

ITALIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION TO LUXOR

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



Autumn 2005

COMPAGNIA
di San Paolo



INTRODUCTION¹

The Autumn 2005 season of the Italian Archaeological Mission to Luxor² lasted from October 8th, to December 14th, 2005 (with a break from November 1st to 11th, in connection with the Ahd festival). Activities concentrated on the ramp and entrance portico, and courtyard of the Tomb of Harwa (TT 37). The main goal of the season was to open the original entrance to the tomb so as to allow an easier access to the monument.

Conservation work was continued in the vestibule of the tomb.

On October 30th a celebration for the tenth anniversary of excavations in the Tomb of Harwa was also organised.

The campaign ran simultaneously with the exhibition “L’ enigma di Harwa. Alla scoperta di un capolavoro del rinascimento egizio” (Logge della Mercanzia - Montepulciano, September 25th – December 15th, 2005) and a daily journal of the activities of the mission was kept on the excavation website (www.harwa.it). Anyone interested could follow the progress of the excavations from home. This was intended as the continuation of an experiment, started in 2004, and to provide a realistic picture of the activities of an archaeological mission in Egypt.

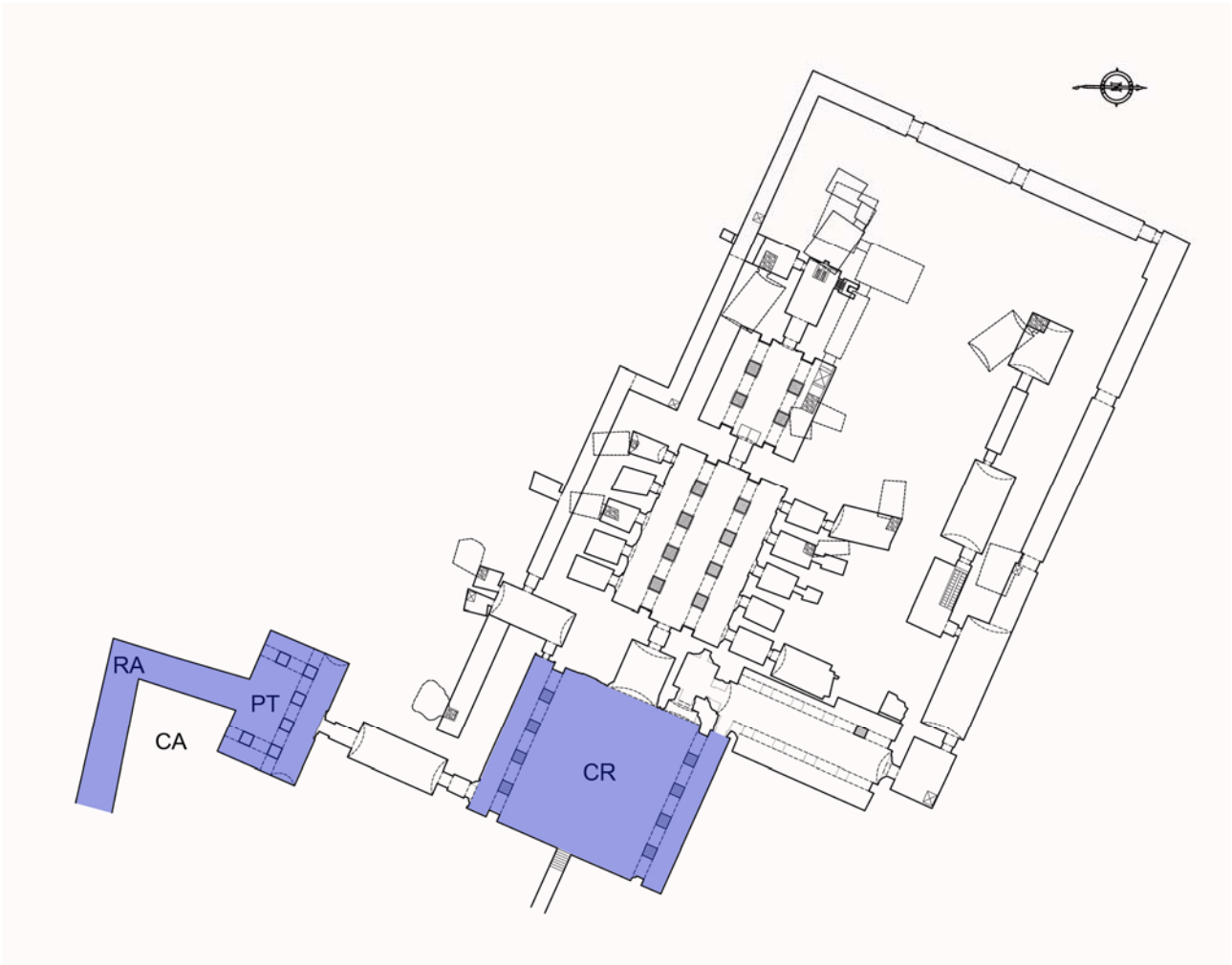
Qurna, December 14th, 2005

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The photographs in this report are by Francesco Tiradritti (1-7, 9), Carlos de La Fuente (8) and Mustafa Mohammed El-Soghair (10). The English text has been revised and corrected by Chris H. Naunton.

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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), **Federica Raverta** (Egyptologist), **Heba Sami Mohammed** (Egyptologist), **Mustafa Mohammed el-Soghair** (Egyptologist), **Iris Bekljanov** (Archaeologist), **Alice Bifarella** (Archaeologist), **Tina Britovšek** (Archaeologist), **Saša Čaval** (Archaeologist), **Daša Pavlovič** (Archaeologist), **Vesna Tratnik** (Archaeologist), **Matija Čresnar** (Archaeologist), **Samo Hvalec** (Archaeologist), **Januš Jerončič** (Archaeologist), **Sophie Duberson** (Conservator), **Diethelm Eigner** (Architect), **Carlos Alberto de La Fuente** (Photographer) and **Hassan Ramadan** (Information Technology).



**Plan of the Tomb of Harwa (TT 37)
2005 Excavations**

RA = Ramp
CA = Quarry
PT = Entrance Portico
CR = Courtyard

THE ENTRANCE RAMP

The area south of the main entrance was first excavated in 2000. At that time part of the access ramp and a quarry lying to the East of it were uncovered. The activities in this part of the monument were started again during spring and summer 2004 to clear a larger area of the mounds of debris resulting from earlier digging activities and to prepare the ground for the excavation of the portico. The excavation of the ramp and the portico began at the beginning of the season. The ramp leads from the entrance of the portico in a southerly direction and then makes a right-angle turn to the East (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1: the area of the access ramp and the quarry at the end of the 2005 season

During the 2000 season we had uncovered the slabs of limestone marking the corner of the ramp. This year we recommenced excavations in that area and reached the upper landing of the staircase after the removal of around 20 cm of sand. The landing was uniformly covered by a layer (around 10 cm thick) of pottery, and is composed of slabs of limestone, irregular in shape and thickness. Their surface shows signs of the chiselling carried out as they were made ready to receive a covering of mortar. This has led us to believe that what we uncovered was not intended to be the landing itself but a preparatory base for the landing. It slopes slightly towards the East, and ends abruptly. The clearance of the area also provided a different picture of the links between the ramp and the quarry, and it now seems that the latter continues underneath the ramp. This would explain why the landing of the ramp is composed of slabs of limestone instead of being carved directly into the rock. Excavations of the ramp have still to be completed and it is impossible, at present, to say if its sudden end in the East should be attributed either to the abrupt halting of work in the Tomb of Harwa (attested in other parts of the monument) or to a later removal of the limestone slabs.

The concealment of some limestone slabs in the inside corner of the entranceway allows for the possibility that the ramp was in use for a certain period of time. The upper steps of the staircase are badly preserved and had had to be removed at an uncertain date. We uncovered half of each of fifteen steps so as to see their condition and to plan their conservation in the next campaign. The lowest steps exposed proved to be in better condition than the uppermost.

During the removal of debris from the area of the ramp, a dry-stone wall, built to retain the debris from falling into the adjacent courtyard of the tomb of Kheruef (TT 192), was also dismantled. Among the other stones, a piece of basalt interpreted as a fragment of a private stela was uncovered (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: fragment of basalt uncovered during the excavation of the ramp

The right hand part of two registers is still preserved. In the upper register the legs of a male figure are still visible. The tail hanging from the skirt and the end of a hieroglyph inscription (“... behind you”) confirm that it depicts a sovereign. He stands on a rectangular base intended to mark the separation between the registers. In the lower register the upper part of a woman figure with arms raised in front of her face in the Egyptian typical gesture of adoration is preserved. The remains of a hieroglyphic inscription identify the lady as the wife (“ ... to his [wif]e, his beloved”) of a man whose figure must have stood in front of hers. The lady wears a long wig and earrings. A lotus flower and a cone of perfume lie on her head. The latter has been deliberately chiselled out. The unfinished carving of the eyes suggests the monument should be dated to the early Ramesside period.

THE ENTRANCE PORTICO

The excavation of the entrance portico began in the central area in order to speed the opening of the main access to the Tomb of Harwa. At the beginning of the season it was still blocked by the stone wall built by The Metropolitan Museum Archaeological Mission during the 1920s to convert the vestibule of the Tomb of Harwa into a storeroom. The items which had been kept there have already been moved to the Supreme Council of Antiquities storehouse near Carter House in 2004. The

demolition of the wall that blocked the access to the vestibule revealed that the stones used to build it had been taken directly from the original frame of the doorway at the tomb entrance. The wall has been replaced with an iron gate to assure the safety of the tomb. The area in front of the portico was covered with a layer of sand, more than 1 metre thick. Its removal revealed an interesting archaeological situation (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3: the portico area after removal of the upper layers of debris



Fig. 4: one of the “Phoenician” type masks uncovered in the portico

Parts of several wooden coffins and at least three mummies were uncovered.

The coffin boards were lying in a sort of bundle in the western part of the area in front of the portico. They can be dated to the Ptolemaic-Roman period. It was possible to identify part of the side of an anthropoid coffin with remains of a large hieroglyphic inscription, roughly painted in blue on white background; a board from a different coffin with a portion of a red and black-painted scene, and the lid of a third coffin lacking any pictorial decoration. A funerary mask, similar to another found some metres to the south-east (Fig. 4), would once have been applied to the lid. A striking parallel to the second is provided by a coffin kept in the Museum of the University of Tübingen (n. 1714)³.

In the catalogue of the collection, the coffin is dated to the 2nd Century AD and it is attributed, dubiously however, (Sarg eines Phöniziers (?)) to an individual who was Phoenician in origin. That statement is based on the fact that the headdress of the funerary mask is similar to a kind of tiara, attested in the Phoenician and Syro-Palestinian world. Other than the two funerary masks uncovered during the present season the Tomb of Harwa has provided a third with similar features. This was found during the 1998 season (HRW 1998, R 29) among the debris that filled the shrine of Osiris, indicating that the funerary mask came from inside the Tomb of Harwa.

The coffin fragments must be ascribed to one of the robberies that took place in the Tomb of Harwa during the 19th century. The stratigraphy does not seem to connect the coffins with the mummy remains found scattered in the portico area. It seems that the mummies were already lying in the area of the portico when the coffin boards were transported there. Parts of at least two mummies were found inside a shallow square pit dug against the south-western wall of the portico, another was lying face down beside the western face of the pillar flanking the main entrance to the tomb to the east.

A large square pit in the north-eastern corner of the portico was also revealed. It contained the remains of a complete calf. The animal had a rope around its neck and its two front legs tied together. Its burial must have taken place in the last fifty years. The calf was perhaps affected by or died from disease and the owners brought it here to bury it. The corpse still smelt strongly and was removed, using plastic bags, to the excavation spoil dump.



Fig. 5: detail of the surviving decoration of the tomb of Uahibra-nebpehty (TT 191)

³ Emma Brunner-Traut, Helmut Brunner, *Die Ägyptische Sammlung der Universität Tübingen*, Mainz am Rhein 1981, p. 234-236, pl. 156-157.

The removal of debris also prompted the excavation of the door of the tomb of Uahibra-nebpehty (TT 191) in the eastern wall of the portico. It was found to be blocked by a dry-stone wall that had been partially breached at least twice and, in 1995, covered with a layer of concrete, destroying part of the lintel decoration. We accurately removed the concrete covering the upper part of the relief carved on the lintel revealing the head of a figure of Uahibra-nebpehty and an almost complete figure of a personage standing in front of him.

The Tomb of Uahibra-nebpehty (which is also accessible through a break in the wall separating it from the courtyard of the adjacent tomb of Kheruef) was briefly visited and notes on the state of preservation of its decoration were taken. Remains of hieroglyphic texts are still visible on the walls of the entrance passage as are parts of scenes decorating the adjacent room (Fig 5).

The door to TT 91 was blocked again with a new red-brick and concrete wall the same day it was opened. A sheet of transparent plastic was inserted between the wall and the natural rock to preserve the monument and to facilitate any future removal of the wall.

THE COURTYARD

Excavation of the courtyard continued on a larger scale. The entire surface was swept so as to ensure that excavation had reached the same point in the vertical stratigraphy throughout. An interesting archaeological situation was found in the area of the southern portico where the removal of layers deriving from robberies and partial collapse of the portico led to the recovery of several fragments of limestone belonging to the decoration of the rear wall and pillars (Fig 6).



Fig. 6: fragments of the decoration of the southern portico rear wall

The retrieval of so many fragments of the decoration of the portico bodes well for the future reconstruction and understanding of the decorative program on the rear wall.

A further register of reliefs has been also exposed. Despite the poor state of conservation of the scenes, some of which were seriously damaged by robbery and the collection of rainwater against the wall it is possible to ascertain that they depict sculptors at work. Some details have parallels with elements of the decoration in the Tomb of Rekhmira (TT 100). Instead of working statues of the king however, Harwa's artists are shown sculpting statues of the Divine Adoratrice and a private individual (Harwa himself?). The paw of a sphinx is still visible in a largely destroyed scene. The uppermost remains of the second pillar from East (A2) have also been exposed. The rock surface is friable due to the collapse of a portion of the portico on to it. The excavation in this area has been slowed to allow what still remains of the pillar to be conserved as it is revealed. The southern face of the first pillar from East (A1) was also uncovered, revealing the upper part of a scene showing Harwa receiving funerary offerings (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7: S face of the pillar A1: Harwa receiving offerings

The removal of entire layers throughout the courtyard has meant that the level of debris is progressively lower towards the centre, increasing the likelihood that, as in the other tombs of the Assasif, a basin (whose dimensions are still impossible to ascertain) is cut into the centre of the courtyard floor.

DOCUMENTATION

During the first part of the autumn mission (October) the northern part of the first pillared hall of the Tomb of Harwa was digitally photographed at high resolution (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8: digital reconstruction of the northern wall first pillared hall, Tomb of Harwa

The aim in so doing is to publish through the internet what remains of the Pyramid Texts on the wall to make them quickly available to interested colleagues.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SCHOOL FOR SCA INSPECTORS

At the request of the SCA Director of the Area of Western Thebes, Mr. Aly El-Asfar, MAIL held a field course in archaeology for inspectors from the Luxor region. The school was attended by twenty-seven participants who followed classes given by members of MAIL at Hotel Marsam, residence of the mission (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9: a moment during one of the classes



Fig. 10: Mr. Aly El-Asfar shows the remains of the temple of Amenhotep Son of Hapu to participants in the Archaeological Field School

Following the classes the participants were given fifteen days of training in the Tomb of Harwa and at the Temple of Amenhotep Son of Hapu (Fig. 10). Inspectors were thus given the opportunity to apply in the field the archaeological skills they had learnt during the classes. The participants in the school showed great enthusiasm for and attentiveness in both the classes and field activities. They were mainly trained in excavation and the preparation for it, stratigraphy, field documentation, recording of small-finds and the use of instruments such as the total station and optical level. The participants also expressed their desire to continue the training. MAIL and the local authorities of the SCA have already agreed to continue the Field School next spring (2006). At that time, MAIL will continue its epigraphic activities in the tombs of Harwa (TT 37) and Pabasa (TT 279). Excavations in the Temple of Amenhotep Son of Hapu will then be resumed by inspectors who will have also the opportunity of learning epigraphic techniques by joining the MAIL team in Harwa and Pabasa.