

LEPSIUS No. XXV: A PROBLEM OF TYPOLOGY*

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The author discusses several problems related to the typological determination of the tomb known as Lepsius no. XXV recently excavated by the Czech Institute of Egyptology (Charles University in Prague) at Abusir in Egypt. The archaeological excavations revealed a large tomb with badly damaged tomb's superstructure and substructure. The whole tomb can be divided into two parts, eastern and western. In both parts of the tomb's substructure a descending corridor built in the north-south direction and remains of the burial chamber were uncovered. In the eastern part of the tomb's superstructure an entrance with part of a corridor leading deeper into the core of the superstructure was discovered. No traces of any relief decoration were preserved. Some graffiti were found during the excavations including inscriptions in which two signs for the pyramid occur. Very modest remains of the burial equipment and other artefacts including anthropological finds were also discovered during the excavations. In several publications this tomb was described by the excavators as a double pyramid. This study challenges the conclusion that L 25 is to be interpreted as the double pyramid. In this paper I argue in favour of an alternative interpretation, according to which the architectural remains of the tomb Lepsius no. XXV from the typological point of view indicate rather a mastaba than a double pyramid.

Key words: Lepsius no. XXV, Egypt, Abusir, typology, pyramid, mastaba

Lepsius no. XXV is a large tomb structure¹ located in the southern part of the central pyramid field at Abusir.² Its name comes from the German

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¹ The modern name of the tomb is abbreviated here as L 25 and its parts as L 25-east and L 25-west.

² For the position of the tomb on the 19th century maps see VERNER, M. *The Pyramid Complex of Raneferef. The Archaeology. Abusir IX*, p. XVI.

archaeological expedition to Egypt led by K. R. Lepsius in the 1840s.³ Its superstructure as well as the substructure were preserved in a very bad physical state. The tomb was robbed and damaged and the stones of better quality coming from the tomb were partly recycled in later buildings. The name of the tomb's owner and the precise dating of the tomb are not known.⁴ More systematic archaeological excavation of this tomb started in the year 2001⁵ with a working hypothesis that L 25 represents an Old Kingdom pyramid complex with an unusual architectural orientation, more precisely, with the pyramid superstructure situated in the east and the mortuary temple unusually built in the west.⁶ This idea was apparently based on the physical appearance of the ruins of the tomb before the excavation, particularly the higher and more massive ruins in the east compared with the lower and less impressive ones in the west with a shallow depression in both parts.⁷ Perhaps the older maps and traditional opinions of scholars might also have influenced the recent excavators.⁸ After several archaeological seasons the preliminary results provide important data and more detailed physical characteristics of the tomb for more comprehensive scientific debate about L 25.⁹ One of the open questions is the typological determination of this tomb.

The superstructure (Figure 1)

The superstructure of L 25 can be divided into two parts, L 25-east and L 25-west, with the longest axis of each aligned in the north-south direction (the dotted line in Fig. 1 indicate the joint of two parts of L 25). The measurements of L 25-east are roughly 27 x 21 m and L 25-west 21 x 15 m.¹⁰ The uncovered major part of the superstructure of the whole tomb clearly shows that the

³ The tomb was (mistakenly) identified as a pyramid. NAVILLE E. (ed.). *K. R. Lepsius, Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien. Bd. 1, Text*, pp. 136-137.

⁴ According to M. Verner the tomb can be ascribed to the prince Hanebu and his wife. VERNER, M., BENEŠOVSKÁ H. *Unearthing Ancient Egypt*, p. 43.

⁵ KREJČÍ, J. *Pyramidové komplexy královen na abúsrském pohřebišti*. [Pyramid Complexes of the Queens on the Abusir Cemetery], p. 70.

⁶ On the various opinions of scholars concerning the type of the structure in the past see VERNER, M. *Abusir Pyramids "Lepsius no. XXIV and no. XXV"*, pp. 371-372.

⁷ VERNER, M., BENEŠOVSKÁ, H. *Unearthing Ancient Egypt*, p. 42.; VERNER, M. *Abusir Pyramids "Lepsius no. XXIV and no. XXV"*, p. 374 and p. 377, Fig. 2.

⁸ Cf. LEPSIUS K. R. *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien*. Bd. I, Bl. 32; BORCHARDT, L. *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Sahu-re*. Bd. 1: Der Bau, Bl. 2; VERNER, M. *Excavations at Abusir. Season 1988/1989—Preliminary Report*. In ZĀS, 1991, Bd. 118, p. 163, Fig. 1; VERNER, M. *Archaeological survey of Abusir*. In ZĀS, 1991, Bd. 119, pp. 116-124.

⁹ I took part in the archaeological excavations of the tomb L 25 together with Czech colleagues from the Czech Institute of Egyptology in the year 2003 and 2004.

¹⁰ KREJČÍ, J. *Hrobový komplex Lepsius č. 25 v Abúsíru (sezóna 2003–2004)*. [The Tomb Complex Lepsius No. 25 in Abusir (season 2003-2004)], p. 211.

masonry did not consist of the solid layers of stones. The inner core of the superstructure was built from limestone blocks of different quality and size, limestone chips mixed with sand and mud bricks. The solid huge limestone blocks were used for the construction of the outer and inner face of the superstructure's walls. The inner face in the corridor with the entrance in the eastern part of the superstructure of the tomb (L 25-east) was built from fine white limestone blocks (a). The blocks in the outer face of the wall of L 25 have coarse surfaces and they are not smoothed. In some parts the ruins of the superstructure are roughly up to 6 meters high.¹¹ The upper parts of the superstructure have collapsed. The massive blocks from the outer wall of L 25 now cover the area in the immediate vicinity of the superstructure on each side in such a way that they disable the full excavation of the whole superstructure along its outer walls down to the floor from the outside of the tomb. That is why some parts in north, east and south were left unexcavated (the area along the whole outer western wall of L 25 was not excavated too). The outer wall on the southern side at the place where L 25-east and L 25-west touch together was uncovered, while the joint of both parts of L 25 on the northern side was not explored.¹² The corners of the superstructure were found and they enabled rough measurement of the ground plan of the whole tomb. As can be seen from the ground plan (Fig. 1), it was found that the superstructure of the tomb has irregular shape consisting of six outer walls.

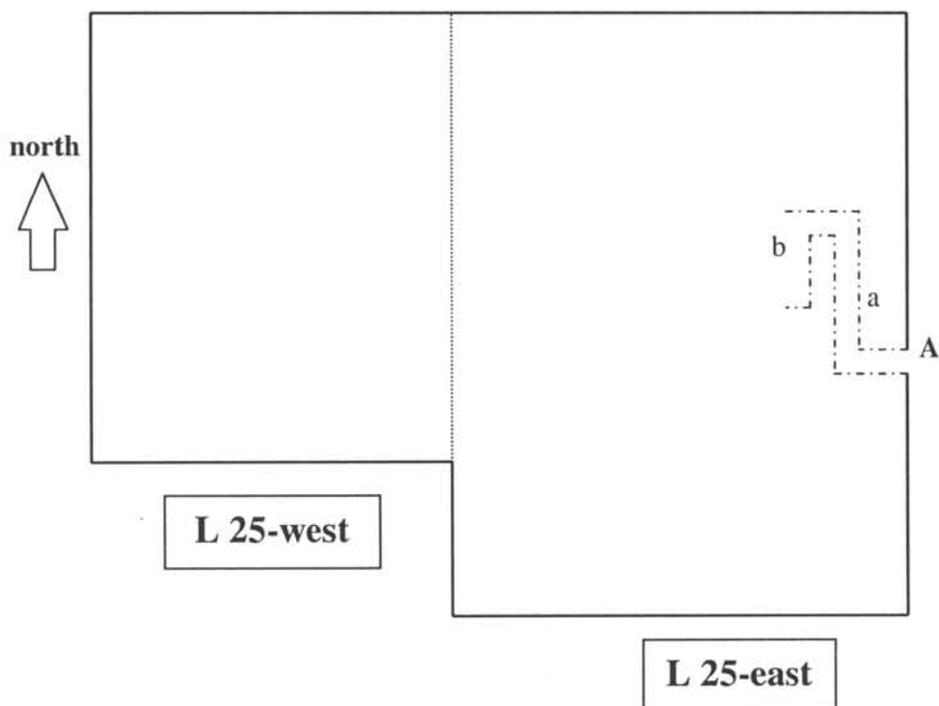
The entrance (A) into the superstructure of the tomb is situated in the eastern part of L 25-east (see Fig. 1). A little area was cleaned in front of it. The entrance was built in the eastern wall of the superstructure closer to its southeastern corner. After some short distance the corridor (a) running to the west turns in a right angle and further runs several metres northwards (indicated in Fig. 1 by the interrupted line). The corridor was roughly one metre wide. The floor of the corridor consisted of a thin layer of mud on the limestone blocks. This layer was irregularly preserved along its length from the entrance to the northernmost part of the corridor. The further course of the corridor could be identified thanks to the imprints of the missing layer of mud preserved on the surface of the limestone blocks under the floor. In front of the northern wall, the corridor turns shortly to the west and then to the south. Unfortunately, because of the huge destruction of the tomb in this part of the superstructure, it was not possible to reconstruct precisely the plan of the corridor here. It cannot be

¹¹ KREJČÍ, J. *Hrobový komplex Lepsius č. 25 v Abúsíru (sezóna 2003–2004)*. [The Tomb Complex Lepsius No. 25 in Abusir (season 2003-2004)], p. 211.

¹² According to J. Krejčí, the core of L 25-east was built at first and that of L 25-west later. KREJČÍ, J. *Pyramidové komplexy královen na abúsírském pohřebišti*. [Pyramid Complexes of the Queens on the Abusir Cemetery], p. 73.

excluded that the corridor continued deeper to the west into the core of L 25-east.

Figure 1 (The schematic ground plan of L 25 and its superstructure).



It is highly likely that this part of the tomb can be interpreted as a chapel serving originally for the cult of the deceased person (or persons) buried in the tomb. Because of the massive damage to the tomb, the plan of the chapel cannot be reconstructed. Its western part (b) where the false door stela (or stelae) can be expected is completely missing. In the corridor on the floor, some spots indicating blood were found in several places. Moreover, small fragments of papyrus inscribed with black ink come from the north-south part of the corridor as well as fragments and chips of an alabaster statue.

At the southwestern corner of L 25-west and at the northeastern corner of L 25-east small areas were uncovered where parts of structures built from mudbricks and limestone blocks were found as well as a few finds including

fragments of ceramics, flint knives and clay sealings. The relation of these structures and finds to L 25 is, however, not known.

A large number of human bones and several single burials from the later periods were found in the vicinity or within the superstructure of L 25.

No discovery of any entrance, passages or rooms within the superstructure of L 25-west was reported by the excavators. The superstructure of L 25-west is smaller than its eastern counterpart. It is roughly about 6 m shorter in the north-south as well as in the east-west direction. The northern walls of both parts lay in one line, while the southern ones do not. The slope of the outer walls of L 25 was not measured.¹³ In any case, it is much bigger than the standard slope of the true pyramids. In general, such a slope can be observed in case of mastabas or stepped pyramids.

The substructure (Figure 2)

On the northern side of the tomb two entrances leading individually into the substructure of L 25-east and L 25-west were identified. The former entrance (B) is situated not exactly in the middle of the north wall of L 25-east, but closer to its northeastern corner.¹⁴ The descending corridor (a), the course of which is indicated by the limestone blocks preserved under the floor, is aligned roughly in the north-south direction and in its lowermost level it runs further horizontally approximately 6 m to the south.

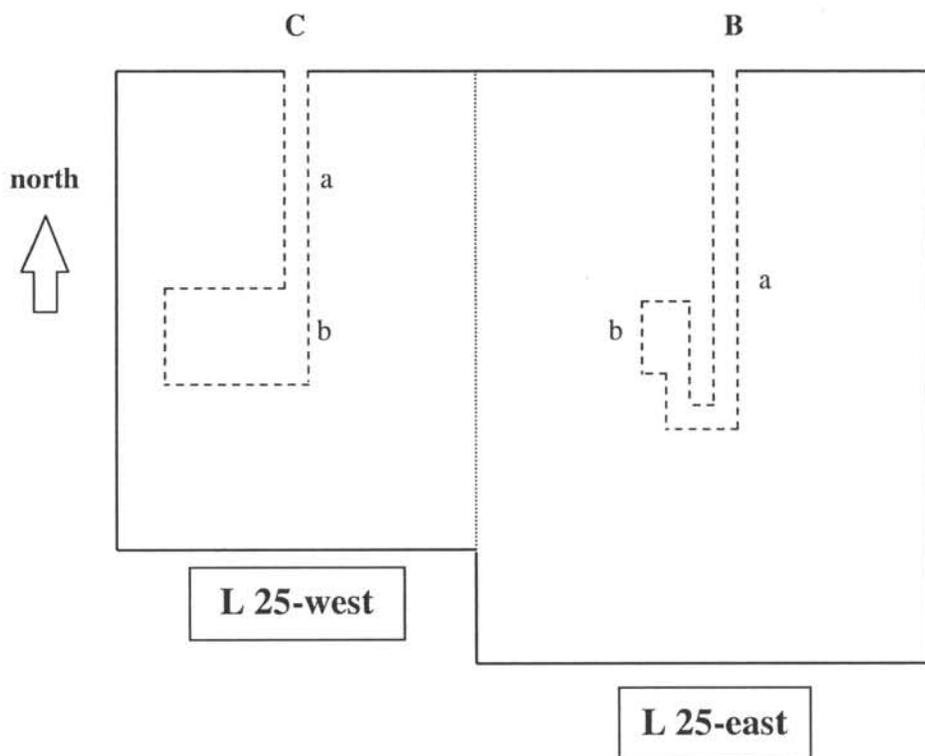
At the bottom the corridor turns twice at a right angle first to the west and then to the north, and finally it ends in the southeastern corner of the burial chamber (b). The burial chamber was aligned in the north-south direction and it was 4,5 m long and 2,7 m wide.¹⁵ Some of the huge white limestone blocks were preserved *in situ* in the lower layers of the inner walls in the horizontal corridor and in the burial chamber. The blocks separating the burial chamber in the west and the horizontal passage of the corridor in the east were also found. Some of the blocks in the horizontal corridor were not fully smoothed. This could indicate that the construction of this part of the tomb was not finished, however, discovery of remains of the burial equipment attests that the tomb was really used for the burial of the body.

¹³ According to Krejčí's estimation, the angle of the face of the core of L 25-east could be ca. 85 degrees. KREJČÍ, J. *Pyramidové komplexy královen na abúsírskem pohřebišti*. [Pyramid Complexes of the Queens on the Abusir Cemetery], p. 73.

¹⁴ KREJČÍ, J. *Hrobový komplex Lepsius č. 25 v Abúsíru (sezóna 2003-2004)*. [The Tomb Complex Lepsius No. 25 in Abusir (season 2003-2004)], p. 205, Fig. 3.

¹⁵ KREJČÍ, J. *Hrobový komplex Lepsius č. 25 v Abúsíru (sezóna 2003-2004)*. [The Tomb Complex Lepsius No. 25 in Abusir (season 2003-2004)], p. 204.

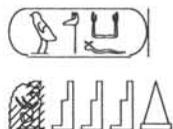
Figure 2 (The schematic ground plan of L 25 and its substructure).



In the burial chamber a modest part of the burial equipment was found, consisting of the fragments of the limestone canopic jars, miniature models of the stone vessels, small gilded wooden fragments probably from the furniture. In several places within the substructure of the tomb, parts of the mummified human body were found too. Their possible relation to the mummy of the owner of the tomb is questionable and it seems that the majority of mummified human pieces, if not all, may come from secondary burials. During the excavations of the subterranean part of the tomb a small piece of limestone of irregular shape was discovered. On its surface a hieratic inscription written in black ink in two lines was preserved (Figure 3).¹⁶ The text was written from right to left and it represents the name of the pyramid complex of the 5th dynasty king Userkaf *W^cb šwt Wšr-k3.f*.

¹⁶ Major part of the first sign in the lower line is missing.

Figure 3 (The transcription of the hieratic text with the name of the pyramid complex of Userkaf).



The entrance into L 25-west (C) is situated in the middle of its north wall. The descending corridor (a), indicated by the remains of the masonry and the blocks under the floor, was aligned roughly in the north-south direction.¹⁷ The central pit (b) built for the burial chamber was found very damaged and compared with that in L 25-east, unfortunately, without any solid limestone blocks found *in situ* there. In the layers of sand mixed with chips of stone a few pieces of limestone were discovered inscribed with several signs including that

used for the pyramid.¹⁸ The excavators transcribe the signs as , transliterate them *rš mrwj* and they read the inscription as “The Two Pyramids are Alert (Watchful)”.¹⁹ According to the excavators, this inscription provides the evidence for the original name of the tomb L 25.²⁰ At the bottom of the central pit remains of the burial equipment were found. They consist of miniature models of stone vessels and copper models of tools.

The Interpretation (Figure 4)

Since 2004, when the archaeological exploration of L 25 was officially completed, several publications have appeared, where the excavators interpret L 25 as double pyramid. Despite this fact, some doubts were expressed as for the double pyramid interpretation of L 25 too.²¹ In the recently updated book on the pyramids published by Verner in 2008, more precisely, in the chapter related to

¹⁷ See note 14.

¹⁸ KREJČÍ, J. *Pyramidové komplexy královen na abúsírském pohřebišti*. [Pyramid Complexes of the Queens on the Abusir Cemetery], Pl. X (up).

¹⁹ VERNER, M., BENEŠOVSKÁ, H. *Unearthing Ancient Egypt*, p. 43; KREJČÍ, J. *Pyramidové komplexy královen na abúsírském pohřebišti*. [Pyramid Complexes of the Queens on the Abusir Cemetery], p. 72 and KREJČÍ, J. *Hrobový komplex Lepsius č. 25 v Abúsíru (sezóna 2003-2004)*. [The Tomb Complex Lepsius No. 25 in Abusir (season 2003-2004)], p. 211.

²⁰ KREJČÍ, J., VERNER, M. *Die »Zwilingspyramide« L 25 in Abusir*. In Sokar, 2004, Nr. 8 p. 20; To Krejčí it was also undoubted evidence that L 25 was at least planned as the double pyramid, if not finished. KREJČÍ, J. *Pyramidové komplexy královen na abúsírském pohřebišti*. [Pyramid Complexes of the Queens on the Abusir Cemetery], p. 72.

²¹ KREJČÍ, J. *The tomb complex Lepsius No. 25 in Abusir*, p. 20ff.; KREJČÍ, J., VERNER, M. *Twinn pyramid complex 'Lepsius no. XXV' in Abusir*, pp. 159-165.

L 25, reference to the double pyramid still can be found.²² It seems evident that the physical data and the theory stand here against each other, and in other words, the archaeological evidence contradicts the written records and *vice versa*. Under such circumstances the known facts should be reevaluated in closer detail and re-discussed in the context of analogies in ancient Egyptian architecture and written records.

One of the important results of the excavations is, that they did not confirm the working hypothesis regarding the unusual orientation of the whole tomb complex with both the superstructure and the substructure of the tomb located in the east on the one hand and the mortuary temple situated in the west on the other (see above). In the place where the mortuary temple was expected (L 25-west) the scholars uncovered another subterranean system. However, no discovery of any remains indicating rooms within the superstructure of L 25-west was reported by the excavators.

As mentioned above, the results of the excavations led the excavators to the conclusion that L 25 represents a unique type of Egyptian tomb and they called it a double pyramid. Their opinion is primarily based on two facts: first, the architecture of the tomb contains two subterranean systems consisting of descending corridors aligned in the north-south direction and the burial chambers which imply that two persons²³ had to have been buried in L 25; second, the discovery of inscriptions containing two signs in the shape of the pyramid they interpreted as the original name of the tomb and possibly the evidence for the original shape of the tomb.²⁴ According to Krejčí, the substructure of L 25 reflects the characteristics typical for the pyramids built for Egyptian queens²⁵ and the occurrence of two signs for the pyramid in the discovered inscriptions might mean that the original plan was to build both tombs in the pyramidal shape, but the plan and consequently the superstructures were changed.

In 2004 the basic measurements of the whole tomb L 25 and its ground plan were known. Unlike the expressed opinions I would like to emphasize that it is evident that neither the whole tomb (L 25) nor either of its single parts (L 25-east and L 25-west) was built on the base in the shape of a square. In other words, the ground plan of L 25 and both its parts is rectangular with the longest

²² VERNER, M. *Pyramidy* [Pyramids], p. 252. Cf. VERNER, M., BENEŠOVSKÁ, H. *Unearthing Ancient Egypt*, p. 43.

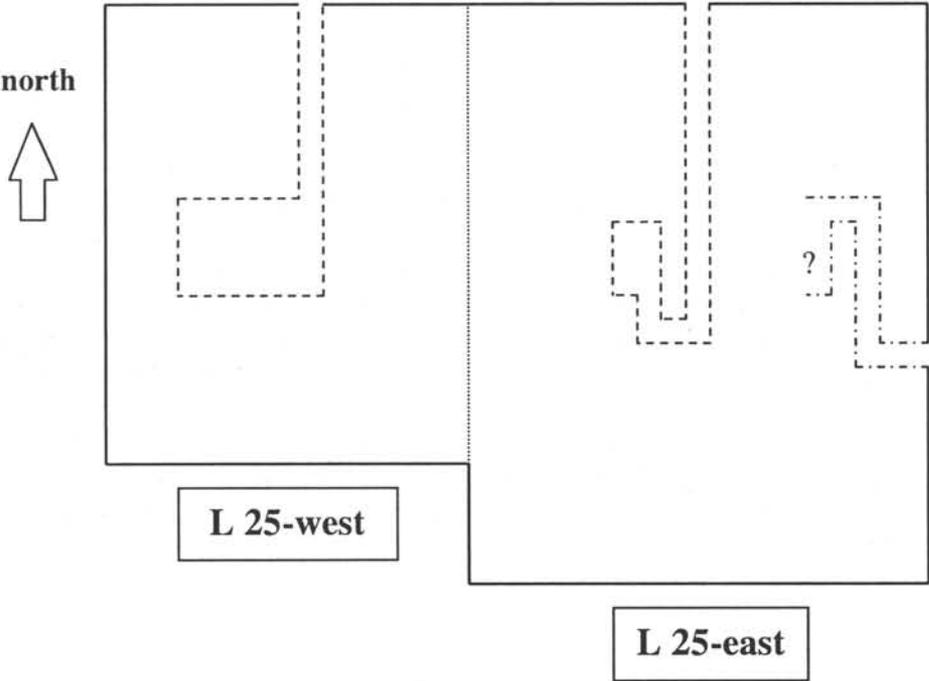
²³ Cf. KREJČÍ, J. *Pyramidové komplexy královen na abúsírském pohřebišti*. [Pyramid Complexes of the Queens on the Abusir Cemetery], pp. 74-76 and VERNER, M., BENEŠOVSKÁ, H. *Unearthing Ancient Egypt*, p. 43.

²⁴ KREJČÍ, J. *Pyramidové komplexy královen na abúsírském pohřebišti*. [Pyramid Complexes of the Queens on the Abusir Cemetery], p. 72.

²⁵ KREJČÍ, J. *Hrobový komplex Lepsius č. 25 v Abúsíru (sezóna 2003-2004)* [The Tomb Complex Lepsius No. 25 in Abusir (season 2003-2004)], p. 211.

axis of L 25-east and L 25-west aligned in the north-south direction (the longest axis of the whole L 25 is aligned in the east-west direction). The physical data here are in serious conflict with the basic definition of the pyramid from the architectural point of view in the context of the typology of ancient Egyptian tombs. As for the pyramid and its physical characteristics, in the Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt Verner writes that it (the pyramid) is "... a structure with a square base and four triangular sides sloping to a single apex ...".²⁶ This is the fundamental definition of the true pyramid – the standard royal tomb of the Old Kingdom Period in Egypt. As far as I know there is only one pyramid, the ground plan of which is not the square.

Figure 4 (The schematic ground plan of L 25 and its superstructure and substructure).



This exception is the oldest Egyptian pyramid, the Step Pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara, one of the milestones in the development of the ancient Egyptian royal

²⁶ VERNER, M. Pyramid, p. 87

tomb.²⁷ There is, however, another and more important physical feature which can be observed in the case of L 25 and which is in evident conflict with the double pyramid interpretation of L 25. It is the occurrence of the cult chapel, or more precisely its remains, identified in the eastern part of the tomb.

In this connection it should be emphasized that in Old Kingdom pyramids we never observe the cult chapel built within the body of the pyramid. These two physical features of L 25 discovered during the excavations, that is, the rectangular and not square ground plan as well as the presence of the cult chapel within the superstructure of the tomb, form very strong convincing physical evidence against the interpretation of L 25 as double pyramids (see Figure 4).

The presence of the cult chapel within the superstructure is typical for the type of Old Kingdom non-royal tombs known as mastabas. In the eastern part of the mastaba the cult chapel with the entrance has gradually evolved in the outer wall of the tomb.²⁸ Afterwards, the chapel became more and more complex and its rooms and corridors increased in number, size and complexity of their decoration in the later period of tomb development. In general, the entrance into the chapel inside the superstructure of the mastaba could be built from the north, east or south. The west wall of the offering chapel inside the mastaba was reserved regularly for the false door stela. As for the substructure, the majority of mastabas have the entrance leading into the substructure built in the form of a shaft, at the bottom of which could be a short passage connecting the shaft itself with the burial chamber. However, the vertical shaft was not the only way the burial chamber could be reached. Alternative ways include the staircase²⁹ and descending corridor more or less precisely aligned in the east-west³⁰ or north-south direction.³¹ In principal, the staircase and descending corridor compared with the shafts were not so frequent in the Old Kingdom mastabas, but they did occur.

Sometimes in the architecture of some Old Kingdom mastabas built, especially, for high officials we observe certain peculiar patterns usually typical for the architecture of the royal pyramid complexes. Such patterns can have the form of:

²⁷ STADELMANN, R. *Die ägyptischen Pyramiden*, p. 35ff.

²⁸ WEEKS, K. R. *Tombs*, p. 421.

²⁹ JÁNOSI, P. *Die Gräberwelt der Pyramidenzeit*, p. 11 (Abb. 9), p. 13 (Abb. 10), p. 14 (Abb. 11), p. 19 (Abb. 15), p. 23 (Abb. 18), 31 (Abb. 25).

³⁰ BORCHARDT, L. *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Ne-user-re*, pp. 109-116, Bl. 20, pp. 117-126, Bl. 22.

³¹ JÁNOSI, P. *Die Gräberwelt der Pyramidenzeit*, p. 102 (Abb. 81), p. 108 (Abb. 86), p. 116 (Abb. 94); BÁRTA, M. *České národní egyptologické centrum – projekt jižní Abúsír 2002* [The Czech National Centre of Egyptology – Project Abusir South 2002], p. 225, obr. 4.

- the above mentioned descending corridor built in the north-south direction leading into the burial chamber,
- the presence of a pit or room in the shape of a boat nearby or inside the superstructure,³²
- the construction of the roof of the burial chamber in the shape of the letter “V” turned up side down,³³
- the occurrence of a pillared hall or courtyard in the superstructure,³⁴ etc.

L 25 represents a tomb in which the first of the above mentioned patterns can be observed, namely, in the north-south aligned descending corridor in each of the two parts of the tomb.

In an attempt to argue in favour of the double pyramid interpretation of L 25 one can say that the slope of the outer walls can indicate the slope of a step pyramid. As mentioned above, in the context of the physical characteristics of the Old Kingdom pyramids, the angle bigger than 60 degrees can be observed only in the slope of the individual layers or steps of step pyramids. However, the only step pyramid with a rectangular base is the Step Pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara. The later step pyramids are built on the base, the ground plan of which is the square,³⁵ and this is not what we observe in the case of L 25. Therefore, according to the slope of its outer walls L 25 cannot be associated with the later step pyramids either.

The epigraphic inscriptions and hieroglyphic texts represent another category of records in this discussion. They show clearly that it is not always possible to use the written records related to the tomb, or more precisely to the name of the tomb, to describe and determine the physical shape of the same tomb without critical analysis and interpretation of all the data available. As we shall see, the direct link between the texts on the one hand and the physical reality on the other may not always be uniform. The following list consists of several types of epigraphic and palaeographic records containing firstly the name of the royal tomb written with the sign for the pyramid despite the fact

³² JÁNOSI, P. *Die Gräberwelt der Pyramidenzeit*, p. 114 (Abb. 92).

³³ JÁNOSI, P. *Die Gräberwelt der Pyramidenzeit*, p. 116 (Abb. 94).

³⁴ JÁNOSI, P. *Die Gräberwelt der Pyramidenzeit*, p. 85 (Abb. 67), p. 102 (Abb. 81), p. 107 (Abb. 85), p. 111 (Abb. 90), p. 114 (Abb. 92), p. 116 (94).

³⁵ REISNER, G. *Mycerinus. The Temples of the Third Pyramid at Giza*, pp. 55-68, Pl. 73, Plan VII; JÁNOSI, P. *Die Pyramidenanlagen der Königinnen*, pp. 82-87.

that evidently the physical shape of the same tomb does not reflect the shape of the pyramid, and secondly the documents containing phrases with the sign for the pyramid written twice side by side.

1/ The Palermo Stone³⁶

In the upper part of the recto side of the Palermo Stone dated to the 5th dynasty, the name of the royal tomb of the 4th dynasty king Shepseskaf



engraved into the surface can be found. The name of the tomb is written with the sign for the pyramid³⁷ and this fact clearly contradicts the physical data, because the tomb of Shepseskaf in Saqqara evidently was not built in the shape of a pyramid.³⁸ In this case we see that the physical shape of the tomb and the written record are not in accordance. It should be said, however, that there are inscriptions where the sign for the pyramid in the name of the tomb of Shepseskaf is replaced by another one of

quite different shape  with the meaning coffin or sarcophagus.³⁹

2/ The false door of Ankhmare⁴⁰

The limestone false door of the official named Ankhmare found in his tomb in Saqqara (D 40)⁴¹ was decorated with the standard hieroglyphic inscriptions including his titles. One of them can be found in the uppermost part of the third column of the outer jamb on the right side of the false door. Ankhmare was the priest in the mortuary cult complex of the 5th dynasty King Neferefre, the name

of which in the form  can be found at the mentioned place of the false door.⁴² The royal tomb of king Neferefre at Abusir, also known as the "Unfinished Pyramid", was undoubtedly originally planned and built as a pyramid, but evidently never finished in this shape.⁴³

³⁶ SCHÄFER, H. *Ein Bruchstück altägyptischer Annalen*, pp. 32-33, Pl. 2.

³⁷ The occurrence of this sign can be verified through the photography of the text in Schäfer's publication.

³⁸ JÉQUIER, G. *Le mastabat faraoun*, Le Caire 1980, p. 1, Fig. 1 and 9, Fig 2.

³⁹ MÁLEK, J. B. *Porter, R. Moss, Topographical Bibliography*, vol. III, part 2, fasc. 3, p. 936.

⁴⁰ MARIETTE, A. *Les mastabas de l'ancien empire*, pp. 283-284.

⁴¹ MÁLEK, J. B. *Porter, R. Moss, Topographical Bibliography*, vol. III, part 2, fasc. 1, p. 455.

⁴² The text in Mariette's publication is written in the autographic version.

⁴³ VERNER, M. *The Pyramid Complex of Raneferef. The Archaeology. Abusir IX*, p. XVI and pp. 100-101.

3/ Fragment of the inscription⁴⁴

A fragment coming from the tomb's decoration with the epigraphic inscription found in the tomb of Nimaatsed in Saqqara (D 56)⁴⁵ contains the name of the royal tomb of King Neferefre in the title of Nimaatsed who served as the priest in Neferefre's mortuary cult complex. The name of Neferefre's tomb in this hieroglyphic inscription⁴⁶ in the standard form

 is written with the sign for the pyramid.

4/ The sealings⁴⁷

In the recently published results of the archaeological research of the royal tomb of King Neferefre at Abusir one can find drawings of the hieroglyphic texts imprinted on the sealings found during the excavations. They are mostly incomplete and only partly preserved. Some of the inscriptions contain the

name of the cult complex of Neferefre . What is clearly evident also in this case is the fact that the name of the tomb is written with the sign for the pyramid, which is fully or partly attested in the imprinted hieroglyphic inscription.

5/ The graffito⁴⁸

In the pit built for the burial chamber of the royal tomb of Neferefre a cursive inscription written in red ink was found. This inscription⁴⁹

 is the cursive form of the name of the tomb. According to the shape of last sign at the end of the original cursive inscription one can say that this sign was a pyramid.

6/ The Papyri⁵⁰

⁴⁴ MARIETTE, A. *Les mastabas de l'ancien empire*, p. 329.

⁴⁵ MÁLEK, J. B. *Porter, R. Moss, Topographical Bibliography*, vol. III, part 2, fasc. 2, pp. 584-585.

⁴⁶ The text in Mariette's publication is written in the autographic version.

⁴⁷ VERNER, M. *The Pyramid Complex of Raneferef. The Archaeology. Abusir IX*, pp. 213/16A, 257/204, 257/205, 257/206, 258/207, 265/243, 266/244, 266/245, 266/246. The texts are available mostly in the autographic version (the b&w photo of the text on the sealing no. 16 can be found in Pl. V).

⁴⁸ VERNER, M. *The Pyramid Complex of Raneferef. The Archaeology. Abusir IX*, p. 189.

⁴⁹ The text is available in the autographic version only.

⁵⁰ VERNER, M. *The Pyramid Complex of Raneferef. The Papyrus Archive. Abusir X*, Pls. 18, 19, 22/A, K, P, 25/A, B, C, 62/A. The texts are available in the photocopies.

One of the most important discoveries made during the excavations of the mortuary cult complex of King Neferefre at Abusir was discovery of a papyrus archive, or more precisely, its remains. The pieces of papyri cited here contain the completely or partly preserved name of the royal tomb of King Neferefre



written in hieratic, and as can be seen in the original hieratic text as well as its hieroglyphic transcription, the name contains the sign for the pyramid again.

7/ The decree of Pepy I⁵¹

This important historical document is very rare evidence of an epigraphic inscription⁵² containing two signs written side by side in the hieroglyphic text. The document as such is the protective decree of Pepy I, a king of the sixth dynasty. It was written on a limestone plate of rectangular shape found at Dahshur.⁵³ The two pyramids occur in this decree in two different contexts. First, it is the name of the pyramid or two pyramids of Sneferu



built at Dahshur,⁵⁴ and second, it is the name of

the pyramid town in the form  located in the same geographical area. Both pyramids in the latter inscription are very likely related to their physical counterparts, that is the Bent pyramid and the Red pyramid. The precise

interpretation of  is not quite clear, because theoretically it could mean either the Bent pyramid⁵⁵ alone or the Bent pyramid and the Red pyramid together. In case of the former interpretation, the two pyramids in the inscription would relate physically to one tomb. The superstructure of the Bent pyramid was built with two slopes, but on one base in the shape of the square. The latter interpretation generally accepted by Egyptologists includes two different tombs with their superstructures separately, in other words the Bent pyramid and the Red pyramid, and this interpretation

⁵¹ GOEDICKE, H. *Königliche Dokumente aus dem Alten Reich*, pp. 55-77, Fig. 5.

⁵² The photocopy of the inscription is available in BORCHARDT, L. *Ein Königerlaß aus Dahschur*. In ZÄS, 1905, Bd. 42, Pls. 1-2.

⁵³ BORCHARDT, L. *Ein Königerlaß aus Dahschur*. In ZÄS, 1905, Bd. 42, pp. 1-11.

⁵⁴ The title "Overseer of the two pyramids of Sneferu" can be found, for example, among the titles held by the official whose name was Duare, see MÁLEK, J. B. *Porter, R. Moss, Topographical Bibliography*, vol. III, part 2, fasc. 3, p. 894.

⁵⁵ This pyramid has two slopes. The angle of the slope in the lower part of the pyramid is about 54 degrees and in the upper part it is about 43 degrees. LEHNER, M. *The Complete Pyramids*, p. 102.

seems more likely.⁵⁶ In context of the name of the pyramids of Sneferu at Dahshur it is important to say that there are inscriptions with the name of the pyramid of Sneferu, in which only one sign for the pyramid accompanied by the adjective “southern” and/or “foremost” was used.⁵⁷ In any case, it seems more likely that the occurrence of the two signs for the pyramid indicates two different pyramidal structures rather than only one structure built in an unusual physical shape.

In the context of the discovery of the inscriptions with two signs for the pyramid in L 25, it sounds as interesting the information reported by M. Verner that „the name of the double pyramid” was also found during the archaeological excavation of tomb L 24 (Lepsius no. XXIV) situated in close vicinity to the north of L 25.⁵⁸ Unfortunately, no detailed information is available in the papers published in the context of this inscription. It should be said that unlike L 25 the structure known as L 24 was archaeologically confirmed to be a pyramid.⁵⁹

Conclusions

The incomplete archaeological research of the tomb L 25 enables us to formulate only preliminary conclusions. In the light of the evidence presented above, the interpretation of this tomb as a double pyramid does not sound convincing. The arguments can be divided into two groups, first, the physical evidence, and second, the written records.

First, the physical characteristics of L 25 should be interpreted contextually with regard to the contemporary analogies and the valid standard typology of ancient Egyptian tombs. The only relevant physical argument expressed by the excavators in their publications cited here in favour of the pyramid interpretation of L 25 is the occurrence of the descending corridor aligned in the north-south direction in L 25-east and L 25-west. This study, however, convincingly shows that there are contemporary non-royal tombs not only with the descending corridor of this orientation – a phenomenon typical for the pyramids – but also with other architectural patterns distinctive for the Old Kingdom royal pyramid complex. Such architectural patterns were rare but they

⁵⁶ GOEDICKE, H. *Königliche Dokumente aus dem Alten Reich*, p. 55 and 59; HELCK, W. *Pyramidennamen und Namen von königlichen Grabanlagen*, col. 5.

⁵⁷ MÁLEK, J. B. Porter, R. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography*, vol. III, part 2, fasc. 3, p. 894 and p. 936. Cf. MÁLEK, J. B. Porter, R. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography*, vol. III, part 2, fasc. 3, p. 879 and 936. FAKHRY, A. *The Monuments of Sneferu at Dahshur*, pp. 4-8, Fig. 283, Pls. XXXVIII-XXXIX.

⁵⁸ VERNER, M., BENEŠOVSKÁ, H. *Unearthing Ancient Egypt*, p. 43. This information is, however, nowhere attested in Krejčí's publications cited here.

⁵⁹ KREJČÍ, J. *Pyramidové komplexy královen na abúsrském pohřebišti*. [Pyramid Complexes of the Queens on the Abusir Cemetery], pp. 68-70.

can be physically attested in the architecture of the Old Kingdom non-royal tombs, more precisely, the mastabas. I would like to point out that the physical characteristics of the tomb L 25 as a whole do not correspond at all to the standard definition of a pyramid. My reasoning for this conclusion is that the ground plan of this tomb is not square, and what is more important in the context of the archaeological investigation of L 25, that there is no Old Kingdom pyramid known to me with the entrance and cult chapel built within the body of the superstructure – something what we do observe in the case of L 25. These characteristics of L 25 involving above all the spatial location of the cult chapel are characteristics typical of the superstructures of the Old Kingdom non-royal tombs known as mastabas. That is why, in my opinion, the preliminary results of the archaeological excavation and physical characteristics of L 25 in the present state of our knowledge do not support the double pyramid interpretation of this tomb, but on the contrary, they can be used as convincing physical evidence against this interpretation. Probably the absence of archaeological analogies to the situation observed in the case of L 25 led the excavators to the formulation of the uniqueness of the tomb, or more precisely, to the introduction of a new type of ancient Egyptian tomb of the Old Kingdom period – the double pyramid. However, no precise definition and characteristics of such a type of tomb were formulated anywhere.

Second, another argument used by the excavators in favour of the double pyramid interpretation of L 25 was based on the discovery of the inscription

transcribed as  and translated as “The Two Pyramids are Alert (Watchful)” (see above). Among the epigraphic and palaeographic inscriptions I have found the texts, in which the sign for the pyramid was used in the name of the tomb of Shepseskaf and Neferefre, although its physical shape does not agree with the written records at all. In other words, these tombs were without any doubts not built in the shape of the pyramid despite the fact that the inscriptions contain the sign for the pyramid in their name. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the most probable explanation of the occurrence of the two pyramids in the inscriptions related to the king Sneferu is, that they represent both pyramids of Sneferu built at Dahshur and not only one of them because of its unusual shape with two slopes. Using this analogy it can be said that the two pyramids occurring in the inscription from L 25 relate to two physically different tombs. The question arises, which tombs it could have been. The simple answer could be L 25-east and L 25-west,⁶⁰ and this is the core of this contradiction (inscriptions versus archaeological data).

⁶⁰ In this context, Verner’s information related to the discovery of the same inscription during the excavations of L 24 could be theoretically relevant for some alternative explanations.

If the inscriptions with two pyramids found in L 25 really represent the name of this tomb the contradiction between the physical evidence and the text can be eliminated in such a way that we accept the idea that it was, in principal, possible to use the sign for the pyramid to write the name of a tomb with a superstructure not built in this shape. This is what we really observe in case of the tomb of Shepseskaf and Neferefre (see above). If we accept such a solution, it is not necessary to introduce a new type of ancient Egyptian tomb – the double pyramid at all.

The method of construction of L 25 is similar to that used in case of the tombs situated in the immediate vicinity to the east of the pyramid and its mortuary temple of King Niuserre excavated by L. Borchardt.⁶¹ These are Old Kingdom tombs built for the officials Userkafankh, Tepemankh and others. There is a consensus among the scholars that from the spatial distribution of those tombs and with regard for the archaeological situation in that area it is clear, that those tombs are older than the pyramid of Niuserre, since the ground plan of the mortuary temple of Niuserre must have been adapted because of the existence of this group of tombs there.⁶²

Despite the discussion and conclusions expressed in this paper it should be emphasized again that the tomb L 25 was not excavated completely and for objective reasons some places were left unexcavated. Perhaps, the similarities between the construction of L 25 and that of the tombs situated near the pyramid complex of Niuserre are not accidental. The same relates to the existence of the mud brick structures built outside the outer walls of L 25 (northeastern and southwestern corners), the tomb of Userkafankh and others. Could these facts indicate the same date for the construction of L 25 and the tomb of Userkafankh and others? Further detailed research into L 25 in the future, both archaeological and historical, could help us to answer this question and a number of others as well.

⁶¹ Cf. BORCHARDT, L. *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Ne-user-re*, pp. 25-33, pp. 109-134.

⁶² BORCHARDT, L. *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Ne-user-re*, p. 26; STADELMANN, R. *Die ägyptischen Pyramiden*, p. 176; LEHNER, M. *The Complete Pyramids*, p. 149.

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