The Triumph of Mentuhotep Nebhepetra at the end of the Eleventh Dynasty signified the emergence of a powerful Egyptian state built upon a culture of traditions and transformations centralized at Thebes. From the First Intermediate Period, the city witnessed the expansion of the Theban rulers toward the north and the unification of the country by Mentuhotep II. Because of this, Thebes became the focus of numerous transformations, among them the construction of the royal mortuary complex in Deir el-Bahari for king Mentuhotep and the building of private tombs for the powerful officials who contributed to the unification of the country and the arrival of the Middle Kingdom. In spite of the role of the capital Thebes in the construction of the Middle Kingdom, the royal and private tombs of this period have never been a priority among the scholars working in Luxor and not many monuments of the period have been published. The Middle Kingdom Theban Project aims at contributing to a better knowledge of the reign of Mentuhotep II and the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty by means of documenting, studying and publishing the tombs of Henenu (TT313 = MMA 510), Harhotep (TT 314 = MMA 513) and Ipi (TT 315 = MMA 516).

The tombs of Ipi (TT 315) and the other two monuments (TT 313 and TT 314) are located to the eastern side of the necropolis in the northern hills of Deir el-Bahari, where some of the officials of Mentuhotep II and the early Middle Kingdom were buried. These tombs represent an excellent case-study to understand the development of the necropolis and the historical circumstances of the period. In general they seem to present a similar architecture although a more thorough analysis evidences the existence of multiple differences in the construction of the courtyards, the preparation of the tomb façades, the inner architecture, the burial chambers, and even the presence of subsidiary burials.

The study and examination of these three tombs are extremely critical for the reconstruction of the history of the late Eleventh Dynasty and the early Twelfth Dynasty at Thebes. Although Herbert Winlock excavated for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York these three tombs in the 20’s, scholars have not yet studied and published these

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1 For several years now the Asasif Project, directed by Dr. Zbigniew E. Szafranski and Mr. Patrik Chudzik under the auspices of the Polish Center of Mediterranean Archaeology (PCMA), has been conducting research on other tombs of the Middle Kingdom cemetery at Deir el-Bahari. Collaborative efforts will be rewarding since this project aims at discussing and responding questions similar to those interesting for our project.
monuments. Therefore, there is a gap of information in our understanding of the late Eleventh Dynasty and early Twelfth Dynasty history at Thebes.

The Middle Kingdom Theban Project will focus not only on the reconstruction of the three tombs, their architecture, decoration, texts and the study of their objects, but also on the active role of their owners in the historical and local circumstances of Thebes at this time. In addition, the study of these three outstanding examples of the mortuary architecture of the period in the northern hills of Deir el-Bahari will help to reconstruct the topography of the necropolis and the reasons for the selection of this area connected with the mortuary temple of Mentuhotep II. Further research might help to understand the distribution of tombs in the area and the socio-political powers at Thebes and in the country.

**Objectives of the project**

- Study and categorization of each tomb and its owner, based on its location, architecture, and decorative/textual programs as well as on the titles and position of the official. Ipi (TT 315) was steward, archive scribe, treasurer, and vizier. Harhotep was also supervisor of treasure.
- Examination of the conditions of each tomb and application of conservation techniques for its preservation: analysis of the materials, decoration, inscriptions, pigments, and small findings. We also plan to examine the condition and stability of the mudbrick walls of each courtyard and propose a reconstruction for the perdurability of the monument.
- Regular publication of season results and final publication for each monument: we shall publish particular studies on the architecture, decoration and inscription of the tombs as well as on the history of the necropolis and the role of Ipi (TT 315), Harhotep (TT 314), and Henenu (TT 313) in the history of the period. The final publication of the work conducted in each tomb is intended as a monograph.
- A better understanding of the history of the Middle Kingdom necropolis at Thebes and the construction of royal and private tombs in the area surrounding the mortuary complex of Mentuhotep Nebhepetra.
- Contribution to the clarification of major aspects of the history of the late Eleventh Dynasty, the reign of Mentuhotep Nebhepetre and the early Middle Kingdom reigns.

**First season (September-October 2015)**

**Sponsor:** Freie Universität Berlin & Fritz Thyssen Stiftung

**Major objectives:** Restoration, conservation, site management and epigraphy

**Mission members:**
- Ms Eman Hanafi Zidan – Cairo Museum, Department of Conservation
- Mr Mohamed Osman – Freie Universität Berlin, archaeologist
- Mr Tobias Gutmann – Bonn Universität, Archaeologist, GIS-specialist
- Dr Antonio Morales – Freie Universität Berlin, Director, epigraphist

**Mission inspector:** Sheimma Abdo

**Mission rais:** Mr Ali Farouk el Qeftaui

**Mission workers:**
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Antonio J. Morales
Project director
15.11.2015