

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.

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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]

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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 Thutmose period, according to their architecture and situation in the Valley. The history of the discovery and excavations of these tombs is very badly or 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 29 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 lower most 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



Fig. 1. Preliminary plan of the side valley leading to the tomb of Thutmosis III with location of undecorated tombs.

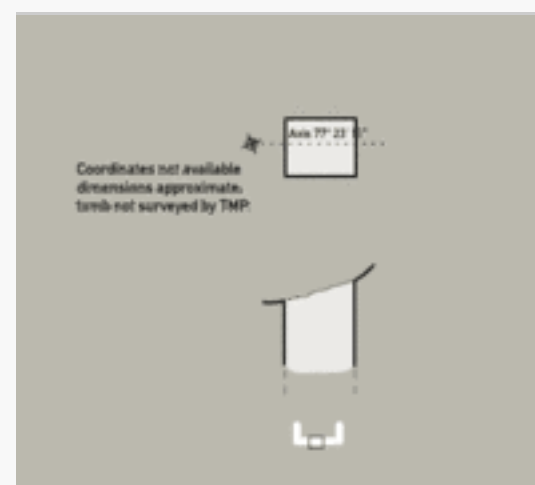


Fig. 2. Theban Mapping Project, KV 29.



Fig. 3. KV 29, flood layer in shaft.



Fig. 4. KV 59, room B.



Fig. 5. KV 40 before work.

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of the Kings.

The tomb entrance was covered with an iron door as a protection against future rains and for security.

Work in KV 40

Tomb KV 40 lies on the slope at the east side of the path towards the tomb of Thutmosis III, to the north of KV 59 and northwest of KV 26. Nothing was known about this tomb or its first discovery. The shaft was filled up to the surface of the surrounding area around the tomb (fig. 5)

In this season the shaft was cleared from modern garbage reaching ca. 2m underneath the surface, until a layer of limestone chips, sand and some flint boulders appeared. Remains of a big wasp nest show that the shaft stayed open for some time in the past. Water had also entered into the shaft. Debris without any modern remains continued down to the floor of the shaft. Some 50 cm above the floor were many fragments of Nile silt, a total amount of ca. 3 m². None of the fragments has stamps. This Nile silt probably was used for the sealing of the entrance. Behind the shaft, the tomb consists of a corridor B, where our work continued until January 25, 2011. This corridor shows strong traces of a fire above the surface of the debris. The few fragments of wood are in bad condition, damaged from termites and water. The pottery, which was found inside the corridor, dates to the 18th Dynasty. Many of the human bone fragments are fragile and belong to children or young adults. The further rooms C, D, E and F, which have all suffered from a heavy fire and plundering, shall be cleared in the coming season.

According to the permission of the SCA, work continued outside the shaft of KV 40 in order to cover the entrance with an iron door. For this security door, which leaves the original size and shape of the shaft visible for future work, the area surrounding the tomb was cleared from debris. During the preparations for the protective brick wall on the north side of KV 40, we discovered a manmade feature under a heap of big stones, only 1,5 m from the shaft edge of KV 40 (fig. 6-7). The feature KV 40b measures approx. 1 m by 2 m. Because of its position very close to KV 40, it could be a foundation deposit for this tomb. Due to its small size, it could also be just the beginning of an unfinished shaft. This feature KV 40b was also covered by an iron door like KV 40 and shall be cleared by us in the next season.

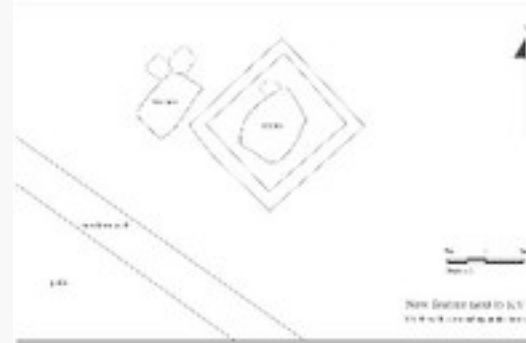


Fig. 6. Sketch of KV 40 and feature KV 40b.



Fig. 7. KV 40 and feature KV 40b.



Fig. 8. Pottery from KV 31.

Documentation of pottery

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 and shapes were found in chambers C and D. Sherds of globular jars, small plates and three jugs of the Thutmotide 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.

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 before being sealed with an 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.