

## **Discoveries of the tombs from the late Early Dynastic to the early Old Kingdom and New Kingdom at North Saqqara**

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A Japanese Egyptian archaeological mission to North Saqqara directed by Professor Nozomu Kawai of Kanazawa University, Japan, has uncovered several tombs dating from the late Second Dynasty to the early Third Dynasty and the Eighteenth Dynasty in the New Kingdom during the excavation at the eastern escarpment in August and September 2024. The mission began excavating the eastern escarpment of the North Saqqara plateau in 2017 and discovered a Greco-Roman catacomb, New Kingdom pit burials, the tombs from the Late Period to the Ptolemaic period, and the surface burials from the Roman Period in the previous seasons.

The eighth season of the excavation conducted in August and September 2024 has revealed several new tombs dating from the Early Dynastic Period to the Greco-Roman Period. Notably, the mission discovered four new tombs dating from the late Second Dynasty to the early Third Dynasty, including two mudbrick mastaba tombs and two rock-cut tombs. One mastaba tomb (NST03) near the edge of the North Saqqara plateau has a mudbrick superstructure and a shaft sealed by a limestone portcullis at the passage's entrance connecting to the tomb's burial chamber. Another mastaba tomb (NST06) is located adjacent to the limestone rocky cliff. It consists of a mudbrick superstructure, measuring approximately 5 x 4 m in plan, and a rectangular shaft in its center, hewn in the bedrock of the rocky cliff. We found several stone vessels in its vicinity, including an Egyptian alabaster plate and limestone dummy cylinder vessels dating from the late Second Dynasty to the early Third Dynasty. We also found a limestone portcullis inside the shaft and hope to excavate further in the coming season. Although we have not cleaned two newly found rock-cut tombs (NST04, 05), their mudbrick size suggests a date to the same period as the mudbrick mastaba tombs. The importance of these discoveries of the tombs dating from the late Second Dynasty to the early Third Dynasty is that the extent of the contemporary cemetery at North Saqqara seems to have been more extensive than previously thought.

Over ten pit burials dating to the early to the middle of the Eighteenth Dynasty have been excavated during the season in 2024. Most of them have already been plundered. However, the diagnostic pottery vessels and the amulets found with the human remains provide that date. The discovery of the dense concentration of the early Eighteenth Dynasty pit tombs provides evidence for the formation of the Saqqara necropolis at the beginning of the New Kingdom when Memphis was re-established as the capital city after the expulsion of the Hyksos.

The restoration and clearance work of the Greco-Roman catacomb continued this season. The team found a mummified human remain (Fig. 10), several artifacts, including a terracotta model of the funerary chapel, a fragment of the head of the terracotta figurine of the goddess Isis-Aphrodite, some fragments of wooden coffins, and pottery shards.