GIZA PLATEAU MAPPING PROJECT

MARK LEHNER | ANCIENT EGYPT RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

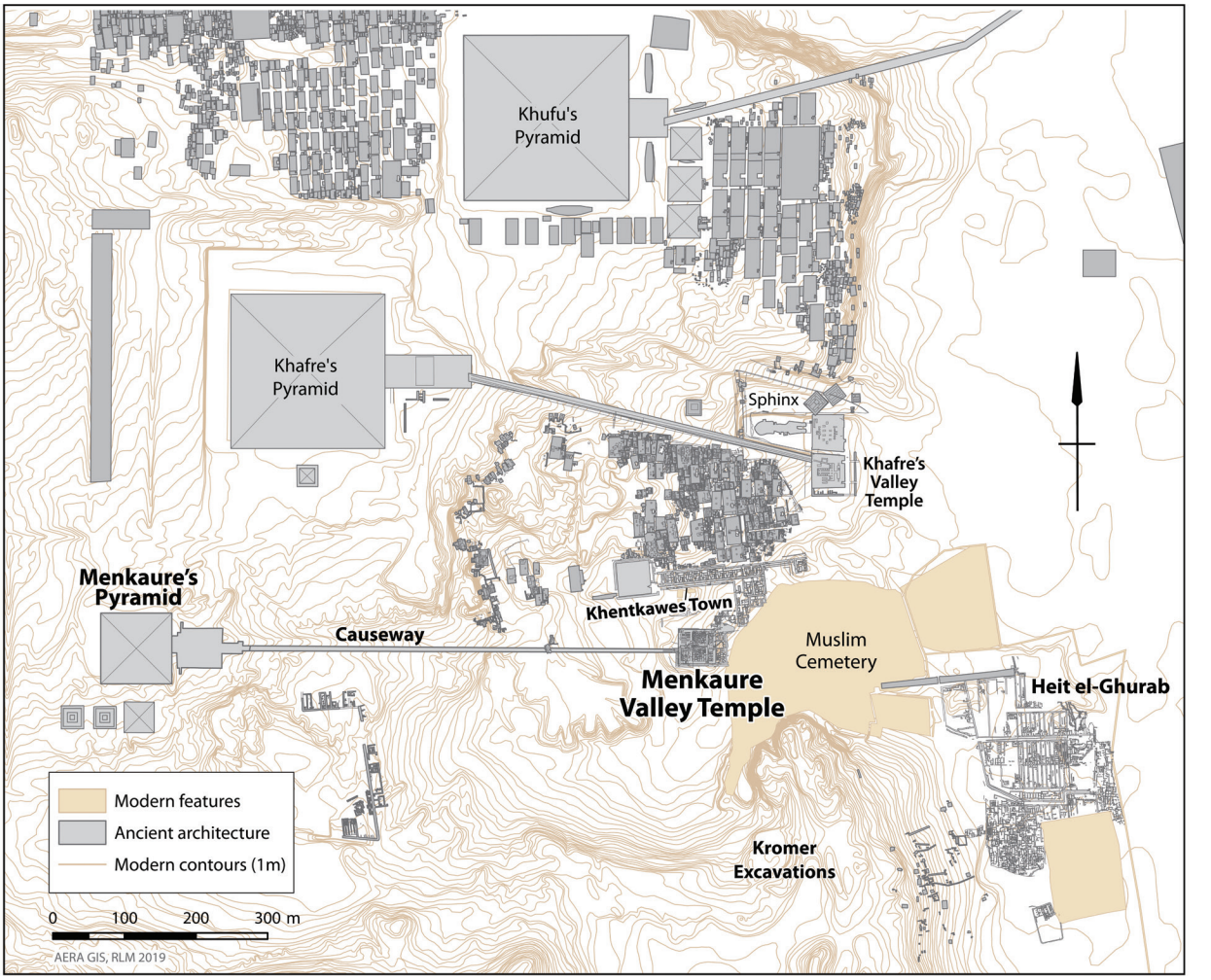
During field season 2019 (February 3–April 11), Ancient Egypt Research Associates (AERA) returned to the Menkaure Valley Temple (figs. 1–2), where George Reisner excavated on behalf of Harvard University and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, between 1908 and 1910, and where we conducted fieldwork in 2008, 2011, and 2012.

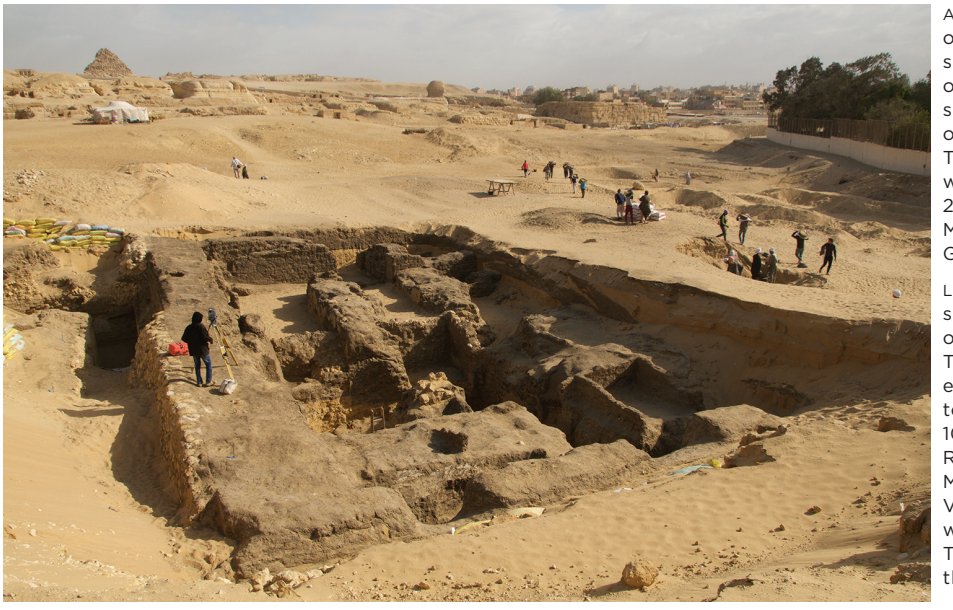
Our aims this season were to re-excavate and document the MVT with the systematic MoLAS-derived method,[1] which we have honed for AERA's overall archaeology program at Giza, because, like the Khentkawes Town (KKT), the MVT and its occupation are a major component of the context of our main site, the Heit el-Ghurab (HeG), in the overall settlement archaeology of the Giza Plateau. Our interest includes chronology, the development of settlement and its structures, the transfer of people through these sites, and concomitant changes in material culture. We hypothesize that as people abandoned the HeG, they settled near the KKT and MVT, and perhaps also near the valley temples of Khafre, nearby, and Khufu, some distance to the northeast. The nature of the sites changed from infrastructures for large royal works to service centers for the cults of the deceased kings.

We had planned to focus on the western part of the MVT, so as to avoid the complexities of the occupation in the court. We wanted to reserve re-excavation of the court settlement for future seasons. We also wanted to avoid retrieving large quantitates of material culture, so as to allow the team in the field lab to catch up processing the backlogged material from last season's (2018) excavation of the Kromer site, a massive dump of Fourth Dynasty settlement waste and demolition debris.[2] Ironically, we did retrieve large quantities of material culture this season in the MVT from Reisner's original excavation of the southern MVT court, because he dumped spoil from this excavation, which was still rich in material culture, back into the western parts of the temple. For this reason, we were able to examine only the southwestern quadrant. Also, the somewhat unexpected depth and volume of his backfill, and the size of a deep pit that Reisner called "Thieves' Hole" in this quadrant, made it tractable to clear and document only the southwestern quarter of the temple.

I directed the overall program of season 2019. Daniel Jones supervised excavation and recording on site, assisted by Ashraf Abd el-Aziz (Ministry of Antiquities, MoA), Virág Pabeschitz (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven), Martina Bardonova (Czech Institute of Egyptology, Charles University), Gregory Viessman (University of Memphis), and M. Victoria Almansa-Villatoro (Brown University). Sayed Salah Abd el-Hakim (AERA) served as archaeologist and foreman of forty workers. Mohammed Helmy (MoA) carried out all survey work and coordinated remotely with AERA's GIS director, Rebekah Miracle.

Dr. Claire Malleson (American University of Beirut) served as director of AERA's field lab and storeroom and as archaeobotanist; Dr. Richard Redding, Eleuterio Luther Sousa (University of Manitoba), and Mohamed Hussein (MoA) analyzed animal bone; Sarah Hitchens (University of Liverpool) acted as lab manager and textile analyst; Samar Mahmoud (MoA) and Dr. Elizabeth Hart (Metropolitan Museum of Art) studied lithics; Mahmoud el-Shafei (MoA), Aisha Montaser Ali (MoA), and Dr. Anna Wodzinska (University of Warsaw) recorded and analyzed pottery; Emmy Malek curated and studied objects; David Jerábek (Czech Institute of Egyptology, Charles University) and Ali Witsell (AERA; working remotely from the USA) studied clay sealings; Dr. Philip La Porta (Center for the Investigation





ABOVE: Figure 1. Map of the central and southeastern part of the Giza Plateau showing the location of the Menkaure Valley Temple where AERA worked during season 2019. Map by Rebekah Miracle from AERA GIS.

LEFT: Figure 2. The southwestern quarter of the Menkaure Valley Temple (MVT) re-excavated by AERA team members in 2019, 109 years after George Reisner excavated the MVT from 1908 to 1910. View to the northeast with the Khafre Valley Tempe and Sphinx in the background.

of Native and Ancient Quarries) studied geological and cultural attributes of ground stone tools and other objects; Dr. Martin Odler (Czech Institute of Egyptology, Charles University) studied metals; and Manami Yahata (AERA) documented and analyzed remains of roofing and plaster. Abdel Latif Ibrahim directed flotation and heavy fraction processing and, with Mohammed Hassan, supervised three workers for sorting and filing different classes of micro-material culture.

REISNER'S WORK IN THE MVT

Reisner never saw the whole MVT in phase, so his plan (fig. 3) of the temple is largely a reconstruction pulled together from separate exposures. After he excavated the upper temple of the Menkaure pyramid from 1906 to 1907, he began to excavate the MVT between July 7 and 28, 1908. Then he left for sixteen months to excavate in Nubia and Palestine. He worked at the MVT again from December 3, 1909, to April 12, 1910. He excavated the temple in parts before he had exposed the entire ruin surface across the width and breadth of the temple. He back-filled the first parts he excavated as he proceeded roughly from back to front, west to east.

Reisner started in 1908 at the middle of the back, western side, where the causeway running from the upper temple comes to the MVT back wall. After finding the connection of the causeway to the temple, he "began cutting out the mud debris from the rooms"[3] numbered 1 through 8 (see fig. 3 for room numbers). Right away, he found royal statues or parts of statues. On the fourth day, July 10, in corridor 4 (fig. 5), he found four triad sculptures.

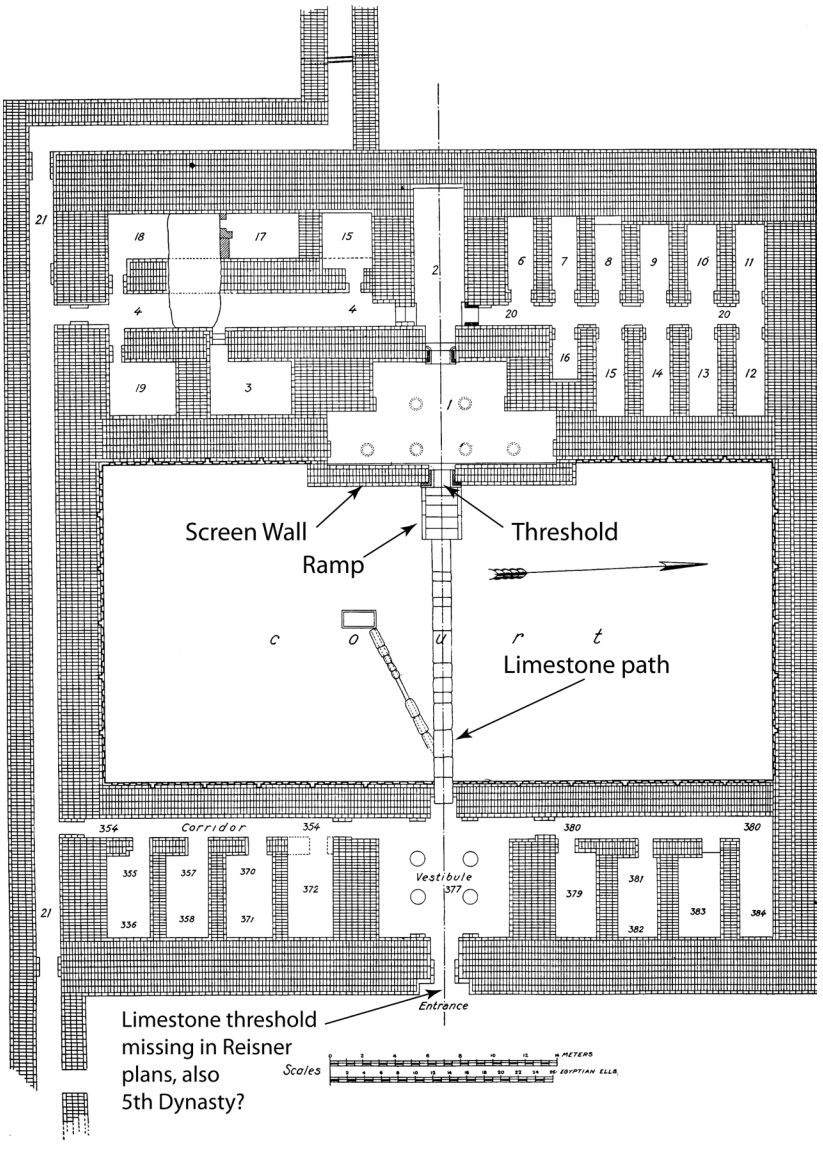


Figure 3. Reisner's (1931, plan IX) reconstructed plan of the MVT "First Temple" as completed in mudbrick by Shepseskaf upon a platform of huge limestone blocks laid down by Menkaure's builders. Reisner never saw the whole temple in phase, so the plan is largely a reconstruction pulled together from separate exposures. Reisner's (most consistent) numbers identifying the rooms appear in this map (Reisner 1931, plan VIII). North is to the right.

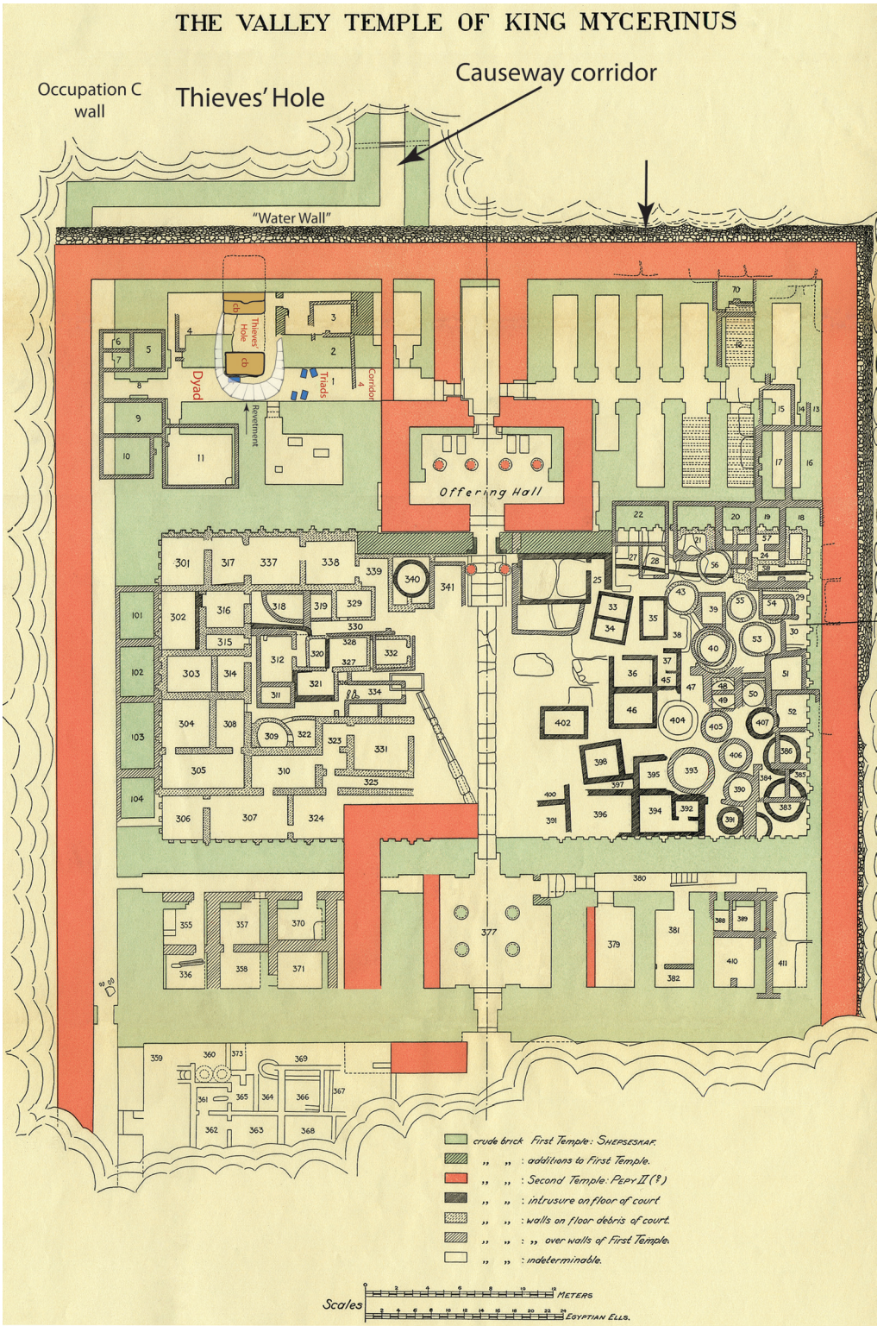


Figure 4. Reisner's (1931: plan VIII) multi-phase map of the MVT. Light green: "First (Fourth Dynasty) Temple." Orange: "Second (Sixth Dynasty) Temple." Hachured gray: an intermediate phase (Fifth Dynasty). Black: latest domestic structures. Reisner found the Menkaure triads in corridor 4 and the dyad in "Thieves' Pit," which cut corridor 4; cb = "core block" of limestone. North is to the right.

Right away, it was clear to Reisner that he had two major periods, a later temple rebuilt upon an earlier one. He reconstructed the ground plan (fig. 3) of a "First Temple." It was most probably Menkaure's successor, King Shepseskaf (2441–2436 BC),[4] the last king of Fourth Dynasty, who completed this first temple in mudbrick. In his multi-phase map (fig. 4), Reisner showed in orange the walls of a "Second Temple," built over two hundred years later, probably under King Pepi II (2216–2153 BC), the last king of Sixth Dynasty. The Second Temple was built upon the walls of First Temple, which Reisner colored green. In order to compose the map shown in figure 4, Reisner's workers sometimes trenched down through the whole stratified sequence, from above the Second Temple, to find the baselines of the walls of the First Temple.

Reisner's backfill and the windblown sand that accumulated over the 109 years since he finished left no visible trace of the central and western part of the MVT. AERA's work on the eastern side of the MVT in 2011 and 2012[5] established the eastern MVT corners, making it possible to geo-rectify Reisner's multi-phase map of the temple into our GIS. By combining these results with the AERA survey grid, we were able, with a fair degree of certainty, to locate the west (back) wall of the MVT and its sanctuary on February 9, 2019 (fig. 5).

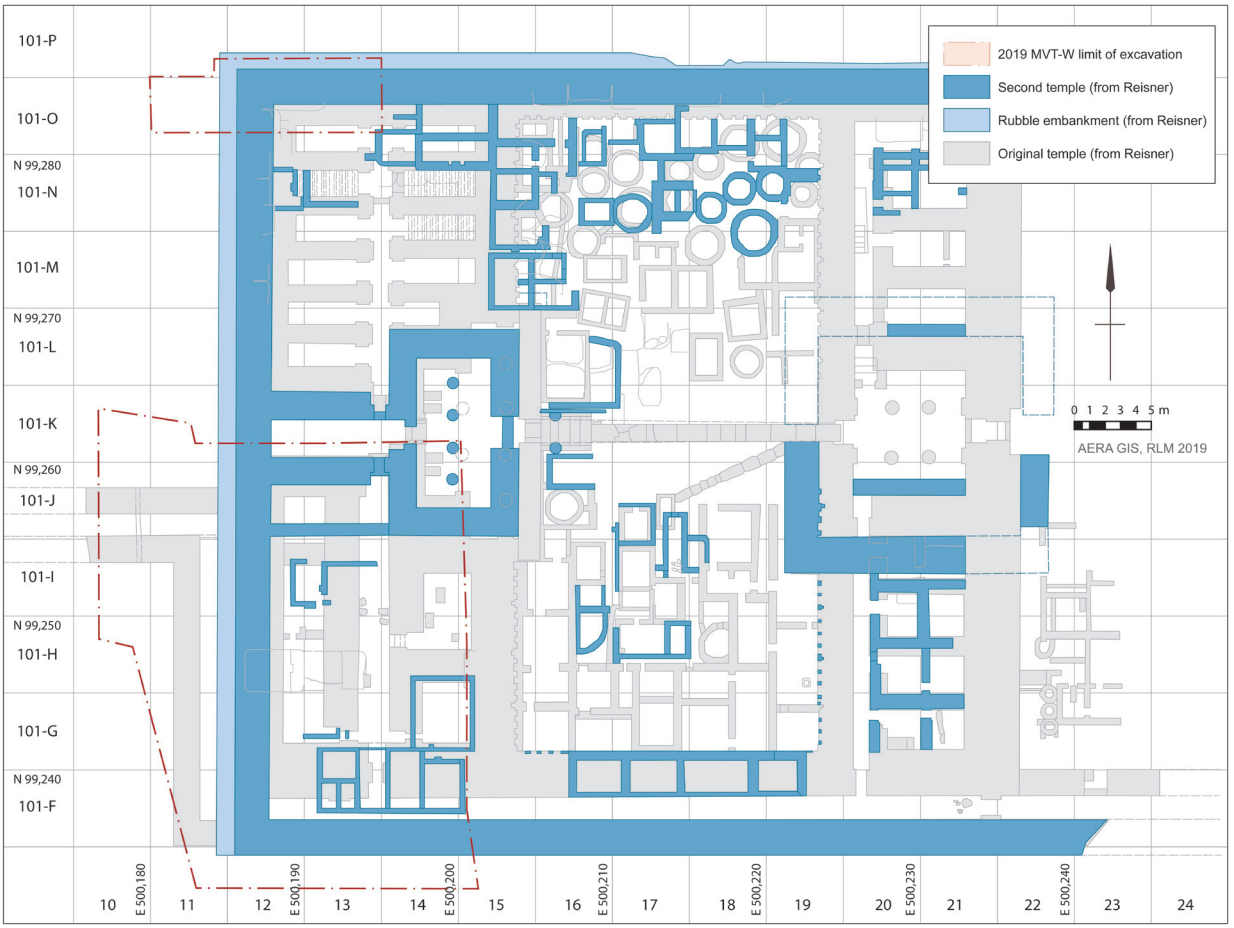
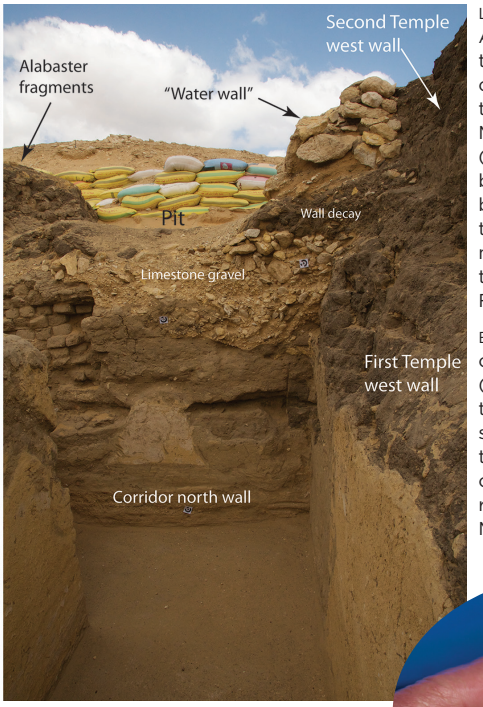


Figure 5. Multi-phase Reisner plan of the MVT geo-rectified (corrected for position with respect to the Giza Plateau Mapping Project grid). Red-shaded polygon indicates limit of excavation (LOE) in season 2019. Corridor 4, where Reisner found the triads and pit with the dyad, outlined in red. A shallow clearing exposed the top of the northwest corner of the temple (red-shaded rectangle upper right). Map by Rebekah Miracle from AERA GIS.



LEFT: Figure 7. (LEFT) Ashraf Abd el-Aziz surveys at the turn of the causeway corridor to the south, along the back western wall of the Menkaure Valley Temple; (RIGHT) the section cut by Reisner up against the back western wall shows the corner between the north causeway wall and the original west wall of the First Temple.

BELOW: Figure 6. Fragment of an Egyptian alabaster (travertine) inscribed with the top of a cartouche and sun disk (Ra), probably the top of a cartouche of Menkaure, from the ruin surface behind the Menkaure Valley Temple.

BACK WALL AND CAUSEWAY CORRIDOR

To the west of the western wall, we retraced Reisner's first excavations at the MVT after he came down onto the temple in the easternmost of a series of trenches on the axis of the causeway, which he determined from its upper, western end near Menkaure's upper pyramid temple.[6] Taking away the sand overburden, we soon exposed the western wall of the Second Temple.

In order to follow the causeway corridor running to the temple from the west, Reisner had cut through a domed mass of mudbrick debris collapsed from the Second Temple west wall.

Just here Reisner excavated alabaster statue fragments.[7] A short distance north of the path of his excavation, we found, on top of (probably the same) mound of mudbrick debris, a concentrated deposit of Egyptian alabaster (travertine) mixed with the sand overburden. This deposit extended north beyond our limit of excavation. We retrieved nearly 100 kg of fragments along with pottery, stone bowl fragments, two flint knives, pieces of diorite (gneiss, probably), and fragments of metal. Some of the alabaster fragments bear parts of hieroglyphic texts. Some show blue paint. At least one fragment with text shows the outlines in black of hieroglyphs later etched (fig. 6). This deposit might remain from Reisner's workers sorting the material they found. In one of his expedition photographs (HUMFA_C_2320_NS) dated February 13, 1910, we can see wooden boxes and piles of material (Egyptian alabaster?) on the mound where we found the alabaster fragments.[8]

We could see the history of deposits under this domed mud mass in the south-facing section that Reisner left above the northern wall of the causeway (fig. 7). Later in his excavations, Reisner found evidence that a flash flood streamed down the northern side of the causeway and washed out the center of the First Temple west wall, destroying the portico and offering hall (rooms 1 and 2 in fig. 3), and reducing the north causeway wall to the height that we still see in his section (fig. 7). After this event, people abandoned the MVT. Gravelly sand accumulated against the Second Temple west wall. Eventually, people returned and rebuilt the outer wall of the Second Temple roughly on what

survived of the outer wall of the First Temple. Late in the occupation of the Second Temple, people built a fieldstone revetment against the base of the wall as protection against flash floods. Reisner called this the "Water Wall" (figs. 4, 7). Eventually, the Second Temple wall collapsed, leaving that domed mass of broken mudbrick on which we found the alabaster fragments.

FINDINGS IN REISNER'S BACKFILL

A good part of our work went into removing deep sand and spoil that Reisner dumped into the back of the MVT as he excavated the central court. He began in the northwest corner of the court by removing debris from the domestic structures, here mostly bins and granaries. These structures had been built over time, one upon another, across the court and up and over the "First Temple" walls.[9] Between January 28 and 31, he started clearing the substantial sand overburden on the southern side of the court where he would uncover apartments.

On February 8, in order to save time and protect the architecture at the back of the temple, Reisner moved his railway lines into the west part of the temple to backfill with the sand overburden. On the day he made the decision, he wrote this in his diary:

> With regret, I have determined to cover up all the back or western part of the temple. It would be well if it could be left open for exhibition, but our experience as to the damage done by rain in 1908–9 proves that if the walls are allowed to stand exposed there will be nothing to see in one or two years. *Perhaps in another century some archaeologist may wish to test the accuracy of our work or to settle questions*, which may come up later. At the same time, it will cheapen greatly the expense of excavating the forecourt—where we have far more work to do than I anticipated. (highlight and emphasis mine)[10]

Once Reisner had removed the sand overburden from the southern part of the court, he repositioned the railway lines and had his workers dump by hand the dark, silty spoil (35,589) from occupation structures in the court over his dumped clean sand in the southwestern quadrant. We found yet another layer of clean sand and two more deposits of silty settlement material from Reisner's excavation down through the sand and silt sequence in different parts of the southern court (fig. 8). We infer that the lowest and largest amount of silty settlement material that Reisner excavated from the southern court would be the uppermost and largest silty layer (35,589) that we re-excavated.

We dry-sieved 100 percent of the spoil layers from Reisner's backfill. We wet-sieved and washed material that could not go through the dry sieves and sorted it. These spoil deposits were rich in pottery, flint tools or parts of tools, animal bone, ash, charcoal, worked stone, pigment, wood, bits of metal and clay sealings, including at least one with Menkaure's cartouche (fig. 9). Worked stone pieces from sieving Reisner's backfill included a gneiss or greywacke beard from a royal statue (fig. 10), possibly from one of the Menkaure triads,

Figure 8. Clean sand and dark, dense, silty material that Reisner's team dumped in 1910 from their excavation of the settlement in the MVT court. View to the east down the axis of the Second Temple offering hall (room 2). March 2, 2019.

LEFT: Figure 9. Sealing fragment impressed with a seal that included the cartouche (oval) name of Menkaure, picked out in 2019 from dry-sieving Reisner's 1910 dumps when he excavated the MVT court settlement. Inset: Menkaure's cartouche name excerpted from a sealing found in the HeG site. RIGHT: Figure 10. Diorite (gneiss) or greywacke beard from a statue, possibly one of the Menkaure triads, found in 2019 from sieving Reisner's backfill.

and possibly triad JE40678 in the Egyptian Museum, for on this one the king is missing his beard. This is one of four complete, or in this case nearly complete, triads found in corridor 4 (see fig. 4). Each shows Menkaure flanked by the goddess Hathor and a personification of an Egyptian Nome, in this case Nome 4 (Thebes). However, Dr. Florence Friedman tells me that another dark-stone beard of similar size, orphaned from its statue, exists in storage in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

We have yet to process most of the material that we retrieved from Reisner's backfill. However, animal bone and flint tools, or flint pieces from making tools, appear to be, by far, the most abundant material (fig. 11), and if this came from the apartments in the southern side of the court, people who stayed there cut a lot of meat.

Figure 11. Bones and blades, and a bit of copper, from sieving dark, silty material from the MVT court settlement, material that Reisner discarded and dumped 109 years ago.

When faunal analyst Mohamed Hussein took a look at the bones in one *makhtuf* (basket) from the many *makhtufs* of bone from sieving Reisner's backfill, he said it is mostly from cattle. Mostly, he saw distal ends of long, meat-bearing cattle bones. When faunal analyst Dr. Richard Redding joined us after a tour in Upper Egypt, he confirmed Mohamed's findings.

The fact that we were finding *ends* of meat-bearing bones was immediately intriguing, because last season (2018), we found baskets and baskets of bones from Kromer's Dump, and many of *those* bones are meat-bearing long bones that are *missing their ends*.[11] Last season we framed the hypothesis that people broke off the ends to make "knuckle-bone soup" or "gelatin soup," *shorbet kawara* (شوربة كوار) in Arabic. With nerve endings and collagen, knuckle

bones and end bones are full of fat and protein. Local soccer teams consume *shorbet kawara* to literally "beef up," and we can imagine *shorbet kawara* would be as good for those who needed to beef up for building pyramids. We might also imagine that knuckle-bone soup would have been a good use of lesser animal parts for lesser folk, while higher-status people received the choicest cuts.

However, two facts show that the Kromer long bones and the MVT end bones match in neither place or time. First, the long bones from the higher, later phase of the Kromer dump are mostly from sheep and goat. Second, all royal name sealings from the Kromer dump, from both the higher/later and lower/older phases, name Khufu or Khafre. So, the Kromer dumpers might have come from the area of the Menkaure Valley Temple, but that temple did not yet exist, and so neither did the settlement within its court.

We must weigh these preliminary findings against the possibility that these remains are the material-culture correlate of royal decrees that endowed the Menkaure Pyramid temples with people and provisions, in particular one issued by Shepseskaf,[12] probably when the First Temple was inaugurated, and another by Pepi II,[13] when the temple was rebuilt and its service renewed. Are we finding the remains of foodstuffs ritually offered to Menkaure, that is, Menkaure's corporate continuance in the service of his temple staff, and then consumed by those people?

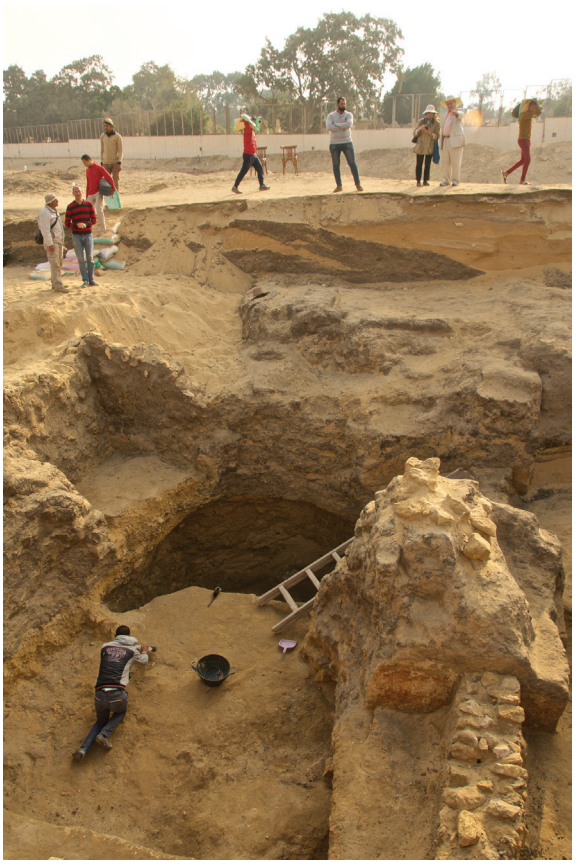


Figure 12. Work in Thieves' Hole, showing Reisner's 1910 retaining walls. A worker lying down is clearing the top of the limestone core block in front of which Reisner found the dyad of Menkaure and a female, probably a queen. Team members stand on AERA's 2019 section through Reisner's backfill. Clean sand layers intercalate between dark silty material from Reisner's excavation of the settlement in the temple court.

THIEVES' HOLE AND THE DYAD

When he decided on February 8, 1910, to backfill the western part of the temple, Reisner did not want to bury his chances of finding more statues in what he called Thieves' Hole, where he found the dyad. He wrote in his diary,

> A gang were set to work to bail out the water and penetrate deeper in the hole where the pair-statue was found in III-4 [corridor 4]. They got down about a meter below the present ground water level and took out a number of fragments of a slate triad—different from all fragments found as yet. There may be more fragments, possibly statues, in this hole but as the water runs in very fast, it will be better to leave the hole until May. I have ordered retaining walls built which will keep the two holes free of debris.[14]

Reisner's workers built the retaining walls on the north, east, and south of the great pit with material readily at hand—the dark silt from disintegrated mudbrick and limestone pieces (fig. 12).

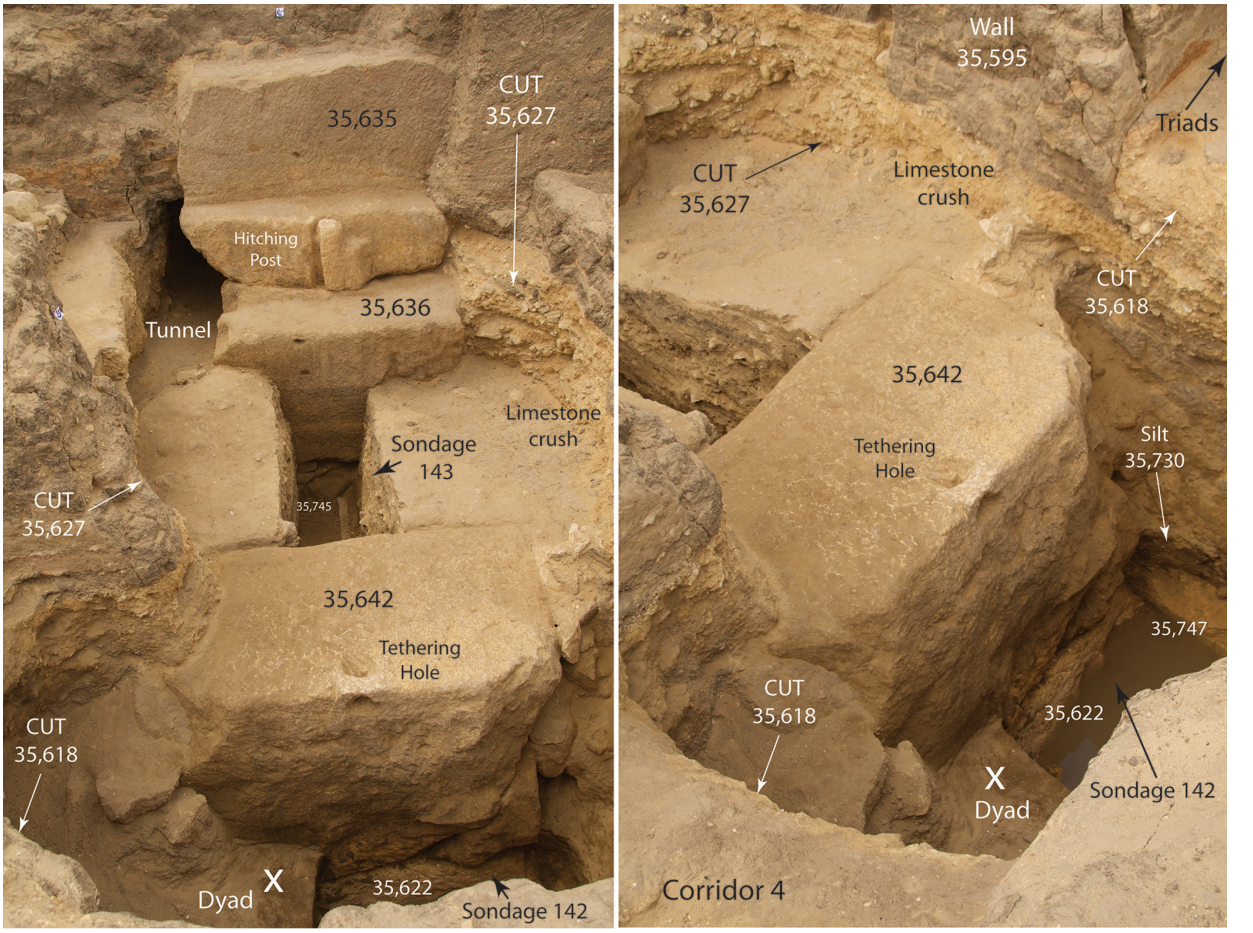


Figure 13. Thieves' Hole, after removing Reisner's 1910 backfill and after excavating sondages (trenches) 142 and 143. Reisner's excavations conjoined two separate pits, or cuts. AERA team members assigned feature number 35,618 to the cut of the earlier, lower eastern pit, and 35,627 to the later, higher western pit, which Reisner first designated as Thieves' Hole. Views to the west (LEFT) and northwest (RIGHT).

But he never did get back to Thieves' Hole that May 1910. He must have backfilled Thieves' Hole, now with only clean sand, sometime before he stopped all work at the MVT April 12–14, 1910.[15]

As our workers descended into Thieves' Hole, removing Reisner's backfill, we were astounded by the great depth of this part of the temple, and the massiveness of the First Temple walls. Given limited time and resources, we focused on removing Reisner's fill within his retaining walls to reach the bottom of Thieves' Hole, which gave a valuable cross-section of the stratified architecture of the temple (fig. 13).

As we descended into Thieves' Hole, down the eastern face of the western wall, north of where the causeway corridor meets the temple, we came onto two large limestone "core blocks," one upon another (fig. 13, left), so called because they were meant to form the cores of the walls, which the builders would sheath in hard granite (fig. 4, "cb"). Menkaure wanted to build a stone temple like Khafre's Valley Temple, 250 m to the northeast (figs. 1–2), but the stonework stopped, apparently when he died, and the temple was completed in mudbrick.

A little short of 2.5 m to the east, Reisner found, and we re-found, another large limestone core block (fig. 13, right). At the front of this block, Reisner found, standing upright and nearly undamaged (except for a chip off the king's beard), the famous dyad statue of Menkaure and a woman, probably

Figure 14. The outline of the dyad statue of Menkaure and a woman, probably the queen mother, in the approximate position where George Reisner's team found it standing upright and practically undamaged on January 18, 1910. View to the west. The dyad is scaled 1.39 m tall, while it might measure closer to 1.42 m tall.

the queen mother.[16] The dyad is one of the most magnificent sculptures in world art history, but it is not quite finished and so lacks any identifying inscription. In figure 14, I superposed the outline of the dyad onto its find spot, near to scale with the core block.

AERA team members, including Dr. Florence Friedman, who has written more about Menkaure's sculptures than any other scholar, and Dr. Walter Gilbert, whose grant made possible our 2019 season in the MVT, have thought long about this find, and its every detail. Reisner's explanation that Thieves' Hole had been "dug by treasure-hunters of the Moslem Period; two meters below floor of corridor 4 (III-4) . . ."—where the triads were found (see fig. 4)—". . . in sand and debris with feet at water level" and that the dyad was "apparently thrown into the hole by the treasure-hunters before they began the next hole on the west"[17] just does not add up in our estimation as we look at the evidence 109 years later.

Why would robbers leave the dyad until later? Why would robbers sink the statue so deep under the temple floor level? How did the dyad remain so complete and relatively undamaged? Is it possible that the dyad stood at this level from the time the temple was under construction, before Menkaure died? Did Menkaure's successor, Shepseskaf, plant the statue when he finished the MVT in mudbrick? Or did people plant the statue in the time of Pepi II (Sixth Dynasty), or his predecessor Merenre, as they renewed the temple service after a desert flash flood ruined the temple and it lay abandoned? It appears to us that we can negate the first two questions, because mostly likely someone deliberately stood the dyad upright, just here.

About the possibility the dyad stood here from the time of work on the stone temple, the fact that Reisner found at least twenty unfinished or uninscribed statues in the MVT could suggest that sculptors shaped statues in the active construction site, that building and stone craftwork happened in proximity.[18] From our work onsite, we can also note the following.

What appears to be an upside-down, cup-shaped cutting that shows in Reisner's photographs of the dyad in situ turned out to be a hole cut through the upper, eastern edge of the block. We found this out when our workers carefully scraped and cleaned the limestone surface of adhering silt and sand (figs. 12–14). I am not sure that Reisner's workers ever cleared the hole all the way through. This "Tethering Hole," just to give it a name, aligns with a boss, which we will call "Hitching Post," cut into the east face of the large core block in the western wall (figs. 13–14). The thought crossed our minds that soon after Menkaure died, his masons, now in the charge of Shepseskaf, carved signals

into the limestone core blocks where the temple designers wanted to bury the dyad, so as to "seed" this temple with an image of the king and his queen mother. The dyad find spot is just slightly south of the center axis of Menkuare's causeway, upper temple, and pyramid, the MVT axis being pushed slightly north of that axis.[19]

Against the idea that the dyad stood where Reisner found it from the time of the First Temple is his report that when he excavated deeper than the level at which he found the dyad, just before groundwater stopped him, he found at least one (possibly more) piece of (a) broken triad(s). Dr. Florence Friedman directed us to this detail in Reisner's reports, including his diary entry for February 8, quoted above.[20] Broken statues found under the dyad certainly argue against it being in situ from the time of the First Temple. But did Reisner mean that his workers found the broken triad pieces buried exactly below the dyad or just deeper in the bottom of the hole?

Figure 15. LEFT: In Sondage 142, a layer of dark Nile silt (35,730) with limestone fragments abuts the base of the "dyad core block" (35,642) and the top of the low core block (35,622) on which the "dyad core block" rests. Emad Abu Shenab cleans the surface at the exact spot on which the dyad stood. View to the southwest. RIGHT: The silt layer (35,730) runs over a low core block (35,747) exposed in the north side of Sondage 142 and to the top of core block 35,622. View to the north.

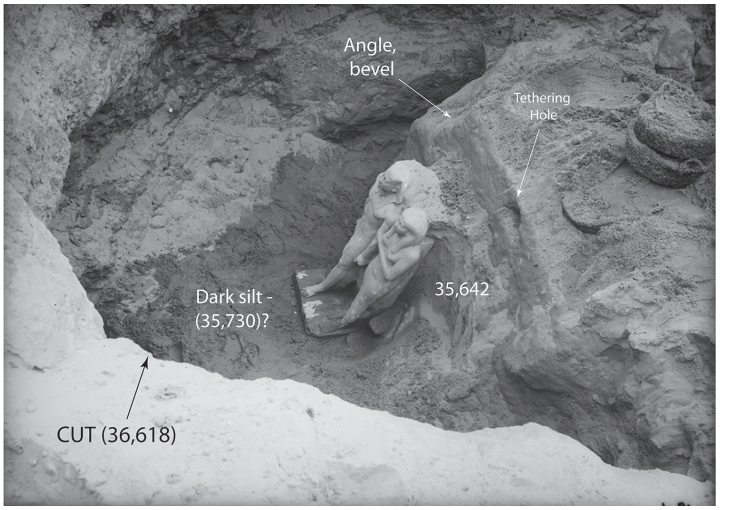


Figure 16. Photograph HUMFA_B481_NS from the Reisner archive showing the dyad fully exposed in situ, January 19, 1910. View to the south. The darker soil spreading out from the dyad could be the dark silt noted in AERA 2019 Sondage 142 (see fig. 14a–b), or it could be sand that is wetter, close to the water table.

Like Reisner, Dan Jones, Vicky Almansa-Villatoro, and Greg Viessman excavated Sondage 142 deeper into the bottom of the hole than the dyad discovery spot. They excavated down through a dark silty layer—feature 35,730—about level with the top of a deeper core block (35,622) on which the "dyad core block" (35,642) rested (fig. 15). The silty layer passes just above this lower core block, and just above another low core block (35,747) exposed on the north side of Sondage 142. On the opposite side of the sondage, just under the spot where the dyad stood, layer 35,730 thickens and includes limestone fragments that Reisner's workers probably stuck here when they incrementally lifted the dyad up and onto the core block to extract it from the temple.[21] In one of Reisner's photographs (fig. 16) of the dyad fully cleared, do we see this silty layer spread out from the base of the dyad? The possibility arises that the dyad stood upon, or close to, this silty layer, and that this layer remains from a working surface during Menkaure's

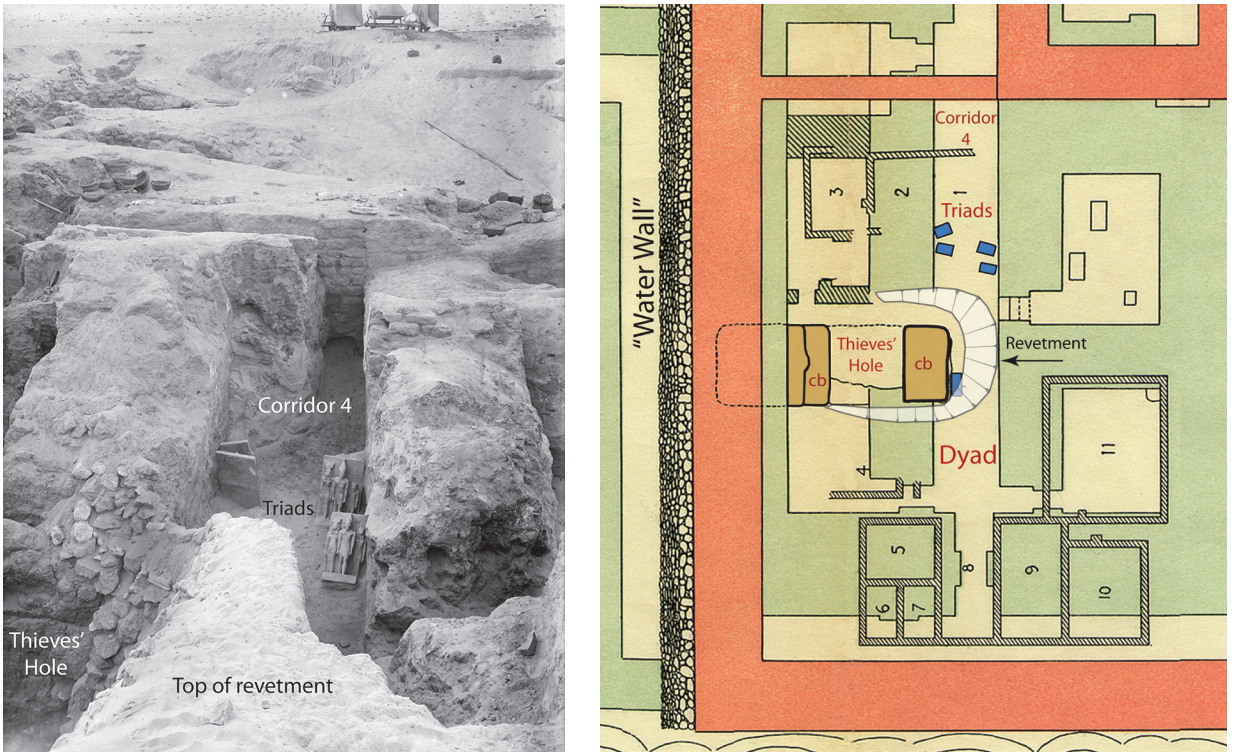


Figure 17. LEFT: Photograph A247_NS from the Reisner archive, view to the north of corridor 4 and the top of the stone rubble revetment lining the east side of Thieves' Hole on July 10, 1908, before Reisner removed the triads. Reisner already excavated the debris away from the back side of the revetment. RIGHT: Excerpt from Reisner's 1931, plan VIII, with the Thieves' Hole revetment drawn in its approximate position. The revetment was built against debris that buried corridor 4.

time, a surface on which his workers were pushing and sliding core blocks into position on wet clay. On the other hand, did Reisner's workers lay down this silty layer when they built their silty retaining walls and moved the dyad?

Against the first scenario stands the fact that Thieves' Hole came down right onto the dyad. Does it not strain credibility that this was just chance?

In fact, Reisner did not find the dyad in Thieves' Hole, but in a deeper, older hole that someone dug in ancient times a little father east. Dan Jones came up with this important finding from a meticulous review of Reisner's published report, his unpublished diary, and, in particular, his archived photographs, now all online and open access.[22]

Reisner found Thieves' Hole in his very first month of work at the MVT, June 1908, when he located where the causeway corridor met the western wall.[23] At the top, before Reisner excavated deeper and farther east into the older hole, Thieves' Hole measured nearly 3 m wide (north to south) and 6 m long. One of its salient features: a skin of loose, broken stone against the downward sloping, eastern curvature of the hole, which cut through the western wall and floor of corridor 4. The skin of loose stones leaned back east, against the curve of the pit, holding back the debris behind and under it. Reisner called it a "rubble lining," or "rubble revetment." He published one of his several photographs showing the revetment free-standing, like a wall, after he removed all the fill of the hole and the debris that the retaining wall held back.

Already by July 1908, in his first stint of excavation in the MVT, Reisner had begun to dig away the debris behind the revetment (fig. 17). Thieves' Hole diggers made that revetment to shore up that debris, as they sunk the hole down to the space between core block 35,636 on the west and 35,642

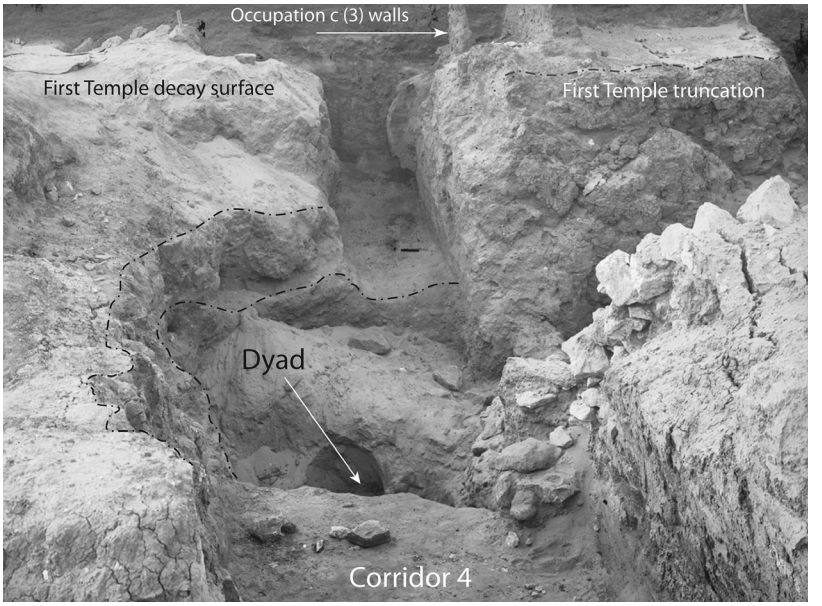


Figure 18. Photograph B486_NS from the Reisner archive, taken January 19, 1910, the day Reisner's team removed the dyad; view to the south down corridor 4, partially excavated, showing the hole in which Reisner's team found the dyad. The cut of the "dyad hole" appears to have been started from the level of the "surface of decay" of the First Temple. Someone dug the hole as or after the First Temple fell into ruin. Remains of the retaining wall that stood above the dyad hole, and retained debris that buried the dyad, can be seen at lower right.

on the east (see fig. 13 above). They founded the revetment on core block 35,642, as they exposed the *western* side of that core block.[25] But the dyad stood buried against the eastern side of core block 35,642. That is why his team did not see the dyad until January 18, 1910. Reisner only found the dyad after removing this revetment and digging behind and underneath it. Someone had buried the dyad in an older hole, long before someone dug Thieves' Hole, either in the temple foundation when Shepseskaf finished the First Temple, or later, after ruination and abandonment of the First Temple

Reisner realized he was dealing with two holes. On January 16, 1910, the last day of work before his team found the dyad late in the afternoon of January 18 (January 17 being a day of rest), he wrote in his diary, "Next to the thieves' hole in room of slate triads opened 1908, there is another hole filled with such debris (yellow gravel) that it also must be a thieves' hole. This is now being cleared."[26]

Once Reisner removed the revetment of loose irregular limestone pieces against the eastern curve of Thieves' Hole and cleared all the deposits that the revetment had restrained, the two holes became one big oblong pit, and in his subsequent reporting, Reisner conflated the two conjoined holes, which happened to be in line and made one long trench, as "Thieves' Hole."

A couple of key Reisner photos show the top and outlines of the older hole (fig. 18). Photograph B486_NS shows the lower hole, in which Reisner's team exposed the heads of the dyad, on the next day, the day before he removed it. As Dan Jones surmised,[27] the lower hole—I think we can properly call it the dyad hole—appears in this photo to have been started *from the surface of the ruins of the First Temple*. That is, someone dug the dyad hole down into the crushed limestone foundation (fig. 15) of the First Temple during or after Reisner's Phase II.9, the phase of decay *and then* deluge, as the First Temple fell into ruin, perhaps soon after that flash flood destroyed the sanctuary. Someone might have buried the dyad in Reisner's phase III, "the second crude-brick temple."[28] The fact that the Second Temple builders placed their new walls and floors above the First Temple ruins on the south and north of the MVT, while leaving the temple floor along its central axis at or close to the First Temple floor level,[29] obviates the strain in credulity that Thieves' Hole hole diggers just chanced upon this fabulous buried statue. Rather, the older hole could have been intentional, dug expressly for placing the undamaged dyad upright, for safe keeping, deep in the temple foundations. Why someone would do so, and who and what the dyad represents, must await further discussion, perhaps with more news from AERA's forthcoming season 2020, when we plan to return to the deep end of the MVT.

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NOTES

[1] Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS), 1994.

[2] *OI 2017–18 Annual Report*, 87–98; Witsell 2018.

[3] Reisner 1931, 35.

[4] Hornung, Kraus, and Warburton 2006, 491.

[5] *OI 2011–12 Annual Report*, 63–66.

[6] Reisner 1931, 34–35.

[7] Reisner 1931, 35. Until further analysis, I use the crude term "alabaster," whereas the material could be calcite, calcite alabaster, travertine, or gypsum.

[8] The photo was pointed out by Dan Jones in Jones et al. 2019, 49–50.

[9] Reisner 1931, 37.

[10] Reisner 1909–10 Diary, vo1. 1, February 8, 1910, 20.

[11] *OI 2017–18 Annual Report*, 93.

[12] Shepseskaf decree: Reisner 1931, pl. 19b, d; Urk, I, 160; Strudwick 2005, 97–98, no. 160; Goedicke 1967, 16–21; Papazian 2012, 108, 127–262. Shepseskaf's may be the earliest known example of such decrees.

[13] Pepi II decree: Reisner 1931, 38, pl. A; Goedicke 1967, 148–80, abb. 12; Strudwick 2005, 106–7, no. 23; *Urk*. I, 277–78; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 47.1654.

[14] Reisner Diary, February 8, 1910 (ED10_02_020), on the same page and two sentences before the quote about backfilling (note 7).

[15] Reisner wrote in his diary that he departed Giza for work at Girga and Mesaeed on April 14, 1910. He returned April 25 "and took up photography, packing and map making of the winter's work there" (Reisner Diary, vol. 2, 46). His account of work in his publication ends April 12; Reisner 1931, 38.

[16] Arnold 1999, 67–68; Friedman 2008, 135–44.

[17] Reisner 1931, 110.

[18] Reisner 1931, 108–15, listed as many as twenty unfinished or uninscribed stone statues from the MVT. Some, like the dyad, were close to being finished. At least three of these unfinished statues show hints of haste, a haste that could reflect those couple of years, or less, when Shepseskaf switched from stone to massive mudbrick works in order to complete Menkaure's cult engine (Friedman 2018, 119–20).

[19] Reisner (1931, 42) thought the dyad might have stood originally in the one long room 15 (he sometimes calls room 15 room 5) of the southwestern magazines (see fig. 3). This room was later divided into rooms 15-17-18. If the dyad stood in room 15, or the northern end of the long magazine, the dyad would have been nearly on the axis of the pyramid, upper temple, and causeway.

[20] See note 11. Friedman (personal communication) further pointed us to Reisner's reference in his 1931 publication, p. 110, twenty-one years later, to the find spot of the broken triad, his no. 14 = MFA 12.1515: "large fragment from the left, lower part of the back of a triad, seated figure in middle, and standing male figure on left of seated figure . . . Found in thieves' hole in room (III-4) in sand below the water-level, about 50 cm below base of the slate pair" [=dyad]. See for illustrations of this piece and discussion, Friedman 2011a, 27–28, fig. 5; 2011b, 93–96, figs. 2–3; 2015a, 95, fig. 1; 2015b, 19, figs. 2.1, 2.5.

[21] Reisner (Diary January 19, 1910, 10) described each step of the dyad extraction in his diary entry for January 19, 1910: "The statue had to be lifted up about 2 meters onto the big foundation stone behind it. This was done by tilting from side to side and shoving stones under it . . ."

[22] We thank Peter Manuelian and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, for making the Reisner Giza archive accessible: http://www.gizapyramids.org; http://giza.fas.harvard.edu.

[23] Reisner 1931, 35.

[24] Reisner 1931, pl. 30.

[25] Jones et al. 2019, 25–26.

[26] Reisner Diary, January 17, 1910, (ED10_01_009). Also, Reisner 1931, p. 52 referring to walls of Occupation c (3) wrote of "rooms (I-1) to (I-3), which were over room (III-17) and corridor (III-4); but the connecting masonry had been destroyed by *the two enormous holes* dug by Arab treasure-hunters."

[27] Jones et al. 2019, 21, fig. 31.

[28] Reisner 1931, 53–54.

[29] In the central, eastern part of the MVT, in room 377 (which I have called Vestibule 1), the floor level probably remained the same through three periods of occupation and during the time of both the First and Second Temples (Lehner 2015, 237–38). Reisner indicates that the floor level in the sanctuary, portico, and offering hall was raised by only 20–30 cm between the First and Second Temples (Reisner 1931, 45–46). On the other hand, Reisner described how the court had been buried by up to 1 m of debris (see his profile along the center axis of the temple—Reisner 1931, 48, plan x, center, section C-D) by the end of the occupation of the Second Temple. From the beginning of the First Temple, the original portico and offering hall were raised above the court, and a ramp was installed to *ascend up to these spaces* from the path across the court. By the end of the Second Temple, with the build-up of debris in the court, the path to the portico and offering hall now sloped *down to them from the east*. On the north and south of the temple's east–west axis, people built their occupation structures upon the truncated walls and debris filling the rooms of the First Temple, a much higher level than the entrance vestibule, the path between houses and bins and granaries in the court, and the sanctuary.

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