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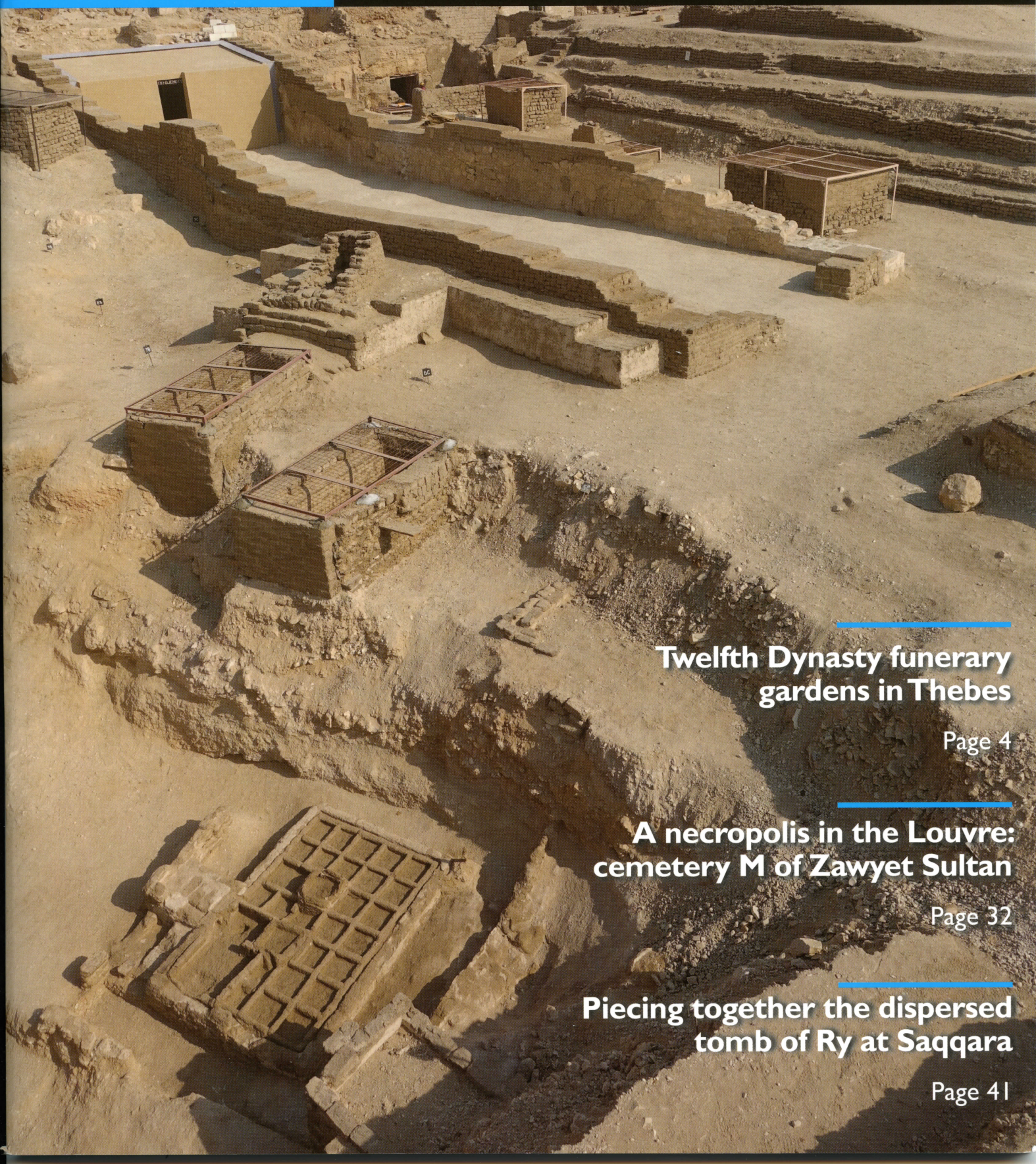


Foto: Proyecto Djehuty / J. M. Galán

Ibrahim Yaber, working for the Spanish mission in Dra Abu el-Naga North, clearing the trunk of a tamarisk still standing at the northeastern corner, with one of its roots growing toward the centre of the garden.

Photo: Ilona Regulski

Contents

Twelfth Dynasty funerary gardens in Thebes

In 2017, the Spanish mission at Dra Abu el-Naga North, Thebes, working near the tomb of the Eighteenth Dynasty official Djehuty (TT 11), disovered a structure that turned out to be a funerary garden. **José M. Galán** and **David García** give some details of what they found.

The tomb of Djari (TT 366; MMA 820; images below and right) was discovered by Herbert Winlock at the end of his 1929–30 season. He cleared and documented it the following year, which was his final campaign after two decades spent digging in the Theban necropolis. Catharine Roehrig, a curator in the Department of Egyptian Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art New York (MMA), pointed out in 1995 that

> *perhaps the fact that it was uncovered so late in his career as an excavator helps explain Winlock's almost complete lack of interest in the tomb (...) the only architectural feature that Winlock comments on at any length is a low mud-brick structure located directly in front of the main entrance of the tomb. He identifies this as a garden, a feature not found in other nobles' tombs of the period* [i.e. the later part of the reign of Neb-hepetra Montuhotep (II)] *and, therefore, considered to be worthy of note.*

In his unpublished field notes, kept in the archives of the MMA, Winlock described it as:

> *GARDEN (?): In the center of the court opposite the middle entrance, but slightly out of parallel with axis. Bricks as above* [i.e. 31–33 × 15–17 × 5–6 cm]. *About 335 × 210 × 40 cm at back (worn down at front). Outside a brick wall 1 brick thick below and 1/2 brick above. Goes to 4 courses at back and 3 in front. White tafl plaster outside and on edges of top. Divided into 2 compartments on the ground surface (but not on top) by a cross brick wall. Entire structure filled with mud which seems to have been watered, and there appear to be roots in it.* (p. 230)

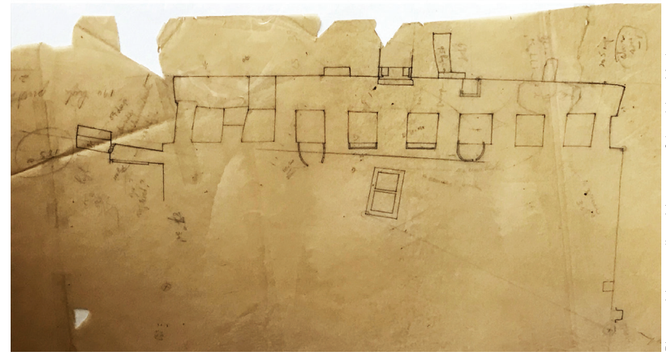
The Spanish mission working in Dra Abu el-Naga North discovered a very similar small / model funerary garden in 2017 (*EA* 51, Digging Diary, pp. 23–4), 13 m south-west of the open courtyard of the tomb of Djehuty (TT 11) but at a level 3.2 m deeper (see images next page). The garden is located on the north-western side of a courtyard shared by two large and almost parallel rock-cut tombs, which, like Djari's tomb, date to the early Twelfth Dynasty, directly in front of the one that appears to be the second oldest. The identity of their owners remains unknown, but the size and layout of the structures suggests that they must have been high-ranking individuals at the Theban court. The walls now visible were left undecorated, but most of their inner rooms remain unexcavated and filled with debris.

The garden is 0.4 m above the floor of the courtyard, which implies that it was built long enough after the court was cut into the rock of the hillside to allow layers of sand to gradually be deposited by wind and rainwater. This also suggests that the garden was not built by the first occupant of the tomb, but by a later one buried in this family mausoleum before the Twelfth Dynasty royal court moved from Thebes to Lisht (c. 1994–1965 BC). Moreover, a silt floor connects the garden with a second mud-brick that closes the tomb entrance, indicating that these two features were contemporary. The latter was built over layers of sand, 0.4 m thick, that had accumulated naturally on the stone floor of the central corridor, exactly matching the depth of deposits under the garden outside. The pottery found within the tomb and around the garden confirms that both the tomb and garden date to the early Twelfth Dynasty. Among the pottery were two *hes*-vases (ritual vessels used for libations, their elliptic shape resembling the hieroglyph hes, which can mean 'to favour', 'to praise') and four *kernoi* bowls (round pottery trays to which are attached several small vessels for holding offerings) of different sizes

The garden itself measures 3.0 × 2.2 m and has a maximum height of 0.4 m. The structure was made of silt, covered with a layer of white plaster to make it stronger, the perimeter wall being 14 cm thick. The interior is mostly divided into a grid of 23 squares of 30 × 30 cm, separated from one another by 8 cm walls with rounded tops. It also contains three 'plots' of different layouts and sizes, and two slightly elevated platforms in the middle that have circles of darker soil at their centres. Between the perimeter wall and the inner grid is a 5 cm-wide channel. Attached to the north-west side, which faces the tomb entrance, is a two-step mud-brick staircase coated with white plaster, which would have been used by water carriers to access the inner squares, as depicted in the Twelfth Dynasty tombs of Amenemhat and Khnumhotep III at Beni Hasan (image next page). The outer face of the staircase adjoins a mud-brick enclosing wall that is the width of a single brick (31 × 15 × 8 cm; i.e. the same size as those that close the tomb entrance, and similar to those recorded by Winlock in Djari's garden), which defines the garden and is nearly square at 3.8 × 3.9 m.

The plots or cells were originally filled with fertile dark soil, which stands out against the brightness of the limestone floor of the surrounding courtyard. Each square served as a separate planting area, the silt walls helping to retain the water within the individual small beds. The aim of a so-called 'square foot garden', also known as a 'waffle garden', is to enable cultivation in a non-favourable environment by optimizing the available water. They are characteristic of arid areas.

In what is a remarkable find for a garden in such a desiccated condition, several square cells contained seeds that had been planted around 4,000 years ago. Research is ongoing, but archaeobotanists have so far identified seeds of coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*) and



Photos: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

View of Djari's courtyard (M12C 369), and plan of the courtyard and façade traced by Winlock during his final Theban season (1930–31).

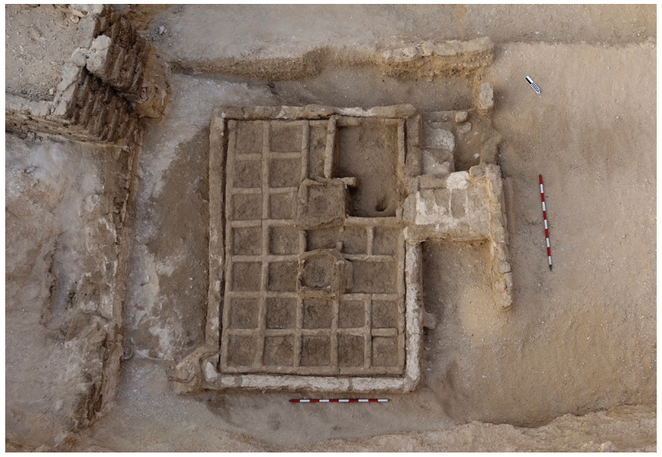
View of the garden before (left) and after (right) the courtyard of the tomb of Djari, TT 366, was excavated (MMA M12C 11 and M12C 31).

Photos: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Right: courtyard shared by two early Twelfth Dynasty rock-cut tombs in Dra Abu el-Naga North, with a 'square foot garden' in front of one of them. Seventeenth Dynasty funerary shafts were cut around the courtyard, and a silt shrine built for three stelae was attached to the façade of the tombs.

Second from top: view of the garden showing a staircase attached to one of its sides.

Third from top: bird's eye view of the funerary garden.



Photos of the garden: Proyecto Djehuty / J. Latova

Bottom: detail from the tomb of Amenemhat in Beni Hasan, showing labourers watering a grid-garden that has a staircase at one of its sides to facilitate access to its central cells.

of a non-sweet variety of melon (*Cucumis melo*), as well as several parts of flowers that show characters that match members of the daisy family (*Asteraceae*) (images opposite page). It seems that the garden combined plants that had a practical use, for example to be presented to the deceased as food offerings, together with other plants that may have had a more aesthetic and/or symbolic use. The size of the garden does not correspond to that of fields under cultivation for a mortuary foundation, such as the one mentioned at the end of the story of Sinuhe, or in the agreements that the nomarch Hapidjefa reached with the priests in charge of his funerary cult, which he registered on the wall of his tomb in Asyut. The garden was thus probably conceived and built as a model or miniature garden, to make a visual statement of the deceased's capability and to support his wish to be periodically supplied with offerings during his eternal life.

Against the outer face of the northern side of the garden was an assemblage of broken pottery. Among the sherds was a complete fine Nile silt bowl that had intentionally been turned upside down. When upended, the contents that remained on the floor included five dates, now dried but remarkably well preserved.

The lower end (0.4 m) of a tree trunk was found at the north-eastern corner of the garden, still upright with one of its roots growing towards the middle of the garden (see image on contents page), in the direction of more humid soil. The tree has been identified as a tamarisk, and its visible rings show that it lived for around 25 years. Although the tamarisk may have had symbolic characteristics in funerary literature – the *ba* of the deceased rests on one of its branches, waiting for offerings – this one probably played a functional role, offering shade to the garden during the morning hours.

The question of how such a fragile silt structure, including 4,000 year-old seeds and the trunk of a tamarisk, was preserved in such good condition may be answered by examining the stratigraphy of the fill in the early Twelfth Dynasty courtyard, which preserved evidence of both environmental and human factors ranging from this period until the beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty (c. 1550 BC). Sand was carried in by wind and rainwater, and eventually covered the garden, sealed it, and provided a natural cushion that minimized any damaged from the later use of the area or by robbers' activities. The courtyard was reused in the Second Intermediate Period (c. 1670–1550 BC), when a silt shrine was built attached to the façade, with three stelae inside and nine funerary shafts cut around the court, all of which were looted in antiquity (see *EA* 49, pp. 24–8), and the inner part of the rock-cut tomb was reused by at least four high-ranking priests of Amun during the Twenty-second Dynasty (c. 945–720 BC), the remains of whom were also violently looted and dismembered.

These two gardens – that of Djari and the anonymous one found by the Spanish mission – are the only Middle Kingdom examples yet known that were built as part of a funerary

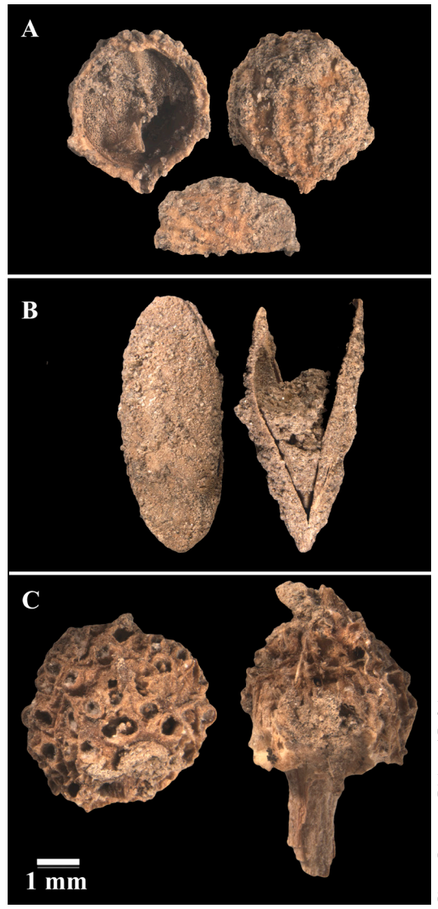


Photo: Proyecto Djehuty / D. Sabato

(A) Coriander seed (*Coriandrum sativum*); (B) seed from a non-sweet variety of melon (*Cucumis melo*); and (C) flower receptacle of a possible member of the daisy family (*Asteraceae*).

Photo: Proyecto Djehuty / J. Latova

Coriander seeds, as found in one of the cells.

monument in the Theban necropolis, but it is probable that more will come to light if excavations are conducted in the courtyards of other rock-cut tombs from the Middle and New Kingdoms. These two gardens constitute good archaeological evidence that the square grid-gardens appearing in the iconographic repertoire of the early Eighteenth Dynasty, before the entrances of tombs and/or the chapels of Anubis and Osiris, correspond to real structures. These appear, for example, in the *heilige Bezirke* ('sacred domains') scenes in the tomb of Reneni in Elkab, or in the tombs of Hery (TT 12), Teteki (TT 15) and Ineni (TT 81) in Thebes.

The botanical information that derives from the ongoing analysis of the seeds and plant remains may contribute to our knowledge about the actual cultivation of plants for religious or funerary purposes. Information on other trees and plants that were cultivated on the fertile plain or grew wild on the West Bank at Thebes may be derived from further analysis of the pollen preserved in the soil of the grid-garden and in the strata that filled the courtyard where the garden was built. Moreover, geoarchaeologists may be able to retrieve information on pluviometry from the stratigraphy associated with the garden, and thereby contribute to our knowledge of the ancient environment from 1900 to 1500 BC in the Theban region.

Detail of the *heilige Bezirke* in the tomb of Reneni at Elkab, showing the 'square foot garden' in front of the chapels of Anubis and Osiris.