

The Valley of the Kings: two burials in KV 64

The University of Basel Kings' Valley Project is exploring the non-royal tombs in the side valley leading to the cliff tomb of Tuthmosis III. A new shaft tomb with two consecutive burials was investigated early this year. **Susanne Bickel** and **Elina Paulin-Grothe** report on the find.



The side valley leading to the tomb of Tuthmosis III (far right) with the non-royal tombs currently under study

The branch off the Valley of the Kings which leads to the sepulchre of Tuthmosis III is home to several undecorated tombs, and until recently no date or owner could be assigned to them. In 2001 a team from the University of Basel was able to identify KV 32 as the tomb of queen Tiaa, the wife of Amenhotep II and mother of Tuthmosis IV. Since 2009, the University of Basel Kings' Valley Project has been investigating this part of the necropolis to document the architecture and the remains of burials. So far, only some of the burial structures in the area have been explored. Three tombs

(KV 32, 33, 37) are accessible by flights of stairs; all the others are shaft tombs of various size and shape. Pottery and some inscribed small finds indicate that all the tombs date to the period between the reigns of Tuthmosis III and Amenhotep III. The fragmentary state of preservation of the surviving funerary equipment has meant that it has not yet been possible to identify the tomb owners with any degree of certainty, though the material testifies to the very high social status of the individuals buried here.

Several tombs were used for multiple burials. KV 31 is composed of a central room with two side chambers and contained the remains of five adults as well as numerous large jars and other types of pottery. Although the tomb has not been penetrated and damaged by rainwater and humidity, only small fragments of wooden furniture, and no coffins, were found.

Nothing was previously known about KV 40, which turned out to be one of the largest tombs in the area. It consists of a deep shaft leading into a corridor and a central room with three spacious side chambers. This tomb contains the extremely scattered remains of several dozen burials dating both to the Eighteenth Dynasty and to the Third Intermediate Period. A heavy fire has blackened all the contents and the walls of the tomb.

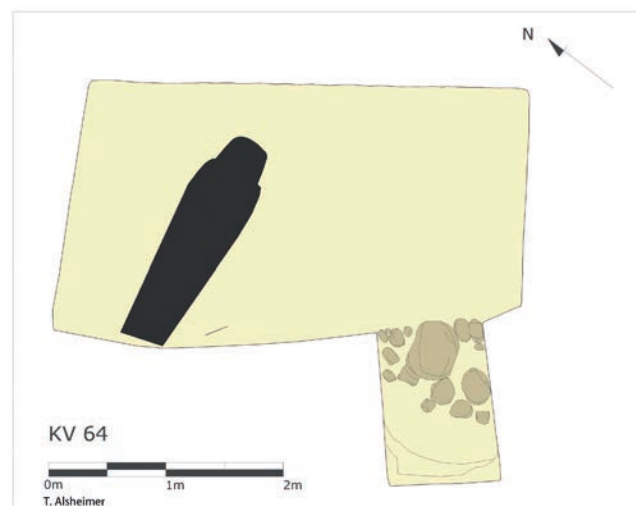
As a measure of site management and in order to safeguard the tombs and visitors walking through the area, protective structures are being built over and around



The shaft of KV 40 (right) with the new stone-cut feature as first found, leading to the discovery of KV 64



The shaft of KV 64 as found, with the intact blocking of the last burial



Plan of the Twenty-Second Dynasty re-use of KV 64 showing the blocking at the bottom of the shaft and the burial of Nehemes-Bastet



The upper part of the coffin of Nehemes-Bastet after restoration



View into the burial chamber with the coffin and stela of Nehemes-Bastet

all the shaft openings. While preparing the immediate surroundings of KV 40 for the construction of the protective wall, a man-made feature was discovered in January 2011 only 1.5m from the northern shaft edge of KV 40. This feature was investigated in January and February 2012 and led to the discovery of an unknown tomb, which received the number KV 64. It belongs to the type of rather small shaft tombs with one single chamber. Despite its modest size it offers an insight into the long and multifaceted history of the Kings' Valley.

The shaft of the tomb contained its original fill and above the edge of the passage leading to the chamber large blocking stones were found, showing that the tomb had not been entered since the last burial took place.

The shaft of KV 64 measures c.1.20m by 0.95m and has a depth of 3.50m. The chamber is c.4.10m from north to south, 2.35m wide, and has an average height of 2m. In the northern part of the room, a black wooden coffin with yellow inscriptions along its side lay upon a thick layer of limestone debris. Restoration revealed the decoration of its lid with several funerary scenes painted in yellow on a black coating.

A painted wooden stela stood against the wall at the coffin's feet, slightly turned towards the body. The two objects identify the owner as the Songstress of Amun Nehemes-Bastet, daughter of a priest of Karnak called Nakhtef-Mut, and support a date in the Twenty-Second Dynasty. Inside the coffin, the carefully wrapped mummy



Profile of the debris that covered the remains of the original burial

lay without any further adornment. This is one of the very few discoveries of an intact 'upper middle class' burial of the period. The stela is one of the finest examples of its kind. Nehemes-Bastet is figured in a thin white dress in front of an offering table and a seated falcon-headed god, addressing a prayer to several deities. Her name is also written on the back of the wooden tablet.

Remains of a second blocking of the passage with stones and plaster, as well as Eighteenth Dynasty pottery at the bottom of the shaft, indicated the presence of an earlier



The mummy of Nehemes-Bastet within her coffin



The stela of Nehemes-Bastet

burial beneath the layer of debris which covered the floor to a height of 0.70m-1.20m. The state of preservation of this original Eighteenth Dynasty burial illustrates the interventions that took place before the tomb was filled with debris and reused for Nehemes-Bastet. The earlier burial was found in an extremely fragmentary and thoroughly looted condition; many objects were missing, the coffin had been stolen for re-use with only an inlay eye left behind, and parts of the canopic equipment, pottery

and possibly pieces of furniture had been removed. The mummy lay next to the northern wall, unwrapped and torn apart. However, the objects that were left behind give some indication as to the original owner of this tomb. Two human-shaped heads of canopic jars are reminiscent of examples from the time of Tuthmosis IV - Amenhotep III. A fragmentary wooden tag probably names a royal daughter, and splinters of furniture carry the name of Amenhotep III. Similar fragments of furniture



The unwrapped and broken remains of the original burial in KV 64



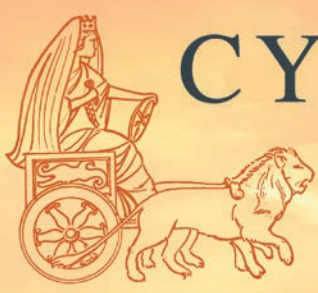
The human-headed lid of an Eighteenth Dynasty canopic jar

were found in several places in the vicinity. If these small elements belong to this burial – and were not brought in accidentally with the debris filling – they would identify the original owner of KV 64 as a princess of the reign of Amenhotep III.

The rifling of the original burial is most probably related to the systematic campaign which took place during the Twenty-First Dynasty, aimed at appropriating all the valuables in the Kings' Valley, and transferring the royal, and some non-royal, mummies into different caches. The lack of respect shown to the Eighteenth Dynasty mummy of KV 64, as well as to those in KV 31, still requires a

plausible explanation. The presence of numerous ancient wasps' nests on the ceiling and walls of KV 64 indicates that this Eighteenth Dynasty tomb may have stood open for some time before it was chosen, in the Twenty-Second Dynasty, as the resting place for Nehemes-Bastet.

□ Susanne Bickel is Director of the University of Basel Kings' Valley Project and Elina Paulin-Grothe directs the work in the field. They acknowledge gratefully the help of the members of the MSA in Egypt and the generous support of sponsors of the project. Photographs © University of Basel Kings' Valley Project. The stela of Nehemes-Bastet is published in full in *MDAIK* 67, 2011. <http://aegyptologie.unibas.ch/forschung/projekte/university-of-basel-kings-valley-project/>



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