Introduction¹ and Stratigraphic Position of the Deposits

Manfred Bietak

The deposits treated within *Tell el-Dab^ca X*, part 2, belong mainly to str. e/1.2 and e/1.1 (ph. D/1.2-1)² at ^cEzbet Helmi, which can be dated to the beginning of the 18^{th} Dynasty, following the Hyksos period at Avaris, after ca. 1530 BC.³

The site of cEzbet Helmi is situated at the western edge of the ancient town of Avaris, on the eastern bank of the Pelusiac branch of the Nile. It only started to be occupied during the middle of the Hyksos Period, while occupation at the central part of Tell el-Dabca goes back to the late 12th Dynasty (ph. H). Other sites (F/I and R/I = cEzbet Rushdi) start at the beginning (ph. N) or in the middle (ph. L) of the 12th Dynasty. During the late Hyksos period (str. f-e/2, ph. D/2) this sparsely settled site was reclaimed for a huge palatial compound that covered 4 ha and included gardens, a buttressed enclosure wall (area H/I), a major palace (area H/VI), and offices (area H/III).

The importance of this place can especially be appreciated because following the conquest of Avaris, occupation continued only here, while the major part

of the town had been abandoned, except for the area of the temple of Sutekh (A/II and A/IV).

SITUATION OF THE DEPOSITS OF PH. D/1.2 (str. e/1.2)

It seems that the former palace compound of the Hyksos had been destroyed, and now during ph. D/1.2 (str. e/1.2), huge storage facilities were established all over areas H/III and H/VI and in between, with repetitive units of round silos attached to magazines. 6 The magazines also included stables for transport animals, most likely donkeys, as can be seen by manger constructions in at least one of the rooms. There were also paved courts or halls, no doubt for the measuring and handling of grain. In area H/VI, a palatial structure was found with a big paved reception hall. What at first appeared to be a short-lived makeshift facility is now known to have been in use for a longer period. In H/VI, we have evidence that the silos were renewed at least four times.⁸ The very solid walls of the magazines and the palace show that substantial buildings were set up. However, their foundations were only set at a shallow depth, which

General introductions to this site appear in M. BIETAK, Avaris. The Capital of the Hyksos. Recent Excavations at Tell el-Dabea, London 1996; id., Le debut de la XVIIIe Dynastie et les Minoens à Avaris, BSFE 135 (1996), 11-44; id., The Center of the Hyksos Rule: Avaris (Tell el-Dab^ca), 78–140, in: E.D. Oren (ed.), The Hyksos: New Historical and Archaeological Perspectives, University Museum Symposium Series, Philadelphia 1997; id., Une citadelle royale à Avaris de la première moitié de la XVIIIe dynastie et liens avec le monde minoen, 29-81, in: A. CAUBET (ed.), L'acrobate au taureau: Les découvertes de Tell el-Dab^ca et l'archéologie de la Méditerranée orientale. Actes du colloque organisé au Musée du Louvre par le Service culturel le 3 décembre 1994, Paris 1999; for the site of cEzbet Helmi: M. Bietak, J. Dorner, I. Hein & P. Jánosi, Neue Grabungsergebnisse aus Tell el-Dabca und Ezbet Helmi im östlichen Nildelta 1989–1991, Ä&L 4 (1994), 9–80; M. BIETAK, J. DORNER & P. JÁNOSI, Ausgrabungen in dem Palastbezirk von Avaris, Vorbericht Tell el-Dabca/cEzbet Helmi 1993–2000, $\ddot{A} \mathcal{C} L$ 11 (2001), 27–119.

The phases in capital letters define the co-ordination of the individual stratigraphies of the different excavation areas at Tell el-Dabca. The stratum designation in small letters is only valid for the site of H/I–VI at cEzbet Helmi.

See P. Fuscaldo, Tell el-Dab^ca: Some Remarks on the Pottery from 'Ezbet Helmi (Areas H/III and H/VI, Strata e/1 and d), 301–316, in: M. Bietak & E. Czerny (eds.), The Synchronisation of Civilisations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Second Millennium BC. III, Proceedings of the SCIEM 2000 – 2nd EuroConference Vienna, 28th of May – 1st of June 2003, CChEM 9, Vienna 2007. For the stratigraphy of the site of 'Ezbet Helmi/Tell el-Dab^ca, see M. Bietak, Rich beyond the Dreams of Avaris: Tell el-Dab^ca and the Aegean World – A Guide for the Perplexed, A Response to Eric Cline, Annual of the British School at Athens 95 (2000), 187–194, and Bietak, Dorner & Jánosi, op. cit., 30–45.

⁴ Bietak, Dorner, Hein & Jánosi, *op.cit.*, 27ff.

M. BIETAK & I. FORSTNER-MÜLLER, Ausgrabungen eines Palastbezirkes der Tuthmosidenzeit bei Ezbet Helmi/Tell el-Dabea, Vorbericht für Herbst 2004 und Frühjahr 2005, Ä&L 15 (2005), 65–100; iid., Ausgrabung eines Palastbezirkes der Tuthmosidenzeit bei Ezbet Helmi/Tell el-Dabea, Vorbericht für das Frühjahr 2007, Ä&L 17 (2007), 33–58.

⁶ Bietak, Dorner, Hein & Jánosi, op. cit., 60–67.

⁷ *Ibidem*, fig. 22.

⁸ Excavation season 2002, still unpublished.

enabled us to easily identify the walls of this stratum over an extensive area. As a security measure, all the magazines and silos were surrounded by a huge enclosure wall.

Typical to these buildings are foundation deposits, which can be found at irregular intervals under the walls of the magazines and the palace. We were unable to identify any sort of a pattern, and the nature of the deposits varied from case to case.

L1055 in H/III-s/16 is a round pit 40–50 cm wide and 15–20 cm deep, which cut into wall M1028 and pavement M1029 of the late Hyksos period (str. e/2). It contained three male human skulls and three right hands. Two of the individuals exhibited Negroid features and could be identified as Nubians. The foundation layers of the eastern outer wall M1019 of the magazine not only sealed this deposit, but the weight of the wall crushed two of the skulls severely.

This pit displays a grim custom, which, to my knowledge, is not otherwise attested in Egypt and may relate to the conquest of Avaris which took place slightly before. It is interesting to note in this regard that we have evidence of Nubian soldiers employed by the Thebans, based on the appearance of Kerma pottery in the 18th Dynasty levels. ¹⁰ Meanwhile, Perla Fuscaldo has also found Nubian pottery from str. e/2–f (ph. D/2) of the late Hyksos period, which demonstrates that Nubian mercenaries, probably archers, were deployed by the Hyksos against the Thebans. However, it is still uncertain whether they belonged to the Kerma Culture or to the Pan Grave Culture. ¹¹

Another deposit, L1057, in H/III-t/16 was situated asymmetrically under a very thick main wall

M1018 of the compound within an oval pit, whose edges were not fully discernable. The objects lay densely packed together with some sand filling in a loam layer L1037. Most likely it was a foundation deposit, since it contained the typical model/votive pottery. Its asymmetrical position under the wall suggests that it was interred during or after the construction, or that the size or position of the wall had been slightly altered after the foundation ceremony.

The third foundation deposit L4329 of this stratum was located in area H/VI-u/14 in an asymmetrical position under an outer wall of a palatial structure. In this case, it was clear that the pit had been dug before the construction of the wall, and that it cut into walls and a pavement from the previous str. e/2 of the late Hyksos period. It is a big round pit c. 195 cm wide and 75 cm deep. It contained about 40 broken pottery vessels, mainly medium-sized bowls and drinking cups. Below this, and partly mixed up with the pottery, were cut up skeletal remains of 4 huge bulls and one ox, some of them showing the effects of fire. In this stratum was located in an asymmetrical position of the showing the effects of fire. In this stratum was located in an asymmetrical position was located in the previous stratum was l

SITUATION OF THE DEPOSITS OF PH. D/1.1 (str. e/1.1)

Within areas H/III and H/VI, we encountered time and again remains of simple pit tombs cut into the silo complex of the previous period, and into the stratum of the Hyksos period. Most of them were males between 18 and 40 years, and most probably soldiers (see below). A lack of offerings was the rule. The single pit burials were lined up along the massive 5 ½ brick (2.05 m) strong walls M1013 of a compound, which seems to have renewed the silo complex in

⁹ According to an unpublished anthropological study by Karl Großschmidt.

P. Fuscaldo, The Nubian Pottery from the Palace District of Avaris at ^cEzbet Helmi, Areas H/III and H/VI. Part I: The "Classic" Kerma Pottery from the 18th Dynasty, with an Addendum, $\ddot{A}\mathcal{E}L$ 12 (2002), 167–186; ead., Tell el-Dab^ca: Some Remarks on the Pottery from ^cEzbet Helmi (Areas H/III and H/VI, Strata e/1 and d), 305, in: M. BIETAK & E. CZERNY (eds.), The Synchronisation of Civilisations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Second Millennium BC. III, Proceedings of the SCIEM 2000 - 2nd EuroConference Vienna, 28th of May -1st of June 2003, CChEM 9, Vienna 2007; I. HEIN, Kerma in Avaris, 199-212, in: C.-B. Arnst, I. Hafemann & A. Lohwas-SER (eds.), Begegnungen, Festgabe für Erika Endesfelder, Karl-Heinz Priese, Walter Friedrich Reineke, Steffen Wenig, Leipzig 2001. In addition, Kerma projectiles were found at ^cEzbet Helmi; see A. TILLMANN, Kat. Nr. 348, 349. Zwei Pfeilspitzen, 257, in: M. BIETAK, I. HEIN et al., Pharaonen und Fremde. Dynastien im Dunkel. Katalog zu einer Sonderausstellung des Historischen Museums der Stadt Wien im Rathaus Wien, 8.

Sept.—23. Okt. 1994, Vienna 1994. For the Kerma culture in Egypt, see J. BOURRIAU, Nubians in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period: An Interpretation Based on Egyptian Ceramic Evidence, 25–41, in: Do. ARNOLD (ed.), Studien zur altägyptischen Keramik, SDAIK 9, Mainz 1981; ead., The Pottery, 15–22, in: P. LACOVARA (ed.), Deir el-Ballas: Preliminary Report on the Deir el Ballas Expedition, 1980–1986, ARCE Reports 12, Winona Lake, IN 1990; ead., Relations between Egypt and Kerma during the Middle and New Kingdoms, 129–144, in: W.V. DAVIES (ed.), Egypt and Africa: Nubia from Prehistory to Islam, London 1991.

P. Fuscaldo, The Nubian Pottery from the Palace District of Avaris at Ezbet Helmi, Areas H/III and H/VI. Part II: The "Classic" Kerma Pottery from the Second Intermediate Period and the 18th Dynasty, Ä&L 14 (2004), 111–119.

 $^{^{12}\,}$ Bietak, Dorner, Hein & Jánosi, op. cit., 60–63, fig. 20.

¹³ *Ibidem*, 64–67, fig. 23.

¹⁴ A. VON DEN DRIESCH, Vorläufiger Bericht über die Tierknochen aus der Gründungsgrube, Ä&L 11 (2001), 67.

area H/III. The bodies lay supine, and in some cases, on their sides. Some of the tombs were also dug out parallel and at some distance to the walls. The orientation of the skeletons varied: east-west, with the heads in the east or in the west, or north-south, with the heads in the north or in the south. Along this enclosure wall at least four horses were interred.¹⁵

Within this compound were also found a series of round pits of varied size and filled with broken pottery (H/III-s/16). Some pits do not intersect with the tombs as do pit 4, and the big pit 9, L1029, which could mean that they were dug at the same time or soon after the tombs. Other pits damage tombs, as did pit 2, L1017, which cut into the foot end of tomb 7, L2020, or pit 5, which disturbed the foot end of tomb 8, L1021. This means that these two pits at least were dug some time after the tombs had been cut, when the tombs were forgotten and no longer visible. Nevertheless, we think that the offering pits must be understood in relation to the burials, since no other explanation makes sense. They should be considered as the interred remains of specific rituals, including meals connected to the dead.¹⁶ And since the individual assignment of any pit to a specific tomb is not possible, a repeated ritual for all the tombs together would be a reasonable explanation of this context. Most exceptional is the evidence offered by the biggest deposit L1016 (H/III-s/16-no. 1).¹⁷ Within a nearly circular pit measuring 1.10-1.20 m in diameter and 1.20 m in depth was found a top layer of limestone blocks, and below them, about 300 smashed pottery vessels. At the bottom lay two skeletons on their abdomens, partly side by side, partly one on top of the other. One individual had its head missing. This looks less like the usual offering pit and more like an execration ritual.

In this regard, one should also consider even more burials outside the compound, where a camping ground was found with numerous fireplaces and some evidence of production and repair of bronze weapons.¹⁸ Along the outer face of the compound

wall M1013, and along an attached smaller wall M1023, were pits oriented north-south with single, double or triple burials. The bodies, which were all deposited at the same time, lay on their stomachs or on their sides, often positioned $t\hat{e}te-b\hat{e}che$.

It seems that the interment of the different tombs took a longer time. While some rows of tombs were positioned in a systematic fashion, other tombs disturbed each other. In some cases, the pits cut into the fireplaces; in other instances, the fireplaces covered the pits. Some irregular pits contained up to 4 bodies stuffed into the shallow pits. Since most of the bodies belonged to young men aged between 18 and 25, but also up to about 40 years, it is reasonable to assume that they were burials of soldiers. Some of them, according to the anthropological analysis, may have been ethnic Nubians. 19 The individual tombs within the compound probably belonged to such soldiers and their family members²⁰ who died of diseases. The burials with corpses on their stomachs may have been the result of executions; a measure that is not particularly difficult to associate with an army camp.²¹ One should also consider the possibility of emergency burials as a result of epidemics, when one tried to maintain as little contact as possible with the dead. The multiple burials could also apply to such an interpretation.²² It is interesting, however, that no offering deposits were found in the vicinity of these tombs.

In 2002, in area H/VI along the big enclosure wall of str. e/1.2, a series of ordinary single burials were found as well. Probably belonging to them is pit L4919 in H/VI-x/19, which contained bones of huge bulls, in all likelihood the remains of a funerary repast. Another pit, L4932, in the same excavation square, of round shape, 1.52–1.55 m in diameter and over 60 cm deep, contained more than 150 pottery vessels and cattle bones. It would make good sense to assign this pit, which is after all under the str. d floor level, to str. e/1.1, and to relate it to the tombs. In such a case the situation would be the same as in the northern compound, where the ordinary tombs were

A. Von den Driesch & J. Peters, Frühe Pferde- und Maultierskelette aus Auaris (Tell el-Dab^ca), östliches Nildelta, Ä&L 11 (2001), 301–311; Bietak, Dorner, Hein & Jánosi, op. cit., 71.

For similar pits of the Second Intermediate Period, see V. MÜLLER, Offering Deposits at Tell el-Dabca, 793–803, in: C.J. EYRE (ed.), Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Egyptologists, Cambridge, 3–9 September 1995, Louvain 1998; ead., Tell el-Dabca XVII. Opferdeponierungen in der Hyksoshauptstadt Auaris (Tell el-Dabca) vom späten Mittleren Reich bis zum frühen Neuen Reich, vol. 1–2, UZK 29, Vienna 2008.

¹⁷ BIETAK, DORNER, HEIN & JÁNOSI, op. cit., 67–69, 72–73, figs. 24, 25, 31.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, figs. 24 and 32.

¹⁹ Unpublished investigation carried out by Karl Großschmidt and Josef Tangl, Univ. Vienna.

²⁰ They included also a few burials of women and children.

²¹ Bietak, Dorner, Hein & Jánosi, op. cit., 71, fig. 30.

²² *Ibidem*, fig. 29.

found in association with the offering pits, even if they were partly younger than the tombs and even disturbed them. As some vessels from this pit mended with sherds gathered from a str. d surface, it seems more likely now that this pit stems from str. d as well. It was situated directly under a plastered construction, which could have been a washing installation or a podium, and belongs to str. d. From a stratigraphic point of view the pit could be considered as a foundation deposit of this construction.

The pottery of pit L4932 was mainly broken and most probably smashed. Most frequent were bowls that served as food plates with a flat base or a ring base, large carinated bowls, cups with flat bases, a few drop-shaped beakers, and big necked jars which functioned as containers for liquids. Of particular interest are Late Bronze Age jugs with ring bases and bipartite handles, and some Bichrome Wheel-made Ware jugs with hatched design, typical to the time of the early New Kingdom. Again, we think these are the remains of a funerary repast belonging to the soldier tombs of str. e/1.1, situated within a huge army camp of the early 18th Dynasty.

The Situation after the Offering Deposits: The Tuthmoside Palaces (ph. C/3-2, str. d-c)

Sometime afterwards this site was turned into a palace district (ph. C/3–2, str. d and c) on approximately the same outlines as the army compound (ca. 4 ha). It consisted of a main palace (G) and two minor palaces (F and J) which were originally furnished with Minoan wall paintings.²⁴ All the palaces rested on huge platforms of casemate walls, of which

only the foundations were preserved.²⁵ Since they cut into the tombs of the soldiers, there was obviously no sentimental connection or respect on behalf of the palace builders towards the anonymous buried soldiers. Perhaps the respective events were separated by some period of time.

Based on the pottery, the palace district dates already into the Tuthmoside period (15th century BC). The second phase C/2 (str. c) belongs to the time-span of Tuthmosis III to Amenophis II (c.1479–1401), while the first phase C/3 (str. d) may date to the early reign of Tuthmosis III (1479-1425 BC). However, it is not possible to differentiate between the pottery of both phases. On the other hand, one can observe a distinct difference between the palace phases and the time of the army camp, which most probably dates to the late reign of Ahmose, after the fall of Avaris onwards (c. 1530 BC). If we assign only 20 years to each of the two phases D/1.2-1 (str. e/1.2-1), we arrive at 1490 BC, i.e., the reign of Tuthmosis I (c. 1494-1482 BC). If we allow 25 years for each phase, it puts us at c. 1480 BC, equivalent to the advent of the reign of Tuthmosis III (1479 BC onwards). If we calculate the median time-span for all the phases/strata at Tell el-Dab^ca from the beginning of the 12th Dynasty till the end of the Hyksos period, we obtain c. 30 years per phase. Applying such an estimated span for each of the two strata places us at c. 1470 BC, towards the end of the first decade of Tuthmosis III's reign.²⁶ This manner of calculation provides us with a reasonable way of assessing the time-span of the strata discussed in this book.

²³ For the typology see M. BIETAK, Towards a Chronology of Bichrome Ware? Some Material from 'Ezbet Helmi and Tell el-Dab'a, 175–201, in: P. ASTRÖM (ed.), *The Chronology of Base-Ring Ware and Bichrome Wheel-Made Ware, Proceedings of a Conference of the Swedish Academy of Letters in Stockholm*, KVHAA Konferenser 54, Stockholm 2001.

K. ASLANIDOU, Der minoische Spiralfries aus dem Grabungsareal H/IV in Tell el Dab^ca. Malvorgang und Rekonstruktion, Ä&L 12 (2002), 13–27; M. BIETAK in: M. BIETAK, J. DORNER, I. HEIN & P. JÁNOSI, op. cit., 44–58; id., Avaris, London 1996, 67ff; id., Une citadelle royale à Avaris de la première moitié de la XVIII^c dynastie et liens avec le monde minoen, 29–81, in: A. CAUBET (ed.), L'acrobate au taureau: Les découvertes de Tell el-Dab^ca et l'archéologie de la Méditerranée orientale. Actes du colloque organisé au Musée du Louvre par le Service culturel le 3 décembre 1994, Paris 1999; M. BIETAK & N. MARINATOS, Minoan Wall Paintings from Avaris, Ä&L 5 (1995), 49–62; M. BIETAK, N. MARINATOS & C. PALYVOU, The Maze Tableau from Tell el-Dab^ca, 77–88, in: S. SHERRATT (ed.), Proceedings of the First International Sym-

posium The Wall Paintings of Thera, Petros Nomikos Conference Centre, Thera, Hellas, 30 August – 4 September 1997, vol. I, Athens 2000; M. Bietak, N. Marinatos & C. Palyvou, Taureador Scenes in Tell el-Dab^ca (Avaris) and Knossos, UZK 27, Vienna 2007; N. MARINATOS, The Tell el-Dabca Paintings: A Study in Pictorial Tradition, $\ddot{A}\mathcal{E}L$ 8 (1998), 83–99; L. MORGAN, Minoan Painting and Egypt: The Case of Tell el-Dabca, 29-52, in: W. Davies & L. Schofield (eds.), Egypt, the Aegean and the Levant. Interconnections in the Second Millennium BC, London 1995. For representations of Minoans in Egyptian tombs in the Tuthmoside Period, see S. WACHS-MANN, Aegeans in the Theban Tombs, OLA 20, Leuven 1987, and H. MATTHÄUS, Representations of Keftiu in Egyptian Tombs and the Absolute Chronology of the Aegean Late Bronze Age, Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies 40 (1995), 177-194.

²⁵ See above, n. 5.

²⁶ M. Bietak, Egypt and Canaan during the Middle Bronze Age, *BASOR* 281 (1991), 27–72.

Calendar of the excavations at cEzbet Helmi and cEzbet Rushdi, 1997–1998

Director: M. Bietak; Vice-director: J. Dorner

Members:

1997, spring season (February 20-May 20)

D. Aston (Egyptologist)

T. Bagh (Egyptologist)

E. Czerny (Egyptologist)

I. Forstner (Egyptologist)

P. Fuscaldo (Egyptologist)

B. Glück (Student)

K. Haider (Photographer)

I. Hein (Egyptologist)

P. Jánosi (Egyptologist)

K. Kopetzky (Egyptologist)

M. Martin (Egyptologist)

N. Math (Egyptologist)

W. Müller (Archaeologist)

M. Negrete Martínez (Draftswoman)

E. Puch Ramírez (Draftswoman)

U. Quatemberg (Egyptologist)

B. Rasch (Archaeologist)

R. Seeber (Restorer)

Z. Szafranski (Egyptologist)

G. Wiplinger (Architect)

H. Fahim (Inspector of the SCA)

1997, autumn season (September 2-November 5)

B. Bader (Egyptologist)

T. Bagh (Egyptologist)

B. Budka (Egyptologist)

E. Czerny (Egyptologist)

I. Forstner (Egyptologist)

P. Fuscaldo (Egyptologist)

I. Hein (Egyptologist)

P. Jankovic (Egyptologist)

K. Kopetzky (Egyptologist)

M. Negrete Martínez (Draftswoman)

C. Pörschman (Egyptologist)

A. A. el-Senoussi (Draftsman)

M. Helmi (Inspector of the SCA)

1998, spring season (February 1-June 10)

D. Aston (Egyptologist)

B. Bader (Egyptologist)

T. Bagh (Egyptologist)

F. Blakolmer (Archaeologist)

E. Czerny (Egyptologist)

I. Forstner (Egyptologist)

P. Fuscaldo (Egyptologist)

N. Gail (Photographer)

B. Glück (Student)

K. Großschmidt (Anthropologist)

I. Hein (Egyptologist)

P. Jánosi (Egyptologist)

K. Kopetzky (Egyptologist)

N. Marinatos (Minoan frescos)

M. Martin (Egyptologist)

N. Math (Egyptologist)

L. Morgan (Minoan frescos)

M. Negrete Martínez (Draftswoman)

C. Palivou (Draftswoman)

U. Randl (Assistant anthropologist)

B. Rasch (Egyptologist)

R. Schiestl (Egyptologist)

A. Schwab (Egyptologist)

R. Seeber (Restorer)

Z. Szafranski (Egyptologist)

S. Tangl (Anthropologist)

B. Triendl (Restorer)

A. A. el-Senoussi (Draftsman)

Risk George (Inspector of the SCA)

1998, autumn season (September 8-December 1)

K. Aslanidou (Student)

D. Aston (Egyptologist)

B. Bader (Egyptologist)

T. Bagh (Egyptologist)

A. Cerondas (Restorer)

E. Czerny (Egyptologist)

A. A. el-Senoussi (Draftsman)

I. Forstner (Egyptologist)

P. Fuscaldo (Egyptologist)

I. Hein (Egyptologist)

P. Jánosi (Egyptologist)

E. Juen (Student)

N. Marinatos (Minoan frescos)

M. Negrete Martínez (Draftswoman)

C. Palivou (Draftwoman)

C. Pörschman (Egyptologist)

U. Quatember (Egyptologist)

B. Rasch (Egyptologist)

R. Schiestl (Archaeologist)

R. Seeber (Restorer)

Z. Szafranski (Egyptologist)

U. Thanheiser (Botanist)

B. Tobias (Student)

E. Ashmawi (Inspector of the SCA)