



ESSEX EGYPTOLOGY GROUP - REVIEW

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by Margaret Patterson

"The Rise of the Theban Necropolis. Current research in the early Middle Kingdom tombs of North Asasif" Dr Patryk Chudzik

At the beginning of October 2021 Dr Patryk Chudzik, director of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology (University of Warsaw) expedition to North Asasif (<https://pcma.uw.edu.pl/en/2019/04/11/deir-el-bahari-north-asasif/>), spoke to us about the work of the project. He began by reminding us of the context of the site, first geographically (briefly) and then historically. As he said, there was no need to spend much time on the geographical introduction – the Theban Necropolis is one of the biggest archaeological sites in the world and the biggest necropolis in Egypt. The specific part of this enormous site that his Polish team are working on is called the North Asasif, it consists of the slope on the northern side of the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri. The tombs at the North Asasif are of people who were contemporary with Montuhotep II who had moved his necropolis to the north and the west of the place that his family were buried during the First Intermediate Period. In that earlier period the rulers and their officials were buried to the sides of the mountains in the low desert, and in Montuhotep II's reign they build their tombs high and deep in the mountains – this will of course become the standard practice in the New Kingdom at Thebes.



The Mortuary Complex of Montuhotep II

Montuhotep II reunited and reunified Egypt around the 39th year of his reign. His mortuary complex (both a temple and a tomb in the same place) is to the south of Hatshepsut's temple at Deir el-Bahri, and Chudzik told us that they hope in the future to begin a project to reconstruct Montuhotep II's temple. This temple is one of the sources of our information on the early Middle Kingdom during the reign of Montuhotep II – for instance on one wall there is a list of high ranking officials who were buried in the necropolis. These names include Meketre (in whose tomb a large number of wooden models was found in the early 20th Century) and the Vizier Bebi (whose tomb is currently unknown but Chudzik said they hope to identify it). Another source of information is the early Middle Kingdom graffiti at Wadi Shatt er-Rigal, many of which name officials. One shows the king (Montuhotep II) with his mother behind him and his father (Intef III) facing him – behind his father is the chancellor Khety. Chudzik said that Khety has the most spectacular tomb, and it was one of the ones he talked about quite a lot during the talk. Another grafitto shows an official standing in front of the king who is represented as the King of Upper and Lower Egypt. This is dated to Year 39 of Montuhotep II's reign, and has previously been interpreted as meaning that the reunification happened in that year. However it's now thought that it probably happened earlier, so this just gives us a last possible date.

The layout of the necropolis itself also provides information about the early Middle Kingdom and one part of Chudzik's team's research is to look at the topography and the relationships between the officials and the king. The rock cut tombs can be seen from the bottom of the valley, if you look up to the right as you walk towards Hatshepsut's temple. They were built for the high ranking early Middle Kingdom officials and nobles (and most of them lived during the reign of Montuhotep II). The location of the tombs reflects the connections and relations between the king and his court. It's always the king in the centre or as the focus – that is why the king's tomb/temple is to the western part, which is closest to Osiris and the Duat. And then the officials stand on both sides – or here are buried in tombs on both sides. Chudzik noted that even now if you visit the office of an Egyptian high official then the chairs are laid out like this – with the official himself in the centre and rows of chairs for other people flanking them.

Chudzik now talked us through the history of excavations at North Asasif. The first European to visit the tombs was Karl Richard Lepsius in the 1840s. He went into some of them and made drawings of the sarcophagus, but couldn't see what was on the walls – it's only recently that the walls have been cleaned so that we can see the original colours. The next to work on the site was Gaston Maspero who found the decorated burial crypt of Harhotep (an official during the reign of Senwosret I) in TT314 – this was then transported to Cairo and is now in the Egyptian Museum there. And then in the 1920s the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York had an expedition to work at North Asasif directed by Herbert Winlock. He and his team discovered most of the tombs and excavated them – in fact his team did most of the pre-modern work in this area of the site. In the 1990s there were some short seasons of work done by Alessandro Roccati from the University of Rome, concentrating on the tomb of Meru and starting to clean it.

In 2013 Chudzik and his team started to work there, and they are currently working in 9 of the tombs. These include MMA507, which is the one that contains the 60 slain soldiers, that they started to re-examine 3 years ago (and he returned to this later in the talk). They are also working in TT311 (MMA508), which is the tomb of Chancellor Khety, as well as MMA509A (another early Middle Kingdom tomb). Next to 509A, or rather right in front of it in its courtyard, is the tomb of Nespakheshuty, who dates to the 26th Dynasty. His tomb is called MMA509 – it was reconstructed in the 1990s. They are also working in MMA511, MMA512, MMA513 (with a temple in the courtyard) and MMA515. And also the tomb of Meru, TT240. Before they started their project it wasn't possible to see what was going on inside the tombs –

they were still full of the debris left by Winlock's team and needed re-clearing. Most of the tombs still just have MMA numbers but some have TT numbers as well, I found the list of MMA numbers in wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_MMA_Tombs) (which also lists owners names where known) useful to check which of the numbers referred to the same tomb as each other.

Having given us context for the site and for his excavations there Chudzik now moved on to talk about some of the things they have found out over the last 8 years. He began with a look at the architecture of these Middle Kingdom tombs of high officials. They all follow a similar plan – beginning from the outside they all have large courtyards, which you can see in a row along the mountain. The courtyards are each surrounded by wall of mudbrick, much of which has disappeared but in places they are still 2m high. The back or upper part of the courtyard is against the stone and mudbrick facade of the tomb it is a part of.

The interior of the tombs are a series of corridors and rooms, some of which were accessible to the offering bearers and family members after the burial ceremonies and some of which were closed to everyone afterwards. Chudzik talked us through the structure using the tomb of Khety (MMA508) as his example. The tomb starts with a long corridor which passes through a gate into the cliff face. The first room that it opens out into is the mortuary cult temple, with a niche where the statue of the tomb owner originally stood. The entrance to the burial chamber was closed, sealed and hidden after the funerary ceremony. It was also in a different place in each tomb to try and hide how to get down into the tomb proper so that robbers didn't have an easy time finding their way in. Through this entrance in Khety's tomb were three successive descending corridors, with larger areas or rooms opening off them for storing his funerary goods. Finally the last room at the end of these corridors held the sarcophagus and the body of the deceased. Chudzik also showed us the layout of the tomb of Meru, which demonstrated the differences in the position of the burial chamber in these two tombs – in this tomb the entrance opens directly under the corridor to the chapel with a layout much like a double-decker bus. After the burial had taken place the lower corridor (to the burial chamber) had been back-filled with debris and then blocked with limestone slabs and covered with the sandstone floor of the upper corridor so that it was hidden from visitors to the tomb.

As part of their work they are making 3D models of these tombs, which let them look at the structure in a variety of ways including in cross section as if you've cut the mountain in half. One of the things that Chudzik talked about while showing us this view of Meru's tomb was how much work it had been to build the courtyards. This is something I hadn't thought about before – I'd thought they were essentially just swept clean but Chudzik pointed out how much of the slope of the mountain had to be cut away to achieve the gently sloping surface of the courtyard. And then of course that's a lot of debris that needed to be removed from the side of the mountain.

Chudzik said that they are trying to reconstruct the entire history of each of the tombs they are working on, including the way that it was built. For instance the tomb of Meru went into more unstable limestone and so the builders had to change the axis early on in order that it wouldn't collapse. They then changed the axis again later so that the burial chamber itself was in the direction of the north star. But in the tomb of Khety they were able to dig the whole thing from the start in the direction of the north star without having to change. Chudzik noted that they currently have no idea how the builders got their axis pointed in the right direction – you can't even see the north star from the courtyard of the tombs as the mountain is in the way.

The tombs at North Asasif are different from Middle Kingdom tombs in other parts of Egypt. At Beni Hasan, for instance, a typical tomb has two large rooms with a niche at the end of the second room and a burial shaft hidden somewhere in the floor of this mortuary chapel. So the style of North Asasif with courtyards, long corridors and small rooms is very different. It's also a style belonging to a particular strata of society – as with everything else tomb location and style is different for the different social classes in Egyptian society. High officials have these tombs that Chudzik is discussing on the high mountain of North Asasif, and the mid-ranking officials are in a lower part of the mountain with the lowest rank right down in the valley with tombs that only consist of a couple of chambers with not many corridors. Chudzik stressed that these are still important people – the top 2% of Egyptian society – everyone else is buried in shallow graves in the desert floor.

The differences in style between the rest of the elite Middle Kingdom tombs and the tombs in North Asasif can be explained by the idea that the latter are copying the tomb of Montuhotep II. All Ancient Egyptian tombs have two spaces, the cult space and the burial space. In Monthhotep II's temple/tomb there is a large courtyard with the temple at the back of it, and then the entrance to the tomb is at the back of the temple with a sloping passage down to the burial chamber itself. Chudzik showed us the tomb of Meru and the tomb of Montuhotep II in cross section at the same size (so the length of Meru's tomb was drawn at the same size as the length of Montuhotep II's tomb) and the similarities were striking. The layout is pretty much the same, it's just that one is an appropriate size and scale for the king, and one is at an appropriate size and scale for a high official.

Chudzik now moved on to talk about the decoration of the tombs. Middle Kingdom tomb decoration is completely different to the style of the later New Kingdom tombs which we are much more familiar with. Sadly the decoration of these tombs is no longer intact, but enough can be pieced together from the parts that remain to get a feel for the scheme and what it looked like. Chudzik talked us through the tomb of Khety (MMA508) for his main example. At the entrance to the tomb there are fragments of the door jambs and lintels which were made of limestone which had been painted with the decoration. The unusual feature of these is that they have a red background – and this was probably intended to mimic red granite. In the Old Kingdom use of red granite was reserved for the king alone, and it's only after this that the use of it was extended to non-royal tombs with the king's permission – it's a status symbol. Khety, despite his high rank, seems only to have had permission to use red granite for the altar where his offerings would be left, and this stood in front of these red-painted door jambs. The corridors in the tomb have decoration in the same style as the door jambs, but without the red background – so they are not pretending to be granite lined. The walls of the mortuary chapel chamber were plastered, and then painted on top of this plaster. The scenes that survive depict preparations for the funerary ceremony, and those that are gone possibly depicted the ceremony itself. Winlock's excavation report suggested that there was also decoration directly on some of the limestone blocks in this chamber, but none of this remains in situ.

In the burial chamber of MMA508 the limestone itself is carved and then painted. The decoration in this room does not have scenes but instead has a long list of offerings and friezes of other burial goods, as well as the text of the offering formula – all that the deceased needed for his afterlife provided on the walls as well as (presumably) in the chamber itself. At the eastern side of the room was a large sunken hole or depression in the floor where the sarcophagus sat below the level of the floor. Most of the sarcophagus is no longer in situ, only the bottom of it is still preserved there, but some fragments of the sarcophagus walls have been found outside in the courtyard. In the wall of the depression there was also a niche where the canopic chest once stood, but again none of this object was found in situ. The sarcophagus was not carved out of a single piece of stone, instead it was made of

6 slabs of stone – one for the base (still in situ), 4 for the walls and the last one on top for a lid. During the reign of Montuhotep there was a change in the style in which sarcophagi and canopic chests were decorated. At the beginning of the reign they had a single line of text running round the object in the upper half of the wall, and by the end of the reign the coffin or sarcophagus was instead decorated with a frieze of objects as well as more coffin texts. I think Chudzik said that the sarcophagus of Khety is in the new style, but the canopic chest was in the old style (it's possible I'm a little confused here, my notes are unclear).

The courtyards are not just flat empty spaces, and Chudzik told us about some of the discoveries he and his team have made in these spaces. For instance in the courtyard of MMA509A they found (in 2015) two holes in the ground near the wall near the main doorway. These contained foundation deposits, and they are the earliest examples of non-royal foundation deposits for a tomb. In the courtyard of MMA513 they found (on 24 December 2013) the remains of a structure – this was a small and never finished mudbrick shrine or chapel. This structure was used by family members to leave offerings at after the ceremony when the door of the tomb was closed and the main chapel inside was inaccessible. Despite the unfinished state it was clearly used as they have found a deposit of more than 112 small volume jars which would be used to pour water over the altar which was in front of this small shrine.

Another group of objects that they have found are a collection of clay offering trays, mostly in fragments, which date to the early Middle Kingdom (there are some examples (not from North Asasif) in the Egypt Centre Collection, which you can see on their website

(https://egyptcentre.abasetcollections.com/Objects?SavedSelections=%24Page-1%24Ob-OSC_208&Search=&Ob=OSC_208&Pe=P_6&Ma=M_18). At one point Egyptologists thought that these were for people who couldn't afford a real altar – instead of an expensive piece of stone which would need a skilled craftsman to carve they had these clay replacements which were easier to source and create. However Chudzik doesn't believe that this can be the case because they've found the trays in courtyards where they have also found altars, so they must have parallel functions rather than one being a replacement for the other. The Spanish mission who are also working at other tombs at North Asasif (see my write up of Antonio Morales's talk to the EEG a couple of years ago:

<https://writeups.talesfromthetwolands.org/2019/07/29/the-cemeteries-of-deir-el-bahri-and-asasif-in-the-early-middle-kingdom-recent-work-by-the-university-of-alaca-expedition-to-thebes-antonio-j-morales/>) have also found some of these clay trays – one was in front of the stone that sealed the tomb, so they seem to have been left at the doors but subsequently moved into the courtyards where they are found. Very intriguing!

The team have also found funerary cones associated with these tombs. Middle Kingdom funerary cones are longer than the ones dating to the New Kingdom, and unlike the later ones they have no decoration or text on them. This is a shame as the New Kingdom ones have a stamp on the end which gives the name of the tomb owner, which would be useful information if only the Middle Kingdom ones were the same! There are a lot of ideas about how these cones were used, but Chudzik said it's not clear which one is right. The most famous interpretation is that they were an architectural component of the tomb – that they were embedded in the wall. This is depicted in New Kingdom tombs, so it's a high possibility during that time period. But they are also found as a deposit in the Middle Kingdom tombs – for instance in 2021 they re-examined an early Middle Kingdom tomb in the ground of Hatshepsut's tomb and found a deposit of these cones in situ. There is no sign that they were ever embedded in a wall, and while this may indicate the tomb was unfinished Chudzik finds this implausible as the reason for the deposit. The cones are painted twice – once in red, and then that was covered over completely with white paint. This is similar to how goods like pottery that was intended for the

deceased to use in the afterlife was painted white. So perhaps these cones had some symbolic or ritual purpose connected with the afterlife itself rather than just being a structural element of the tomb.

The courtyards of the tombs also contain the spoil heaps from the original excavation of the tombs, and the one in MMA508 (Khety) has particularly rich pickings. This tomb was originally excavated in 1922, by Winlock – the same year as Tutankhamun's tomb was discovered by Howard Carter. When Carter made his discovery he didn't have enough skilled Egyptologists on hand to carry out the excavation, and so he asked Winlock if his staff could come and work on KV62 instead. So that left Winlock as the sole senior Egyptologist in charge of the (large) local Egyptian workforce. This meant that rather a lot of smaller finds were missed because this was too big a job for one man to supervise.

Chudzik and his team have re-excavated this spoil heap (in 2017) and found many interesting things. There's obviously no real stratification as it is the spoil heap of the previous excavation but they have been able to map broad sections of the spoil heap to regions of the tomb. At the top of the pile (section I) is debris and objects from the burial chamber, next (section II) are the items from clearing the cult chapel and some of the sloping corridor towards the burial chamber. Section III below this contained the debris from the entrance (including lots of fragments of limestone blocks decorated with reliefs) and section IV at the bottom had objects from the entrance, the courtyard and the gateway into the tomb. Chudzik showed us several examples of the finds they have made in this spoil heap. These included some wooden models, a figurine and a sandal, and also some ship oars. They have also found some pieces of a statue of the owner (Khety). Winlock had found a head from a statue of Khety which is now in (I think) the Met Museum in New York, but these new pieces are not from that statue – the head is only 7cm high but the eye they have found is life size. They've found fragments of this larger statue with skin that is painted red and some fragments painted yellow, which indicates that this was a statue with both male (red) and female (yellow) figures. There were also some fragments that were clearly of a smaller figure as well. So putting this all together Chudzik thinks there was once a large scale status of Khety, his wife and a child (probably a son) which probably sat in the niche in the mortuary chapel.

Other finds from this spoil heap include a mortuary seal, with an impression of a stylised Hathor figure. This shows the association of Hathor with Deir el-Bahri and the Theban Necropolis in the early Middle Kingdom as well as later in the New Kingdom. They have also found an enigmatic wooden head about 2cm wide, and it's not clear what it is or what it's from. In style it looks quite like a stick shabti – but Chudzik said it can't be one of those, as they are found in the Second Intermediate Period (so several centuries after this object was made). Another possibility is that he may have something to do with mu-dancers – these are male dancers who danced in the courtyard outside the tomb at the end of the funerary ceremony. But this still seems quite implausible, as even though it looks like the existing 2D representations of these dancers there have never been any other figurines found.

In the courtyards of MMA508 and MMA509A they've also discovered some intriguing finds that are not attested in any of the other tomb courtyards. These are fragments of crocodile jaws and crocodile skin! Chudzik speculates that there may have been equivalents in the other tombs but they were cleared away and discarded by the original excavators – this was not the sort of thing that early 20th Century (or earlier) archaeologists were looking for and even if they noticed them as connected with the tomb they wouldn't've had the biological specialists in their teams to identify them. So what are these crocodile fragments doing in the courtyards? Chudzik noted that crocodiles are important in the Middle Kingdom – particularly in the Faiyum, and in relation to Sobek (for instance several late Middle

Kingdom kings have names including the name of Sobek). However this is less so in the early Middle Kingdom when these tombs were created. There is a later catacomb of crocodile mummies in the Theban Necropolis – but this doesn't seem to be linked. The catacomb contains entire mummified crocodile whereas the pieces found the courtyard aren't mummified and seem to be only the head of the animal. Another idea Chudzik explored was that they might be references to Ammut, the devourer, who you see in Weighing of the Heart scenes from the Book of the Dead – she is a composite beast who has the head of a crocodile, so perhaps this is what the heads refer to? The first obvious problem is that the Book of the Dead dates to the New Kingdom so is (again) too late to be connected to this early Middle Kingdom practice. Another problem is that Ammut is to be avoided – she's the fate that awaits those who fail the test, so you wouldn't want her associated with your tomb. And she is a singular demon, but in MMA509A they found parts of 3 crocodiles. So Chudzik said that this also seemed an unlikely explanation. Perhaps they were more general guardian demons? Chudzik showed us an illustration from the Coffin Texts of a gate guardian sitting holding a knife, which had a crocodile head. However he pointed out that again this is later in the Middle Kingdom so not easy to see as an explanation.

There are rather a lot of these crocodile fragments in the two tombs where they've found them – in MMA508 they've found 97 fragments so far, and in MMA509A they've found 3. Given where they were in the courtyard they were originally in the burial chambers of the tombs. He repeated that there were no signs of mummification but there are some indications that they may have been wrapped in linen – no oils or resins though. Possibly they were in a linen bag? Chudzik next raised the possibility that they were intended as offerings to Sobek – but this is not something that's been seen before in a tomb context. Crocodiles in tombs is not an entirely unique phenomenon – there are 4 teeth that have been found at tomb 16105/2 in Deir el-Berhsa but it's not known where in the tomb they were originally so it's not clear if this is directly comparable. There is also a small crocodile found in a slightly later tomb under the (much) later Ramesseum. However this is a whole crocodile so it seems to be different – and given how close this site is to the floodplain it's possible that the crocodile crawled up to the tomb and fell in! So looking for potential examples at other tombs of the period has brought Chudzik no closer to an explanation.

He said they next started to think more broadly about why one might want crocodiles within the tomb context. This led to another avenue to explore: crocodiles are associated with Re as well as with Sobek – in particular they are associated with the sunrise when crocodiles tend to come out of the water onto the land and bask in the sun to warm up. In the Egyptian mind it's as if they were coming out of the water every morning as the sun had risen from the primeval waters at the beginning of time. This association of Re and Sobek/crocodiles is contemporary to the tombs at North Asasif – for instance there is a tomb in South Asasif whose owner is called Sobek-Re. But Chudzik noted that this is still insufficient to explain the presence of the crocodile pieces in the tomb. He turned now to funerary texts that reference Re and crocodiles – starting with a papyrus found in the 13th Dynasty era tomb that is beneath the later Ramesseum (pRam VI) talks about the association of the crocodile and Re. Other parts of the Coffin Texts also talk about the deceased taking the form of the crocodile and travelling every day from the east to the west with the sun god Re. There's no explanation in these texts for why taking on the form of a crocodile is desirable – for that Chudzik turned to the Pyramid Texts. In these texts there is a discussion of the deceased king taking the form of the god and also the substance of the god. So Chudzik interprets the Coffin Texts as referring to not just taking the shape (form) of the crocodile but also taking on the attributes of the god and being able to do whatever the god can do – taking the spirit of the god and thus his power, which then protected the deceased during his journey with Re. Another Coffin Text also refers to taking the

face and the spirit of the crocodile. So this seems to Chudzik to be a plausible explanation for the crocodile pieces he has found in MMA508 and MMA509A – they are there as a protective element, so that the deceased can protect himself by taking the shape and spirit of these crocodiles.

Chudzik now moved on to things that the tombs can tell us about the history of the period – in particular how reunification affected the art of the time. Again he was focusing on the tomb of Khety (MMA508/TT311). From the graffiti in Shatt er-Rigal that he discussed earlier in the talk they know that Khety lived through at least year 39 of the king's reign, and so the art in his tomb changes as the prevailing style changes. At first it's in the provincial style – the mortuary chapel is in this style. The proportions look all wrong – in particular the legs, arms and eyes don't have realistic proportions. This was the style of all the art in the Theban region during the First Intermediate Period up until the reunification. When Montuhotep II conquered the north the Thebans came into contact again with the artisans in the Memphite region who had passed down the style of the Memphite Old Kingdom. The art style in the south then changes to the older Memphite style which has much more realistic proportions. This happens even in projects that were already ongoing – the burial chamber of Khety's tomb is in the newly reintroduced Memphite style. Chudzik says that some people say there was no direct contact between the artisans of the north and the artisans of the south – that instead the southern craftsmen visited Memphis and figured out the way to do that style of art themselves without being taught. However he thinks this is not the case, and sees some of the ostraca that they have found in the tomb of Khety as proof that the two groups of artisans met. These three ostraca have trial sketches (for instance of an ear, or of the king) in the Memphite style. And Chudzik told us these demonstrate that the artisans of the north had been brought to the south and were teaching the local craftsmen to use the Memphite style.

As part of their work at the site Chudzik's team is also preparing the tombs to be opened to the public – the first one will be Meru's tomb (MMA517/TT240), which they have finished cleaning and conserving. Hopefully in the autumn of 2022 it'll be open – this will be the oldest tomb open to the public in the Theban necropolis (and the first Middle Kingdom one that people will be able to visit). Chudzik also showed us some photos of one of the other tombs where they are working to put in a new wooden floor because there are open shafts in the actual floor.

They are also now working on tomb MMA507, the tomb of the soldiers – this was first excavated by Winlock who came to the conclusion that these were Montuhotep II's troops who died in the war of reunification. However the names on the linen wrappings suggest a 12th Dynasty date instead. So Chudzik and his team are beginning to re-excavate this tomb so see what they can find. Many of the remains are still in the tomb, so they can be examined with modern methods. However rather oddly none of the skulls are there. They may have been removed by Winlock for analysis (as it was only really skulls they were interested in measuring and investigating in the 1920s), however there's no mention of it in Winlock's excavation reports nor do Cairo Museum know where they are. It's possible that they are stored somewhere in Luxor, or less plausibly they may have been stolen during the several decade period the tomb was accessible after Winlock's excavations (though Chudzik couldn't see why someone would steal only the skulls).

Chudzik finished off his talk by briefly touching on the history of the tombs after their use in the early Middle Kingdom and before their excavation. During their investigations they have found quite a lot of fragments of the later use of the tombs, and they are now starting to reconstruct this history of reuse. Khety's tomb (MMA508/TT311) was still open and visited throughout the 12th Dynasty – some of the graffiti on the walls has the names of visitors to the tomb, and some has the names of later kings which dates this graffiti. There's also a lot of secondary graffiti

from the Second Intermediate Period and the 18th & 19th Dynasties. In the graffiti the tomb is referred to as being that of "the father of my father of my father", which is the way that the Egyptians referred to their ancestors. There are also some secondary burials, which date to the early 18th Dynasty – but he doesn't know precisely where these were because they have only found fragments of these. Another way that the tomb was reused was by destruction of parts of the walls to make limestone bowls. This happened sometime around the end of the New Kingdom and the early 21st Dynasty. It wasn't confined solely to the tombs of North Asasif – there's evidence of the same happening at Hatshepsut's temple, so this appears to be widespread destruction. There is evidence for extensive reuse of the site in the Third Intermediate Period when there was a large scale necropolis at North Asasif – for instance there appear to have been over 21 burials from this time in the tomb of Khety. They haven't found many objects from this time but do have some fragments of coffins and cartonnage from the 21st to the 22nd Dynasty. Then there seem to have been no more burials – nothing dating to the Late Period – but they do have a piece of textile naming someone called Khonsuiraa. He's known from statues that have been found at Karnak, so perhaps he was buried at North Asasif but there is no sign of any other objects relating to him here so this textile may have been transferred by later visitors from wherever he was buried.

This was a really interesting talk, showing us how re-excavating previously excavated sites can teach us so much more about the period and the site. I found the crocodile heads particularly intriguing and enjoyed Chudzik talking us through his thought processes as he tried to find an explanation for these finds.