

ITALIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION TO LUXOR

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



Spring and Summer 2004



INTRODUCTION¹

The 2003 autumn season of the Italian Archaeological Mission to Luxor in the tombs of Harwa (TT 37) and Akhimenru (TT 404) demonstrated the impossibility of continuing the excavations in the courtyard of the Tomb of Harwa without the re-opening of the vestibule. It was used as storeroom by the Metropolitan Museum Archaeological Mission working at Thebes in the Twenties of the last century and was found filled by monuments and findings made during their excavations in Malqata, Deir el-Bahri and the Assasif. Our presence in Spring and in Summer was mainly intended to move all the antiquities from the vestibule to prepare the ground to further excavations in the courtyard of the tomb. Other activities were carried on in the meanwhile. We cleared from the debris a large area at South-East of the tomb of Harwa in the aim of exposing the ramp leading to the portico entrance of the tomb. We continued and we complete the inventory of the small finds found during the excavations in the tomb of Harwa. We eventually moved them in the SCA magazine situated near the Carter House. We recuperated a piece of the decoration of the tomb of Harwa stored in the Sheikh Labib Magazine at Karnak. In March we also prepared the objects chosen for the exhibition “Cento anni di archeologia italiana in Egitto” that opened at the Egyptian Museum of Cairo on May 30th, 2004.

In Spring we worked from 13th to 24th of March, in Summer from June 27th to July 21st.²

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The photographs in this report were taken by Francesco Tiradritti.

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² **Francesco Tiradritti** (Director and Egyptologist) and **Mustafa Mohammed Mohamed el-Sughair** (Egyptologist) took part to the activities in March and in June-July. **Federica Raverta** (Egyptologist), **Eva Butina** (Archaeologist), **Daša Pavlovic** (Archaeologist), and **Vesna Tratnik** (Archaeologist) were also present on the excavations in June-July.

THE VESTIBULE

The vestibule of the Tomb of Harwa (TT 37) was used as magazine by the MMA Archaeological Mission to store monuments – mainly fragmentary – recovered during excavations in the Palace of Amenhotep III (Malqata) and in the mortuary temple of the Queen Hatshepsut (Deir el-Bahri). Some of the objects were briefly published by W.C. Hayes³. The article is mainly focussed on the jar-stoppers bearing hieroglyphic inscriptions, the fragments of a statue of Amun-Re and some other inscribed architectural features. Hayes states that some monuments (the statue of Amun-Re) were found during the 1916-1917 season and that excavations closed in 1920. From this information it is safe to assume that the closing of the vestibule took place after the latter date.

The MMA Archaeological Mission partly excavated the vestibule (to around 50 cm over the floor level). They walled up the passage leading to the outside portico and provided the entrance to the courtyard of the tomb of Harwa with a wooden door framed by a mud-brick wall (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1: The Northern part of the vestibule with the wooden door and the mud-bricks frame provided by the MMA Archaeological Mission

The wall was built partly over the inscriptions of the passage between the vestibule and the courtyard and it will be dismantled in the future. An iron door, framed by a red-brick wall coated in concrete, was further provided between the older wooden door and the courtyard. This intervention corresponds to works carried on by the Egyptian Antiquities, to further secure the vestibule, which took place in a later date.

Excavations in the courtyard of Harwa (2001, 2003) brought to the light two different mud circles, used to produce the mud-bricks to frame the wooden door and a path heading from the rock-carved staircase - used by the workmen of Harwa to enter the courtyard - to the vestibule and surrounding a large pit open in the centre of the East side of the Harwa's courtyard. In the pit was recovered the base of a sandstone statue of Mentuhotep Nebhepetre. It maybe fell down there during its transport in the courtyard. At the beginning of the works in the Tomb of Harwa (TT 37) other fragments of sandstone statues of Mentuhotep Nebhepetre were found scattered in front of the entrance to the

³ W.C. Hayes, *Inscriptions from the Palace of Amenhotep III*, JNES 10, 1951, pp. 231 – 242.

first pillared hall, together with parts of other monuments. Among them are some parts of a large sandstone inscription of Pabasa (TT 279). Smaller fragments belonging to it were also found in the vestibule. They derive from the activities undertaken by MMA Archaeological Mission in the tomb of Pabasa⁴. This evidence allows dating also the fall of the base of the Mentuhotep Nehetepre sandstone statue in the pit to the Twenties of the last century.

Fragments of the decoration coming from the tomb of Harwa were also found among the antiquities stored in the vestibule. They probably were found when the MMA Archaeological Mission partly cleared the floor of the vestibule and they were left there. One of the fragments proved to be part of the large scene carved in the South part of the first pillared hall Eastern wall (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: the decorated block found in the vestibule back to its original position

In the vestibule the objects were stored along the Eastern wall (large fragments of painted sandstone sphinxes of Hatshepsut) and the Western wall (wooden boxes containing objects coming from Malqata excavations and other fragments of the sandstone Hatshepsut's sphinxes). The vestibule was flooded and, because of the narrow spaces between the stored objects and the walls, the latter suffered serious damages. At unknown date robbers entered the vestibule from the stone wall closing the passage to the portico entrance. They opened a small hole in the top west part of the wall. It does not seem that they succeed in their attempt. All what found witnessing their passage were some pieces of the statue of Amon-Re taken out from the box where they had been stored and heaped in the southeast corner of the vestibule together with fragments of other monuments. The robbers hole was re-closed and the upper part of the outside side was coated with a thick layer of concrete in 1995, before the beginning of our excavations. In the same date a SCA commission inspected the vestibule.

The clearing of the vestibule was decided to ease the excavations in the courtyard of the tomb of Harwa and the operations of recording were carried out between March and June 2004 by Mustafa Mohammed Mohammed el-Soghair with the help of Francesco Tiradritti under the supervision of the SCA Inspectors Ammar Hasan Hanafy (March) and Hasan Aly Ahmed (June). The inventory was completed on July 8, 2004 and the monuments stored in it have been transported in the SCA magazine near the Carter House in the days of 11, 12, 13 July, 2004. Due to the dimensions of the

⁴ A. Lansing, MMA Bulletin, Pt. II, July 1920, pp. 16 – 24.

iron door built by the Egyptian Antiquities Service - smaller than the wooden door provided by MMA Archaeological Mission – it was not possible to take out the bigger fragments of the sandstone sphinxes of Hatshepsut. They were left in the middle of the vestibule - as to prevent the danger of damages in case of flood – and, upon agreement with the local authorities of the SCA, will be moved in the future.

CLEARING OF THE DEBRIS AT SOUTH-EAST OF THE MAIN ENTRANCE

During the 2000 season we started excavations in front of the main entrance of the Tomb of Harwa. They brought to the discovery of part of the ramp leading to the portico. To completely uncover it we felt necessary to enlarge excavations also to the mound of debris that hypothetically is covering the easternmost part of the ramp. The complete exposure of the ramp and of the entrance portico will permit us to re-open the outside door of the vestibule. That access will eventually enable us to enter the courtyard and to continue excavations in it.

We started the removal of the mound of debris in March. It was mainly formed by a large layer of limestone fragments of different dimensions deriving from ancient works of digging, connected with the realisation of the Tomb of Harwa or of a later tomb. In June, at the beginning of the reprisal of our works, we divided into squares the area under excavations to have a better record the position of the findings made during the clearing of the debris.

In March, in correspondence of the western edge of the mound (Square B4), we had the surprise to find some limestone ostraca, a fragment of a papyrus and the pieces of a large jar with two hieratic texts: one painted in black ink - and mostly faded away - and another painted in red ink (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3: Shard of the jar with the hieratic inscription painted in red ink

We found other parts of the same jar during the reprise of the excavations in June, scattered in a surface of ten meters (Square A2-B3) eastward of the finding spot of the other fragments. Both groups of shards are bearing the hieratic text in red ink but they are not joining together. It is sustainable that they come from the same vessel on the basis of the identical palaeography and of characteristics similarity showed by the different shards. Same fabric and internal coating (a sort of

asphalt) are detectable in each shard. Those similarities also permitted the identification of some un-inscribed fragments of the jar.

The circumstances of the discovery brought out to the conclusion that the jar was thrown away in two different moments. On the first shards uncovered in March are visible three fingerprints in one side and the print of a thumb in the opposite side, left by someone who was working with plaster. That evidence points out that the shard was handled by a workman when the jar was already broken. It is highly possible that it was thrown by the same workman to the place where we discovered it. Scattered in an area of a meter, at different levels, we found other pieces of the same jar joining with the first one. The fragmentation of that part of the jar had had to take place when it landed over the surface of the debris following its discarding. Taking into consideration the position of every fragment, it seems that that part of the jar was thrown from East to West. That was confirmed by the discovery we made in June of the other fragments belonging to the same vessel around ten meters eastward. Together with the second group of inscribed shards – not joining with the others – we recovered most part of the neck and some other un-inscribed fragments of the jar (two of the latter were also found in between the two spots of the main discoveries). These evidences, other than confirming the possibility that the jar was thrown from East, allows assuming that the second group of shards has been discovered in the spot from where the workman collected the part of the jar he eventually threw away.

A first reading of the hieratic text painted in red ink was attempted. The group discovered in Spring yielded a list of names, among which Harwa was detected. The group discovered in Summer makes mention of Amon-Re, Nebnesuttauy and Uaset (Fig. 4).

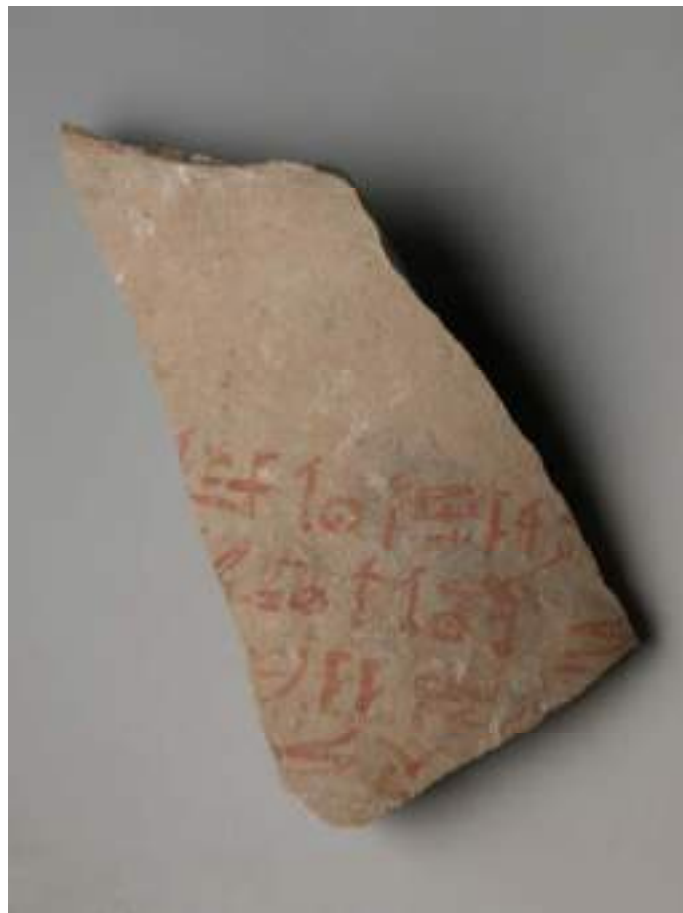


Fig. 4: Shard of the jar with the hieratic inscription painted in red ink found in Summer

For the moment it is impossible to catch the sense of the inscription. The use of the red ink induces to think that the text can be connected to a magic or execration subject. In this perspective it has to take into account that some fragments of faïence magic balls were uncovered during the excavations in front of the entrance portico in the 2000 season. Lacking any further archaeological evidence, that we hope to acquire with the prosecution of the excavations in the area in front of the main entrance to the tomb, to date it is impossible say more about these findings.

The huge layer of debris also yielded (discovered in March not far from the first group of jar fragments) two other inscribed limestone ostraca: one bears the beginning of the “Teaching of a man to his son” and the other a hieratic text consisting of a line repeated twice by different hands, followed by three other lines starting with what seems to be a name. The latter seems to be a simple exercise of a scribe and the two ostraca could be interpreted as remains of some scholastic activities that took place in the surroundings. The nature of the other findings made in connection with the two ostraca would reinforce such an interpretation. Not far we also uncovered a small slab of limestone used as an artist trial piece (it is carved with the sketch of a column with papyrus capital, fig. 5) and an unfinished limestone shabty.



Fig. 5: Limestone slab with the sketch of a column with papyrus capital

Also the shabty is to be considered a trial piece because it was deliberately cut little over the feet. A strip of papyrus with a line of hieratic inscription and a piece of blank papyrus were also discovered in the same context. Especially the blank papyrus can further point to the existence of a school in the surrounding.

The heap of limestone debris on the top of which all these findings were made was not completely excavated because of the presence of a pole of the electricity line standing over it. It is possible that, once removed the pole and continuing excavations eastward, we will be able to find more shards of

the jar with the painted inscriptions. The layer was completely excavated to its Western limit. In its lower part some shards of blue-painted pottery, typical of the Amenhotep III's reign, have been uncovered together with some other fragments of pottery dating to the end of the First Intermediate Period – beginning of the Middle Kingdom. This evidence induces to attribute the limestone debris layer to a date after the 18th Dynasty, the blue-painted pottery having to correspond to the works of excavation of the close tomb of Kheruef Senaa (TT 192).

The fragments of Middle Kingdom vessels were to be attributed to the underlying level. Its consistence is sandy and it was already partly exposed during the 2000 excavations when it demonstrated to be cut by the eastern edge of the quarry lying in the corner formed by the ramp. In that occasion some shards dated to Middle Kingdom have also found protruding form the section.

RECOVERING OF THE BLOCK ANX 281

In 2001 the French Egyptologist Laurent Coulon told us that, during a survey in the photographic archives of the Centre Franco-Egyptien d'Etudes du Temple de Karnak (CFEETK), he had come on a picture of a block (ANX 281) bearing the name of Harwa and unmistakably belonging the decoration of his tomb. Following an agreement with the SCA authorities of the Karnak Temple, we subsequently organised a visit to the Sheikh Labib magazine and we managed to retrace the block in a wooden box lying close to the entrance. In that occasion, we were able to take his dimensions and then to identify its exact position inside the tomb.

The block was brought in the Sheikh Labib magazine after the closing of the Antiquarian shops in Luxor. It had to be seized in one of them and stored there. This season we accomplished all the procedures to bring back the block to the tomb and on July 7th we went to the Karnak temple to recuperate it. The picture of the block in possession of the CFEETK shows that the block was in fact composed by two fragments but we were able to find just one of them. We alerted the SCA authorities of the Karnak Temple leaving them a picture of the missing part of the block, in case they will come on it during the planned works of reorganisation in the magazine.

When we reached the tomb we verified our assumptions about the block that we supposed coming from the southern part of the First Pillared Hall East wall. They demonstrated to be correct (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6: The block Anx 281 back to its original position

RECORDING AND MOVING OF THE FINDS

We completed the finds recording and stored all the data in a MS Access 2002 database specifically designed for the archaeological activities in the tomb of Harwa. We were so ready to move them to the SCA magazine near the Carter House, in accomplishment to the instructions we received upon our arrival in Luxor by the SCA local authorities. The task was carried out, as in the former season by Dr. Federica Raverta. All the objects were moved on July 21st, 2004. They are now stored following the category in wooden boxes (fig. 7) inside two iron closets.



Fig. 7: The wooden boxes containing the finds from the Harwa's excavations ready to be moved

CLEARING OF THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE CORRIDOR

In order to have space where to store all the decoration fragments and pottery found during our excavations in the tomb of Harwa, we started to clear the southern westernmost part of the subterranean corridor surrounding the tomb in July. After the removal of the bigger limestone fragments lying on the surface of the debris we were forced to stop our work because of the discovery of the edges of a shaft. It was completely hidden by the debris and it had escaped to our detection until present. We decided to postpone its excavation until next season because of the lacking of time (it was found just ten days before the planned date for the works end). The mouth of the shaft is 1 m x 1m wide pointing to a late date of it. It could maybe have escaped to the thorough activities of the tomb-robbers and, if it demonstrated to be achieved, could reserve us some nice surprise, maybe allowing us to better understand the late reuses of the tomb of Harwa. Anyway, the finding of Graeco-Roman funerary objects (shabtys and mummy tags) in the neighbourhood made during the 2001 season, are not promising in that sense.