

Preliminary report on work carried out during the field season 2014–2015

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Participants during this season were: Susanne Bickel: Project Director, Egyptologist; Elina Paulin-Grothe: Field-Director, Egyptologist; Tanja Alsheimer: Archaeologist; Agnieszka Wos-Jucker: Textile Conservator; Erico Peintner: Conservator; Matjaz Kacicnik: Photographer; Faried Adrom, David Aston, Claudia Gamma, Miriam Hauser, Florence Mauric-Barberio, Nadine Meier, Yasmin Müller, Hans-Hubertus Münch, Daniel Reber, Stephanie Vieli: Egyptologists; Christiane Jacquat and Rim Hamdy: Archaeo-Botanists; Frank Ruehli: medical doctor and palaeopathologist; Roger Seiler Palaeodentistry; Lena Öhrström: Radiologist; Liliane Seiler; Nakita Frater and Sabrina Meyer: Anthropologists.

Work in the concession area of the side valley leading to the tomb of Thutmosis III (fig. 1) started in November 2014 and concentrated on reassembling the pottery from KV 40 and photographic documentation.

The main season from early January to the end of March 2015 was dedicated to the conservation and analysis of the abundant fragmentary remains from KV 40: wooden objects, cartonage, textiles, pottery, and botanical remains. The anthropological assessment and radiological documentation of the fragmented human remains was begun. The clearing of an area in front of KV 64 and KV 40 was undertaken and the archaeological and architectural documentation of the tomb structures was continued.

The study of fragments of wall decoration from the tomb of Sety I, KV 17, was resumed.

1. Documentation of finds

Finds from KV 40

Antique and modern looting and a heavy fire have left the remnant material in KV 40 in a highly deteriorated state of preservation. This condition poses an important challenge to the conservation and the assessment of the various categories of remains.

Conservation and study of selected finds

Conservation work mainly concentrated on the fragments of cartonage, wood and textiles.

- Numerous fragments of cartonage (fig. 2-3) and wood from both the Eighteenth Dynasty and the Third Intermediate Period were cleaned from soot, consolidated, and reassembled. The observation of construction techniques of linen cartonage yields insight into different production processes and will help differentiate periods of production and workshops.

- The consolidation and conservation of a linen sock from KV 40, presumably from the Eighteenth Dynasty, was continued (fig. 4). Other textiles from the same tomb were cleaned and analysed, some 80 specific pieces inventoried and others categorised according to six different qualities of fabric.

- Over one thousand fragments of wooden coffins and furniture from KV 40 were classified and some one hundred more relevant pieces were documented and prepared for study (fig. 5-6). Their analysis will help reconstruct the inventory of wooden burial goods for both periods of occupation of the tomb.

- The assemblage of pottery fragments was continued (fig. 7). With very few exceptions the pottery can all be dated to the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty. Studied material comprised a large number of Nile silt dishes with diameters of between 18 and 22 cm. These were generally left in an uncoated state although many of them bore red bands at the rim. Splash decoration, so common in, for example, KV 31, was very rare; this fact is indicative of the later date of KV 40 when compared with KV 26, 30 and 31. In addition the ceramic corpus also included a considerable number of larger dishes, usually with red rims, with a rim diameter of between 38 and 48 cm. Surprisingly few closed shapes of small to medium size were found. Marl clays were very rare comprising parts of only two amphorae and one jug. By far the greatest amount of pottery, however, consisted of large Nile silt storage jars, undoubtedly used to store mummification materials. Over 30 jars were reconstructed, whilst another 72 rims preserve their complete circumference, with rim diameters ranging from 26 to 32 cm. All of these jars were white washed, and once sealed were given another white plaster coating which covered the mud sealings and the jars themselves at least as far as the mid-point. The presence of one LB IIB Canaanite jar completes the ceramic repertoire from KV 40.

- The study of the inscriptions apposed in black and/or yellow hieratic script on the large pottery storage jars was continued (some 120 docketts or fragments). Many inscriptions mention the names of individuals from the Eighteenth Dynasty. Some of the individuals bear the title "king's daughter" (fig. 8) or "king's son", other female individuals bear no title and, in some instances, foreign names. Some thirty-five people – a large majority of females – can be distinguished, who all seem to have lived under the reign of Amenhotep III. Tomb KV 40 can be considered as a resting place for part of the king's personal entourage. Further study will correlate the analysis of the vessels with their inscriptions in order to reveal typological patterns and possible chronological indications.

Archaeo-botanical Research

The botanical remains from KV 64, KV 31 and partially KV 40 were analysed and identified with the help of a magnifying lens; storage in special boxes was begun. The remains comprise fragments of garlands, mats, fruit and various plant species. This part of the research benefited from the assistance of Dr. Rim Hamdy from the Herbarium of Cairo University.



Fig. 1. KV 64 and KV 40 in the side valley leading to the tomb of Thutmosis III (photo M.Kacicnik).



Fig. 2. Cartonage after consolidation and cleaning from soot.



Fig. 3. Consolidation of remains of wood and cartonage.



Fig. 4. Linen sock, presumably Eighteenth Dynasty, after consolidation (photo M.Kacicnik).



Fig. 5. Mask of wooden coffin after cleaning.



Fig. 6. Remains of wooden coffins.



Fig. 7. Reconstruction of pottery.

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An extensive photographic documentation of tomb KV 40 and of a large number of its finds was undertaken.

2. Study of human remains

KV 64

The mummy of the Chantress of Amun Nehemesbastet from the Twenty-Second Dynasty burial in KV 64, now stored in the Museum Magazine of the Inspectorate of Qurna, was investigated with the help of a portable x-ray unit. She seems to have died as a young adult.

The mummy of the Eighteenth Dynasty from the same tomb was also assessed radiologically; severely damaged by antique looting, this mummy represents a woman of mid-age.

KV 40

The repeated tomb robberies in KV 40 in ancient and modern times led to heavy disturbances due to which the mummies were disintegrated, disarticulated and scattered. The fire led to even more destruction leaving burnt human remains in every stage of fragmentation.

The aim of the first anthropological field season was to catalogue the human material and on this basis to determine the minimal number of individuals. Further assessments will help identify sex, age distribution, body height and paleopathological alterations. So far the human remains was catalogued and photo-documented (fig. 9), followed by radiological assessment of the most important mummified and pathologically altered remains.

At this stage approximately 60 individuals have been determined. They belong to the group of Eighteenth Dynasty individuals (at least 30), as well as to the population of the Third Intermediate Period who reused the tomb. The studied material reveals a wide age range and distribution from perinatal to late adulthood. Among the adults we find both sexes. Several pathological deformations were observed ranging from skeletal stress markers (e.g. Harris lines, cribra orbitalia) to healed bone trauma.

In many cases the age determination, sexing as well as analysis of pathologies were only possible thanks to the direct digital output and high quality of the portable x-ray generator.

3. Mapping of the tombs

The season started with a check-up and confirmation of the coordinates of survey points (temporary bench marks) in the concession area of the University of Basel Kings' Valley Project. The points are all located on the protective lids covering the tomb entrances, between one and two points on each protective lid. Work then proceeded in tombs KV 64, KV 40 and KV 36. The sector of the clearing in the area immediately in front of KV40 and KV64 was surveyed. The documentation of the architecture of KV 36 was completed and KV 40 continued. With the help of a total station, plans and sections were established and isometric visualisations prepared.

4. Work connected with KV 40 and KV 64

The area in front of KV 40 and KV 64 was surveyed and cleared to the West between the tombs and the path leading to KV 34. The investigated surface measured 5,5m from East to West and 12m from South to North.

The bottom of the *wadi* was reached at approximately 2.5m beneath the modern surface. The *wadi* floor was covered with large limestone boulders and gravel.

The Western and Southern profiles in the trench showed layers of modern levelling of the area with a modern electricity cable. Underneath was a layer of debris with signs of water or flash floods. The lowest level was dense and hard and consisted of limestone chips originating from the building of the two tombs in the Eighteenth Dynasty (fig. 10). This excavated stone material was just deposited in front of the tombs and facilitated the entry to the shafts during the digging. This original layer of the stone chips did not, however, reach the height of the mouth of the shafts so that the tombs remained well protected from rain floods (fig. 11). The sounding was not enlarged to the West over the entire width of the path; therefore, the complete slope situation and topography could not yet be observed in this part of the area.

Directly in front of KV 64, on a level corresponding to the upper edge of the shaft, the remains of a modern resting place of local workers were identified, with leftovers of sugarcane, dark blue fragments of cotton clothes and a piece of a newspaper mentioning the year 1914. These remains might stem from workmen, who had spent some time here sitting and eating; they could have belonged to the team of Howard Carter, who worked in this area in spring 1921[1]. They might have entered KV 40, as we found proof that the tomb had been visited after the looting and burning of its contents. They did not observe, however, the presence of KV 64.

The finds from the Pharaonic period in this excavation area consisted of New Kingdom pottery and a few fragments of Ramesside limestone ostraca.

In the end of the season the excavation trench was refilled and the Eastern wall of the modern path was built again on its original place.

5. Fragments from the tomb of Sety I, KV 17

Thanks to the kind permission of the MSA it was possible to resume the study of the fragments of the wall decoration from the tomb of Sety I undertaken in previous years (2003–2010). Some 276 further painted wall fragments were retrieved from the debris in the annex Jc of KV 17. They were cleaned and documented. Numerous pieces can be identified and virtually replaced in the tomb decoration. Parts that are now entirely missing in the tomb can be reconstructed with the help of the drawings prepared in 1818 by Belzoni and Ricci (today kept in the City Museum and Art Gallery of Bristol). Many fragments can be attributed to the Sarcophagus Hall: a lacuna in the Book of the Gates can be filled and the decoration of several pillars reconstructed. A second group of fragments can be attributed to the cornice and to the pillars of the annex room Jb (fig. 12). The debris that were heaped up in the annex Jc still contain large quantities of decorated fragments which can hopefully be saved, analysed and reconstituted in the future.



Fig. 8. Reconstructed jar with inscription (photo M.Kacicnik).



Fig. 9. Human remains from KV 40 (photo M.Kacicnik).



Fig. 10. Sounding in front of KV 64 and KV 40.



Fig. 11. Sounding in front of KV 64 and KV 40.



Fig. 12. Fragments of the pillar decoration of room Jb in the tomb of Sety I, KV17.

[1] www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/cc/page/map/3jan21.html