

KV 5: A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE EXCAVATIONS OF THE TOMB OF THE SONS OF RAMESES II IN THE VALLEY OF THE KINGS, edited by *Kent R. Weeks*. (Publications of the Theban Mapping Project 2.) Pp. 201, figs. 117, diagrams 20, tables 24. American University in Cairo Press, Cairo 2000. \$29.50. ISBN 977-424-574-1 (cloth).

KV 5 is the first scholarly report on the rediscovery in 1987 of one of the most remarkable rock tombs in Egypt's famous Valley of the Kings. Since the worldwide public announcement in 1995 of its rediscovery, KV 5 has become known as the "Tomb of the Sons of Rameses II"—an interpretation put forward by the excavator, Kent R. Weeks, himself, and earlier, by the late Elizabeth Thomas in her seminal work on *The Royal Necropoleis of Thebes* (Princeton 1966).

The volume consists of two major parts (not labeled as such): the first part (1–146) comprises a preface, an introduction, and chapters on archaeology and architecture, wall decoration, inscribed objects, pottery, fauna, and conservation. The second part (147–99) is a series of reports on technical details of the geology, petrography, mineralogy, hydraulics, and geotechnical engineering of the tomb and its surroundings.

In the preface, Weeks outlines the goals and aims of the "Theban Mapping Project," which started in 1979 as a project of the University of California, Berkeley, and is now continued on behalf of the American University of Cairo, under the directorship of the author. The introduction includes a short history of previous works in and on the tomb.

From an archaeological point of view, the chapter "Archaeological and Architectural Description" (Weeks) forms the central part of the book. First of all, it is the tomb's size and architectural layout that makes it a unique and unprecedented monument (figs. 6, 8). At the time of publication, the tomb consists of 110 rock-cut corridors, chambers, and side-chambers, certainly making it one of the largest entirely rock-cut structures ever created. Weeks gives a short description of the 17 main chambers and corridors (and various side-chambers) that were known and accessible at the time when he wrote the report. His description starts with the tomb's entrance and ends with a passage ("corridor 20") that runs backwards, probably extending far beyond the entrance in the opposite direction of the tomb's main corridors—an extremely unusual, but not entirely unprecedented, feature of rock-cut tombs in the Valley (J. Rose, *Tomb KV 39 in the Valley of the Kings* [Bristol 2000]).

The major problem with the archaeological work inside the tomb lies in the fact that most of its chambers and corridors have suffered severely "a dozen times from rare but heavy rains in the Valley of the Kings, and these had filled KV 5's chambers literally to their ceilings with stones, limestone chips, sand, and silts" (3), including, naturally, numerous objects from outside the tomb which were never part of the original contents of KV 5. In addition, the rains contributed to an extremely high humidity inside the tomb over extended periods; this, in turn,

has led to an almost complete decay of all organic materials. The main issue here is the assessment of the tomb's original contents, and, subsequently, an attempt to interpret KV 5's original purpose.

To that end, the archaeological record of chamber 2 deserves special attention since this chamber contained the only "original" burial found in the entire tomb so far (16–21): in a rectangular pit cut in the chamber's floor, the complete skeleton of an adult male was discovered. The pit was originally covered with six sealing blocks, one of which was still in situ when found. Week's interpretation that the body was dropped there by later tomb-robbers does not seem plausible: the body was found above the bottom of the shaft, in an orderly position, arms crossed on his chest, skull still attached. In view of both Thomas's and Week's (21) assumption that chambers 1 and 2 may constitute the first two chambers of an unfinished tomb of the 18th Dynasty, the pit burial may as well belong to an earlier use of KV 5. The same may be true for an irregular architectural feature in the adjacent chamber 3, the large 16-pillar hall. Here, "the floor level between the western wall and the first row of pillars was lowered by 0.80 meters." (22). This cut was later "raised back to its former height by laying down 0.80 meters of clean limestone." (24). Weeks does not offer an explanation for this change of plan. Is it conceivable that the cut was part of the original, 18th Dynasty architectural layout of the tomb?

In the following chapter, "Wall Decoration" (55–94), Edwin C. Brock gives a short account of the remains of the decoration of KV 5, illustrated with photographs and line drawings of the scenes preserved. The surprising result of the chapter is the fact that at least all the major chambers (the entrance and chambers nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, and 9) and corridors (nos. 7, 12) seem to have been more or less entirely decorated with painted plaster relief. Today, there is not a single wall whose decoration is completely preserved; in many rooms, only scant remains are visible on the walls or on plaster fragments found in the fill. However, the existing remains are preserved well enough to allow the interpretation that all the decoration known so far dates to the times of Rameses II—after the change of his name in the second year of his reign. The king's names are preserved on many walls, and several of his sons are mentioned, Amenherkhepeschef (58–9) and Rameses (59–61), or depicted (twice, four princes whose names are lost, on the west wall of chamber 3 [79–82]).

The next chapter, "Inscribed Objects" (95–117) by Edwin C. Brock and Nathalie Walschaerts, lists a number of objects discovered. Some of these include in their inscriptions the names of Rameses II's sons Suty, Amenherkhepeschef, Rameses Mery-Atum, and perhaps Mery-Amen. In the following chapter on "Pottery" (119–26), Barbara Green introduces a sample of the various types of pottery vessels found in KV 5, according to periods. Salima Ikram ("Fauna" [127–33]) deals with the faunal material, which was excavated over a 10-year period. The variety and distribution of both pottery and faunal remains discovered so far vividly demonstrate the difficulty in assessing the original contents of the tomb (119, 127). In the final chapter of this part ("Conservation, 1994–1999"

[135–46]), Lotfi Khaled Hassan describes various methodological and technical aspects of the consolidation and conservation of the tomb's decoration and of some of the objects excavated. The chapter is especially important because it addresses conservational problems, which are frequent not only in other tombs of the Valley but also in the entire Theban Necropolis.

Similarly important—if beyond the expertise of the reviewer—are the following chapters in the second part of the volume (“Appendices I to VI” [147–99]). These technical reports on rock mechanics, mineralogy, hydraulics, slope deformations, and geotechnical engineering will certainly be of use for experts of neighboring disciplines engaged in archaeological projects in Thebes.

One minor point of criticism may be added: only the chapters on pottery, fauna, and conservation are augmented by a few bibliographical references. The remaining chapters of the first part do not make use of footnotes or bibliographies at all. A selected general bibliography would have helped the non-Egyptologist reader obtain further information on the Valley or on KV 5 itself (e.g., N. Reeves and R.H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Valley of the Kings* [London 1996], or N. Reeves, ed., *After Tut'ankhamkūn* [London 1992]; both volumes contain extensive bibliographical references).

The title of the publication leaves no doubt that its authors did not attempt to present more than a preliminary report on the first few years' excavation of KV 5. Therefore, a final interpretation of the tomb's architecture, decoration, and original purpose must await further clearance. For the time being, Weeks's designation of KV 5 as the “Tomb of the Sons of Rameses II” can only be regarded as a working hypothesis. Clearly, some of the more important and well-known sons of Rameses II are depicted as deceased, guided by their father to their last resting place—similar representations are known from the tombs of princes of Rameses III in the Valley of the Queens. It may also be tempting to equate the number of chambers, 50, in the main corridors 7, 10, and 11 of KV 5 with the number of known sons of Rameses II (approximately 50; K.R. Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions 2* [Oxford 1979] 859–60; see now M.M. Fisher, *The Sons of Ramesses II* [Ägypten und Altes Testament 53, Wiesbaden 2001]), and thus to assign one prince to each chamber. However, a considerable number of these chambers are not likely to have been burial chambers *stricto sensu* because their doorways are not wide enough (tables on pages 32, 42, 46) to allow an elaborate coffin—even less a stone sarcophagus—to be dragged inside. In addition, we would not expect burial chambers on the “upper” level of a royal tomb in the Valley but, instead, in the lower parts of the structure (starting with corridors 12 and 20). Perhaps, these chambers have to be put in the wider context of an architectural realization of Osirian ideas or of loci in the books of the Netherworld, such as the Amduat (the title of which seems to be mentioned in the decoration of chamber 2), or the Book of Gates.

By any standard, KV 5 is one of the more enigmatic tombs of ancient Egypt. Weeks's preliminary report on his recent excavations provides a first glance at its unique architecture and the remains of its decoration, but also at

its difficult archaeological record. Given the technical and archaeological problems involved, the prompt appearance of the volume certainly deserves our appreciation.

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