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Since the discovery of the royal mummies in 1881, and in accordance with the conclusions of the Lansing campaign in 1920, the Royal Cache Wadi (or C2 Valley) on the West Bank at Luxor has been assumed to be archaeologically deserted. Since 2017, the C2 Project of Universidad Complutense of Madrid has returned to the site in order to explore the valley as a whole, not as though it were defined exclusively by the cache tomb TT 320. The results of the Project’s research to date challenge the interpretation of the Wadi either as archaeologically deserted or exclusively as an ancient hiding place, insofar as evidence of human activity indicates that other elements of the valley were significant in antiquity.

**Keywords**: Royal mummies, Theban necropolis, landscape, graffiti.

**Scenes**

Scenes of important events are often diminished in proportion to the importance of what happened there. In 1881, the mummies of a large number of kings were discovered in a tomb (TT 320) near the bottom of a small rocky valley or bay, immediately south of Deir el-Bahari on the West Bank at Luxor—accordingly, a central area in the spatial organisation of the Theban necropolis. The reasons for transferring royal bodies to this place from their original tombs could have been multiple and several possibilities have been mooted, most of which focus on a presumed intention to hide the bodies of the monarchs to protect them from looting. This spectacular discovery, known since 1881 simply as the Royal Cache, seemed to be the definitive feature of a site now often known simply as the Royal Cache Wadi, and has focused the interest of researchers ever since. In the very first report of the discovery, Gaston Maspero stated that “jamais cachette ne fut mieux dissimulée”,¹ and this interpretation has discouraged further analysis of the valley itself by apparently precluding the prospect of other significant human activity in an area which functioned as a ‘hiding place’.

¹ Maspero 1881-1887: 7.
Because the Royal Cache Wadi—or C2 Valley according to the nomenclature used in the *Graffiti de la Montagne Thebaine (GMT)*—has otherwise been considered archaeologically deserted, the subsequent interest of researchers has focused on matters immediately related to tomb TT 320. In January 1920, Ambrose Lansing did explore the possible existence of other significant structures or elements in the valley and the outcome was negative, though the site was said to have been explored “yard by yard.” 3 Graffiti in the valley have been surveyed several times as part of the complete survey of graffiti on the West Bank: initially Wilhelm Spiegelberg 4 published his results from a survey mostly made in the winter of 1895-96; 5 and most recently the Centre de Documentation et d’Étude sur l’Ancienne Égypte (CEDAE) published *Graffiti de la Montagne Thebaine.* 6 Nevertheless, a more recent project to re-explore and map tomb TT 320 left aside any consideration of the valley as its context. 7 In the light of these previous investigations of this central area in the Theban necropolis, the question arises whether the so-called Royal Cache Wadi is indeed a vacant space suited for a hiding place or whether, on the contrary, there are indications of human activity which may suggest a different original context for using the tomb as a cache. Of course, the presence of graffiti itself may be at odds with the interpretation of the site as archaeologically deserted. So, the study presented here focuses on the geographical environment of the C2 Valley as context, rather than on the content discovered in 1881, and the possibility of identifying other activities and other elements in the valley, thereby better contextualizing the reasons for the transfer of the kings’ bodies to this site.

**C2 Project. The Royal Cache Wadi Survey**

Whereas little attention has been paid to the geographical environment of the small, rocky C2 Valley, since 2017 Universidade Complutense of Madrid, in collaboration with the Centre for Study and Documentation of Egyptian Antiquities of the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities, has been conducting the C2 Project. Royal Cache Wadi Survey, under the joint direction of José R. Pérez-Accino and Hisham El-Leithy. Prior to beginning our work, members of the team in informal visits had identified a number of elements which had not been recorded previously, such as rock formations with apparent traces of human intervention and chiselling, and unrecorded graffiti. Before arriving on site, the team had already compiled a corpus of known graffiti in the valley from the published information. These records have been the basis of work in the field, allowing us to check the position and current state of preservation of the recorded graffiti. Spiegelberg identified a particular coherent group of graffiti in the upper ground of the valley in the cliff walls towards the west, which he dated to the Middle Kingdom. Unfortunately, access to these graffiti is now unsafe so we have decided to document these graffiti in future campaigns with a proper access plan and safety measures in place. Consequently, during the 2017 campaign we focused mainly on the survey of the lower ground of the valley.

First of all, the team identified topographical markers and register numbers left by previous surveyors. This allowed us to delimit the sections defined in GMT and locate the published graffiti (figs. 1 and 2). The markings were mostly clearly written in pencil so they have been resistant to erasure. We identified all the sections in the GMT survey but in the 2017 campaign we were only able to explore the sections numbered 93, 94, 95 and 96 on the lower ground of the valley. Despite the frailty of the stone, already described in one of the earliest reports of the site, 8 the graffiti are still in place. This indicates that most of the stone is stable and, at least, presents...
the same facade as that recorded over a century ago. The graffiti are difficult to identify (fig. 3) but the ancient ones are easy to distinguish from modern ones, which are often vandalism. Recent graffiti by tourists or visitors tend to be written with limestone flakes, which have left a broader trace, whereas the ancient graffiti tend to be finer and darker. Presumably in antiquity flint flakes, very common in the area, were used as the writing tool because flint is a much harder material than limestone. The previous surveys in the valley seem to have covered only part of the walls, which present about 320 linear metres in the lower ground. Approximately 202 linear metres had already been surveyed, leaving around 110 linear metres—or about a third of the walls of the lower ground—unsurveyed at the beginning of the present project.

There seemed to be two areas of concentration of graffiti already surveyed in the lower ground (see fig. 2). One group clearly follows the present path from the mouth of the valley to the cache along the east wall. This includes Sections 93 and 94 of the GMT and contains a large number of informal inscriptions. Their presence alone casts doubt over the interpretation of TT 320 as a hiding place because the location seems to have been well-known in antiquity and visited often. Unfortunately, because the ancient path to the tomb seems to have been the one still used today by visitors and tourists, modern inscriptions here sometimes damage the ancient graffiti by writing over them. The second concentration is in the south-west corner of the valley, symmetrically opposite but out of sight of tomb TT 320. This concentration includes Sections 95 and 96 of the GMT but the C2 Project has identified a number of new elements in this area, as discussed below.

**Graffiti Group 1**

Since the GMT was published, new inscriptions have been identified in the valley: notably two graffiti bearing the name of king Nubkheperre Antef V (Seventeenth Dynasty) at the entrance of tomb TT 320 itself; and a graffito of the royal scribe and priest Butchhamun (fig. 3), to add to several of his identified previously. The former graffito brings the debate over the date and identity of the owner of TT 320 back to queen Inhapy, a contemporary of Nubkheperre Antef. In 2017, the team found a number of other elements in the vicinity never previously described:

- One unpublished graffito was discovered in the farthest stretch of the north-east wall, facing west at a distance of forty-eight metres from the origin of Section 93 but well outside this section (fig. 4). This has more formal characteristics than other graffiti found within the valley, taking the form of a round-top stela depicting a royal figure, with a uraeus and possibly a diadem, standing in front of a pyramid. There is a further discussion of this graffito in terms of its relationship to the second concentration of graffiti below.

- A second unpublished graffito was identified in Section 94, in the north-west corner of the valley at four metres above the present ground—specifically in the recess at the entrance to tomb TT 320. It takes the form of a rectangular double frame within which a human figure can be identified. This graffito is positioned symmetrically opposite the graffiti of Nubkheperre Antef in relation to the tomb shaft (fig. 5).

As noted above, the belief that TT 320 was used as a hiding place originated in the first moments after the discovery of the royal mummies.

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in 1881, but this assumption could be reviewed in the light of the observations made by the present project. The valley is not remote at all but central to the Theban necropolis, and surrounded by significant archaeological sites on all sides. Its simple, rectangular shape makes it perfectly straightforward to visualise the whole valley from its entrance and thus recognise the significant location of TT 320 at the north-east corner, closest to Deir el-Bahari and in a position analogous to the locations of cemeteries in the C1 and C3 Valleys (the Deir el-Bahari and Meketre bays respectively). If we add to this revised interpretation the numerous graffiti along the path from the valley’s entrance to the tomb, it seems that the location of TT 320 was well known in antiquity.

**Graffiti Group 2**

The second concentration of graffiti is in the south-west of the valley and falls within Section 96 (see fig. 1). From here a person writing a graffito cannot see the entrance of TT 320 but several inscriptions of considerable interest may be found here nonetheless, including: a known graffito of Butehamun containing a prayer; graffiti with names deliberately erased; and a figure standing in a gesture characteristic of mourning or worshipping. Previously, there have been no particular explanations for the presence of these inscriptions in this part of the valley, but the team has noted that they are immediately adjacent to a rectangular niche in the south-west corner of the valley, symmetrically opposite tomb TT 320 in the north-east corner (see figs. 1 and 6). The floor of the niche has seemingly been smoothed by human action and the corners deliberately squared into the living rock (fig. 7). The measurements of this niche are similar to the measurements of the recess at the entrance of tomb TT 320. Resting on the floor of the niche was a stone showing indications of having been intentionally squared, which has retouched edges and a central basin with indications of the former presence of liquid. One edge of the basin is lowered as though to allow pouring, and marks have been incised in two of the corners (fig. 8). This seems to be a very basic offering table, albeit of a known type. Therefore, the niche and its environment, including the graffiti, may constitute a shrine or area for worship.

This group of graffiti and the area described in the foregoing are adjacent to a rock formation in the south wall of the valley, facing north. This formation, about twenty metres in height, resembles a human head emerging from the mountain as

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11 Maspero 1881-1887.
12 Niwiński et alii 2001; Rzepka 2004.
13 Sadek and Shimy 1974.
14 Holzl 2002.
had previously been recognised by Maria Belchi, a team member (fig. 9). Its significant appearance may be represented in the first of the newly registered graffiti in Group 1 (see figs. 4 and 10), which is located directly opposite this rock formation. On the right of the graffiti a tomb (TT 320?) is represented by a pyramid; on the left, a prominent pyramidal shape dominates the scene, perhaps to represent the peak of El-Qurn towering over the area; between them is the anthropoid form with a royal head (fig. 11). Therefore, this distribution of elements may be understood to coincide with the distribution of the significant elements in the visible landscape looking from the location of the graffiti towards the south-west corner of the valley (fig. 12).

Taking all these elements into consideration—and the continuation of the survey of these areas of the valley notwithstanding—we may propose the existence of an area of worship or ritual activity centered on the south-west corner of the C2 Valley, symmetrically opposite the location of tomb TT 320. This area has been defined, essentially, by observation of the walls of the valley, by the second concentration of graffiti considered here, and by the new graffiti in Group 1 that seems to represent the significant elements in this landscape. In short, it seems that the so-called Royal Cache Wadi in ancient times was not a vacant space suited for a hiding place. On the contrary, there are indications of significant human activity, which suggest a different context for using tomb TT 320 as a cache. The ongoing aim of the C2 Project is to study and record such indications in order to explain more fully the role of the wadi within the history of the Theban necropolis.

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El artículo presenta los trabajos llevados a cabo en el templo de Heryshef durante la campaña de 2018 como continuación

Un proyecto importante fue el dewatering, que permitió alcanzar niveles más profundos y encontrar nuevos elementos arquitectónicos. Los rellenos intactos y no alterados permitieron analizar secuencias completas. Excavando los rellenos mediante estratigráficos reales, se logró aislar el material arqueológico y fechar los principios de construcción.

Los trabajos de excavación también permitieron determinar la secuencia del edificio, resolver la sucesión cronológica y encontrar elementos arquitectónicos nuevos. Mediante la utilización de métodos y técnicas modernos, estas excavaciones ayudaron a alcanzar los objetivos principales: establecer la secuencia del edificio, solucionar la sucesión cronológica y encontrar nuevos elementos arquitectónicos.

Además, se realizaron observaciones de los faldeos occidentales A, B y C. Nuevas observaciones en los faldeos permitieron encontrar niveles más profundos, que fueron más antiguos que el suelo del templo. El dewatering llevado a cabo por el Servicio de Antigüedades de Beni Suef permitió alcanzar estos niveles.

En resumen, los trabajos de 2018 en el templo de Heryshef proporcionaron nuevos datos para entender la historia del edificio, su secuencia cronológica y sus elementos arquitectónicos.
Estudio preliminar sobre la tumba 22, hallada en el noroeste del templo de Millones de Años de Tutmosis III
Javier MARTÍNEZ BABÓN

Elementos arquitectónicos de la capilla funeraria de Sarenput II (QH31) en Qubbet el-Hawa. Characterización geoquímica
Juan Antonio MARTÍNEZ HERMOSO, María José AYORA CAÑADA, Ana DOMINGUEZ VIDAL

Tueris-Oxirrinco. La diosa protectora de Per-Medyed
Marte MASCORT ROCA, Esther PONS MELLADO

Restauración y conservación de un conjunto de estelas de falsa puerta hallado en Heracleópolis Magna (Ehnasya el-Medina, Beni Suef)
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La explotación de esmeraldas en el Egipto romano. Primeros resultados del Sikait Project
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Libertad SERRANO LARA, Luisa María GARCÍA GONZÁLEZ

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Inmaculada VIVAS SAINZ

Submission Guidelines