

**PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE SPANISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION
AT HERAKLEOPOLIS MAGNA (IHNASYA EL MEDINA), BENI SUEF.**

SEASON 2013

Ed. M. Carmen Pérez Die

and others¹



The 2013 campaign in Herakleopolis Magna (Ihnasya el Medina, Beni Suef) took place from 3-25 March under the Direction of M. Carmen Pérez Die. This is a Project of the Egyptian and Near East Department of National Archaeological Museum in Madrid, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, and was carried out with the collaboration of the Spanish Embassy in Cairo and with the help of the Supreme Council of Antiquities and its office in Beni Suef .

¹ .- Antonio Gómez: Necrópolis of First Intermediate Period/ early Middle Kingdom.
José Ramón Pérez-Accino, Lucía Díaz- Iglesias and Gema Garrido: Temple of Heryshef.
Juan Antonio Belmonte: Astronomical Studies.
Bettina Bader: Pottery.

Antonia Moreno and M^a Fernanda Pascual: Restoration.

Jose Javier Martínez: Aerial Photograph.

Antonio Guío: Drawings

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I.- ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT

I.A. HERY SHEF TEMPLE.

2013 season started on March 5 with the general cleaning of the site. Plants and general dirt were removed in order to show the structures as it was left from last season activity.



Temple before excavation

Also a tanker truck was used to empty the water surfacing from the water table which flooded the centre of the courtyard (an estimated 32,000 litres of water were removed) and stone blocks were found submerged in the water. However, we were unable to reach the original floor, which is covered with a thick layer of mud which cannot be removed, as there is a constant flow of water from the water table to the surface.



Removing water

I.A.1.- The Courtyard and the Portico²

The intervention in the front part of the Temple was conducted in two areas:

In the area of the **Courtyard** works were undertaken in the East and West sides in order to uncover the blocks forming the North-Eastern corner, and to define other architectural elements and structures (rear walls, basement of columns and statues). Several large stone slabs were unearthed, forming part of the Eastern outer wall.

The filling removed is quite homogeneous in both sides of the courtyard: a loose debris formed by the accumulation of soil since the area of the temple was unearthed by Naville and Petrie with abundant pottery fragments (among which the types Late Roman Amphora 7 smoothed and ribbed are predominant), fragments of roman bricks, and limestone and red granite fragments belonging to architectural elements –lintels, bases, basements.



View of NE corner and East wall of the courtyard



View of the Western part of the courtyard

².- Lucia Diaz LLanos

The monumental closing of the courtyard in its southern part began to be defined by the discovery of the upper fragments of a triad in the water. The sculptures located in the flooded zone of the Temple have been provisionally moved to the Temple entrance to ensure their appropriate conservation. The future plan is to continue with these tasks and place the blocks and sculptures in a new position as near as possible to their original one, which will facilitate the reading and understanding of the monument.



Fragments of Statues

In the area of the **Portico** an artificial level of 20 cm of soil was removed in the Eastern and Western sides of the entrance in order to uncover the basement of the portico of columns (the latter dated to the Ramesside Period). The basement is made of large stone slabs some of which are reused and could date to the earlier New Kingdom phase of the Temple.



Basement of the portico of columns (West side)

I.A.2.- The North area³

The aim of the present campaign was to uncover as much as possible of the North wall of the temple. Two areas were selected for intervention: the first one in the NW corner of the building, in the excavation of a trench 2.50 m. As the steep gradient increased it seemed gradually difficult to continue excavating from the surface level. Consequently the excavation continued from above in the mound maintaining the shape of the square until a workable point could be reached. The ground of this intervention is formed by a modern filling deposited after Petrie's intervention in 1904. Therefore this filling is now 111 years old. Accordingly mixed materials and pottery have been found.

The second area intervened forms the North wall of the sanctuary as it adjoins rooms NW and NE at the back of the temple. In these two areas the walls are already defined by the excavation of 2004 and so presumably the stones forming the back wall of the sanctuary will be uncovered soon.



North Area

³.- J.R. Pérez -Accino

I.A.3.-Trench in Squares 16 and 24⁴

A low hill in the South-Eastern area of the temple has been selected to work on a trench which runs parallel to the axis of the building. The aim of this work is to define the limit of the Temple in this area.

The trench is placed in the squares numbered 16 and 24. Initially its dimensions were 9 m. of length and 1,5 m. of width. We have excavated by artificial levels and these layers probably belong to the ancient excavations. Several fragments of pottery were identified in all the levels, and they belong to the type Late Roman Amphora 7. After deepening 1,80 m. a mudbrick wall running lengthways to the west profile and linked to a deposit of large pottery jars was documented.

The trench was enlarged 5 m to the South and 3,5 m to the East. No new structures have been found.



General view of the trenches



Pottery deposit

⁴.- Gema Garrido



Heryshef Temple. Courtyard and Portico. End of Season

I.B.- NECROPOLIS OF THE FIRST INTERMEDIATE PERIOD/ EARLY MIDDLE KINGDOM⁵

The excavation of the First Intermediate Period/early Middle Kingdom Necropolis has been underway for several years⁶. This necropolis is composed of tombs arranged in parallel rows or streets, running E-W, which belonged to high dignitaries in Heracleopolis Magna.

The excavation of a trench in Square C-23 is intended as a continuation of a survey started in the season 2012. The aim is to connect and relate the South profile with the tombs existing in the Central and Northern part of the necropolis. The excavation of this large test trench had three basic aims: to obtain a stratigraphy, to excavate the area around the stone tomb of Sakat, Nefeririut and Heryshefnakht and to connect this tomb with tomb 76/9 situated in the North

⁵.- Antonio Gomez

⁶.- "Sector C" is used for the whole sector occupied by the necropolis.



Trench between North and South tombs

The excavation was conducted following the Harris System, based on the identification of the stratigraphic units forming this part of the site. Thus, a stratigraphical correlation among the fillings and structures documented in the sector of the necropolis was achieved. Archaeological works started at of 5,25 m and had to be abandoned at a level of 4,28 m due to the water table.



Tombs of Sakat, Nefeririut and Heryshefnakht

General final view of C-23

Conclusions:

- All the chambers have the same N-S orientation with slight NW-SE variations.
- Two construction systems have been detected in the structures: stone chambers and mud brick rooms. The quality of the materials and architectonic solutions used in Tomb 76-9 are very inferior to those in the tomb of Sakat, Nefeririut and Heryshefnakht .
- Adobe walls are the most widely used building system. In most cases these are of dark brown mud bricks. The mud bricks evidencing a reddish colour because of chemical alteration or because they were burned appear at a specific moment in the construction.

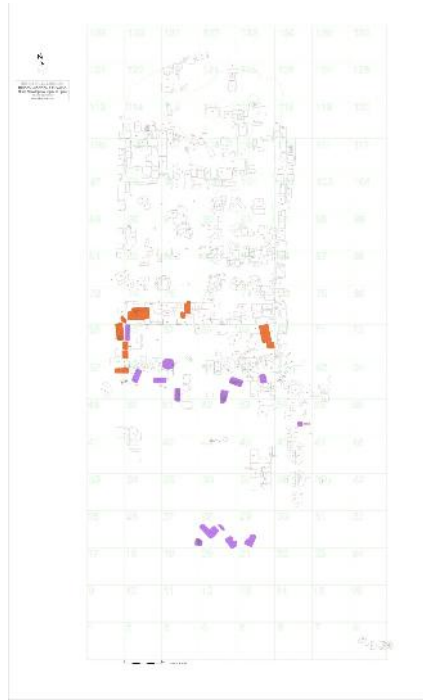
II.- RESTORATION REPORT



II.A INTERVENTION AT THE TEMPLE OF HERYSHEF⁷

During the season of 2013 the following works have been undertaken in the Temple of Heryshef:

-Continuation of the documentation started in 2012 concerning the state of conservation of the quartzite and red granite blocks that should be moved and re-located in a new position. These works were primarily undertaken in the area of the Portico.

⁷.- M. Antonia Moreno Cifuentes



-  Documented and treated red granite blocks
-  Documented and treated quartzite blocks

- Removal of the quartzite and granite blocks, inscribed with hieroglyphs, which were submerged under water. They were re-located in dry places to avoid their contact with the water. In the courtyard of the Temple the extraction and movement of decorated pieces have been initiated. We started taking out of the stone inside the water level.



Stones in the flooded zone of the Temple



Block inside the water



Mouvement of the stones

A total of 32 architectonic and sculptural elements in quartzite and granite have been documented. Each block in the portico has been numbered, running from the E side of the portico to the W side. The bases of the columns have been numbered B1E, B2E, etc. and the sculptures have been numbered starting from E-W.



II.B POTTERY COFFIN⁸

Measurements: length, 1,70 m approximately; maximum height, 0,50 m; width, 0,40 m

The object is completely broken. It was found in 2000 but only a conservation work with gauzes and polyurethane materials was made. During this season of 2013 the works consisted on the removal of the reinforcement of gauzes and polyurethane, the drawing of maps of fragments in his original position and in to clean and consolidate them with Paraloid B-72 dissolved in acetone (2%), and in to unit them with nitrocellulosic adhesive. In the area of the feet, a consolidation with ethyl silicate was necessary, due the extreme fragility of the material.



However, the complete mounting of the whole sarcophagus could not be completed and has been left until the next campaign. This item is currently conserved in a specially designed wooden box made to hold the coffin.



Wooden box for the Coffin

⁸.- Maria Fernanda Pascual

III.- OTHER WORKS

III.A ASTRONOMY AND LANDSCAPE IN HERACLEOPOLIS MAGNA.⁹

Astronomy played an essential role in the culture, religion, architectonic design and sacred geography of the Nile valley. In addition, the Egyptians aligned their temples in perfect accordance with the *Maat* or cosmic order, choosing selective patterns of astronomical orientations for different places. In Upper Egypt, the Nile was the source of inspiration for the orientation of religious buildings. The main door of the Temple must be facing and perpendicular to the Nile, but when the river is not present, as in the case of Heracleópolis Magna, astronomical observations and the solar and cardinal orientations were what determined the position of the monuments ¹⁰.

For three days a detailed analysis of the orientation and location of monuments in Ihnasiya has been performed. The main objective has been to get the data that will eventually permit a study of the landscape connections on the site, including the skyscraper and the Bahr al Yusuf branch of the Nile as the most important components.



Bahr el Yusuf

⁹.- Juan Antonio Belmonte

¹⁰.- The Bahr el Yusuf flow near the town. The studies by Juan Antonio Belmonte are proving essential in this thematic area.

Data have been taken in the most important monuments of the site such as:

1. The temple of Heryshef
2. The necropolis of the First Intermediate Period (FIP)
3. The necropolis of the Third Intermediate Period (TIP)
4. The Kom el Akareb monumental Gate
5. Elsewhere in the city.

The data gathering have consisted of obtaining the precise coordinates of each of these monuments and the orientation of every component of the diverse buildings and also of the relationships between them. Eventually, the course of the Bahr al Yusuf has also been put into context with the ruins of the city.

A very preliminary analysis of the data on site has offered promising results which suggest that we may obtain important information within a diachronic study of the relationships and historical sequences of the most important monuments of the site from the earliest phases of the temple of Heryshef to the Third Intermediate Period necropolis.

A future deeper analysis of the data will allow new insights in the internal organization of the city sacred places and how they relate to each other and to the general landscape of ancient Heracleopolis.

III B.- STUDIES ON THE POTTERY¹¹

This season the focus of research was on ceramic material from Sector C15 from the excavation of the years 2007 and 2008 in the necropolis of the First Intermediate Period. It was possible to review almost all of the material, process and record it. At the same time the undiagnostic body sherds were also recorded by means of especially designed recording sheets and afterwards discarded. In this way the pressing problem of overwhelming amounts of ceramic material accumulating and blocking space could be alleviated. The material was reduced by about 100 kg without losing any vital

¹¹ .- Bettina Bader

information for future studies. All diagnostics were kept except from disturbed top soil levels, where only the latest material was kept.

The actual analysis of the ceramic material concentrated on three particular contexts from C. 15, namely stratigraphic units 238, 241 and 264. The oldest unit in this sector is 264 and according to the current state of knowledge it is likely that this context entirely represents an older phase than the main habitation level of the necropolis. Whether this is to be termed 'late Old Kingdom phase' or 'early First Intermediate Period phase' remains to be seen after thorough analysis of the pottery in connection with the stratigraphy of the site. Also in units 238 and 241 a good measure of older material was found although here already types appeared also known in the main First Intermediate Period/early Middle Kingdom phase of the necropolis. Finally a type known only through bases rims and body sherds could be reconstructed to a complete profile: A cone shapes slender beaker from a very rough Nile clay (C2) roughly shaped by hand not dissimilar to the earlier Old Kingdom beer jar type in terms of fabric. It is about 22 cm tall (Fig. 1).

Excavation in the necropolis in sector C23, a trench connecting the northernmost stone tomb and that of López with the southern profile will bring much clarity into the stratigraphy of the whole of the site. The material was carefully collected by the excavator and will be studied next year. Already a very important result can be reported: immediately beneath the level of the northernmost stone tomb a fragmented dish was found in situ, which dates that level (Fig. 2). The type of the dish seems to represent also an earlier phase as it does not conform to the ubiquitous dark red slipped dishes, so common in the main phase of the necropolis. Again a late Old Kingdom or early First Intermediate Period date may be assumed.

The work at the Temple of Heryshef also yielded masses of pottery. Keeping in mind the disturbed nature of that area, the amount of material collected for analysis was kept at a minimum, in order to ascertain the date of activities at the temple. Of ubiquitous appearance is a late Roman amphora type named Late Roman Amphora 7 (LRA7), with ribbed and smooth body. The general date of this type is in the 4th to 7th centuries AD. It appeared in almost all contexts of the temple in large quantities. Only a few fragments of this type were kept in each context as a quantitative study is futile in the top soil. In the test trench in the south east a considerable layer of this amphora type

was found and collected in full, so that in future studies the development of the type can be studied more closely. This is the more important as there are regional differences.



Figure 1: Dish from Sector C23.



Figure 2: Conical vessel, Sector C15. UE 238.

III C.- DOCUMENTATION¹².

Once the structures of the Temple had been excavated, cleaned and delimited using Cartesian coordinates (normal grid size 5 x 5 m), they were drawn on the ground plan on graph paper using a scale of 1:20. These field drawings were later scanned and processed using the program *Corell Draw*, to include them in the general plan on a scale of 1:50. In some cases photogrammetric techniques were used, with overhead or aerial scale photographs of the zone to be drawn, with referenced coincident points on the plan, to allow direct work on the photograph. To correct the photographic distortion produced by the camera lens and the perspective, PTLens and Perspective Rectifier programs respectively were used.

¹² .- Antonio Guio and Jose Javier Martinez



Coordinates

As well as digital photographs, an Olympus Digital Camedia C5060WZ camera, coupled with a 4m telescopic lens and actioned by a remote control delayed action release was used for overhead images; a Ricoh CX2 camera, coupled to a kite, was also used to obtain aerial photos at altitudes between 4 and 50 m which have proved very useful



Aerial photo of the Temple

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