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Documentation, epigraphy and conservation of the burial chamber and sarcophagus of Harhotep (Cairo Museum, CG 28023)

This project aims at the study and publication of the burial chamber and sarcophagus of Harhotep, royal seal-bearer of Senwosret I (early Middle Kingdom). His decorated tomb (TT 314/ MMA 513) was discovered in February 1883 by Gustave Maspero, who immediately carried the limestone blocks of the burial chamber and the sarcophagus to the former Cairo Museum of Boulaq. In his research, Maspero also found a fragment belonging to the sarcophagus of Harhotep in the Abbott collection at the Metropolitan Museum of New York.

The painted walls of the burial chamber and sarcophagus of Harhotep represent one of the most elegant and colorful instances of mortuary decoration of the Middle Kingdom, certainly compared to the artistic quality and religious significance of other Twelfth Dynasty burial chambers such as those of Senwosertankh at Lisht, Siese at Dahshur, and Meru at Thebes. However, beyond Maspero's publication in 1889, Lacau's initial presentation in the *Catalogue Général* in 1904, and Soliman's 2009 book on the Middle Kingdom tombs,¹ no study has examined the tomb decoration and textual repertoire in detail with facsimile edition and high-resolution photographs of the monument, the sarcophagus, and their texts and iconography. The ramifications of the study of the religious texts and images in Harhotep's tomb allows for an extensive investigation in which the mortuary corpus can be analyzed and connected to other materials from the Old and Middle Kingdom. In addition, the study of the tomb owner, his titles, functions, and position in the officialdom of the Twelfth Dynasty could help to understand the history of the early Twelfth Dynasty and the use of Deir El-Bahari by nobles of the Middle Kingdom.

The goal of the project is to publish a comprehensive study of the chamber and the sarcophagus of Harhotep, offering not only the results of the epigraphic and photographic work in the Cairo Museum but also a more extended analysis of the archaeological setting, the mortuary texts, the iconography, and the position of Harhotep in his time.

Members of the project, with permission of the Museum Board and the Director in the Cairo Museum, have already visited the collection and conducted a general study of the chapel and sarcophagus in 2014, including analysis of the conditions and evaluation of the most appropriate *non-damaging* epigraphic digital methods. Epigraphic work and rectified high-resolution image tasks were initiated for the preparation of the facsimile, drawings, and photographs. In addition, the work of the team curators on the stabilization and protection of the chapel and sarcophagus will be essential.

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¹ *Literature*: P. Lacau, *Catalogue Général des Antiquités Égyptiennes du Musée du Caire Nos. 28001-28086* (Caire: 1904); G. Maspero, "Trois années de fouilles dans les tombeaux de Thèbes et de Memphis", in: *Mémoires publiés par les membres de la Mission archéologique française au Caire I* (Paris: 1889), 133-181; and R. Soliman, *Old and Middle Kingdom Theban Tombs* (London: 2009), 128-129.