INSCRIBED FUNERARY CONES
FROM THE THEBAN NECROPOLIS

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The Waseda University Archaeological Mission has excavated at Malkata-South on the west bank of Thebes, Luxor since January, 1972. Since 1980 we have been excavating and cleaning the private tombs of the New Kingdom. Up to now, we have studied the tombs No. 241, W-1 at al-Khokha, and the tombs No. 128, 129, 317, 318, W-2 at Sheikh Abd al-Qurna. At the beginning, we aimed to study only the tomb No. 318, but we decided to excavate and clean the other four tombs connected with one another. (Fig. 1, Fig. 2, Fig. 3)

We have found a lot of objects. They are faience and clay ushabties, faience amulets of “the sons of Horus”, faience scarabs with wings, beads, parts of wooden “statuette of Ptah-Sokar-Osiris”, a wooden statuette of “Ba”, a wooden statuette of “Horus”, ear-shaped wooden models, fragments of potteries, funerary cones and some other objects.

The final reports of these seven tombs are being prepared now and will be published soon.

In this paper, I will concentrate on funerary cones and examine them in detail.

I Funerary Cones

Generally funerary cones are conical pottery objects, most of which are found near private tombs at the Theban necropolis. They were used from the 11th to 18th dynasties. However, most of them belonged to the 18th or the 19th dynasty.

In the first stage which goes back as early as the 11th dynasty, the flat part of the bottoms of the cones were left plain without any inscriptions.

In the end of the 17th dynasty, however, the names and titles of the tomb

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Fig. 1 The location of the tombs in the Theban necropolis
Fig. 2 The plans of the tombs No. 241 and W-1
Fig. 3 The plans of the tombs Nos. 128, 129, 317, 318 and W-2
owners were started to be stamped on the faces of the bottoms of the cones. The names and titles were carved on the bases of the bottoms before the clay dried, with stamps, probably made of hard wood. The shapes of the name stamps are circular, oval or square.

The funerary cones were hand-modelled or coil-built and some of them have kept the fingerprints of craftsmen on the surfaces formed while making the cones.

The forms of the funerary cones are chiefly conical cone-types, but rare examples of brick-types and wedge-types are reported.

Number of the cones reported to have been found in complete form is limited. In the Petrie collection only eighteen different sorts of complete cones have been reported and eleven out of the eighteen are in the range of 22~25cm in length. The range of the size of the name stamp is quite wide (from 3.9 to 10.2cm), but two thirds of the cones reported in D. & M. have diameters of 5.5cm to 7.5cm.

On the other hand, in the case of brick-type cones only four examples are reported as complete in the Petrie collection. The sizes of them are different from one another and there seems to be no general rule among them. The sizes are 16.8×7.7×3.5cm, 16.5×9.0×8.8cm, 29.3×13.0×8.8cm and 5.9×3.8×3.7cm.

The inscriptions carved on the bottoms of the cones are divided into several groups. About 30% of the cones have the phrase of “im3hy ḫr Wsir (one revered by Osiris).” There are many unknown points about the purpose of funerary cones. There are some different theories of how they were used. One theory says that they are models of bread or cakes used for offerings. In another theory, they are considered to be superficial decorations imitating the wooden beams supporting the roof of a house.

At the excavations of the 11th dynasty tombs of the Middle Kingdom in Deir al-Bahri and al-Tarif, funerary cones were found over the entrance of the rock-cut tombs, in horizontal rows embedded in the facades showing the flat round bottoms. But they are very rare cases.

On the wall paintings of the hall of the tomb No. 181, the tomb of Neb-amen and Ipuky, of the late 18th dynasty, at al-Khokha, funerary cones are depicted as round brown circles in four horizontal rows. In each row there are 15 circles. Still another theory says that they were used to mark the
location of the tombs in case they might have been covered and lost in sand.

Part of the studies on inscribed funerary cones by N. de G. Davies was edited by M. F. Macadam and issued under the title of "A Corpus of Inscribed Egyptian Funerary Cones" (in this paper abbreviated as D. & M.) by Oxford in 1957. However, only the first part containing the plates was issued, and though Macadam has promised to issue the second part containing the source-lists and commentaries by Davies, so far it has not been published. However, D. & M. remains the best corpus of inscribed funerary cones, having 611 full-scale drawings of name stamps discovered in the Theban necropolis.(20)

H. M. Stewart has published the detailed catalogue on the funerary cones in the Petrie collection. In this catalogue, 161 different sorts of cones belonging to 142 individuals are listed. 50 cones could have been attributed to particular 39 tombs. The rest of the cones (about 70%) are not yet attributed to any tomb. Their related tombs have not been identified. It is because most of the cones of the Petrie collection were purchased and not excavated.(21)

Stewart's catalogue has informations about related tombs, sizes and sorts of cones and references which cannot be obtained from D. & M. So it is of very great use.

Funerary cones are rarely found in their original condition or places, because in many cases the facade of tombs have been collapsed or the tombs have been reused in later times. Also tombs have been destructed by tomb-robbers. So it would be of value to be able to discuss on the funerary cones discovered through the excavations, though they have not been found in their original places.

II Cones from excavations

We have found 52 funerary cones. 51 cones of them are cone-types. And one is a brick-type. Out of these cones, the inscriptions on 16 of them could have been deciphered by comparing with D. & M.. The deciphered cones have the names and titles of the following seven nobles.

a) Aahmose (I’h-ms)
im3hy hr Wsir sﬂ-nsw m3’ n nb-t3wy I’h-ms m3’-hrrw hr ‘3-ntr (D. & M. # 178)

"One revered by Osiris, true king’s scribe of the two lands, Aahmose,
We have found three cones in a tunnel, which is situated at the side of an entrance of the tomb No. 241 at al-Khokha. These cones certainly belonged to Aahmose (‘I’h-ms), who was the owner of the tomb No. 241. One of them is almost complete, although the top of the cone is missing. The length of this cone is 22.1cm. So it seems that the original complete length was approximately 23cm. The diameter of the bottom of the cone is 6.5cm and the diameter of the frame of the name stamp is 6.1cm. The inscriptions of the name stamps are clear in raised relief. Aamose, the owner of the tomb No. 241, probably had another kind of funerary cone, D. & M. #234, with the following inscriptions.

“‘I’h-ms...... hrd n k3p n Mrit-‘Imn m3’-hrw (Aahmose...... child of the nursery of princess Merytamen).” One of his titles, “hrd n k3p” was carved on the flat bottom of this cone. Merytamen was a princess of Tuthmosis III, a queen of Amenophis II and was known as Aahmose Merytamen (‘I’h-ms Mrit-‘Imn).(23)

A. W. Shorter estimated that the tomb No. 241 was built in the first half of the reign of Tuthmosis III, judging from the colors of the background of the wall paintings.(24) If D. & M. #234 belongs to the owner of the tomb No. 241, we will be able to estimate the date of the construction more correctly.

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Fig. 5  The name stamps of the cones and and the inscription of the stone statue (canopic jar?)
b) Senemi'oh (Sn-m'-i'h)

śś ḫsb-t n Ṣm3w Mḥw Sn-m-i’h m3’-ḥrw ḥr ʾ3-nṯr (D. & M. # 494)

"Accountant of grain of Upper and Lower Egypt, Snemi'oh, justified with the great god." (Fig. 5–2)

Seven funerary cones were found in the forecourt of the tomb Nos. 128 and 129. Six of them are cone-types and the other is a brick-type. These cones were attributed to the tomb No. 127. Senemi'oh, the owner of the tomb No. 127, was living in the reign of Tuthmosis III. And this tomb was usurped in the Ramesside period. Funerary cones of Senemi’oh were probably removed from the original place at that time. The tomb No. 127 is situated only 15m west from the entrance of the tomb No. 129. All of the six cone-type cones are not complete in shape and only bottom parts remain. Average diameter of the bottoms of the cones is approximately 7.5cm. The diameter of the frame of the name stamp is 6.2cm. And part of the bottoms are painted in red color.

The brick-type cone is not complete, either and its original size is not certain. Fortunately, however, Stewart has reported the same sort of brick-type cone, complete in size and shape, of Senemi'oh in the Petrie collection. Therefore, we can estimate the size of this cone. According to Stewart, the size is $29.3 \times 13.0 \times 8.8$cm.

The cones of D. & M. # 446, # 447, # 514 and # 556 may also belong to the owner of the tomb No. 127, Senemi'oh. The titles deciphered on the surfaces of the cones D. & M. # 446, # 447, # 514 and # 556 are as follows: "hereditary noble, steward of Montu at Iwny (Hermonthis), overseer of the treasury, overseer of gs-pr and accountant of cattle" (# 446), "hereditary noble, steward of Montu at Iwny, accountant of cattle of Amen and overseer of the treasury" (# 447), "hereditary noble and steward of Montu at Iwny" (# 514) and "accountant of cattle of Amen and overseer of gs-pr" (# 556). Comparing the titles, it is clear that all of these cones belonged to the only one person, Senemi'oh. Their inscriptions were also written in horizontal lines and were without any dividing lines. Therefore, they are similar to D. & M. # 494 cone in some points.

c) Kenna (Kn-n3)

im3ḥy ḥr Wsir sš s’t n ḫm-nṯr ṭpy n ’Imn Kn-n3 m3’-ḥrw ḥr ʾ3-nṯr

“One revered by Osiris, secretary of the first prophet of Amen, Kenna,
justified with the great god.” (Fig. 5–3)

Three funerary cones had the title and name of Kenna. We found them during removing the sand of the forecourt of the tomb No. 128 and No. 129. D. & M. # 433 has the same inscriptions as these cones, but it is written from left to right, while our cones are written from right to left. Furthermore, D. & M. # 433 is not perfect. The first line of it is missing. Fortunately I can see that missing part on the cones we have found, although the fourth line has not been able to be deciphered. The first line is “im3ḥy ḫr Wsir (one revered by Osiris)”.

The name-stamps on the bottoms of these cones are in sunk relief. The flat parts of the bottoms of these cones are painted in red color just as Sene-mi‘oh’s cones. The average diameter of the bottoms of the cones is approximately 7cm. And the diameter of the frame of the name stamp of them is 5.3cm.

Judging from the way the inscriptions were carved, it seems that these cones were made in the late New Kingdom or the early Late Dynasties.

And we have also found a fragment of a stone statue (or a canopic jar?), which had the same title and name of Kenna on it. The title and name deciphered on it are as follows:” ḫr Kbḥ-snwy f ...... [im3ḥ]y ḫr Kbḥ-snwy f [ṣṣ š’t n] ḥm-nfr tpy n ‘Imn ḫn-[n3 m3’-ḥrw] (...) Kebehsenuf ...... [one revered] by Kebehsenuf, [secretary of] the first prophet of Amen, Ken[na, justified]” (Fig. 5–8)

The tomb of Kenna has not been discovered yet, but it is my opinion that his tomb must be situated in the neighborhood.

d) Dehutnefer (Dhwty-nfr)

im3ḥy ḫr [Wsir sḥ]-nsy Dhwty-[nfr m3’-ḥrw] (D. & M. # 176)

“One revered by Osiris, king’s scribe, Dehutnefer, justified.” (Fig. 5–4)

We found this cone during removing the sand of the forecourt of the tomb Nos. 128 & 129, too. The upper right half of the cone had been lost. The restored diameter of the bottom of the cone is about 7cm and the diameter of the frame of the name stamp is 5.4cm. The inscriptions, which were stamped on the bottom, are very clear and elaborate. So, it was quite easy to decipher them.

This cone may have belonged to Dehutnefer, the owner of the tomb No. 317, which is next to tomb No. 128. But the title of Dehutnefer, which was
carved on the wall of the hall of the tomb No. 317, is the following:” ss ḫsb-it m šnwt ḫpt-ntr [nt 'Imn] (accountant of the granary of sacred offerings to Amen).” It is different from the title carved on the cone.(28) And the forecourt of the tomb No. 317 now is situated under an inhabited house, so we can not excavate to confirm that it really belonged to this Dehutnefer.

There are two other tombs belonging to Dehutnefer who had the title of "king's scribe" in the area of Sheikh Abd al-Qurna. They are the tombs Nos. 80 and 104.(29) The tomb No. 80 is 250m west of the tomb No. 128, and the tomb No. 104 is 250m north of the tomb No. 128. Furthermore, Dehutnefer, the owner of the two tombs, had another sort of cone, D. & M. # 492 with the following inscriptions: "ss-nsw imy-r pr-hd Dhwty-nfr m3'-hrw nbt-pr hnwt T3-h' (king’s scribe, overseer of the treasury, Dehutnefer, justified, mistress of the house, his wife, Takha).”

e) Paser (P3-sr)

ḥry šmww [ḥry pdty] ḥrd n k3p P3-sr m3'-ḥrw (D. & M. # 230)

"Chief retainer, chief bowman, page, Paser, justified." (Fig. 5-5)

This cone was also found in the forecourt of the tomb Nos. 128 and 129. Paser was the owner of the tomb No. 367. He was living in the reign of Amenophis II.(30) The diameter of the bottom of this cone is approximately 6cm. And the diameter of the frame of the name stamp is 5.3cm. This cone has three lines in vertical writing, but the upper part of the second line was too defaced to read. The tomb No. 367 is situated about 330m west of the place where the cone was discovered.

f) Ramose (R'-msw)

dw3-k R’ tp-dw3yt [rp’t smr w’ty h3t-’ ḫnt wrw imy-r niwt t3ty R’-msw] m3'-ḥrw (D. & M. # 132)(31)

"Thou adorest Re at dawn, hereditary noble, sole companion, foremost of the great ones, overseer of the city, vizier, Ramose, justified.” (Fig. 5-6)

This funerary cone belonged to well-known Ramose, who was the governor of Thebes and the vizier under Amenophis IV. His tomb (tomb No. 55) is approximately 80m south-west of the tomb No. 128. The lower left half of the cone had been lost. The inscriptions and dividing lines are very clear and elaborate. Ramose had another sort of cone, D. & M. # 133 with the
same inscriptions. The inscriptions are written from right to left on the cone #132, whereas on the cone #133 they are written from left to right. And the determinatives of the word “adore” are written in different ways. On #132 it is carved as a picture of standing man (A4), and on #133 it is a picture of kneeling man (A30). 

(g) Roy (R3-y)

ṣš imy-r pr-hḏ ṯmy-r šnwty n Mnṯw m ’Īwny R3-y (D. & M. #345)

“Scribe, overseer of the treasury, overseer of the granaries of Montu at Iwny (Hermouthis), Roy.” (Fig. 5–7)

This cone was unearthed from a shaft of the tomb W-2, which is situated to the east of the forecourt of the tombs Nos. 128 and 129.

The surface of a bottom of the cone was so damaged that it was not easy to decipher the inscriptions. The shape of the name stamp is narrow oval, so the bottom of the cone itself is also oval. The size of the bottom of the cone is about 7.5cm and 6cm from one side to the other. And the size of the name stamp is 7.2cm and 4.2cm. It was stamped badly at the angle of 30 degrees, so two sides of the frame are missing. Roy had another kind of cone, D. & M. #122, with the following inscriptions: “ṣš imy-r pr-hḏ R3-y, ṯmy-r šnwty n Mnṯw m ’Īwny R3-y, ḫry mrw R3-y, sš imy-r gs-pr R3-y (scribe, overseer of the treasury, Roy, overseer of the granaries of Montu at Iwny, Roy, chief of weavers, Roy, scribe, overseer of gs-pr, Roy).”

Having closely reported on the funerary cones excavated, it seems that the biggest problem at present is that most of the cones are not attributed to their original tombs. Even the places where they were found have in many cases not been reported. For example, in the Petrie collection, 64 funerary cones (including complete ones) of Wsy are reported to have been found at Dra Abu al-Naga, but the exact location of the discovery has not been reported, and so his tomb which must be situated nearby has not been discovered yet. If we knew the exact place, we could have located the tomb and could have gained more information. Furthermore, new questions have come up.

1. Why was the use of funerary cones concentrated in the New Kingdom and in the Theban necropolis?

2. Considering the fact that some individuals had more than one sort of
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cones is it possible to think they made new cones when their titles had been changed?

3. What was the social and religious background behind the use of the funerary cones?

Some of the questions may be answered when the related tombs of the funerary cones are discovered.

Notes

(4) The tomb W-1 was found while cleaning the tomb No. 241 and the tomb W-2 was found at the cleaning of the forecourt of the tomb No. 129 by chance. They have not been registered or numbered, so we tentatively call them W-1 and W-2.
(7) Ibid., p. 34.
(8) H. M. Stewart, op. cit., p. 23.
(9) A. Eggebrecht, ‘Grabkegel’ in Helck et al., Lexikon der Ägyptologie.
(10) H. M. Stewart, op. cit., pp. 25–79.
(12) H. M. Stewart, op. cit., pp. 27–76.
(13) N. de G. Davies and M. F. L. Macadam, op. cit.
(19) C. K. Wilkinson, op. cit., p. 16.
(20) N. de G. Davies and M. F. L. Macadam, op. cit.
(21) H. M. Stewart, op. cit.
(22) H. M. Stewart, op. cit., p. 23.
(24) A. W. Shorter, “The Tomb of Aahmose, supervisor of the mysteries in the house of the


(27) H. M. Stewart, op. cit., p. 70.


Urk. IV. 1457.

(31) Urk. IV. 1791 (636).


(33) H. M. Stewart, op. cit., pp. 78–79.