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Pottery from the Tombs of Karakhamun and Karabasken

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Tomb of Karakhamun, Season 2012: Report on the Pottery Analysis¹

A second season of the recording of the pottery from TT 223 was carried out between September 3 and October 3, 2012.² There were seven actual working days of the pottery team led by Dr. Julia Budka (03–04/09/2012, 10/09/2012, 22/09/2012, 29–30/09/2012, and 03/10/2012).

The main aims of the 2012 season were to sample the newly excavated material from the front areas of TT 223 and to establish a dating of these ceramics. In addition, we focused on enlarging the corpus of recorded and drawn pottery.

Quantitative Data

Coming from 149 different find positions (loci), a total of 5,258 sherds were looked at, sorted, and recorded according to their ware and vessel type. Among these sherds, 1,087 (= 20.6 percent) were documented as diagnostic pieces (rim sherds, bases, decorated fragments, and complete vessels). The distribution of the processed material according to areas within TT 223 is illustrated in tables 15.1a and 15.1b.

Thus, the majority of the material studied in 2012 was excavated in the open courtyard (I, a total of 1,807 sherds = 34 percent) and the vestibule (XIII, a total of 1,541 sherds = 29 percent). Both areas are characterized by modern reuse and the mixing of material, resulting in the very late appearance of the material. Most of the ceramics are Coptic and modern; intrusive pieces from the New Kingdom are also present in considerable numbers (especially Eighteenth Dynasty burial pottery and Ramesside amphorae). The only exception to this mixed character was area I.1, the southwest corner of the courtyard, where a large amount of Ptolemaic offering pottery was found associated with the southern altar in the lowest levels, just above the floor (see below).

Area	Number of bags	Number of sherds
I.1	44	1,338
I.2	7	195
I.3	10	354
I.4	3	109
I.5	1	11
II	26	779
III	1	54
IV	2	11
XI	2	114
XII	3	77
XIII	29	1,541
XIV	4	131
XV	17	544
	149	5,258

Table 15.1a. Location of pottery processed in 2012 within TT 223

Table 15.1b. Distribution of recorded pottery according to areas in TT 223



Besides the statistical recording of all forms and wares, 120 pottery vessels were processed in detail and registered in the database in 2012. All of these vessels were cleaned and reconstructed with the help of one workman prior to registration. Fifty of these reconstructed vessels were documented by digital photos. In addition, drawings of twenty-six pieces were realized in 2012.



Fig. 15.1. Ptolemaic pot stands in situ in TT 223, set within a plastered floor at the western side of the open courtyard, in front of the door niche. *Photo Julia Budka*

Pottery from the Courtyard

The focus of work on the ceramic material from TT 223 in 2012 was on Ptolemaic pottery unearthed during the excavation of the courtyard in 2012. The fieldwork has yielded a large amount of ceramics of very mixed character. A number of pieces from the New Kingdom were present as well as a very small amount from the Late Period (fragments from marl clay storage vessels). Most of the material from area I is Roman, Coptic, and modern in date and attests to the domestic use of TT 223. Amphorae, *zir* vessels, *saqia*-vessels, cooking pots, bowls, and dishes underline the then-established dwelling character of the site.³

Despite this mix of materials, some interesting observations were possible in the lower levels of the courtyard. Ptolemaic ceramics came to light which are completely consistent with the material from secondary phases of use in other open courtyards of Late Period temple-tombs, especially the Saite tombs in the Northern Asasif. The best comparison may be found in TT 414 where small goblets used as burners, pot stands, pottery *situlae*, and offering plates comprise the main corpus of types. At TT 414, these vessels were found together with inscribed material and within a clear stratigraphical sequence. They could be dated to the Thirtieth Dynasty up to early Ptolemaic times, and provide important references for assessing similar ensembles.⁴

A remarkable finding of 2012 is the discovery of two small, almost intact, pot stands set into a plastered layer between the two altars at the western wall of the



Fig 15.2. Selection of complete vessels found as offering pottery around the southern altar in the courtyard of TT 223. Thirtieth Dynasty—early Ptolemaic time. The most common types are conical beakers. *Photo Julia Budka*

courtyard (fig. 15.1). The stands are situated within the western door niche and are most probably associated with the southern altar. They find close parallels in the courtyard (*Lichthof*) of TT 414 and can be dated to the early Ptolemaic period. Thus, the remains of a newly plastered floor and offering pottery next to the altars of the courtyard are clear traces of ritual activities in TT 223 in the late fourth/ early third century BC.

Close to the pot stands, and possibly related to them, a large amount of offering pottery was found around the southern altar, especially in the southwestern corner between the walls of the courtyard and the installation (fig. 15.2). Although random Coptic sherds were present, this assemblage can clearly be dated to the Thirtieth Dynasty or Ptolemaic period. The most common pottery type is a small conical beaker used as a burner and attested in different shapes and sizes. More than 100 beakers have been found around the southern altar, a large number still completely preserved. The beakers are associated with a limited number of other types (see fig. 15.2): *situla*-like

drop-shaped vessels of various sizes (miniature size of less than 10 centimeters up to a regular size of 50 centimeters in height), various dishes and lids, mostly carinated types, some deep bowls with a ring base, and one complete example of a painted storage vessel in the Egyptian 'Hadra ware' style with linear painted decoration (Thirtieth Dynasty to early Ptolemaic, fig. 15.3).

The presence of several large pieces of *dokkas*, typical bread plates, is notable in context with the offering pottery around the altar. Associated with the small incense beakers, these plates of which a minimum of five examples were found, might attest to food offerings accompanying the burning and libation at the altar. However, the form illustrated by P2012.22 (fig. 15.4) is well attested since early Pharaonic times and a dating to Ptolemaic times based on the relationship with the beakers must remain tentative.

Summary

To conclude, the 2012 study season of the ceramics from TT 223 illustrated several aspects of the later reuse of this Kushite monument. An increase in the reuse as a tomb can be attested for the fourth century BC, which continued into the Ptolemaic period. Ritual activities of this period were traceable in the courtyard of TT 223, using the original offering installations of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty. TT 223 thus supports the evidence from other monumental Late Period temple-tombs, like



Fig. 15.3. Complete vessel painted with linear decoration P2012.75, Thirtieth Dynasty to early Ptolemaic. TT 223. Photo Julia Budka

TT 414, that especially the open courtyard remained an important place for offerings and rituals, not only during the original phase of the tomb, but also during the Ptolemaic period.

The majority of the material from the excavation season 2012 in TT 223, however, refers to a domestic use of the tomb of Karakhamun in late Roman, Coptic, and Islamic times. Large numbers of modern pottery vessels, especially *zir* vessels, *qadus*, and cooking pots, reveal aspects of the recent history of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty monument in connection with the Abd al-Rasul family.



Fig. 15.4. Bread plate P2012.22 used for offerings, found close to the southern altar in the courtyard. Ptolemaic? TT 223. *Photo Julia Budka*

Tomb of Karakhamun (TT 223) and Tomb of Karabasken (TT 391), Season 2014: Report on the Pottery Analysis

A third season of the recording of the pottery from TT 223 was carried out between August 9 and August 15, 2014.⁵ The main aims of the 2014 season were to analyze the material from area I.1 in the courtyard of TT 223, especially establishing a dating of these ceramics. Samples were also taken from the current excavation in the courtyard of TT 391. In addition, work focused on enlarging the corpus of recorded and drawn pottery.

Quantitative Data

From area I.1 in the courtyard of Karakhamun, a total of 4,823 sherds (170 bags from twenty-seven different levels) were looked at, sorted, and recorded according to their ware and vessel type. Among these sherds, 885 (= 18 percent) were documented as diagnostic pieces (rim sherds, bases, decorated fragments, and complete vessels).

Besides the statistical recording of all forms and wares, fifty-six pottery vessels from TT 223 were processed in detail and registered in the database in 2014. All of these vessels were cleaned and reconstructed with the help of one workman prior to registration. Thirty-five of these reconstructed vessels were documented by digital photos. In addition, drawings of thirty-eight diagnostic pieces were realized in 2014.

From the courtyard of Karabasken, a sample of ten bags from seven positions has been processed. The total number of sherds was 726 with 131 diagnostic pieces (18 percent). In all bags, a considerable amount of New Kingdom material was present (see below).

Pottery from the Courtyard of TT 223

Other than the previously established date for the ceramics directly associated with the southern altar, which can be dated to the early Ptolemaic period, the pottery from I.1 is largely mixed material with most of the ceramics being Coptic and modern. The material therefore reflects the reuse of TT 223 during these periods, especially its domestic use. Amphorae, zir vessels, saqia-vessels, cooking pots, bowls, and dishes underline the then-established dwelling character of the site. Painted fine wares are present as well (see fig. 15.6). Intrusive pieces from the New Kingdom, always mixed with Coptic and Islamic sherds, have been documented in small numbers (especially Eighteenth Dynasty beer jars and a few Ramesside amphorae). Only ten out of the twenty-seven levels did not yield any material earlier than the Late Period/Ptolemaic age. The Late Period is represented by very few body sherds of questionable date-nothing was found attributable to the Twenty-fifth Dynasty.6 The Ptolemaic material compares well to finds from the First Pillared Hall of TT 223 and other temple-tombs like TT 414. The main types are conical beakers, situla-like drop-shaped vessels of various sizes, various dishes and lids, some deep bowls with a ring base, and painted storage vessels in both the Egyptian 'Hadra ware' style with linear decoration (Thirtieth Dynasty to early Ptolemaic) and the 'Lotus flower' style (mid-Ptolemaic, fig. 15.5).

Many adjoining pieces were found throughout the bags, separated according to absolute levels for example, between levels 218 and 308 (fig. 15.6), 282 and 336, 314 and 436 (see fig. 15.5), as well as 336 and 398 (fig. 15.8). This suggests a



Fig. 15.5. Fragments of mid-Ptolemaic painted storage vessel P2014-30 (joints have been found from levels 314 and 436). TT 223. Photo Julia Budka



Fig. 15.6. Two fragments of a Coptic painted jar (P2014-41), joining from levels 218 and 308. TT 223. *Photo Julia Budka*

substantial layer of mixed filling material. However, it is intriguing that complete vessels have been recovered from it (fig. 15.7). This high state of preservation is not only limited to Ptolemaic offering pottery (as assumed by the preliminary assessment of I.1 in 2012), but holds true for Coptic (fig. 15.8), and in some cases for Islamic, vessels as well.



Fig. 15.7. Almost complete Ptolemaic jug P2014-32. TT 223. Photo Julia Budka

Pottery from the Courtyard of TT 391

In 2014, only a small collection from TT 391 was studied. Even with the well-known presence of New Kingdom material in TT 223, the percentage of this early material in the courtyard of TT 391 came as a surprise: six of the ten bags held an estimate of 75 percent of New Kingdom sherds—one bag from C1, Level 83.83, with 106 sherds, was even 100 percent New Kingdom in date. These early ceramics are predominantly Eighteenth Dynasty vessels, but some Ramesside pieces are present as well. The contexts of this very high amount of New Kingdom material were found in different areas of the courtyard, ranging in level from 90.46 meters (VI.6.4) to 81.46 meters (I.S4).

In addition to the bags, the selection of decorated pottery from TT 391 collected in 2013 and 2014 was studied. Most of the material is again New Kingdom in date: late Eighteenth Dynasty to early

Nineteenth Dynasty Blue painted ware (fig. 15.9). The other decorated sherds are mostly Islamic bowls and dishes.

As yet, no material from the building phases in the Late Period has been documented among the pottery from TT 391. At this early stage it is therefore not possible to give a close assessment of the character and dating of the filling material and strata in the courtyard. It is, however, noteworthy that a bag recorded from I.S4 (southwestern area, 81.46 meters) contained only three New Kingdom sherds, but yielded a large amount of Thirtieth Dynasty/early Ptolemaic cult pottery, closely resembling the material from I.1 in TT 223.



Fig. 15.8. Small Coptic dish P2014-40, complete profile reconstructed from various levels (336 and 398). TT 223. *Photo Julia Budka*



Fig. 15.9. Two fragments of an early Nineteenth Dynasty Blue painted jar from I.S1 and VI.1. TT 391. *Photo Julia Budka*

Summary

To conclude, the study season of the ceramics from TT 223 and TT 391 illustrated (1.) differences and (2.) comparisons between the materials from the courtyards:

- 1. Whereas the courtyard of TT 223 is primarily significant for the domestic use of the tomb in late Roman, Coptic, and Islamic times, the pottery from the courtyard of TT 391 raises several questions. The significantly higher amount of New Kingdom material than in TT 223 still needs to be explained. The material comprises not simply random sherds which would have been eventually washed in, but broken vessels which find joining pieces throughout the areas (see fig. 15.9). Therefore, the complete set of pottery, its quantities, and proportions have much potential for understanding the formation processes within TT 391 up to the present day. A stratigraphic excavation of the courtyard would possibly allow a comprehensive assessment of all phases of use, reuse, dismantlement, abandonment, and natural influences like flooding.
- 2. Even at this preliminary stage, it seems as if there will be close parallels between the material excavated in the southwestern corners of each courtyard: The presence of early Ptolemaic offering pottery (especially at selected spots and the lowermost levels of I.1) suggests for both tombs a secondary phase of use, which is well-established for the open courtyards of Late Period temple-tombs, chiefly the Saite tombs in the Northern Asasif. Obviously the leftovers of the cultic activity in Ptolemaic times have been disturbed during the later reuse as a dwelling place.

Notes

- 1 Dr. Julia Budka (Humboldt University, Berlin), with the assistance of Dr. Federica Facchetti (University of Pisa), Veronica Hinterhuber, MA (Humboldt University, Berlin), and Nicole Mosiniak, BA (Humboldt University, Berlin).
- For results of the first season see J. Budka, "Pottery from the tomb of Karakhamun,"
 in *Tombs of the South Asasif Necropolis, Thebes. Karakhamun (TT 223) and Karabasken (TT 391) in the Twenty-fifth Dynasty*, edited by Elena Pischikova, Cairo, 247–62.
- 3 Cf. J. Budka, "Kushite Pottery from the Tomb of Karakhamun: Towards a Reconstruction of the Use of Pottery in the Twenty-fifth Dynasty Temple Tombs," in *Thebes in the First Millenium BC*, edited by Elena Pischikova, Julia Budka, and Kenneth Griffin, Cambridge, 505.
- 4 Cf. J. Budka, "Totenkult im Tempelgrab. Zu rituellen Handlungen in Elitegräbern des 1. Jahrtausends v. Chr. in Theben (Ägypten)," in: *Grabrituale. Tod und Jenseits in Frühgeschichte und Altertum, Aken der 3. Tagung des Zentrums Archäologie und Altertumswissenschaften an der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, edited by Gerhard Thür, Origines 3, Vienna, 48–49.
- 5 Dr. Julia Budka (Austrian Academy of Sciences).
- 6 See J. Budka, "Kushite Pottery from the Tomb of Karakhamun: Towards a Reconstruction of the Use of Pottery in the Twenty-fifth Dynasty Temple Tombs," in *Thebes in the First Millenium BC*, edited by Elena Pischikova, Julia Budka, and Kenneth Griffin, Cambridge, 505.