

ITALIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION TO LUXOR

RESEARCHES IN THE TOMBS OF HARWA (TT 37) AND AKHIMENRU (TT 404)



Winter 2004 – 2005



INTRODUCTION¹

During Winter 2004-2005 (December 11th, 2004 – January 19th, 2005) the activities of the Italian Archaeological Mission to Luxor² mainly concentrated on the subterranean part of the Tomb of Harwa (TT 37), where three funerary shafts were excavated. Two (YE and YF) are located in the Second Pillared Hall. The third (YN) was discovered last summer, during clearing of the debris from the southwest part of the corridor surrounding the first subterranean level.

Conservation work was conducted in the vestibule of the tomb. All the antiquities stored there by the Archaeological Mission of the Metropolitan Museum of Arts in the 1920s had been moved to the storerooms of the Supreme Council of Antiquities last summer.

A team of epigraphers from the Archaeological Italian Mission to Luxor³ also worked in the Tomb of Pabasa following an agreement with Dr. Mohammed El-Soghair and Dr. Mahmud Abd El-Rasek. They continued the recording of the blocks stored in the room XB, completed and verified the copies of the texts engraved in the pillars of the pillared room and started to copy some other texts in the courtyard.

The campaign ran simultaneously with the exhibition, “L’enigma di Harwa. Alla scoperta di un capolavoro del rinascimento egizio” (Palazzo Bricherasio, Torino, December 14th 2004 – January 23rd 2005) and was connected to a website (www.anticoegitto.org), where a daily journal of the activities of the mission was kept. Anyone interested could follow the progress of the excavations from the exhibition (where two computers connected to the internet had been placed) or from home. This was intended as an experiment aimed to provide a realistic picture of the activities of an archaeological mission in Egypt.

As a final part of the mission’s activities nearly thirty tombs of Theban officials, most of which are unopened to the public, were photographed. The mission aims to publish a book on the private necropolis of Thebes.

Qurna, January 19th, 2005

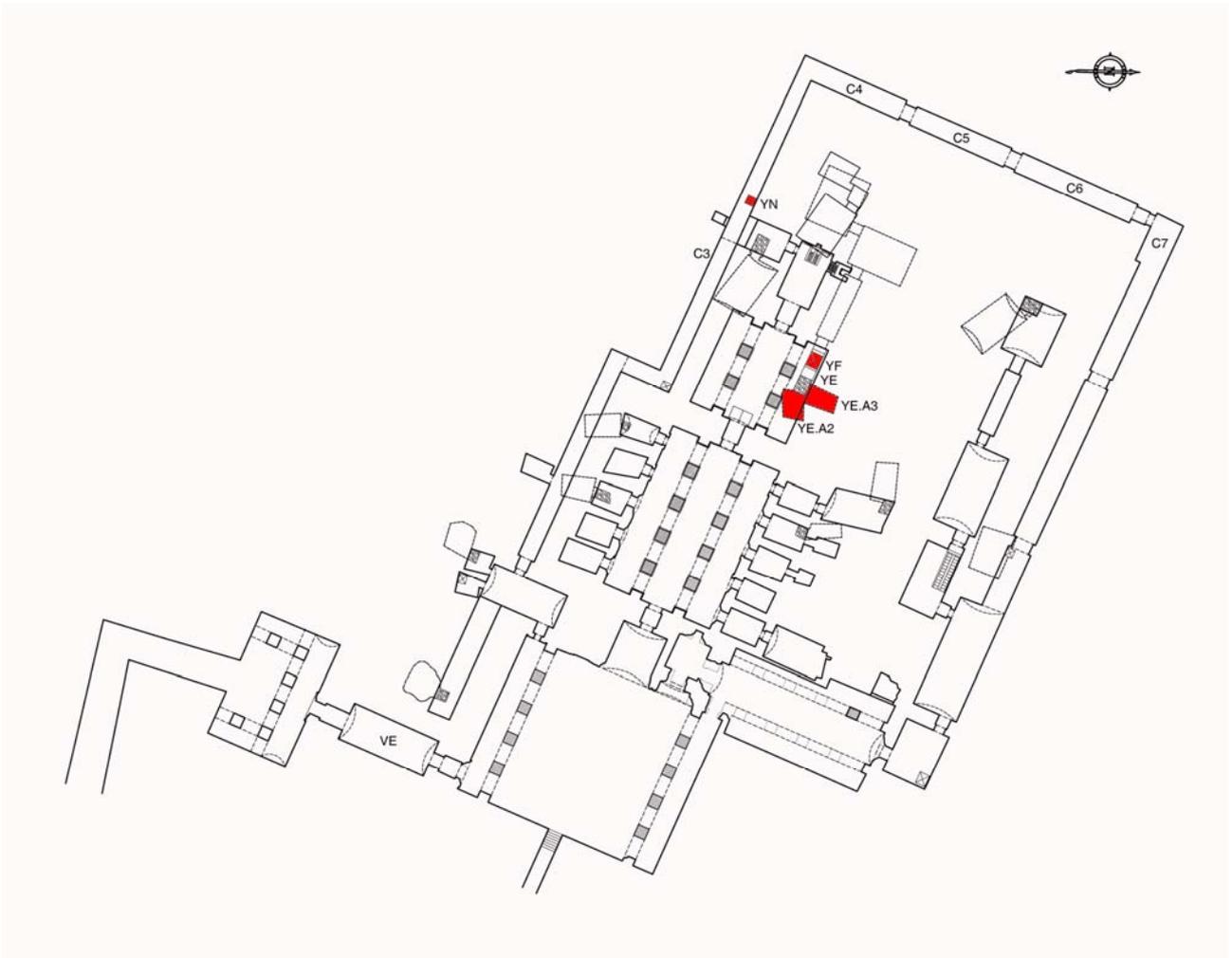
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The photographs in this report are by Franco Lovera (6) and Francesco Tiradritti (1-5). The English text has been revised and corrected by Chris H. Naunton.

¹ *Compagnia di San Paolo, Gruppo Galgano Consulenti di Direzione* and the *Italian Foreign Affairs Ministry*, funded the 2004 activities of the Italian Archaeological Mission to Luxor. The insurance covering the members of the mission was provided by *Toro Assicurazioni S.p.A.* for the sixth year running. The members of the *Cultural Association “Harwa 2001” O.N.L.U.S.*, through their membership subscriptions and donations, substantially contributed to the success of the excavations. Our warmest thanks go to all of them. We also would like to thank the authorities of the Supreme Council of Antiquities who greatly facilitated our activities: **Dr. Zahi Hawass**, General Director, **Sabri Abd el-Aziz**, Director of Pharaonic Antiquities, **Holeil Ghali**, Director of the Upper Egyptian Antiquities and **Aly el-Asfar**, Director of the Western Thebes Area. Special thanks are due to **Abd El-Hady Mahmud Mohammed**, **Hassan Mohammed Hossein**, **Aly Reda Mohammed**, our inspectors, who followed the work of the mission, demonstrating a sincere friendship to us. The help and the support given to us by the Italian Government, represented in Egypt by **H.E. the Ambassador Antonio Badini** and the Archaeological expert **Dr. Maria Casini**, proved, as usual, invaluable.

² The members of the team were: **Francesco Tiradritti** (Director and Egyptologist), **Silvia Einaudi** (Deputy-director and Egyptologist), **Giacomo Maria Tiradritti** (Director of logistics and administrator), **Lorelei Corcoran** (Egyptologist), **Federica Raverta** (Egyptologist), **Heba Sami Mohammed** (Egyptologist), **Miguel Angel Molinero Polo** (Egyptologist), **Christopher Hugh Naunton** (Egyptologist), **Mustafa Mohammed el-Sughair** (Egyptologist), **Sophie Duberson** (Conservator), **Silvia Bertolini** (Architect), **Diethelm Eigner** (Architect), **Carlos Alberto de La Fuente** (Photographer), **Franco Lovera** (Photographer) and **Hassan Ramadan** (Information Technology). The archaeological and epigraphic activities saw the participation of the following students: **Maria Milagros Alvarez Sosa** and **Noemi Delgado Corona** of the University of La Laguna (Tenerife, Spain), **Lori Francz** and **Elisabeth McDonald** of the University of Memphis, Tennessee and **Alice Bifarella** of the University of Bologna.

³ The team who worked in the tomb of Pabasa was formed by **Lorelei Corcoran** (Egyptologist), **Silvia Einaudi** (Egyptologist), **Miguel Angel Molinero Polo** (Egyptologist), **Christopher Hugh Naunton** (Egyptologist), **Mustafa Mohammed el-Sughair** (Egyptologist), **Maria Milagros Alvarez Sosa**, **Noemi Delgado Corona**, **Lori Francz** and **Elisabeth McDonald** (students). The direction of the Egyptian-Italian Mission of the Tomb of Pabasa is assured by **Mohammed El-Soghair**, **Mahmud Abd El-Rasek** and **Francesco Tiradritti**.



**Plan of the Tomb of Harwa (TT 37)
2004 Excavations**

VE = Vestibule

YE = Shaft in the second pillared hall (excavated December 18th, 2004 - January 5th, 2005)

YF = Shaft in the second pillared hall (excavated January 6th - 18th, 2005)

YN = Shaft in the south-western part of the corridor

C3 = South-western part of the corridor

C4, C5, C6 = Western part of the corridor

C7 = North-western corner of the corridor

THE VESTIBULE

At the beginning of the 1920s the vestibule of the tomb of Harwa was transformed by the Archaeological Mission of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA) into a storeroom where the objects found during the excavations in the West Bank of Luxor could be kept. Between Spring and Summer 2004, a complete inventory of those antiquities (which had come mainly from Malqata, the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri and the tombs of Assasif) was compiled, so that they could be moved into the storerooms built by the Supreme Council of Antiquities not far from the Carter's House. The clearance of the vestibule allowed us to access it easily and to carry out preliminary conservation work. The storage of the monuments had meant that water from the rare but harsh rainstorms had long stagnated inside it causing severe damages to the walls.

First of all the door built by the archaeologists of MMA between the courtyard and the vestibule when the latter has been transformed in a storeroom was demolished. The mud-brick frame of the door had been built against the walls and covered large parts of the hieroglyphic inscriptions engraved on them. It has since been possible to clean and consolidate the inscriptions (Fig. 1).

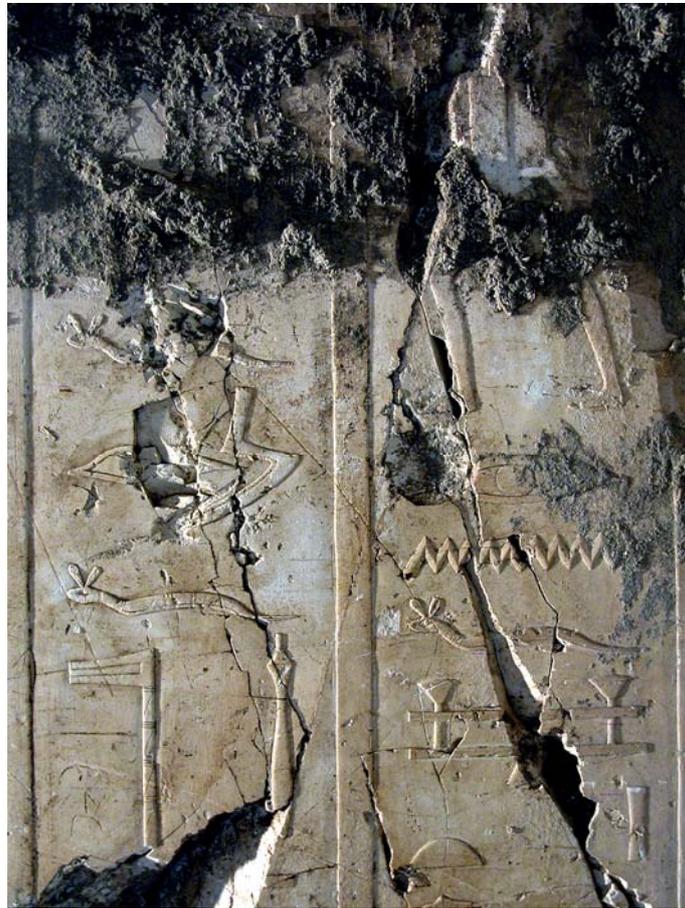


Fig. 1: detail of an inscription in the vestibule during cleaning

The floor of the vestibule was covered by a layer of sand, around five centimetres thick, that we removed. This allowed us to extend the cleaning to large areas of the Eastern and Western walls. As a whole the decoration is in bad condition due to the leeching of salts to the surface and as several sections of the wall have collapsed. Several sections have also been removed by tomb robbers. Nevertheless the cleaning allowed us to recover some of the carved scenes. Thus it was possible to ascertain that boats and standing men are depicted on the Eastern wall, while standard-bearers are visible on the Western wall (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: standard-bearers on the western wall of the vestibule

The elements revealed allow us to establish an exact parallel with the tomb of Pabasa which, since it is in better state of conservation, is also of outstanding usefulness in helping us to understand the decorative program of the vestibule of the tomb of Harwa.

THE SHAFTS IN THE SECOND PILLARED HALL (YE AND YF)

In the north-west corner of the second pillared hall a rectangular opening in the floor leads to oriental (YE) and central (YF) shafts and to the corridor (YF.A1) through which the deepest rooms of the tomb can be reached. According to Eigner⁴, the opening had been originally planned to contain a staircase that would have led to the corridor YF.A1. Shaft YF and perhaps YE too, would have been hidden under the steps, as with the burial of Montuemhat's son Nesiptah, discovered in the middle of the 1990s under a staircase in the tomb of his father (TT 34).

The staircase in the tomb of Harwa was never carried out and the digging out of the shafts YE and YF was abandoned.

At the beginning of the season we began emptying shaft YF, at the bottom of which lie two vast rooms that open eastward (YE.A2) and northward (YE.A3), and which was not completely filled with debris. The archaeological situation inside the two rooms appeared to be much disturbed by several tomb robbers' intrusions at dates which are almost impossible to ascertain. Hundreds of sun-dried mud shabtys of poor workmanship have been recovered in both rooms. These were found in greater concentration in YE.A3, whose floor level is 80 cm lower than that of YE.A2. This would seem to indicate that YE.A2 was cut later than YE.A3, enlarging the shaft in an easterly direction.

Fragments of fayence amulets in shape of sons of Horus, two wings of a heart-scarab and innumerable fayence beads coming from mummy-nets have been recovered in YE.A3. Fragments of a coffin decorated with rosettes were uncovered on the surface of the debris in YE.A2. That would suggest that shaft YE had been used as a burial place during the Greco-Roman period. This is made more likely by the discovery of fragments of a papyrus against the western wall of the bottom

⁴ D. Eigner, *Die monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit in der Thebanischen Nekropole*, Untersuchungen der Zweigstelle Kairo des Österreichischen Archäologischen Institutes VI, Wien 1984, p. 135, Abb. 106.

of the shaft (YE.A1). They bear remains of vignettes and a hieratic text that can be dated to the period between the end of the Ptolemaic and the beginning of the Roman period (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3: Fragments of the papyrus from YE

Shaft YF was filled with debris to a depth of around three metres from the opening. The removal of this debris led to the discovery of an opening in the northern wall of the shaft, which leads to a spacious room: YF.A4. YF.A4 was also shown to have been visited by tomb robbers, the fragment of a terracotta pipe-bowl having been found there.

During the excavation of shaft YF a fragment of gold-leaf in the shape of a lotus flower was recovered, having originally been part of an anthropoid coffin of a woman (Fig. 4).

The hypothesis that shaft YF was prepared for a female burial is supported by discoveries made subsequently in chamber YF.A4. In the north-eastern corner a small shaft (YO) was discovered. It has a square opening, with sides of 60 cm, and is 50 cm deep. It could have been excavated to house a set of canopic jars, though no trace of these has yet been found. Inside YO, little was found under the surface layer of debris, though some fragments of a wooden coffin with the remains of delicate decoration were recovered. One fragment bears part of the scene of the judgement, with Anubis and Horus to the side of the scale on which the heart of deceased was weighted. Another preserves part of the body of a woman wearing a white pleated dress. Remains of a column of hieroglyphs precede this figure. Unfortunately the section in which the name the name of the deceased would have been written is now lost. A number of sun-dried mud shabtys of poor workmanship were recovered at the bottom of YO. Three samples of the same shabtys were also discovered in YF.A4.



Fig. 4: gold-leaf in shape of a lotus flower from the excavation of YF.A4

The archaeological evidence suggests that these shabtis had previously been deposited in YO and formed part of the funerary equipment of the female burial. This assumes a certain importance when considering that, in the north-western corner of room YF.A4 more than six hundred fayence shabty fragments were recovered. They are identical to those found in the deepest rooms of the tomb that bear inscriptions with the name of Harwa. All the fayence shabtys found in YA.A4 are uninscribed (Fig. 5).

All these finds suggest that chamber YF.A4 was intended for the burial of a woman who (as is suggested by the similarity of the shabtys) was connected to Harwa in some way and had at her disposal a certain amount of wealth (as is suggested by the gold-leaf in the shape of a lotus flower and the high quality of the coffin decoration). The cleaning and the analysis of several other pieces of wood recovered inside YF.A4 perhaps will perhaps lend support to this assertion. If the chronological relationship between these archaeological contexts is confirmed, the sun-dried mud shabty found inside YO might be re-dated to the end of the 25th and the beginning of the 26th Dynasties (though shabtis of this type are usually ascribed to the Greco-Roman period). That would prompt a revision of the dates given to many burials discovered in the tomb in the past seasons.



Fig. 5: fayence shabty reconstructed from the fragments recovered in YF.A4

SHAFT YN

During Summer 2004 the process of removing the debris from the south-western part of the subterranean corridor that surrounds the tomb of Harwa was begun. This led to the discovery of the opening of a shaft (YN) to the left of the room that connects the corridor to the shrine of Osiris.

At the beginning of the winter season the removal of the debris was continued, and once the south-western part of the corridor had been completely cleared, excavation of the shaft YN was begun.

The fill of the shaft proved to be different from that of the shafts we had excavated in the past which had been found to have been visited by tomb robbers. These were invariably found to have been filled with fragments of limestone of various size, whereas the sand and soil in YN was composed very largely of stone. Also worthy of note was the near complete absence of any pottery. During the excavation of the shaft we recovered a clay shabty that, on the basis of typology, can be dated between the end of the New Kingdom and the beginning of the Third Intermediate Period, though the column of hieroglyphs painted on the front of the shabty would suggest a much later dating. Among the debris, at a depth of little less than 3 m, the dried corpses of a cat and a jackal were recovered.

At the bottom of the shaft, a chamber (YN.A2) opens to the north. It is almost square in plan with sides around two metres long. It was filled with debris to half a metre from the ceiling. On top of the debris the dried corpse of a big feline was found.

Against the rear wall of the chamber there was a substantial accumulation of pottery. Among the shards, again on the surface of the debris, a skull of another animal, probably of a dog, was lying.

Once the surface layer of debris beyond the door had been removed, the bottoms of four jars were revealed. A subsequent study of the pottery revealed that some of the shards lying against the rear wall had come from the four jar bottoms. They still contained the remains of some substances, one

of which proved to be little stinging, and made the eyes water. Several lumps of what appeared to be a salty substance (natron ?) were recovered along the western wall of the chamber. Under the rim of some vases black painted hieratic inscriptions were discovered. One of them mentions the *sefet*-oil, one of the seven sacred oils attested in lists since the Old Kingdom. Along the eastern wall of the chamber lay a coffin in bad state of conservation. Attempts were made to rescue the few fragments of the lid, consolidating them before their removal, but this proved to be almost impossible. The remains were then subjected to further cleaning that revealed traces of a column of blue painted hieroglyph. The poor preservation of the signs did not allow their reading. The removal of the remains of the lid exposed the content of the coffin which proved to consist of wrappings and little bags filled with sand (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6: the coffin found along the Eastern wall of chamber YN.A2

Among the wrappings some shards that perhaps slipped into the coffin when the chamber was filled with debris were also found. The removal of the content, made possible the analysis the bottom of the coffin. In keeping with the lid, it bore traces of blue painting. Its poor state of conservation meant it was not possible to otherwise ascertain the nature of the decoration, though what little remains suggests that a figure of the goddess Nut may have been stretched along its centre. A column of blue painted hieroglyphs runs along the left part of the bottom, part of which clearly reads '[...]-*kheru neb-imakhu*', a formula that normally follows the name of the deceased, though the name itself is completely missing or perhaps was never written at all.

To the right of the entrance into YN.A2 the poorly preserved remains of a burial were uncovered. The dimensions of the bones suggest that it was that of a child. The body had been lain inside a coffin of which only a few pieces of wood remained.

As a result of its excavation, the archaeological situation revealed inside chamber YN.A2 suggests that a deposit of materials used during the mummification of a body had been made there. The data, supported by the palaeography of the few hieroglyphs of which a reading was possible, would seem to suggest a date not much later than the 25th Dynasty. Since the archaeological context appears to have been closed and undisturbed, it is very likely that the analysis of the substances found inside the vases will provide useful information on the process of mummification.

It is yet to be ascertained to which burial this mummification cache was related. It seems very likely that the discoveries in chamber YN.A2 are closely related to the large shaft in the room between the corridor and the shrine of Osiris.

The burial of the child uncovered to the right of the entrance to YN.A2 presents a problem. The excavation would suggest it was deposited at the same time as the other contents of the chamber. The excavation of YN.A2 is not yet complete. The north-western corner of the chamber is covered by a layer of *tafla* (lime hardened by water) into which some fragments of limestone appear to be embedded.

EPIGRAPHIC ACTIVITIES IN THE TOMB OF PABASA (TT 279)

Following an agreement with Doctor Mohammed El-Soghair and Doctor Mahmud Abd El-Rasek, the Italian Archaeological Mission to Luxor was able officially to work in the tomb of Pabasa (TT 279) as of last summer. The reason for the study of this monument is that the greater part of its decoration represents a precise copy of that of the tomb of Harwa. Owing to its superior state of preservation, the texts in the tomb of Pabasa have already proved useful in identifying some parts of the pillars of the first pillared hall of the tomb of Harwa. It was mainly this process of comparison that led to the formalising of the work of the Italian Archaeological Mission to Luxor on this monument.

Last summer the study and the inventory of the decorated blocks kept in a side room of the Tomb of Pabasa was begun. These had been stored here following restoration work undertaken by the Egyptian Antiquities Service in the 1980s. This work was continued during the winter season. At the same time the texts engraved on the pillars and walls of the pillared hall, and on certain walls of the courtyard were copied.