

# An intact Eleventh Dynasty burial in Dra Abu el-Naga

A Spanish–Egyptian mission has been working at the rock-cut Theban tomb-chapel of Djehuty since January 2002. **José M Galán** reports on the discovery of an earlier burial, found beneath the courtyard of the Eighteenth Dynasty tomb.

The funerary monument (TT 11) of Djehuty, Overseer of the Treasury and Overseer of Works under Hatshepsut-Tuthmosis III, is located in the foothill of the central area of Dra Abu el-Naga, at the northern end of the Theban necropolis. The courtyard of the monument lay beneath more than five metres of rubble which included dismembered human remains and fragmentary objects from funerary equipment dating from the Seventeenth Dynasty onwards. This material came from nearby burials and was found all mixed up in the process of the excavation (see *EA* 25, 38–40).

When Djehuty's courtyard was finally revealed in its entirety in February 2006 it proved to be the longest one so far recorded of its time period, measuring 34.0m x 7.6m. The floor of the court had been cut into the bedrock to a distance of 12m from the façade of the rock-cut chapel, and from there to the mud-brick pylon-entrance an artificial terrace had been built with limestone chips and sand. The extension of the courtyard floor ran over and covered earlier burials in the necropolis, hiding

and protecting them, as had happened to earlier tombs when the causeway of Hatshepsut's funerary temple was built along the valley of Deir el-Bahari.

A trench was excavated in the middle of the court in 2007 and two Eleventh Dynasty coffins were brought to light 20m away from the façade and resting 1.5m below the court's floor. They were lying on the bedrock, without any kind of protection above them. The better-preserved one, undecorated, belonged to an elderly woman who was lying on her right side, facing east, and only adorned by a faience necklace.

The following season, at the same distance from the façade and at the same depth, but this time almost under Djehuty's south-west mud-brick sidewall, an undisturbed and well-preserved early Eleventh Dynasty burial was discovered. A small, rough recess in the bedrock had been used as a shelter and a wooden coffin had been pushed, sideways, inside. As excavation progressed, it was realised that the rock recess was actually the upper part of the collapsed entrance to an older rock-cut tomb



*The early Eleventh Dynasty coffin in a recess below the floor of the courtyard of the tomb of Djehuty. A linen bandage is still attached to the coffin*



Above: the Marl C clay globular jar which had been placed beside the coffin

Left: a group of five broken arrows placed near the coffin's head-end. Feathers are still attached to the shafts of three of them

hewn deeper in the bedrock, its rock-floor being 3.5m below the floor of Djehuty's court, i.e. that the burial was reusing part of an even earlier tomb which was already, by the Eleventh Dynasty, filled with rubble.

Before the coffin was pushed in, a very fine Marl C clay globular jar was deposited touching the inner wall. The room was then filled with rubble which almost covered the coffin. Finally, near the coffin's head-end, a group of five arrows, each intentionally broken in two, was left. The entrance to the recess, located to the east, was then closed with large stones, and a clay offering-tray was left right outside the interment.

The coffin, which measured 195cm x 44cm x 46cm and was made of boards 7-8cm thick, was found in a fairly good condition. Once the boards had been assembled, the exterior face was whitewashed and then a linear sequence of polychrome hieroglyphs was written along the four sides of the box and the lid, after tracing in black the frame lines of the inscription and sketching some of the signs. Finally, a coat of reddish brown paint was applied all over the surface, except for the white horizontal band

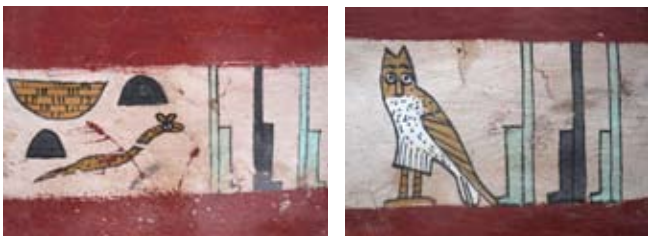
with the colourful inscription and a square at the head of the eastern side panel where two *udjat*-eyes were painted in black. The closest parallel is to be found in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and it is said to come from Farshut (it was bought in Qena), north of Thebes. These two 'red' coffins probably date to the early part of the Eleventh Dynasty.

The polychrome hieroglyphic signs have a naïf style typical of the First Intermediate Period. They are well spaced out, outlined in black, and use six different colours: yellow/gold, light blue, dark blue, red/brown, white and black. Some signs do not have a consistent colour, but they vary between two or three colours or a combination of colours to avoid monotony. This is particularly so when the same sign is written more than once in a short space or consecutively, as shown by *st*-signs. One particular feature is the horned-viper-sign for the letter *f* which consistently has its neck cut off; a scribal trick (or artistic visual play) supposedly meant to neutralize the negative potentiality of the animal depicted.

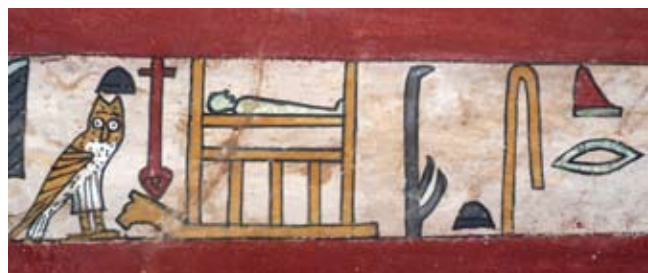
The text uses the standard offering formulae for coffins in the Eleventh Dynasty. It is worth pointing out the unusual semantic determinative with which the name of Anubis, Lord of Sepa, is written on the lid: a human figure seated on the ground, completely painted in red, wearing a conical tall crown (similar to the Upper Egyptian white crown) and holding a flail. The choice of such a determinative could be taken as a scribal error, but since Osiris and Khentymentiu mentioned on the eastern side panel have the same very specific determinative, identical to the one used for Anubis on the western side panel, it seems that the distinctive anthropomorphic figure

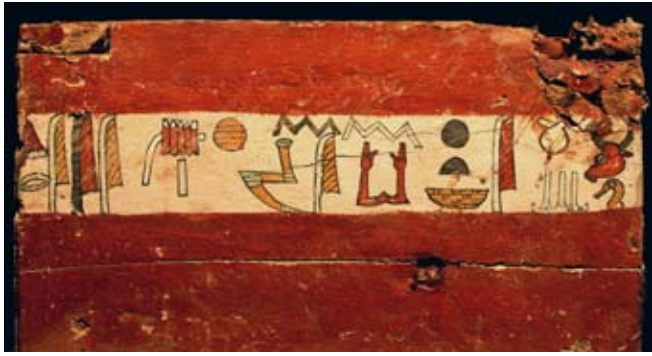
of Anubis, Lord of Sepa, on the lid has to be taken as

Detail with the unusual determinative for the name of Anubis



Details of the hieroglyphic texts. The horned-viper-sign consistently has its head cut off. The colours of some of the signs alternate to avoid monotony





Foot-end of the coffin with, at the left-hand end, what is probably the name of the owner, *Iqer*.



The head-end of the coffin with the start of the offering formula and the name of the goddess *Hathor*

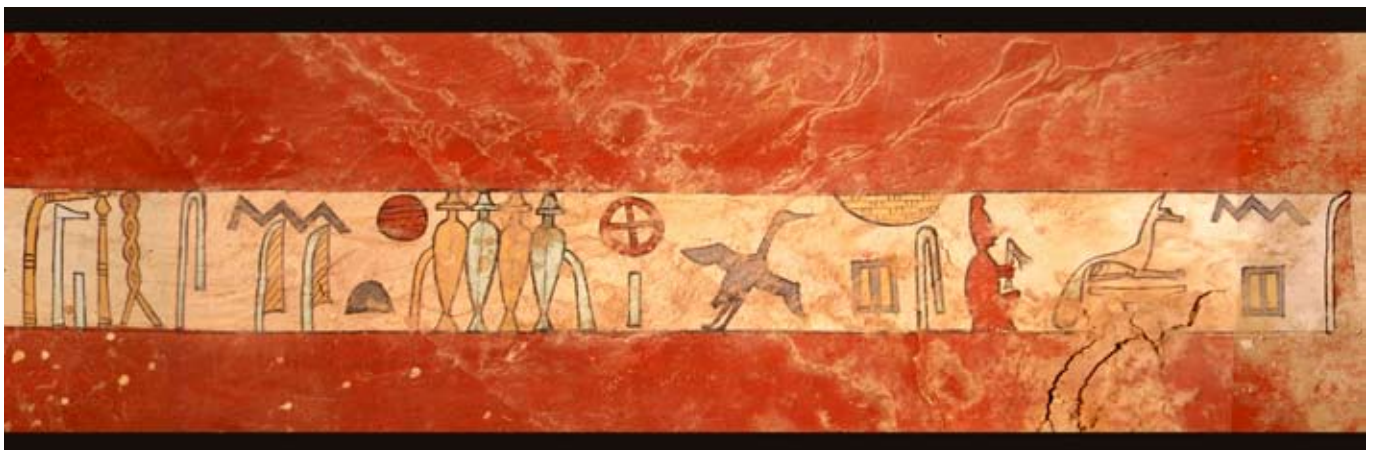
intentional. The head-end has one of the earlier references to Hathor as guarantor of a royal funerary prerogative in the Theban necropolis.

The name of the owner, *Iqer*, is written only once, at the foot-end, with no semantic determinative and just preceded by the epithet 'the venerated one'. This prompts some doubts about *Iqer* actually being the owner's name. If it is not a name but an epithet, the 'Excellent one', could have played the function of an anthroponym or nickname.

Inside the coffin the body lay on its left side, facing east. Rainwater had run into the recess and seeped into the coffin, and since it was slightly tilted towards the head-end the water damaged this part of the coffin, the mummy wrappings and the cartonnage mask. The mask covered the upper part of the body down to the chest and, as found, did not fit over the head properly, but protruded well

beyond the cranium, favouring the collapse of the right side of the head inward upon itself. The mask was made of two layers of plastered linen, with a third unplastered one inbetween. Only the mask's head and the upper part of its painted collar were visible when found, as the rest of the wrapped body was covered with a coarse linen shroud.

Examination of the body showed that *Iqer* was about 1.57m tall, and in his late thirties when he died. His facial features were typically Nubian: low nasal bridge, round nasal aperture, and marked alveolar prognathism (protrusion of the upper jaw and teeth), resulting in a pronounced overbite. *Iqer* must have suffered from a blow when he was young, as the arch of the left cheekbone had been bent inward and torn at its upper margin, then healed, albeit with deformity, resulting in a left-right asymmetry of his whole face. He must also have suffered from spinal discomfort and instability, as he had



Detail of the inscription on the lid of the coffin. At the right-hand end is the name of the god *Anubis* which has an unusual determinative. The name is followed by his title 'Lord of *Sepa*'



Detail of the inscription on the west side of the coffin. Here the name of *Anubis* (left-hand end) has the more usual 'seated god' determinative



*The upper part of the mummy with bows and staves*

a degenerative joint disease in the fifth lumbar vertebra. Iqer's body had almost no flesh preserved, and there was no indication of any remaining internal organs, apart from the brain which had not been removed. The body showed only a few indications that natron and resins had been used for its treatment after death.

Above the body there were two curved staves and a bow and below it there was a second bow, and two more staves (one of them almost disintegrated). All of them had been tied to the legs by a linen band knotted at the front, below the knees. The bows were each made from a single piece of wood, circular in section, and measuring 152-162cm, one of them being even taller than its owner. The bows still have the twisted gut cord tied to both tips. The staves measure 105-111cm, and are slightly curved near the top-end.

Iqer has no titles on his coffin, but the Nubian physical characteristics and the fact that he was buried with five arrows, two bows and four curved staves might indicate a military association during his lifetime. It is true that bows were also used for hunting game in the desert edge,



*Detail of the cartonnage mummy mask*

and that they were regarded as a sign of social status and for this reason men represented themselves on stelae with bows and arrows, which were also frequently included in funerary equipment. Nevertheless, since armed conflicts seemed to have been quite common at the beginning of the Eleventh Dynasty, it seems likely that Iqer may have been at some point in his life a middle-class soldier under one of the Theban leaders or kings.

The preservation of Eleventh Dynasty burials at Dra Abu el-Naga, including that of Iqer, is thanks to their location in the necropolis where they were overbuilt and thus buried by the construction of the Eighteenth Dynasty tombs. The burial of Iqer, hidden under Djehuty's courtyard, was protected from tomb robbers and reached us undisturbed.

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*The mummy inside the coffin, with two bows and four staves on top. In the background is a relief scene on the south-west side-wall of Djehuty's courtyard, near the façade*