. Aimé-Giron, “Adversaria semitica”, *BIFAO* 38 (1939): 46, no. 118.

43 Aimé-Giron, *Textes*, no. 102; Porten/Yardeni, *TAD*, D21.2.

44 L. Borchardt, *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Nefer-ir-ke-Re* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1909), 75-79.

45 Borchardt, *Das Grabdenkmal*, 79, fig. 96. See also Porten/Yardeni, *TAD*, D21.1.

46 J. Dušek and J. Mynářová, “Phoenician and Aramaic Inscriptions from Abusir”, in *In the Shadow of Bezalel. Aramaic, Biblical, and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Bezalel Porten*, ed. A. Botta (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 67-69. See photo in M. Verner, *Forgotten Pharaohs, Lost Pyramids: Abusir* (Prague: Škodaexport, 1994), 93.

47 There are examples of inscribed and decorated Aramaic stelae, some from Saqqara, but not found *in situ*. See B. Porten and J. Gee, “Aramaic Funerary Practices in Egypt”, *World of the Aramaeans Vol. 2: Studies in Honor of*

percent, of the total number of clay coffins he found at the Cimetière Araméen, but he never gives a total number of the clay coffins he discovered, or a total of all the coffins.⁴⁸ If his ten percent estimate is correct, this cemetery included 140 burials in clay coffins, and an unknown number of wood and limestone ones. Jéquier says that because of the lack of any other inscriptions, the cemetery is probably not an Egyptian one, but a foreign one, or else for the lower classes, as well as foreigners.

In the Late to early Ptolemaic Period, an extensive cemetery spread throughout the Saqqara plateau.⁴⁹ An examination of the other contemporary, non-elite cemetery areas shows that they, and the Cimetière Araméen, are in general very much alike in terms of their funerary material. The area around the Teti Pyramid had two excavations in the earlier 1900's that uncovered burials associated with Persian Period pottery. Quibell reported 36 burials in poor quality wooden coffins, with faces and wigs modeled in clay, or wooden coffins covered in clay, which were buried in pits dug in the ground.⁵⁰ The bones were in poor condition, and there were not many objects outside of beads, which were frequent, and a few pots. Only two proper names were found, both Egyptian, but they were on bead plaques in a necklace, found with two rings in a child's burial.⁵¹

Working on the north side of the pyramid, Quibell found a cemetery of 171 anthropoid wooden coffins, well made, but most not decorated. A few of the coffins were poorer quality, with faces and wigs modeled out of mud. According to the excavation report, "Objects in or near these coffins were remarkably few".⁵² No inscriptions or personal names were found.

Area 5 of the Anubieion at Saqqara produced 134 burials, for the most part in mud coffins, with the mud "frequently modeled over the corpse".⁵³ Mummification was rare and poorly done. Only 36 burials had an object, for the most part a wedjat eye. Nine mummy tags were found, eight of wood and one of polished bone. They were trapezoidal or rectangular in shape, and all but two had a hole for string. There were no visible inscriptions on any of the tags. There were also no inscriptions on the coffins giving personal names. The pottery from the layer in which the burials were found probably dates to the first half of the fourth century; a Persian Period pottery vessel accompanied one burial.⁵⁴ These burials and the ones discussed just above by the Teti pyramid are contemporary, and all of them should be dated in the range of the fifth to the fourth century BC.⁵⁵

To the north at Giza, Late Period burials covered areas of the Old Kingdom workmen's settlement south of the Wall of the Crow, and they were also found in an area called the West Dump. A

Paul-Eugene Dion, ed. J.L. Koosed (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2001), 283-301; H. Donner, "Elemente ägyptischen Totenglaubens bei den Aramäern Ägyptens", in *Religions en Égypte Hellénistique et Romaine*, ed. P. Derchain (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969), 35-44; S. Caramello, "The Reception of the Egyptian Funerary Cult by the Near Eastern Communities in the Memphis Area", in *Proceedings of the Fourth Central European Conference of Young Egyptologists*, *Studia Aegyptiaca* 18 (Budapest: La Chaire d'Égyptologie, 2007), 67-69.

48 Jéquier, *Deux pyramides*, 52.

49 L. Giddy, *The Anubieion at Saqqara II: The Cemeteries* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1992), 90.

50 J.E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara (1905-1906)* (Cairo: French Institute, 1907), 8-11.

51 Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara (1905-1906)*, 8.

52 J.E. Quibell and A.G.K. Hayter, *Teti Pyramid, North Side* (Cairo: French Institute, 1927), 3-6. There were 14 assorted objects, mostly rings and amulets, and 9 pots.

53 Giddy, *The Anubieion*, 89.

54 Giddy, *The Anubieion*, 88.

55 D. Aston and D. Jeffreys, *The Survey of Memphis III: Excavations at Kom Rabia (Site RAT): Post-Ramesside levels and Pottery* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2007), 81.

total of 126 mud coffins were found, some of which had been painted.⁵⁶ Parts of offering formulae could be read on a few of the painted coffins, but there were no personal names. Near the burials discovered south of the Wall of the Crow were three caches of Persian Period amphorae,⁵⁷ and a large pottery jar, “either a Persian import or a copy”, accompanied one burial, Burial 398.⁵⁸ Beads and amulets were found, particularly with the burials of children.

In general, the funerary material found in the Cimetière Araméen fits in with the other contemporary Memphite cemeteries discussed, although certain details differ. One thing that all these cemeteries had in common was a scarcity of pottery. Another feature in common was the lack of funerary objects. Giza, where the burials had numbers of beads and amulets, was the only exception. The range of materials used for coffins was similar, although while the Cimetière Araméen had coffins of stone, wood and clay, the other cemeteries used wood and clay, or mostly just mud. The Cimetière Araméen burials had some mummification of the body and use of cartonnage, which was also found at Abusir and West Saqqara. Mummy tags and mummies with a wreath on their head were found at both the Cimetière Araméen and West Saqqara.

Most significant for the purpose of this study is the fact that the few personal names attached to burials in any of these cemeteries were all written in Aramaic. Fourteen clay coffin inscriptions, five inscribed mummy tags, and two stone markers were found at the Cimetière Araméen, and another two stone markers were discovered at Abusir. While there must have been burials of Aramaeans lacking inscriptions, the fact that the only inscriptions found were in Aramaic must reflect the desire to express an ethnic identity in burials that conformed to Egyptian funerary tradition.⁵⁹ Caramello believes that the people buried in these coffins adopted aspects of Egyptian religion, particularly the belief in Osiris and the afterlife, as well as Egyptian funerary culture, while at the same time they “wanted to show clearly their Semitic origins”.⁶⁰ It does appear from the texts and scenes on the Aramaic stelae found in Egypt⁶¹ that the Aramaeans understood and used the basic funerary formulae of the ancient Egyptians,⁶² and they participated “in the Egyptian afterlife according to Egyptian practices described in Egyptian terms”.⁶³

Unfortunately, there seems to be very little known about Aramaean burial practices or funerary beliefs. Lipiński, in his synthesis of Aramaean history, states that the lack of studies on the subject “does not allow us to treat this question in a satisfactory way”.⁶⁴ The difficulty in pointing

56 J. Kaiser and J. Karlsson, *The Giza Plateau Mapping Project: The Late Period Mud Coffin Catalogue* (unpublished manuscript).

57 “2000 Years Later: Slipper Coffins and Amphorae Buried in TBLF”, *Aeragram: Newsletter of the Ancient Egypt Research Associates* 2 No. 2 (1998):10.

58 M. Lehner, M. Kamel, and A. Tavares, *Giza Plateau Mapping Project, Season 2005, Preliminary Report: Giza Occasional Papers* 2 (AERA, 2006), 32.

59 For ethnicity see “Ethnicity and Material Culture” in S. Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity* (London: Routledge, 1997), 106-127; P. Ucko, “Ethnography and Archaeological Interpretation of Funerary Remains”, *World Archaeology*, 1 No. 2 (1969): 262-280; C. Riggs and J. Baines, “Ethnicity”, *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, 2012: (<http://digital2.library.ucla.edu/viewItem.do?ark=21198/zz002bpmfm>)

60 S. Caramello, “Aramaic-speaking people in Egypt: religion and ethnicity”, in *Tenth International Congress of Egyptologists: Abstracts of Papers* ed. P. Kousoulis (Rhodes: University of the Aegean, 2008), 39-40.

61 See ft. 45 above.

62 Donner, “Elemente Ägyptischen Totenglaubens”, particularly the conclusion, 44.

63 Porten/Gee, “Aramaic Funerary Practices in Egypt”, 302.

64 E. Lipiński, *The Aramaeans: Their Ancient History, Culture, Religion* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 636.

out Aramaean material culture in the Cimetière Araméen is paralleled in an excavation at the Iron Age cemetery of Tell Shiukh Fawqani in Syria, where "textual evidence clearly shows the massive presence of Aramaeans", while they "remain elusive in many respects, and more particularly in their material culture".⁶⁵ The site report concludes that the Aramaeans were "inclined to adopt other cultural features".⁶⁶ Szuchman also reaches such a conclusion in his work on the material culture of Bit Zamani.⁶⁷

The Aramaeans were one of a number of foreign ethnic groups who came to Egypt in the Late Period. These foreigners tended to be merchants or mercenaries, and the evidence for them, whether Aramaean, Carian, Babylonian, Moabite, Lydian, or otherwise, has been found mostly in the area of Memphis.⁶⁸ The origin and early history of the Aramaeans is not entirely clear, but the "first incontestable use of the name 'Aramaean' occurs in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser I of Assyria (1114-1076 B.C.)".⁶⁹ The Assyrian Empire began to use Aramaic as its official language in the 8th century B.C. "as part of their political strategy for integrating the western provinces into the empire".⁷⁰ The dialects of Aramaic were standardized at this time, and the resulting "Imperial Aramaic" continued in use under the Babylonians and Persians,⁷¹ so that with the Persian conquest of Egypt, Aramaic was the official administrative language of the 27th Dynasty.⁷²

Thompson discusses the cosmopolitan nature of Memphis at this time, and the many Aramaic documents that were "a product of a well-embedded administration that utilized Aramaic speakers and scribes up and down the Nile and at the major guardhouses".⁷³ She concludes, however, that "throughout the period of both Persian and Ptolemaic rule, the language of the majority remained Egyptian".⁷⁴ Ray, who in a discussion of literacy in Late and Persian Period Egypt, states "the evidence from the various foreign communities in Late Period Egypt shows a consistent pattern of adaption to, and adoption of, Egyptian culture and ways of thought", backs up this view of Egyptian cultural domination.⁷⁵ But, while it is clear that the individuals buried in the Cimetière Araméen adopted Egyptian funerary material culture, using anthropoid clay coffins and mummification, it is also clear that they chose to make a statement of their ethnic identity. The only inscriptions from the non-elite Late Period to Ptolemaic Saqqara cemeteries, most numerous at the Cimetière Araméen,

65 A. Tenu, "Assyrians and Aramaeans in the Euphrates Valley Viewed from the Cemetery of Tell Shiukh Fawqani (Syria)", *Syria* 86 (2009): 95.

66 Tenu, "Assyrians and Aramaeans", *Syria* 86: 96.

67 J. Szuchman, "Bit Zamani and Assyria", *Syria* 86 (2009): 62.

68 J. Johnson, "Ethnic Considerations in Persian Period Egypt", in *Gold of Praise: Studies on Ancient Egypt in Honor of Edward F. Wente*, ed. E. Teeter and J. A. Larson (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1999), 214. Also see the discussion in J.B. Segal, *Aramaic Texts from North Saqqara* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1983), 7-11.

69 Lipiński, *The Aramaeans*, 35. See also H. Sader, "The Aramaean Kingdom of Syria: Origin and Formation Processes", *Ancient Near Eastern Studies*, Supplement 7 (2000), 61-76.

70 W. Schniedewind, "Aramaic, The Death of Written Hebrew, and Language Shift in the Persian Period", in *Margins of Writing, Origins of Culture*, ed. S. Sandars (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2006), 142.

71 Schniedewind, "Aramaic, The Death of Written Hebrew, and Language Shift in the Persian Period", 142-43.

72 See J. Ray, "Literacy and Language in Egypt in the Late and Persian Periods", in *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, ed. A. K. Bowman and G. Wolf (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1994), 51-66.

73 D. Thompson, "The Multilingual Environment of Persian and Ptolemaic Egypt: Egyptian, Aramaic, and Greek Documentation", in *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, ed. R. Bagnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 399.

74 D. Thompson, "The Multilingual Environment of Persian and Ptolemaic Egypt: Egyptian, Aramaic, and Greek Documentation", 399.

75 Ray, "Literacy in Egypt in the Late and Persian Periods", 57.

are written in Aramaic and state the name of the deceased and their father; clearly this identification, including the language in which it was written, must have been purposeful and meaningful.