



Freie Universität Berlin Expedition to Deir el-Bahari Ägyptologisches Seminar, Freie Universität Berlin

The project

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).¹

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

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 durability 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 Qeftau
Mission workers:	Mr/ Mohamed Gomma, Abd El-Hady Ahmed, Hussein Abu Alwafa, Talaat Handakha, Mamduh Ahmed Abed, Adham Hassan, Ibrahim Abd El-Kreem, Mohamed Abd el-Kreem, Ahmed Sayed Hassan, Ahmed Ali Ahmed, Badwy Mohamed Saleh, Ayman Mohamed, Hassan Mohamed Hassan, Abd el-Hamed Ramadan, Hamdy Mohamed Admed, Hazem Helmy Shared, Ahmed El-Tohany, Ahmed Sayed, Salem Ibrahim Awad, Badwy Mahmud Hassan, Faray Mohamed Abd El-Alem, Saban Mohamed

Acknowledgments

The Freie Universität Berlin Mission to Deir el-Bahari would like to express its gratitude to all the institutions and MSA officials of the government who have supported the initial season of this mission. The MSA members of the Permanent Committee, especially the Director of the Foreign Missions, Dr Hany Abou el-Azm, as well as the Head of Luxor, Mr Sultan, and the Head of the West Bank Inspectorate at the Taftish, Mr Taalat Abd el-Aziz, who have supported our work in Luxor.

We would also like to express our thanks to the local inspectorate at Deir el-Bahari, first to the Chief Inspector of the Area, Mr Ezz El-Noby, who has been very supportive, and to the inspectors of Deir el-Bahari. We also would like to thank our inspector, Sheimma Abdo, for her directions, suggestions and assistance, and the gafirs of the area headed by their Sheikh, Mr. Yamal.

In addition, we would like to thank numerous colleagues who have contributed with their suggestions, help, and advice in the initial developments of this project, among them Osama Amer, José Manuel Galán, Mohamed Ismail, Jochem Kahl, Elisabeth Kruck, Joanne Rowland, Omar Abou Zaid and many others.

Finally, our gratitude to the *Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York*, especially to Dr. Catharine Roehrig, for their support, help and assistance with the archival materials of Herbert Winlock and the Metropolitan Museum Expeditions to Deir el-Bahari.

Antonio J. Morales
Project director
15.11.2015