

B. K93.11 – A royal tomb of the early Eighteenth Dynasty (Area E)

From 1993 to 2000, a large rock-cut tomb in the hills of Dra' Abu el-Naga was excavated (Area E; for the location, see Fig. 1).⁷ Tomb K93.11 was chosen because of its unusual position in the necropolis, its architecture, and size, all of which excluded its interpretation as a private burial place from the beginning. In addition, tomb K93.11 is only the northern one of two neighbouring rock tombs, which share the same basic architectural layout and are separated from each other by a massive rock-cut wall. To date, only K93.11 has been completely excavated, its southern counterpart, K93.12, still awaits further excavation. When work began in 1993, it was assumed that these two rock tombs were among the long-lost final resting places of the kings of the Seventeenth Dynasty. During the course of our work on the site, however, we gradually came to change our original assumption.⁸

The architectural layout of tomb K93.11 is exceptional (Fig. 5). The dimensions of the entrance to the inner part alone demonstrate the gigantic scale of the tomb's architectural conception: 3.5 metres high and 3 metres wide, the entrance leads to an antechamber, from which the central hall opens. The latter is almost square and contains four massive pillars. The hall ends in a small and crudely cut chapel, which may have been intended to serve as the main place for the cult. Neither walls nor pillars were ever decorated or even entirely smoothed. In the axis of the tomb and between the four pillars lies the main burial shaft, again with exceptional dimensions: 3.5 by 2.5 metres wide and 10 metres deep. At the bottom of the shaft, a horizontal passage nearly 20 metres in length, at a height and width of 2.6 and 2.4 metres follows, ending in a small chamber which once may have been used to store some of the burial goods. Directly in front of the chamber and sunk into the bed-rock of the passage's floor, a roughly mummy-shaped recess was cut which once contained the coffin of the person buried here. The sidewalls of the recess were smoothed with a fine white lime plaster. Originally, the recess was covered with large sandstone slabs. After the interment, the subterranean passage was walled up in the middle with finely carved limestone blocks, which then, on the side facing the shaft, were plastered over with a rough mortar. The remaining half of the passage was filled with huge, unworked limestone boulders, probably to better protect the burial.

The tomb's outer part consists of two large open courts (Fig. 5), cut out of the rock, and subdivided by a massive doorway, a pylon. The second, western court contained a shaft of exactly the same dimensions as the one in the pillared hall, except for the fact that any additional passages or chambers are missing -- the shaft was unfinished.

The first, eastern court, as well as the first court of the adjoining tomb K93.12, is limited by a huge retaining wall, built of irregularly shaped limestone blocks. With its original length and height of at least 50 metres and 8 metres respectively, this retaining wall must once have been a prominent landmark in the northern part of the Theban necropolis.

Since the retaining wall had been erected quite some distance east of the natural sloping edge of the bedrock, it would seem to have been built for two reasons: first, it enlarged the east-west dimensions of the first court considerably. Secondly, it served as a means to dump the debris that originated from the cutting out of the tombs and their inner and subterranean parts: the large limestone boulders were used to build the wall itself, the smaller chips and flakes were dumped into the open space between the wall and the slope of the bedrock.

⁷ For details see: Polz and Seiler, *MDAIK* 51 (1995), 211-223; D. Polz/W. E. Gordon/A. Nerlich/A. Piccato/U. Rummel/A. Seiler/S. Voss, 'Bericht über die sechste, siebte und achte Grabungskampagne in der Nekropole von Dra' Abu el-Naga/Theben-West', *MDAIK* 55 (1999), 343-410; D. Polz/E. Mählitz/U. Rummel/A. Seiler, *MDAIK* 59,

317-388; D. Polz, *SAK* 25 (1998), 257-293; U. Rummel, in: *Egyptian Archaeology* 14 (1999), 3-6.

⁸ For a detailed discussion of the ownership of tombs K93.11 and K93.12 see Polz, *Der Beginn des Neuen Reiches. Zur Vorgeschichte einer Zeitenwende*, chapter 3.4 (in preparation).

Dra' Abu el-Naga
Area E
K93.11

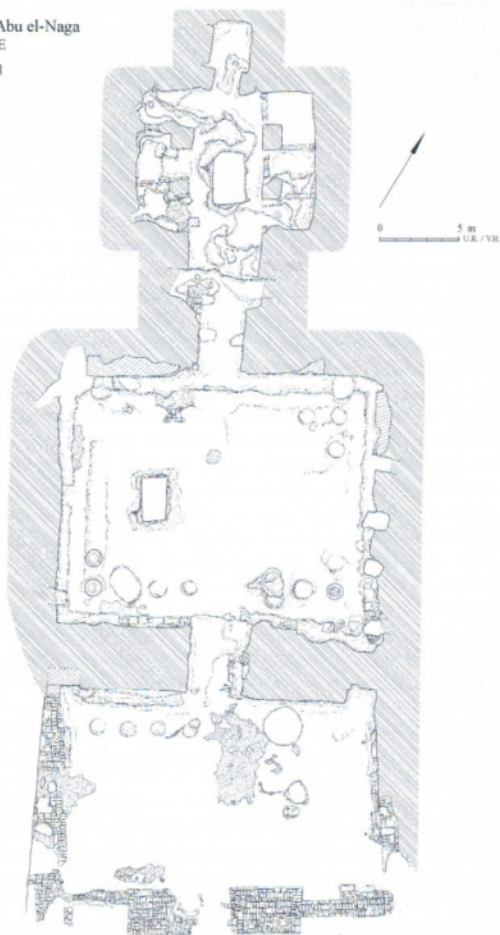


Fig. 5. Area E, tomb K93.11, plan (U. Rummel/ V. Hacquard).

A most important observation here is that the wall in its entire length was planned and executed in one piece, covering the eastern area in front of both tomb K93.11 and tomb K93.12. This observation has a crucial consequence: if the wall was built in one step, the two tombs of which the wall forms the outer limit must also have been planned and constructed at the same time. Naturally, the next question arose: when was the wall erected and who built it? To clarify this question we excavated the foot of the retaining wall, which was partially buried under 2-4 metres of debris. The result was astonishing: immediately below the wall, a terrace of altogether four small private tombs was discovered all of which had definitely been built when the wall already existed. On the grounds of stamped mud bricks, one of the tombs is dated to the early years of the reign of Amenhotep IV (before he changed his name to Akhenaton), another can be dated to the reign of Thutmose IV, based on its partially well preserved mural decoration.

Having established a *terminus ante quem* for the erection of the retaining wall (pre-Thutmose IV, that is), the remaining part of the question of who built the wall, and, accordingly the two tombs K93.11 and K93.12, becomes even more interesting. Assuming that both tombs were not private but royal burial places, one can exclude the following kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty before the reign of Thutmose IV as possible candidates: Hatshepsut, Thutmose III, Amenhotep II, and Thutmose IV -- these kings' tombs are all in the Valley of the Kings. The tombs of the earlier kings of that dynasty, however, are not known yet and these rulers are, indeed, possible candidates for K93.11 and K93.12: Ahmose, Amenhotep I, Thutmose I, and Thutmose II. Further possible candidates, of course, are the rulers of the Seventeenth Dynasty, but they can be excluded as candidates for the following reason: Immediately above the bedrock of the two courts in K93.11, we discovered a comparatively large amount of early Eighteenth Dynasty pottery sherds of jars and vessels used both in connection with the funerary cult and as part of a burial equipment.⁹ There were no pottery sherds or any other artefacts dating to a time prior to the Eighteenth Dynasty in the debris that covered the two courts. This fact alone would exclude a king of the Seventeenth Dynasty as the original builder of the tombs.

There seems to have been regular activities by high officials in the two courts of K93.11 throughout the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties: in the debris of the courts, numerous fragments of private stelae and parts of small buildings were discovered. Among them are those of the famous scribe of the workmen's village at Deir el-Medineh, Ken-her-Khephes-ef, an unnamed high priest of Amun, a likewise unknown Royal Scribe, and, most interestingly, the well-known high official and vizier, Paser, who governed during the early reign of Ramesses II.

Most prominent, however, are the activities of the high priest of Amun in Karnak, Ramses-nakht, who is attested in this office from the early reign of Ramses IV until the reign of Ramses IX. During the reign of Ramses VI, almost 400 years after tomb K93.11 was originally built, Ramses-nakht substantially reused and remodelled the two courts and parts of the inner hall of K93.11 and turned the whole complex into a chapel or sanctuary. He added a sandstone pavement to the courts and a huge entrance building (a pylon) in front of the eastern court. In both courts of K93.11, he erected altogether 34 sandstone columns a part of which was crowned with double-sided capitals, depicting in round relief the face of the goddess Hathor -- quite an unusual type of capital for any building on the Theban West Bank and absolutely unique in the context of a non-royal building. In addition, Ramses-

⁹ Seiler, *MDAIK* 59, 338-351.

nakht had the walls of the second, inner court cased with sandstone blocks which were decorated in raised relief.¹⁰

So substantial were his additions and alterations that during his lifetime hardly any traces of the original surface of the tomb's outer courts were still visible. But yet, there is no sign of Ramses-nakht having used the ancient tomb for his own burial place: during the excavations, no traces of his burial equipment were found, nor were there any additional shafts or chambers which could have housed the high priest's burial. Why then, did Ramses-nakht remodel the courts?

His was not the only remodelling in the area: it seems that a similar large-scale reshaping took place in the adjoining tomb K93.12: several sandstone fragments found during the excavations and three decorated blocks discovered by Richard Lepsius immediately above the tomb in the 1840s, seem to indicate that this southern twin-tomb was reused by a daughter of king Ramses VI, named Isis, who held the important clerical office of 'god's wife of Amun'.

Regardless of the function of the two Ramesside structures, the important thing to observe here is the fact that two old tombs were substantially reused and reshaped 400 years after their original construction by the highest representatives of the country's most important Temple of Amun in Karnak, the high priest and the god's wife of Amun. Again, the question arises whose tombs did they reuse?

At this point, one must briefly return to the original planning phase of the two structures: if, as stated above, the tombs had been executed in one stage, one would have to look for a ruler who must have known, by the time when he came to the throne and started the construction of his royal tomb, that he would be in need of more than just one burial place.

Having already reduced the number of possible candidates to those kings at the beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty, only one such ruler remains: king Amenhotep I. The second tomb, K93.12, was planned and built as the last resting place for his likewise famous mother, queen Ahmes-Nefertari, who was not only one of the most important political figures at the beginning of the dynasty but also probably the acting ruler of Egypt when her son was still an infant.

With this identification of the original owners of the two tombs at Dra' Abu el-Naga, a few other puzzles in the Theban Necropolis can be solved: approximately 500 metres due south of the two tombs, in the plain on the edge of the cultivation, are the scanty remains of a stone temple which was originally built and decorated for Amenophis I and Ahmes-Nefertari. Amazingly, the extended main axis of the temple, which is almost exactly north south, runs through the court of K93.11. Could this be pure accident? Hardly: the relevant paragraph in Papyrus Abbott says: '...[the tomb] of King Djeserkara, ..., north of the house of Amenhotep of the Garden'. A temple 'Amenhotep of the Garden' is otherwise unattested and we have to assume that the scribe of Papyrus Abbott used this term as some kind of a popular name by which this temple was known to his contemporaries.

It has long been known that Amenhotep I and his mother Ahmes-Nefertari were venerated as gods among the inhabitants of Thebes during the Ramesside period. In several dozen private tombs of the period, the royal couple is depicted seated on thrones in shrines, and being offered to by the tomb owners. In the field of Egyptology, it was always taken for granted that the reason for the Ramesside tomb painters to include the royal couple in the

¹⁰ See Rummel, *MDAIK* 55, 350-364; Rummel, in: *Egyptian Archaeology* 14, 3-6; Rummel, *MDAIK* 59, 319-334; Rummel, in: M. Elidamati/M. Trad (eds), *Egyptian Museum Collections around the*

World. Studies for the Centennial of the Egyptian Museum (Cairo, 2002), 1025-1034.

scenes of the tombs' decoration was simply the fact that both were regarded as patrons of the necropolis; Ahmes-Nefertari would have been included because of the eminent role she played in ruling the country at the very beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty.

Seen against the background of tombs K93.11 and K93.12 in Dra' Abu el-Naga, however, it seems much more likely that the Ramesside depictions of the royal couple also reflect the point that they 'shared' a temple and were buried close to each other, in tombs which were certainly landmarks throughout the New Kingdom, presiding over the entire Theban Necropolis and guarding the tombs of both royal and private individuals.

C. The pyramid of king Nub-Kheper-Re Intef (Area H)

In the spring of 2001, after the excavation of tomb K93.11 was completed, an attempt was made to verify an old hypothesis of Herbert E. Winlock who identified the area around the rock-cut tomb of Shuroy (TT 13) as the place where the pyramid of king Nub-Kheper-Re Intef of the Seventeenth Dynasty had once been erected.¹¹ Although Winlock himself never tried to verify his hypothesis archaeologically, it was widely accepted by the Egyptological community. Still, the question of whether or not the tombs of the kings of the Seventeenth Dynasty were once crowned by pyramids, remained unanswered.

Therefore, a new excavation area in the plain of Dra' Abu el-Naga was designated - Area H (see Fig. 6) - and a number of test trenches were laid out in the immediate vicinity of the tomb of Shuroy.¹² These trenches resulted in the discovery of several rock-cut tombs and shaft tombs and of the small funerary chapel of Teti described above. Immediately north of Teti's chapel the lower layers of a large enclosure wall and, even further north, the southern side of the mud brick pyramid itself appeared.

After the remains of the pyramid had been completely cleared, its architectural construction became apparent: the pyramid had been built against the natural slope (of ca. 22%) of the hillside in this area with no substantial foundations. It had been built with a casing technique, i.e. only the outer 1 to 1.5 metres were constructed with mud bricks and the core was then filled up with rubble and small limestone flakes. In several places on the northern, western, and eastern sides of the pyramid the mud bricks had disappeared down to the first layer. Only the southern side is entirely preserved in its lower part ranging from a minimum height of 40cm to a maximum of 95cm. On all four sides there are, however, enough areas that remained preserved to allow measurements of the original angle of the pyramid's inclination. Based on a total of 26 measurements, the average angle of inclination was 67, 81°, which may correspond to the ancient intended angle of 2 palms recess at 5 palms height (i.e. 66, 66°). The calculated angle also allows for a reconstruction of the pyramid's original overall height: it stood approximately 11.50 metres tall on its eastern side, 9.90 metres above its centre, and 8.25 metres on the western side.

The pyramid was surrounded on three sides by an enclosure wall, which was covered on both sides with a fine white lime plaster. The clearing of the pyramid's core resulted in the remarkable discovery of a tomb shaft (K02.2), which was almost exactly in the centre of the building.¹³ This shaft has no apparent architectural connection to the pyramid and was inaccessible once the pyramid had been erected above it. The contents of this tomb's chamber were even more interesting since it can be dated to a period preceding the construction of the pyramid, i.e. the Thirteenth Dynasty. In other words, Nub-Kheper-Re Intef intentionally

¹¹ H. E. Winlock, JEA 10 (1924), 217-77.

¹² For a detailed description of the work in this area up to the fall of 2002, see D. Polz/A. Selzer, *Pyramidenanlage*, passim. For other

results of previous seasons at Dra' Abu el-Naga, see: D. Polz/E. Mähltz/U. Rummel/A. Selzer, *MDAIK* 59, 317-388.

¹³ D. Polz/A. Selzer, *Pyramidenanlage*, 33-37, Taf. 10.