Conclusions

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At the outset of this project, we posed two fundamental questions about the Naga ed-Deir material. Both questions relate to the number of artifacts currently in the collection of the Hearst Museum. According to museum records, some tombs have many more artifacts attributed to them than others. Why is that? Were some burials simply outfitted with more objects than other burials? Was it a question of preservation, or excavation techniques, or other decisions made by the excavators? These questions were answered by comparing the archaeological material in the Hearst Museum of Anthropology and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, with the excavators' fields notes (tomb cards), photographs taken in the field and staged photographs, and Mace's draft publication of the Coptic tombs.

Tomb N 2446 = N 2522 is a good starting point to discuss the relative number of objects found in tombs. According to the Hearst Museum records, N 2446 was a particularly well-appointed tomb, accounting for 50% of all of the museum's ceramic materials from N 2000/N 2500. But N 2446 is not as unusual an example as it appears from the Hearst Museum records. By consulting the excavator's notes, it is readily apparent that the statistical analyses made from artifacts in the Hearst Museum do not necessarily translate to the original corpus of objects found in the cemeteries. Other tombs, such as N 2031, N 2034, and N 2235, also had large ceramic assemblages. For reasons unknown at this late date, the assemblage removed from N 2446 was shipped to California, while the other corpora were split between Egypt and California with the majority of the objects remaining in Egypt.

Many flint objects from other Naga ed-Deir cemeteries, such as N 500, N 900, and N 7000, were shipped to the Hearst Museum. Only four flint objects from N 2000 and N 2500 are currently in that collection. We wanted to find out why there was an uneven distribution of material. Was that uneven distribution reflected in the finds? Did it relate to the excavation techniques or the particular interests of the excavator?

In the case of the flint, the low number of finds from cemeteries N 2000 and N 2500 seem to be a simple error in recording. There is no indication that the original four objects (of which only three are currently available for study) actually derived from those cemeteries. The excavators' notes on tomb cards

contain no reference to finding flint objects. Given the large quantity of flint found in other Naga ed-Deir cemeteries, it seems likely that the four objects listed in the museum as deriving from N 2000/N 2500 actually came from a different Naga ed-Deir cemetery.

An obvious reason for the disparity in the number of objects found in tombs in N 2000 and N 2500 is one of time. The First Intermediate Period/Middle Kingdom tombs contained more ceramic and stone vessels, beads, and other objects, as well as occasionally wood remains from coffins or other items, than do the Coptic tombs. The Coptic tombs contained preserved clothing, wrappings, and botanical materials, all of which had previously decayed in the earlier tombs if they were ever present at all. But in comparison with the First Intermediate Period/Middle Kingdom tombs, the Coptic tombs contained little in the way of inorganic remains like ceramic and stone vessels. As might be expected, group burials, such as N 2071 of the First Intermediate Period/Middle Kingdom and N 3747 of the Coptic period, contained many more objects and a wider variety of objects than did single burials.

Although some tombs resulted in more object finds than others, the representation of this discrepancy as presented in museum records was inaccurate. For example, N 2002, a burial of a young female dated to the Coptic period, was a particularly rich source of information and provides one of only a few examples of beads from this era. Mace made 12 drawings of jewelry and garments from this tomb, but no objects from this tomb exist in the records of the Hearst Museum. Conversely, some tombs have objects attributed to them in the records of the Hearst Museum that are not mentioned in the original excavation notes. N 2075 is described by the excavators as containing beads and ceramics. Records in the Hearst Museum attribute to that tomb a metal wire, a needle, stone vessels, and mirrors. Perhaps those objects were assigned to N 2075 in error.

The original tomb cards containing the excavators' site notes preserve valuable information, especially about some of the Coptic-era artifacts that are now stored in an uncertain location. The decorated wood and whorl from N 2049 were carefully drawn on tomb cards and photographed by the excavators. Since the artifacts are delicate and prone to decay, the early twentieth-century drawings and photographs are important records of Coptic handiwork. The tomb cards meticulously record Coptic-era garments, such as the tunic from N 2002, the shawls from N 2006, N 2130, and N 2503, the rosette from N 2637, and the many wrappings from N 2009, N 2636, and N 2812. Those notes and drawings survive only in the tomb cards. Mace's unfinished manuscript, finally published in this volume (see Appendix 2), excludes the garments entirely because he had planned a later publication devoted solely to them.

Certain tombs in N 2000 and N 2500 are significant because of the large quantity of a particular object type in them or because of the unusual nature of the objects in them. A number of tombs contained a large quantity of ceramics (N 2040, 2473, 2501, 2641), stone vessels (N 2096, 2641), or beads (N 2042, 2071, 2075, 2090). N 2042, 2071, and 2075 contained many beads and also a wide range of other objects, including amulets and scarabs, stone vessels, ceramics, and various other objects. N 2031, 2032, 2093, 2100, and 2507 contained stelae that name and depict the tomb owners. Other goods were found in those tombs, including a wooden object covered in gold foil (N 2031), beads, ceramics, stone vessels, and other assorted objects, suggesting perhaps that the tomb owners were afforded a certain amount of prestige in life. N 2332 contained the unusual square headrest and the intriguing and well-preserved rope with sealings that were found on top of a coffin. Other unusual finds include 3 rings worn by the tomb owner and a wooden box in N 2007, the whorl and decorated wood pieces joined by pegs, which were mentioned earlier, in N 2049, 4 rings and a copper dipper with an adjustable handle in N 2417, and the jewelry in N 2813.

In his 1932 publication of *Naga ed-Deir*, Reisner characterized the community he was excavating at Giza as far more impressive than the “provincial” (as he put it in the book title) community at Naga ed-Deir. In that third volume of the *Naga ed-Deir* series, Reisner concludes the main part of the text with this observation on the two sites: “Memphis appears as one of the most brilliant of the courts of history, the product of the greatest of the ancient civilizations of the world. Of all this glory practically nothing was reflected in the daily life of our obscure agricultural community at Naga-d-Dêr ... the products of the great arts and crafts [of Memphis] were not for the people of our village” (Reisner 1932, 192).

Reisner’s comments here are at odds with the pattern of work over his career, which focused on both monumental art and architecture and the finds of “daily life” that were typically less desirable to collectors. Letters he wrote to Mrs. Phoebe A. Hearst discuss objects like ceramic and flint, as well as trips to dealers to purchase statuary, stelae, and an offering table (Reisner 190–, 25, 29, 30, 33). At a time when scientific method in the archaeology of the Nile River Valley was not yet the norm, Reisner’s fieldwork and publications treat all archaeological material.

The group of scholars who have contributed to this volume have arrived at a conclusion somewhat different from Reisner’s quoted earlier. Given the range of finds and the evidence of craftsmanship analyzed and published in this volume, we feel that the attention given to Coptic textiles, to finely crafted beads and amulets, to scarabs, stone and ceramic vessels, painted stelae, and a variety

of other objects indicates that the populations who lived at Naga ed-Deir, although perhaps lacking the large stone statuary and largescale stone architecture that Reisner saw at Memphis, nonetheless enjoyed a range of carefully made goods. Reisner saw “glory” only in the products produced for the ancient Egyptian capital. The authors in this volume see that glory reflected in the careful and detailed work the residents of Naga ed-Deir valued enough to include in their tombs.

Bibliography

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