



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

The project

The triumph of Mentuhotep Nebhepetre 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) and Ipi (TT 315 = MMA 516),¹ as well as the burial chamber of Harhotep (now in Cairo Museum as CG28023).

The tombs of Henenu (TT313) and Ipi (TT315) 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. The burial chamber of Harhotep, now in Cairo, also proceeds from the same area of the cemetery. 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 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* focuses not only on the reconstruction of the two tombs and the Cairo Museum chapel, 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.

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.

Objectives of the project

- a) 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 (TT315) was steward, archive scribe, treasurer, and vizier. Henenu (TT313) was royal seal bearer, steward. Harhotep (CG28023) was also royal seal bearer and supervisor of the treasure.
- b) 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 remaining walls in each tomb and propose a reconstruction for the perdurability of the monument.
- c) 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 Henenu (TT313), Ipi (TT315), and Harhotep (CG28023 < TT314) in the history of the period. The MKTP team plans to publish the results of each season as a preliminary report in a peer-reviewed journal of the discipline. The final publication of the archaeological, epigraphic, and restoration works conducted in each tomb is intended as a monograph.
- d) 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 Nebhepetre. Furthermore, the MKTP aims at contributing to the clarification of some of the major aspects of the history of the late Eleventh Dynasty, the reign of Mentuhotep Nebhepetre and the early Middle Kingdom, mainly the reigns of Amenemhat I and Sesostris I.

Second Season (March-April 2016)

Sponsors:	Freie Universität Berlin, Fritz Thyssen Stiftung, and Wien Universität.
Mission members:	Ms Eman Hanafi Zidan (Cairo Museum, Department of Conservation); Mr Mohamed Osman (Freie Universität Berlin, archaeologist); Mr Sebastian Falk (Freie Universität Berlin and DAI, archaeologist); Mr Raúl Sánchez Casado (Universidad de Sevilla, Egyptologist); Mr Hazem Shareed (Aim Shams University, Egyptologist); Dr Antonio Morales (Freie Universität Berlin, Director, Egyptologist)
Mission inspector:	Ms Eman Hagag Youssef
Mission rais:	Mr Ali Farouk el Qeftau

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Antonio J. Morales
Project director
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