



***Report on the archaeological work in the rock tomb K93.12
in Dra' Abu el-Naga***

Field season October 9th to November 25th, 2010

Ute Rummel

This year's fall season in K93.12 (fig. 1), the southern part of a large double tomb complex, started on October 9th¹. Excavations this time concentrated on the southern portion of the first court (VH1-S), and the area south of it. The investigation of the court's southern limit was started last season (spring 2009) in the course of which the western tower of a monumental lateral gateway has been discovered. This season's objective was to excavate this unique feature in full and to further investigate the area south of the first court. Further work took place in the northern portion of (VH1-N trench II), and in the northern portion of the inner court (VH2-N trench III) where the remains of at least 9 wooden coffins were discovered last year.



Fig. 1: Preliminary plan of K93.11/K93.12
(status of 2006-2009)

VH1-North: In trench II, the layer consisting of sandstone debris covering the ancient court level, which was excavated and documented last year, has been removed. In this area, some slabs of the original Ramesside sandstone pavement came to light which are preserved *in situ* (fig. 2). The sandstone pavement was set on a thin layer of fine limestone debris. This in turn, was filled on a mud *dakka* which was applied on the filled up ground in order to smoothen and compact the surface. It is not yet clear how far the pavement extended to the east – most probably not all the forecourt was covered with sandstone slabs. But so was the portico in front of the central mud brick pylon consisting of five columns (most probably, an original row of four was enlarged by a fifth one) which can be traced by the almost circular foundation depressions of the column bases. As can be seen by one

sandstone slab forming a step of 20 cm height, the portico had an elevated level (fig. 3).

¹ Participants besides the author: Teresa Czok, Stéphane Fetler, Juliane Goischke, Günter Heindl, Anja Hilbig, Linette Körfer, Susanne Michels, Marina Reinemer, Céline Talon, and Ramadan Ali Mohammed as representative of the SCA.



Fig. 2: View over the northern half of the first court (trench II) with a layer of sandstone debris covering the floor level, *in situ* preserved pavement slabs in the foreground and the alignment of column base depressions to the right.



Fig. 3: Detail of the preserved step of the portico next to a column base depression

VH1-South:

In the two open trenches of VH1-S the Ramesside floor level was reached. Due to the sloping bed rock, the ground was filled up in this area by more than one meter with several layers of limestone debris (fig. 4). On top of this fill, single sandstone slabs of the original pavement were discovered *in situ*. The access into the first court was most probably granted by an ascending ramp which might have been equipped with shallow steps. A trench cutting through the fill and featuring an ascending ground level was detected which appears to be what is left of the Ramesside ramp. So far, only the western rim of the ramp's trench has been freed from debris. The eastern rim (located within excavation trench IV) is still covered and will be excavated next year.



Fig. 4: Section through the fill of the first court, southern portion (VH1-S) topped by an *in situ* pavement slab

The lateral pylon and the causeway:

This season was devoted to the clarification of the southern entrance to the complex. With the discovery of the western part of a monumental side gateway in 2009 (see last year's report) it became clear that K93.12 was entered from the south. The same holds true for K93.11: on the remains of the Ramesside mud brick separation wall between the outer courts of both tombs the western reveal of a doorway is preserved which lies in alignment with the western thickness of the lateral pylon. This finding shows that both tombs have **two axes** lying perpendicular to each other: the east-west oriented central tomb axis equipped with two pylons, and another north-south oriented axis running through the lateral gateway, and extended to the south by a causeway (see below). In the course of the excavation the eastern tower of the pylon as well as the southeastern corner of the forecourt's wall came to light (fig. 5). Unfortunately, the southeastern quarter of VH-1 is heavily disturbed by a later pit which was dug to access the mud bricks of the pylon. Two deep hollows in the pylon's masonry bear witness to the removal of mud brick material. It was not possible to examine the eastern limitation of VH-1 in full because altogether four mummies (three adults and one child) were dumped in this area by tomb robbers. These mummies originate either from the main shaft or from the secondary burials in the intrusive shafts in VH2. Due to the lack of time, this finding could not yet be documented. It was covered by a protective construction, and consequently, the investigation of the eastern wall and the expected eastern pylon had to be postponed to the next season.

South of the lateral pylon the remains of an ascending causeway have been discovered which once lead from the southern *wâdi* up to K93.12, and which apparently formed the main access to the double tomb complex. So far, only a small part of this structure, namely a segment of its eastern limitation, could have been excavated (fig. 6). To the east, the causeway was lined by a wall made of limestone boulders. This wall retained the limestone debris that was used to fill up the terrace south of the pylon in order to raise its surface to the level of the courtyard, VH1. The effect of this layout was the visitor approaching the gate in a kind of hollow way enhancing the visual impression of its monumental architecture. The construction of the causeway did obviously take advantage of the landscape's morphology: below the forecourts of K93.12 the hill slopes towards the south where it leads into a small *wâdi* which, in turn, opens to the east on the main processional road of Western Thebes. Hence, the causeway forms the final stage of a processional way leading from the main road up to K93.11 and K93.12, and was presumably used during the the great religious festivals like the "Beautiful Feast of the Valley". This aspect – the integration of K93.11/K93.11 into the rites connected the the Valley Festival and its embedding into the Theban ritual landscape – forms one of the major research interests of the project.



Fig. 5: View over VH1-South and the lateral pylon (centre) with the adjacent eastern limestone wall of the causeway



Fig. 6: Detail of the eastern limestone lining of the causeway (3) displaying a secondary modification (4) on a layer of fill (6).

VH 2-North (trench III): Cleaning, consolidation and documentation of 9 wooden coffins



Fig. 7: Face and wig of coffin no. 7 after cleaning and consolidation

In the inner court, VH2, conservation work on a group of 9 badly preserved wooden coffins was carried out (fig. 7). The particularity of these coffins is the virtually complete loss of the wooden structure beneath the painted surface. Two factors seem responsible for this: the effect of termites and the exposure to water. Due to this condition the flaked shell of painted stucco lacks its solid substructure since the remaining material consists of desintegrated wood (reduced to powder) and soil. Only in a very few places the original wooden structure is preserved. In order to consolidate the coffins for documentation they were treated as follows: The first step was to clean the surface and to remove the soil and dust covering large parts of the decoration. Mechanical cleaning was effected with a soft brush, a bulb syringe and a scalpel. Then, a consolidation of the weak coffin

structure (remains of wood mixed with soil) was carried out by injection of Paraloid B72 at 8% in ethanol/acetone.

Displaced fragments with an obvious location were fixed in their original position by means of Mowilith (non-acid Acetate Polyvinyl). The documentation of the consolidated coffins proceeded quite far. Besides photographic general views and close-ups of iconographical and technical details, and the drawing of the entire finding situation, the painted decoration of six coffins was traced using transparency film and pen. All documentation was effected on the spot since the very fragile coffin remains cannot be moved. They were left in the ground, and the trench was covered with a roof-like protective construction. Work on them will be continued in the next season.

A first observation of the coffin's decoration provide some indications about their date. At least three coffins seem to correspond to type 5 according to Niwinski², showing the representation of mummy-braces on the chest: this would place them at the end of the 21st dynasty/beginning of the 22nd dynasty. The decoration of the four other coffins seem to be of Niwinski's type 3 which can be dated to the same period³.

Retaining wall below the forecourts

Due to a slide of limestone boulders and filling material at the northern end of the retaining wall restoration work became necessary on this segment (fig. 8). First, all the area was freed from the collapsed debris in order to create a solid ground for the reconstruction. For the subsequent restoration (using the original material only) cement was applied to fit the blocks in order to gain a greater stability of the newly built wall. This was highly advisable since this structure serves as support for the overlying masonry preventing a further collapse of blocks. From the outside, however, the use of cement is not visible so that the original impression of the dry masonry wall is preserved.

² A. NIWINSKI, *21st Dynasty coffins from Thebes. Chronological and Typological Studies*, Mainz 1988, pp. 80-82.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 69.



Fig. 8: Restoration and consolidation of the retaining wall

Digital survey and documentation

Parallel to the excavation and documentation work a digital survey of K93.11/K93.12 and its immediate surroundings was carried out to obtain a precise plan of the tomb complexes' rock architecture and its topographical setting. This plan replaces the preliminary one created in 2006 which displays the rock's contours before the excavation of the forecourts was started (fig. 1). The subterranean structure of K93.12, consisting of shaft, sloping passage and burial chamber, has been digitally measured. The detailed drawings of architectural structures (mudbrick pylons, walls, pyramid etc.) executed so far in the field were digitalized and added to the newly surveyed plan in order to generate complete synoptical mapping of the site (fig. 9).

The excavation was terminated on November 14th. All finds of this season were transported to the DAI Cairo's study magazine behind Carter House on the same day. Documentation work (drawing and survey) on the site continued until November 22nd. On November 23rd the work was closed down and all excavated structures were covered with reed mats. The entrance of K93.12 was blocked with limestone boulders, and K93.11 was locked and sealed in the presence of the inspectors of the SCA, Mr. Ramadan Ali Mohammed and Mr. Ayman Mohammed Ibrahim.

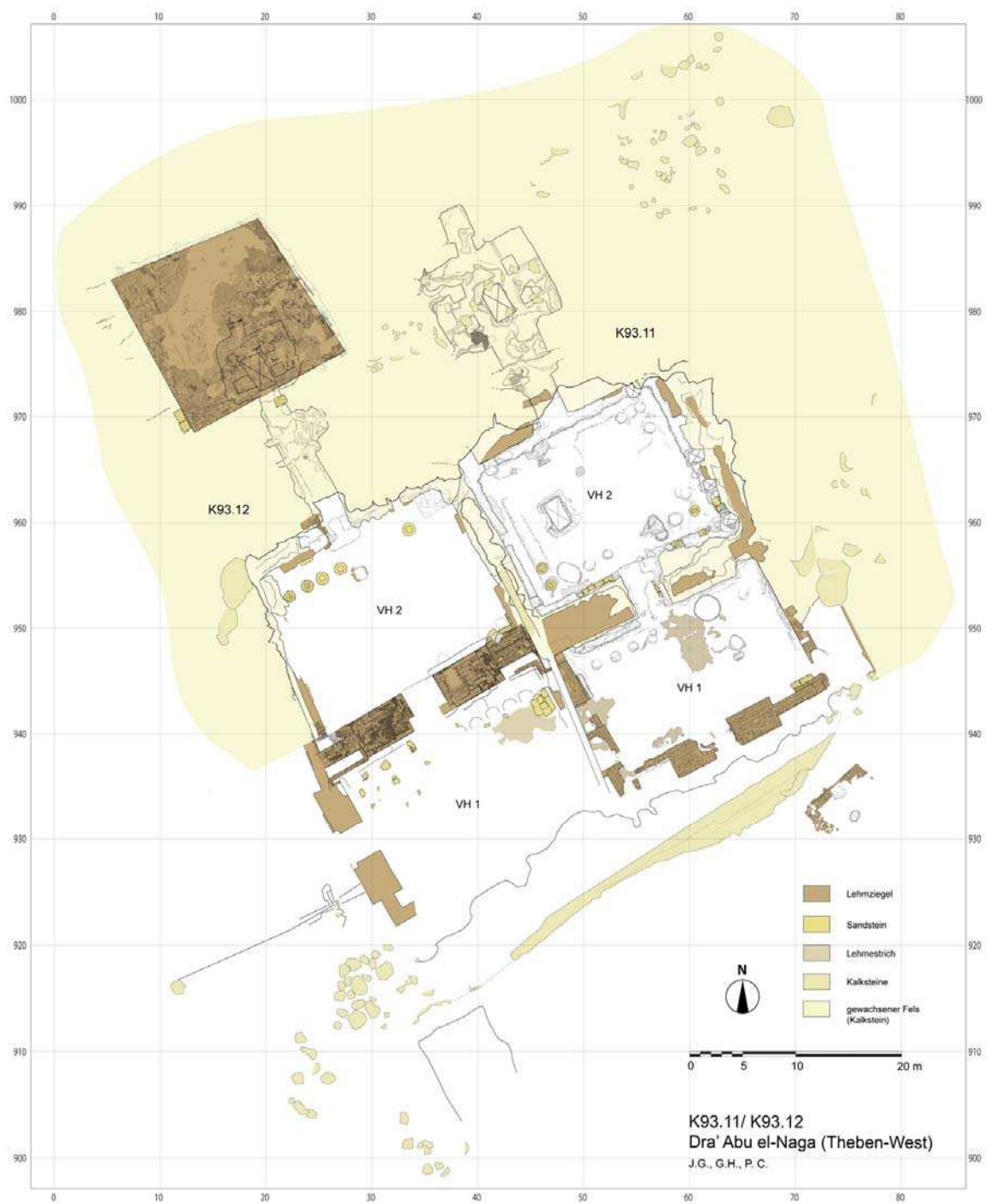


Fig. 9: Plan of K93.11/K93.12 (status November 2010)