Preliminary Report on the Work Carried out During the Season 2011
in the undecorated tombs KV 26, KV 29, KV 30, KV 31, KV 32, KV 37, KV 40, KV 59.

Susanne Bickel, Elina Paulin-Grothe, Tanja Alsheimer

Report on work performed on undecorated non-royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings in the side valley leading toward the tomb of Thutmosis III: KV 26, KV 29, KV 30, KV 31, KV 32, KV 37, KV 40, KV 59. The main purposes of the project include the documentation of the tombs' very different architectural layouts, the historical reconstruction of the various phases of use and earlier clearings, as well as the study of the fragmentary finds still remaining inside the structures. As a measure of protection for the structures and people, the shafts are covered with an iron door fitting discretely into the surrounding site.

This 13th season of the University of Basel in the Valley of the Kings started on January 07th, 2011 and lasted until April 15th 2011. The participants were Faried Adrom, Tanja Alsheimer, Susanne Bickel, Claudia Gamma, Elina Paulin-Grothe, Frederik Rogner and Stephanie Vieli.[1] We would like to express our sincere thanks to the members of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, to the former Minister of Antiquities Dr. Zahi Hawass and to the Director of Foreign Missions, Dr. Mohamed Ismail Khaled, to the General Director of Egyptian Antiquities Department of SCA Dr. Sabri Abd El-Aziz, to the General Director of the Antiquities of Upper Egypt Mr. Alia Radwan, to the Director of Luxor Mr. Mansour Boreik and to the Inspectorate of Western Thebes and its General Director Mr. Mostafa Waziri, to the Director of the Westbank Mr. Nour Abd El-Ghaffar, to the Director of the Valley of the Kings Dr. Mohamed Abd El-Aziz Ahmed. Our work has been effectively supported by the representatives of the Supreme Council of Antiquities Chief-Inspector Mr. Aiman Ibrahim and the Inspectors Mr. Ahmed Yaseen and Mr. Ali Reda.

The main tasks during this season were the following:

1. Clearing of the tombs KV 29 and KV 40 was started.
2. Clearing of the chamber in KV 59 was completed.
3. Documenting of finds and pottery from earlier seasons was continued.
4. New feature was discovered on the north side of KV 40 and here called KV 40b.
5. KV 29 and KV 40 and KV 40b were protected with iron doors.

Undecorated tombs are numerous in the of the Valley of the Kings and most of them can be dated to the Eighteenth Dynasty, more precisely to the Thutmoside period, according to their architecture and situation in the Valley. The history of the discovery and excavations of these tombs is very badly not at all documented. Our work aims at gathering more information about the various architectural patterns and remaining traces of the burials of this group of tombs (KV 26, KV 29, KV 30, KV 31, KV 32, KV 37, KV 40, KV 59) along the path to the tomb of Thutmosis III (KV 34) (fig. 1).

Work in KV 29

The undecorated tomb KV 29 has probably been known at least since 1825. In 1899 it was given the number 59 but no records are known concerning an excavation inside. It is situated on a sloping hill to the East of the path leading to the identified 18th dynasty tombs KV 32 (Queen Tiaa), KV 42 (Thutmosis II/Queen Meritre-Hatshepsut?) and finally KV 34 (Thutmosis III). The latest information before our clearing is the plan of the entrance of the shaft in the Theban Mapping Project. (Fig. 2)

The clearing of the shaft was started in January 2011. About half of its depth included modern rubbish, namely plastic from the years after the sixties of the last century and layers from the last flood 1994. This corresponds to the result of the TMP. Under the modern layers, the shaft’s content was again debris brought in by earlier floods (fig. 3). No objects or sherds were included in these layers. Towards the bottom of the deep and wide shaft, the last 3 meters were filled with very hard limestone chips and sand. In these layers only few pottery sherds remained with 4 fragments of a small alabaster jar. No organic remains were preserved in the shaft and the dating of the earlier floods is still unknown. The floor of the shaft lays approx. 9 m under the surface of the hillside. The clearing of the tomb with at least one chamber, also flooded, will be continued in the following season. No traces of a burial were found in the shaft. In the end of the season KV 29 was covered with an iron door and sealed.

Work in KV 59

The tomb is situated in the horizontal bedrock under the very high vertical cliff in the east side of the path to KV 34, between the tombs KV 26 and KV 37 and opposite KV 31. The shaft of KV 59 was cleared in the previous season. This year the burial chamber was analysed. The tomb has stayed open for a longer period and several floods entered down into the small room on the east side of the shaft. It is not known when this tomb has been discovered in modern times, but it seems that it has been robbed of all its contents.

The entire room B has been flooded. The chamber was filled with debris from the entrance up to the middle of the chamber. The flood layers were documented, it seems that the debris dried 3 times after the rainfalls. Each of the layers was approx. 20cm high. A very clear line in the walls of the chamber shows the height of the fill. In the sandy debris brought in by water from outside of the tomb, only a few pottery sherds, dating to the New Kingdom, were found. The size of the chamber is approx. 3x3 m and its height is 1.8 – 2 m, the lowermost part being the east end of the room (fig. 4). Despite the humidity and the floods, the cliff is still very solid. No information concerning burials was discovered, nor any objects, and it remains unclear if the tomb was ever used for a burial. The modern history of the tomb and its discovery is not clear, its number 59 is one of the last in the Valley
All of the above mentioned tomb entrances were measured above ground for a new topographical map of the area of our concession.

Work above ground

This was also taken into consideration during the survey and documented as such. Features such as possible broken steps and other structural features such as steps into rooms and mason marks were recorded. A section of the tomb was surveyed.

The tomb was surveyed in the same way as KV 31. This involved importing the TMP coordinate system into the tomb and using this as the basis for surveying. The documentation of finds and pottery continued in this season. The pottery from KV 31 shows several shapes of 18th dynasty jars. All the sherds were labelled with a code for their find spot and it shows that the fragments for the different jars were scattered in all the 3 rooms (B, C, D) inside the tomb and that further sherds must also be found outside the tomb, because only very few jars could be completely reconstructed. Flowerpots were found in the lowest layers in the shaft A and in the room D. 12 Hes-vases of different fabrics were found in chambers C and D. Sherds of globular jars, small plates and three jugs of the Thutmosid period coming from chambers C and D were glued together. The reconstruction of more than 50 large jars with white slip was started in February (fig. 8). Drawings were made of the objects and ostraca from KV 31 and this work will continue in the coming season.

Documentation of pottery

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Surveying of tombs KV 40, KV 31, and KV 59

During the field season 2011, surveying work was undertaken in three tombs as well as on the area around them. Different tasks were undertaken, such as the architectural surveying of two tombs and pre-clearing documentation in one tomb. As clearing work was concentrated in tombs KV 31, KV 59 and KV 40 the surveying work naturally followed this. The TMP survey network was as usual used as the basis for surveying.

KV 40 and surrounding area

The initial clearing work in KV 40 was started this season. To this work belonged documentation of the debris in the main chambers of the tomb. A careful survey of pottery and other debris found in the tomb including stone boulders was carried out. The position of the stone boulders and the various types of debris was planned and a pre-clearing plan of the main chamber axis in the tomb was made. In addition to this a rough outline of the main chambers in the tomb was surveyed. This is to give an idea of how the debris is positioned in the chambers before next year’s work. A more thorough architectural survey will be carried out during future field seasons.

Possibly associated with KV 40 is a new feature KV 40b. This feature was surveyed in the general plan and its position in relation to KV 40 was documented. The correct outlines of the feature were documented for sealing the entrance protection lid.

KV 31

Surveying work in KV 31 had already begun during field season 2010 by importing the TMP coordinate system into the tomb. This year the work continued with an architectural survey of the tomb. At the beginning of the work the coordinate system inside the tomb was checked and the correlation to TMP’s coordinate system verified. Work was started in the side chambers and from there moved on to the rest of the tomb. Structural features such as steps into rooms and mason marks were recorded. A section of the tomb was surveyed.

KV 59

The tomb was surveyed in the same way as KV 31. This involved importing the TMP coordinate system into the tomb and using this as the internal coordinate system for the surveying of the tomb. A standard architectural survey was carried out in the tomb, which involves a base plan and a section of the tomb and shaft. As the outline of debris in the tomb was still visible as a dust mark on the tomb walls this was also taken into consideration during the survey and documented as such. Features such as possible broken steps and other traces were documented.

Work above ground

All of the above mentioned tomb entrances were measured above ground for a new topographical map of the area of our concession.

[1] Due to the revolution, part of the members of the mission had to leave early or to postpone their participation on site.