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## THE PLAN OF A ROYAL TOMB ON O. CAIRO 25184

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More than a century after its discovery and publication, O. Cairo 25184 is re-examined according to the results of the most recent research in the Valley of the Kings. The identification of the plan drawn on the ostracon as KV 6, tomb of Ramses IX, is confirmed, thus providing interesting insights into the planning and building of rock-cut tombs.

From an architectural point of view, the plan of a royal tomb sketched on O. Cairo 25184 may be considered one of the most interesting documents found in the Valley of the Kings. This ostracon was found in 1889 and published in 1898 by Daressy, who translated the short text accompanying the drawing and commented upon the identification of the tomb.<sup>1</sup> After a century, and in the light of the most recent research in the Valley of the Kings, it may be worth re-examining the subject and assessing the evidence gathered to date. For their contribution, I wish to thank Dr. Hanna Jenni and Elina Paulin-Grothe (Basel University), who kindly shared with me the results of their survey of KV18; Dr. Ted Brock and Ilka Schacht (Theban Mapping Project), who discussed with me several aspects of their surveys; and Barry J. Kemp and Dr. Sarah Clackson for their support.

The plan on O. Cairo 25184 shows a royal tomb consisting of four corridors with lateral recesses and three internal rooms increasing in size, each labelled by a short hieratic inscription providing their dimensions (fig 1, text omitted). The best candidate for the identification of this tomb is certainly KV 6, tomb of Ramses IX, the general design of which matches very well the plan on the ostracon (fig. 2). However, there is a significant difference between the dimensions provided by the text and many of the actual measurement of KV 6. In the case of the burial chamber, the difference in size between the drawing (the written dimensions of this room are lost) and the actual chamber may be due to lack of time to complete the latter according to the intended dimensions, but for the length of the corridors obviously this explanation does not work.

The ostracon was found during the clearance of KV 6 (Ramses IX) and KV 9 (Ramses V-VI). Because the ostraca found in these two tombs were confused during the transport to Cairo,

<sup>1</sup> G. Daressy, *Ostraca* (CG; Cairo 1901), 35, pl. 32, and *Revue Archéologique* 32 (1898), 235-40.

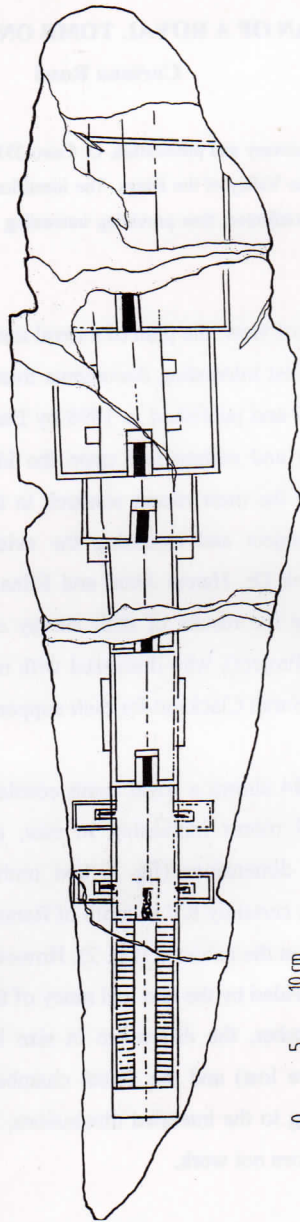
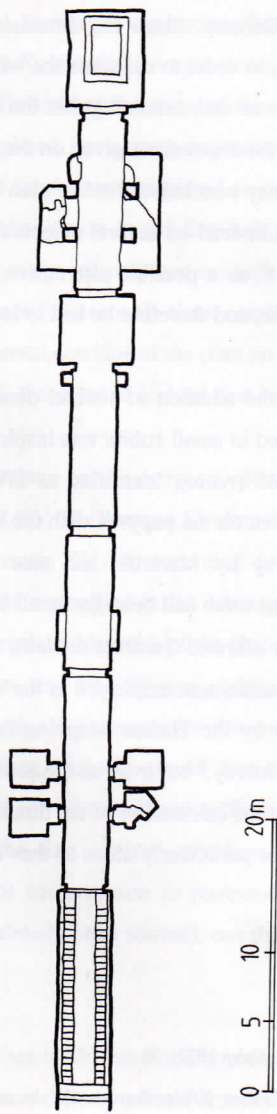


Fig. 1 : O. Cairo 25184 (text omitted).



**Fig. 2:** Sketch plan of KV 6, tomb of Ramses IX  
(re-drawn after N. C. Reeves, *Valley of the Kings*, London 1990, fig. 40).

their exact place of discovery is uncertain.<sup>2</sup> The identification of the plan as KV 6 was immediately considered by Daressy. Since the dimensions of the second corridor and the burial chamber were missing, in order to calculate the whole length of the tomb, he filled the gaps with hypothetical measures and, assuming that the dimensions were expressed in small cubits (ca 45 cm), converted the dimensions given on the ostrakon into metres. The result was quite discouraging, and Daressy concluded that the plan did not refer to KV6 after all. Since the name of Ramses X could be read on several objects found at the same time, he suggested the tomb of this king, KV 18, as a possible alternative. This tomb had not been excavated when Daressy wrote his article, and therefore he had to leave the question open.

Subsequent research allows the addition of several observations. Daressy's assumption that the dimensions were expressed in small cubits was inspired by Lepsius' study of the plan of a royal tomb on P. Turin 1885 (*recto*), identified as KV 2, tomb of Ramses IV.<sup>3</sup> Lepsius compared the dimensions given on the papyrus with the survey of KV 2 from the *Description* and then with a later survey by Mariette, and was left in the doubt that the unit of measurement employed in that tomb had been the small cubit.<sup>4</sup> The later, more reliable survey of KV 2 carried out by Carter allowed Gardiner to claim unequivocally that the royal cubit (ca 52.5 cm) was the unit of measurement employed in the tomb.<sup>5</sup> Going back to KV 6, tomb of Ramses IX, the 1978 survey by the Theban Mapping Project provides data which are quite different from Daressy's old survey,<sup>6</sup> but even so the problem is still not solved. The adoption of the "correct" royal cubit in the calculation of the dimensions written on the ostrakon in fact produces a result which is not particularly close to the "correct" modern survey, as shown in figure 3.

<sup>2</sup> J. Cerny, *The Valley of the Kings* (Cairo 1973), 23.

<sup>3</sup> R. Lepsius, "Grundplan des Grabes König Ramses IV. in einem Turiner Papyrus", *Abhandlungen der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* 1867, 1-22.

<sup>4</sup> R. Lepsius, "Über die Masse im Felsengrabe Ramses IV", *ZÄS* 22 (1884), 1-5.

<sup>5</sup> H. Carter and A. H. Gardiner, "The Tomb of Ramses IV and the Turin Plan of a Royal Tomb", *JEA* 4 (1917), 135-6.

<sup>6</sup> K. R. Weeks, "The Berkeley Map of the Theban Necropolis; Preliminary Report 1978", *NARCE* 105 (1978), Appendix.

It may, therefore, be worth taking into account again the possibility that the plan on the ostrakon referred to another tomb. Daressy's suggestion that the plan on the ostrakon represented KV 18, tomb of Ramses X, remains a vague possibility. This tomb, which was recently excavated, proved to be unfinished at the stage of the second internal corridor. The external corridor was actually completed by a ramp-step-ramp type of floor (now almost completely disappeared), as intended for the tomb depicted on the ostrakon. The first internal corridor, however, with remains of decoration in the first half, does not show any trace of lateral chambers, but elongated recesses were prepared on both sides of the second internal passage, as in the tomb on the ostrakon.<sup>7</sup> Since only three corridors were quarried in KV 18 and the dimensions of the second internal corridor of the plan on the ostrakon are lost, there is little material to compare, that is, only the external and the first internal corridor.

Figure 3 compares the dimensions written on the ostrakon with KV 6 (Ramses IX) after the Theban Mapping Project (TMP), and KV 18 (Ramses X) after the recent surveys of both the TMP and Basel University.<sup>8</sup> Concerning KV 18, according to the TMP plan the external corridor may have reached the 30 cubits specified in the ostrakon, and its breadth is not very far from the corresponding value. Length and breadth of the first internal corridor show a very good correspondence with the plan on the ostrakon, while the height appears to be significantly different. In conclusion, the few comparable dimensions of the plan and KV 18 show a certain degree of correspondence, probably greater than that between the plan and KV 6, but it remains to be seen whether it can be considered sufficient. Then there is the problem of the four missing rooms beside the first internal corridor: only by assuming that their construction had been abandoned for some reason or postponed (although this is unlikely since the decoration had apparently already been started), can this tomb still be considered as a possible candidate.

Apart from KV 6 (Ramses IX), no other tomb was actually provided with the combination of the ramp-step-ramp floor at the entrance, the two pairs of lateral chambers in the first corridor,

<sup>7</sup> H. Jenni and E. Paulin-Grothe, personal communication.

<sup>8</sup> The length of the sloping corridors taken into account here is the length measured along the slope. According to the graphic conventions of our modern architectural drawing, this happens to be slightly longer than its projection on the plan. For a discussion on the subject, see C. Rossi, "Dimensions and Slope in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasty Royal Tombs", forthcoming in *JEA* 87 (2001).

	O. Cairo 25184	KV 6 (Ramses IX)	KV 18 (Ramses X)
<b>external corridor</b>	L = (30 c =) 15.75 m B = (7 c =) 3.67 m		L = ca 15.70 m B = 3.78 m
<b>gate</b>		L = 0.59 m	L = 0.61 m
<b>first corridor</b>	L = (30 c =) 15.75 m B = (6 c =) 3.15 m H = (7 c =) 3.67 m	L = 15.45 m B = 3.25 m H = 4.47 m	L = ca 15.70 m B = 3.16 m H = 4.00-4.15 m
<b>gate</b>		L = 0.57 m	L = 0.62 m
<b>second corridor</b>	lost	L = 9.95 m B = 3.22 m H = 4.11 m	L = 10.40 (unfinished) B = 3.16 m H = 4.00
<b>gate</b>		L = 0.60 m	
<b>third corridor</b>	L = (30 c =) 15.75 m B = (6 c =) 3.15 m H = lost	L = 11.52 m B = 3.20 m H = 3.70 m	
<b>gate</b>		L = 0.59 m	
<b>hall of hindering</b>	L = (10 c =) 5.25 m B = (10 c =) 5.25 m H = (7 c =) 3.67 m	L = 4.91 m B = 5.25 m H = 3.59 m	
<b>gate</b>		L = 0.59 m	
<b>pillared hall</b>	L = (20 c =) 10.50 m B = (20 c =) 10.50 m H = (7 c =) 3.67 m	L = ca 8.30 m B = ca 8.30 m (unfinished)	
<b>gate</b>		L = 0.61 m	
<b>burial chamber</b>	lost	L = 7.36 m B = 5.31 m H = irregular	

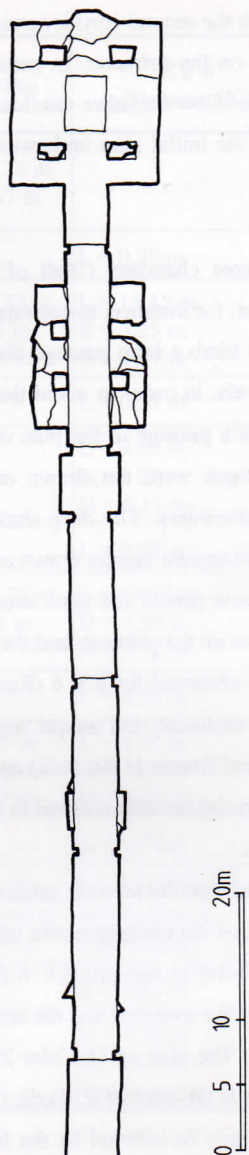
c = (royal) cubit, ca 52.5 cm  
m = metre

**Fig. 3:** Comparison between the dimensions given by O. Cairo 25184 and those of KV 6, tomb of Ramses IX (TMP survey) and KV 18, tomb of Ramses X (Basel University survey).

the long rectangular recesses in the second corridor and the two niches at the end of the third corridor as show by the plan on the ostrakon. In particular, the four chambers of the first corridor are unique. In order to allow for other candidates for an alternative identification, it must always be assumed that the initial plan underwent substantial modification during the quarrying.

The increasing size of the three chambers ("hall of hindering", pillared hall and burial chamber on the ostrakon) seems, for instance, to correspond to the proportions of KV 4, tomb of Ramses XI (fig. 4). In this tomb a long passage divided the pillared hall and the burial chamber, lying at different levels, in order to avoid the creation of too long a cavity in the rock. There is no trace of such a passage in the plan on O. Cairo 25184, but thickness and length of doorways and passages were not drawn on the P. Turin 1885 (*recto*) either, evidently being perceived as secondary. The deep shaft departing from the second pillared hall might correspond to the rectangular feature drawn on the ostrakon in the largest chamber. The general design of the deepest part of the tomb seems, therefore, to correspond, and the discrepancy between dimensions on the ostrakon and the measurements of KV 4 (Ramses XI) is indeed as significant as that observed for KV 6 (Ramses IX).<sup>9</sup> However, KV 4 lacks the flight of stairs at the entrance, obviously the unique four rooms of the first internal corridor (the recesses are due to a vertical fissure in the rock) and the pair of niches at the end of the third corridor, shown in the plan and actually realised in KV 6.

Obviously it cannot be excluded that the plan on ostrakon referred to a tomb that was never even started, but in conclusion, of the existing tombs which were completed, the most likely candidate for the plan on the ostrakon remains KV 6 (Ramses IX). An explanation for the significant discrepancy between the recorded and the actual dimensions may lie in the nature of the drawing and its purpose. The plan on O. Cairo 25184 appears to have been an initial project, rather than a survey, as is the case of P. Turin 1885 (*recto*). That the Turin plan is a survey of the completed tomb may be inferred by the fact that the sarcophagus is shown in place, surrounded by a nest of wooden shrines. The dimensions of the various elements of the tomb are expressed with remarkable accuracy using cubits, palms and fingers (respectively about 52.5 cm, 7.5 cm and 1.8 cm). The dimensions from O. Cairo 25184, by contrast, are



**Fig. 4:** Sketch plan of KV 4, tomb of Ramses XI  
(re-drawn after N. C. Reeves, *Valley of the Kings*, London 1990, fig. 42).

expressed in a simpler, less detailed way, by means of whole numbers of cubits. The same happens in P. Turin 1923 and related fragments, recording the calculations carried out in advance by the scribe to establish how many cubic cubits should have been removed in one year in order to complete in three years the project of enlargement of KV 9, started for Ramses V and then taken over by Ramses VI.<sup>10</sup>

Probably the initial plan of any tomb was laid out on papyrus or ostrakon according to a set of generic and ideal dimensions. The three surviving corridors mentioned in O. Cairo 25184 and the first two of P. Turin 1923, for example, are all supposed to be 30 cubits long, and the other dimensions are always "simple" numbers of whole cubits. After the work was begun, the progress was recorded from time to time on ostraca and papyri. These documents list the architectural elements of the tomb completed at a certain date, and their exact dimensions expressed in cubits, palms and fingers.<sup>11</sup> It was probably during construction, when also characteristics of the rock and technique of excavation must have exerted a constant and significant influence over the development of the work, that many details seem to have been decided, including the final dimensions of the chambers.<sup>12</sup>

The project which engaged the scribe of P. Turin 1923 was never carried out, but the plan on O. Cairo 25184 probably materialised in KV 6 (Ramses IX). The transition from initial plan to actual result may be visualised by the differing nature of the dimensions, ideally simple and linear in the projects, and naturally fragmented into submultiples of the cubit in the actual tombs. It may be concluded that an initial plan of a tomb, such as O. Cairo 25184, was intended only as a general guide for the workmen, and that it might be significantly modified by decisions taken during the work.

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<sup>9</sup> K. R. Weeks, "The Berkeley Map of the Theban Necropolis; Report of the Second Season, 1979", *NARCE* 109 (Summer 1979), Appendix - Special Supplement, 1-21.

<sup>10</sup> R. Ventura, "The Largest Project for a Royal Tomb in the Valley of the Kings", *JEA* 74 (1988), 137-56.

<sup>11</sup> R. J. Demarée, "Royal Riddles", in R. J. Demarée R. J. and A. Egberts (eds.), *Village Voices* (Leiden 1992), 9-18.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, how Engelbach and Reeves commented upon the sketch of a pillared hall on O. Cairo 51936 (R. Engelbach, "An Architect's Project from Thebes", *ASAE* 27 (1927), 72-6; N. C. Reeves, "Two Architectural Drawings from the Valley of the Kings", *CdÉ* 61 (1986), 43-9.

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