

**PRELIMINARY REPORT OF SPANISH ARCHEOLOGICAL MISSION IN  
HERAKLEOPOLIS MAGNA. IHNASYA EL MEDINA, BENI SUEF).**

**2023 SEASON**

BY Maria Carmen Pérez-Die, Director of the Mission and Antonio Gómez,  
Juan Candelas , Antonio Guio, Antonia Moreno y Bettina Bader.



MAN

MUSEO ARQUEOLÓGICO NACIONAL

**SPANISH ARCHEOLOGICAL MISSION IN HERAKLEOPOLIS MAGNA  
(IHNASYA EL MEDINA, BENI SUEF). 2023 SEASON**

The 2023 campaign in Heraklepolis Magna took place during the month of Mai. The Project is under the supervision of the Department of Egyptian Antiquities at the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid and has been carried out with the help of the Ministry of Egyptian Antiquities and its office in Beni Suef. This year the sponsors have been: Ministry of Culture of Spain, Argea Constructors, Spanish Association of Egyptology and Germn Ruiz

The team was composed of:

M. Carmen Pérez Die, Director. Antonio Gómez and NJuan Candelas Archaeologists.  
Antonia Moreno Restorer, Bettina Bader, Ceramologist. Antonio Guio, Draughtsman,  
Emad Hosni Arabic-Spanish translator.

On behalf of the Antiques Service in Beni Suef the group was composed of xxxxxx

In agreement with the permission of the Ministry of Egyptian Antiquities we have carried out the following works:

**I.- HERYSHEF TEMPLE:** CLEANING, EXCAVATION, and DOCUMENTATION<sup>1</sup>

The Temple was discovered by Naville in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and excavated by Petrie in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Spanish Archaeological Mission continued the work in the sanctuary from 2004 until 2023.

**1.CLEANING.-** During the first days of this campaign we have carried out general cleaning of the temple eliminating the vegetation and weeds that have grown throughout the year.

Also we had obtain permission from the Permanent Comitee to use two shovel excavators (Lodar) to remove the modern rubble and debris (Radim) on the south-west profiles of the Temple.

The accumulation of debris (Radim) around the Temple, resulting from the excavations by Petrie, prevents us from extending our investigation of the surface area of the temple.

2.- b.- **Pay loader** to take out this debris material (Radim), before remouvt ; then it will then be possible to excavate extensive new areas not excavated by Petrie or Naville, to reveal the continuation and size of the building.

We use this two machines with very goods results.

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<sup>1</sup>.-Excavated by Antonio Gómez and Juan Candelas.Documentation. Fotographer, fotogrametric work : Antonio Gómez and Antonio Guio



Zone of Radim to be removed by the machine



Results of the work

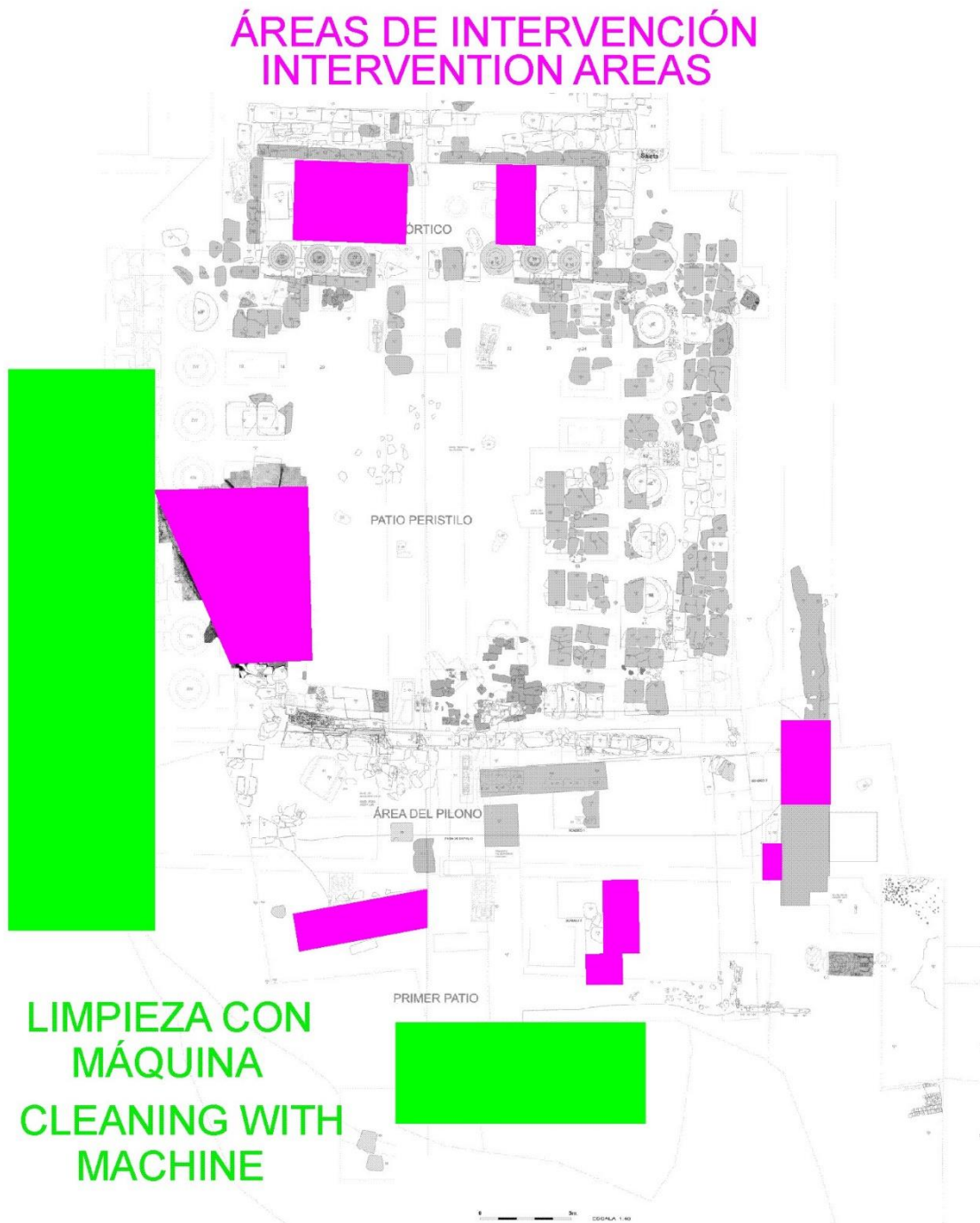
## **2.-EXCAVATIONS**

I.-The excavation campaign of 2023, has been developed in several areas of the Temple:

The underwater was always a problem, but this year the dewatering Project does not work and I have very big Problems with the water that cannot allow us to work in some places very important

**. WORKS CARRIED OUT guio**

During the first week, vegetation grown in the area has been cleared, consisting of reed beds up to 5 m high. Part of the dirt from Petrie's excavations, located on the SW side of the Temple, has continued to be removed with a shovel-excavator machine, to allow further excavation in this area. (Photo 1).



The cleaning of the southern area (also with a machine) has begun, made up of rubble from ceramic end pieces from the Roman period, to allow good frontal visibility of the entire temple complex. Expansion of survey no. 3. In the E zone of the first patio (area of the pylon), borehole No. 3 has continued to be expanded in E and S directions until

it reaches the water table, which, due to a malfunction of the water extraction system, has not been able to finish excavating. However, it has made it possible to connect the stratigraphy of profile E with that of the [2017](#) excavation. (Photo 2).



Reconstruction of the adobe wall on the E side. In order to make it visible and understandable, it was decided to reconstruct a part of the outer wall E of the temple, with a width of [1.70](#) m and a height of [1.50](#) m, reproducing its adobe construction, made of mud and straw. measures 30 x 15 x 10 cm. To differentiate the original part from the reconstructed part, an orange fiberglass marker has been used, which clearly separates both invoices. The construction has been carried out in a staggered way to allow access to its upper part, and it can continue to be expanded if necessary in future campaigns. (Photos 3,4,5).





Definitive placement of decorated ashlar on the E side of the first patio. This piece temporarily placed during the previous campaign is moved to its final place next to the other piece of the monumental door of the pylon, located on the E side. A pedestal or podium is made of white brick and mortar for fixing and stability. (Photo 6).





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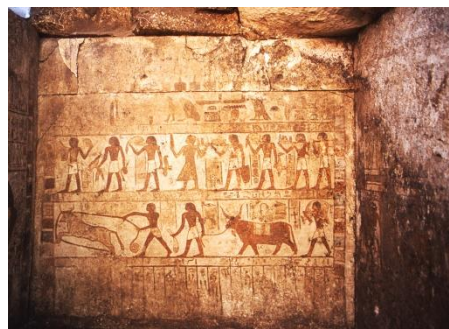
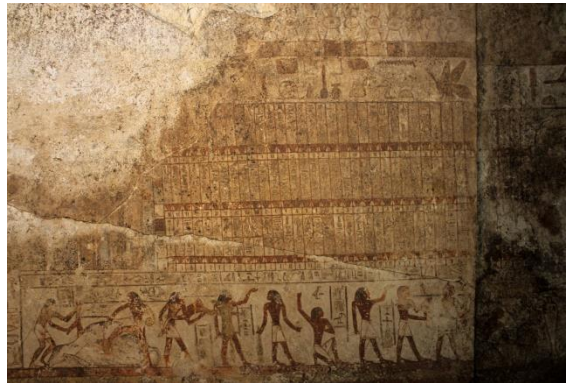
A large container was found. With the help of Bettina Bader we could take out and it will be kept in the magazine for future studies.

### **3.-DOCUMENTATION.**

We continuous work at the Temple preparing related documentation (photos, topography and drawings) to determine its history, to know the different levels of constructions and to understand more about this sacred building and the deity Heryshef.

**A.-** High-resolution digital **photogrammetry** system has been used to generate the planimetry and altimetry of the excavated areas.

## II-PROJECT OF THE SALVAGE TOMB OF HOTEPUADJET. EXTRACTION OF THE PINTED WALLS OF THE TOMB AND RELOCATION IN ANOTHER PLACE, AFTER RESTORATION<sup>2</sup>.



Tomb of Hotep-Uadjet. East and South wall

**The tomb of Hotep-uadjet** is the most important tomb found by Spanish Archaeological Mission in the Cemetery of the First Intermediate Period in Herakleopolis Magna. Dimensions: East wall: Two dallages In total 272 cms.long; 122cms. High. South wall: Two dallages: 150 cms. Long: 119 cms, high

**The Supreme Council.** Give usp ermit to take off the stone tombs in order to be kept in the Egyptian Magazin of Ehnasya el Medin Site

The procesus is very long and we need at least three campaigns to finish our work. !

- 1.- Extraction of the tomb (done)
- 2.- Restoration
- 3.- To transport to the EgyptianMagazine in Ehnasya el Medina, as continuation of the transport of the dallages last season

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<sup>2</sup>.- Responsable del Proyecto de Restauración:. Maria Antonia Moreno

A total of five limestone blocks of the walls have been removed.

Now, all the walls are placed in the EypTIAN Magazine in Ehnasya el Medina site

## . CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION REPORT

SEASON 2023

HERACLEÓPOLIS MAGNA (EHNASYA EL MEDINA)

M<sup>a</sup> Antonia Moreno

Restorer

During the campaign, the conservation and restoration works of the blocks that formed the Tomb of Hotep Uadjet, begun in 2021, continued. The works have consisted of:

Restoration of Block No. 5 of the East Wall. The block is broken into three large fragments due to an attempted robbery in 2011. When the fragments were removed from the tomb, the edges of the blocks were reinforced with Japanese paper, acrylic resin and plaster. The reverse side of the fragments was reinforced with plaster, cotton gauze and wooden sticks.

The limestone block is in good condition and structurally the stone is cohesive. The surface was dirty and with remains of dirt and dust. Remains of red polychrome are preserved and images of the priestly procession are preserved. Due to changes in humidity and temperature over the years, the polychromy and the figures have lost their brightness and color. There are also salts that have surfaced at the surface

The treatments carried out have been:

Mechanical removal of the protections on the reverse side of the blocks.

Removal of Japanese paper and resin applied for protection with acetone.

Mechanical cleaning with spatulas, brushes, brushes and wooden sticks.

Chemical cleaning with a 50% solution of distilled water and alcohol.

Soluble salts were removed with paper pulp plasters -Arbocel 100- and distilled water.

Reinforcement and crack filling with polyvinyl acetate (Vinavil).

Bonding and filling of microgaps with dental clay.

The anterior and decorated face has been consolidated with acrylic resin -Paraloid B-72- 3% in acetone.



Restoration of Block No. 4 of the East Wall. The state of conservation is very similar to block N° 5: cohesive stone with remains of earth and dust on both the front and back faces. Remains of decoration are preserved: a figure with red clothing and black horizontal lines. The inscription with the name Hopet Uadjet and part of the figure of the individual are preserved.

The treatments carried out have been:

Mechanical cleaning with spatulas, brushes, brushes and wooden sticks.

Chemical cleaning with a 50% solution of distilled water and alcohol.



Set of four canopic jars. Made of Egyptian alabaster and limestone. Three are complete and one is fragmented and incomplete. The restoration treatments have been as follows:

Mechanical cleaning with wooden sticks and spatula.

Chemical cleaning with 50% water-alcohol solutions.

Gluing of fragments with nitrocellulose adhesive, cyanoacrylate and epoxy.

Filling of gaps with dental plaster.

**Photos 4, 5**





4.- Report on the Work done in Season 2023 at Herakleopolis Magna – Pottery

During the 2023 season at Herakleopolis Magna several objectives for the study of the pottery were followed.

One of these goals was the further study of the material finds (a large number of pottery vessels and sherds and a few small finds) from the Necropolis of the First Intermediate Period, of which still a large proportion needs to be properly studied to obtain the full information this find category can provide. As pottery is the single most numerous find category connected to the archaeology of the site, it is extremely important for the chronological dating of the tombs, when they were set up, how long the cult lasted, when they were robbed for the first time and finally what happened to the whole of the necropolis after the Middle Kingdom and when it was finally destroyed. Without the pottery study these questions can never be answered. Moreover, the pottery and the specific types used in the burials, the cult and for other occasions provide some information on the belief system of the ancient Egyptians and which provisions they were given for the afterlife as well as which products were used in the mortuary cult. Finally, and by no means unimportant, is the research about the manufacturing technology of pottery in the region of Herakleopolis Magna and the Fayoum, because the use of raw materials and the way of making the vessels allow glimpses on the modalities and organisation of craft production in the First Intermediate Period, and in the bigger picture to which 'craft production region' Herakleopolis Magna once belonged. This does not mean that there was a political background or motivation to this production but rather a number of local/regional tradition of one or more social groups that developed, used and eventually changed their traditions over time. For the FIP pottery is the most widely distributed find category/craft product and will therefore be very important for comparison with other parts of Egypt during the same time period, where pottery in terms of vessel shapes and material looks different.

Another goal is to get a better understanding of the chronology of the building, further use and destruction of the Heryshef Temple. For this reason very specific soundings are executed in very important locations of the Temple providing insights into which parts were built in which sequence. Moreover it may be possible to reconstruct areas of reuse and the time periods in which this took place. However, Flinders Petrie's excavation in this area in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century AD went very deeply into the foundations and we can see traces of his work in many places, which is not clear from his publication. Thus, the work with the pottery will contribute considerably to the research history in and around the Temple.

1.) Ceramic material of Area 20 excavated in 2007 in the FIP necropolis  
Finally, the study of the ceramic material from Area 20 could be finished. The last 8 contexts were processed, recorded and documented and all the ceramic material will be ready for analysis and publication, which will be the next task.

2.) Pottery vessels from Areas 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 11 in the FIP necropolis



Documentation and recording of mostly complete pottery vessels from the early phase of the Spanish excavation in the necropolis of the First Intermediate Period in the years 2000 and 2001 was undertaken due to a better understanding of the archaeological find situation in the course of ongoing research for the publication of these areas. Stress was on archaeologically complete vessels (i.e. a full profile, but not necessarily all sherds or intact vessels), to enhance and complete the pottery vessel corpus of the site for comparative purposes (i) within the site, (ii) with other sites nearby, e.g. Sedment and Saqqara and (iii) with more distant sites such as Deir el Bershah and Luxor. A tall stand with dish, that is so far unparalleled at Herakleopolis (and Sedment) was found in Area 9 in 2001. It's irregularity due to the manufacturing technology does not leave doubt that this vessel is contemporary to either the foundation of the tombs or to the cult activities and provides a glimpse into practices conducted in this necropolis. [Photo 1] All in all 35 vessels of different shapes were added to the overall corpus of the site.

3.) The reconstruction of the two very large pottery vessels situated below the stone floor in the first court of the Heryshef Temple excavated in 2016 proves to be very challenging because they are so huge as to need consolidation in order to glue the pieces together with a special glue (araldite) because the material used, Nile C2 is not strong enough to keep the thick sherds together (Wall thickness from 2 cm to 6 cm). Although the vessels were handmade and so far no exact parallels were found in other sites, the most likely date for these vessels is the Late Period. Documentation by drawing as it is done conventionally, is not possible, but it will be attempted with a photogrammetry programme. Perhaps this is the reason why no such pottery is known from other sites. The smaller of the two vessels could be reconstructed and documented.

4.) Dating the ceramic material from the excavation in the Heryshef Temple from 2021 and 2022 as well as from the current season.

The dating of the material from the season of 2021 and 2022 has been finished and better preserved pieces of the Late Roman and Late Antique Period were chosen for recording at one point in the future. All of it belongs to the post-pharaonic period, identifiable pieces belonging to a timespan of the 3/4th century AD to the 7/8<sup>th</sup> century AD.

As the material was quite repetitive, duplicates were discarded. Recording sheets have been filled in for these contexts and more complete pieces selected for documentation by drawing and analysis.





## **II CLEANING THE “THIRD INTERMEDIATE PERIOD NECROPOLIS” IN ORDER TO FIND OUT THE PLACE OF THE MISSING STONES RECORDED IN THE “REGISTER BOOK”.<sup>3</sup>**

According to the Instructions of SCA we have proceeded to the cleaning of a specific area of the Necropolis of Third Intermediate Period in order to find the place in which we put the Stone after the discovering in 1984 and 1986, inside the necropolis.

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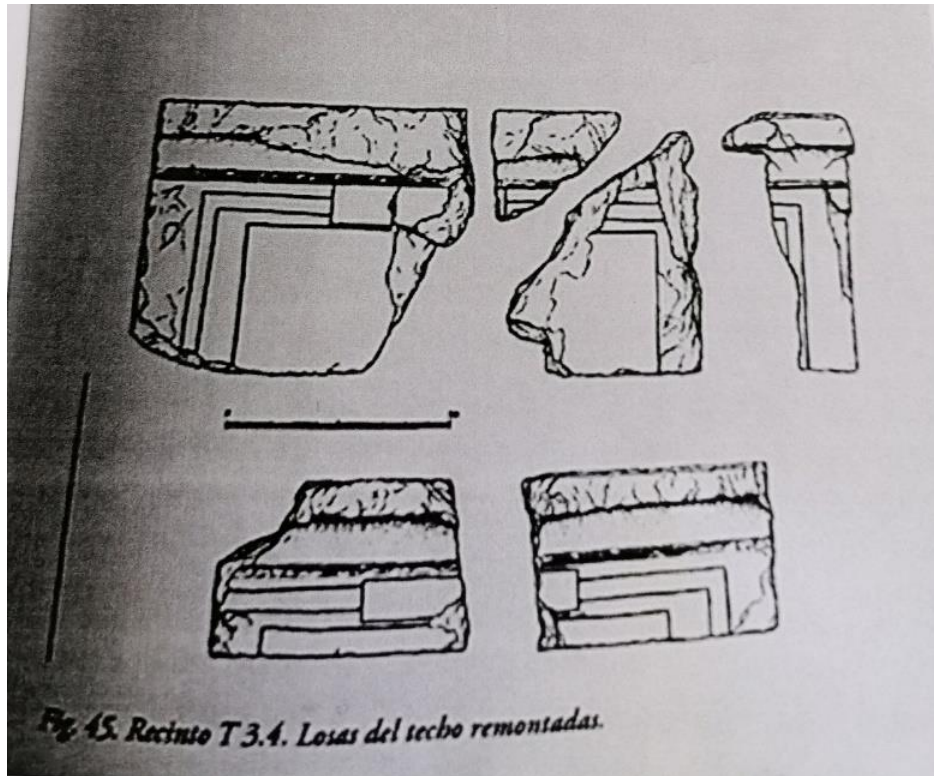
<sup>3</sup> Conducted by M.Carmen Pérez-Die and the Inspector Walid Mohamedin Ahmed



Necropolis before cleaning

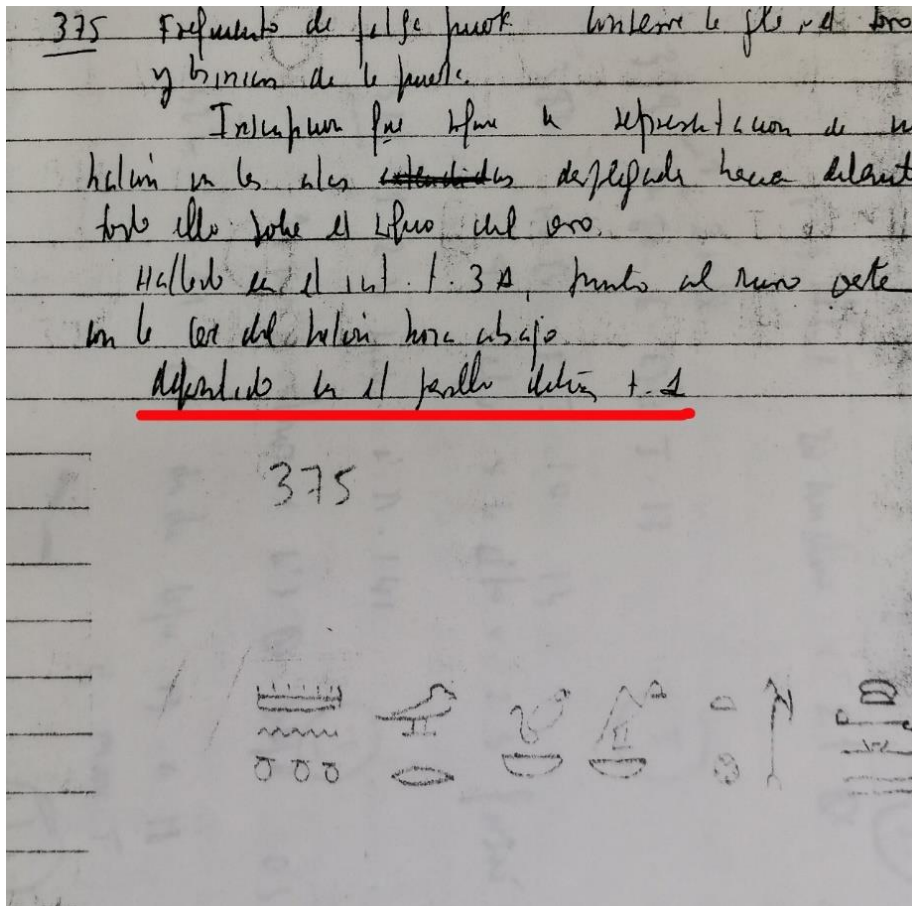
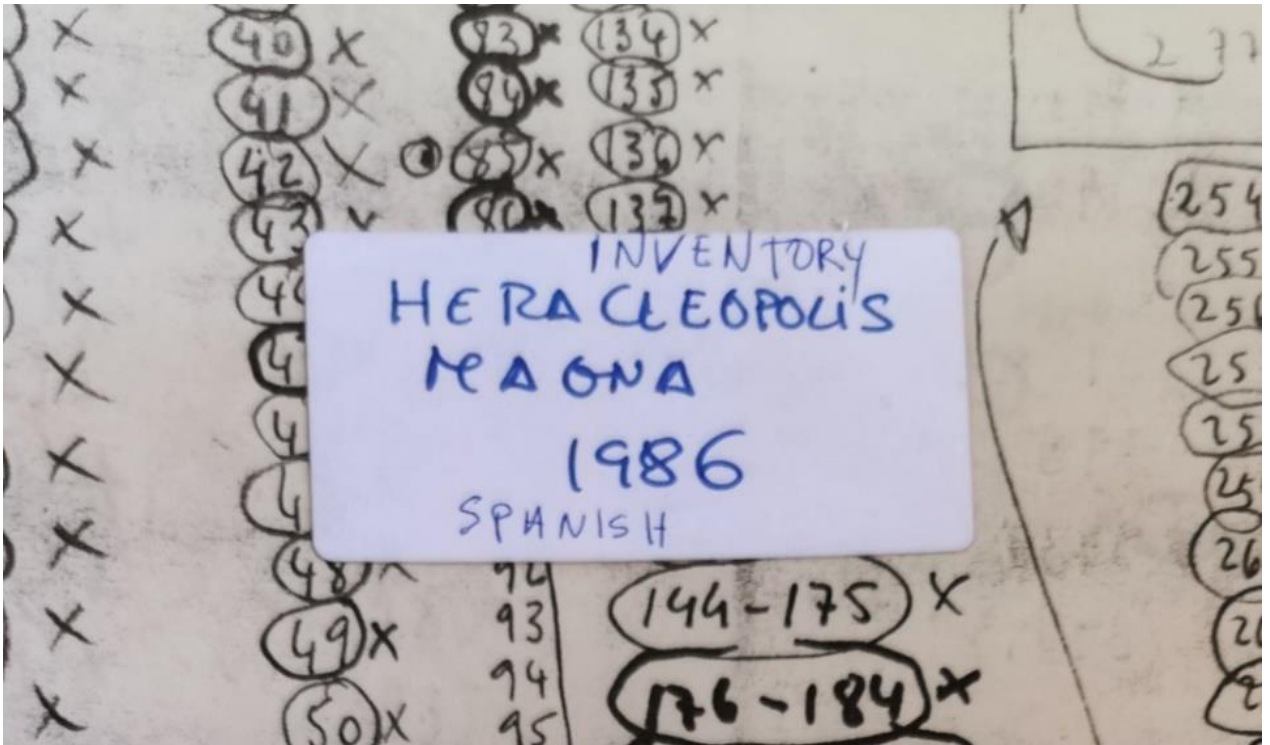
First at all the Spanish and Egyptian team with Mr. Walid in charge of this work went to the Egyptian magazine in Ehnasya in order to look for this object, but we cannot find them.

These elements are



1.- They consist in several stones with inscriptions, with the form of a false door, belonging to the roof of the tomb number 3, and fallen down inside this tomb, around the sarcophagi

In the Inventory of Spanish Mission of 1986, it was noted all these stones were deposited in the south corridor of Tombe nº 1, according the instruction of the Inspector of his year.



Spanish Inventory of 1986

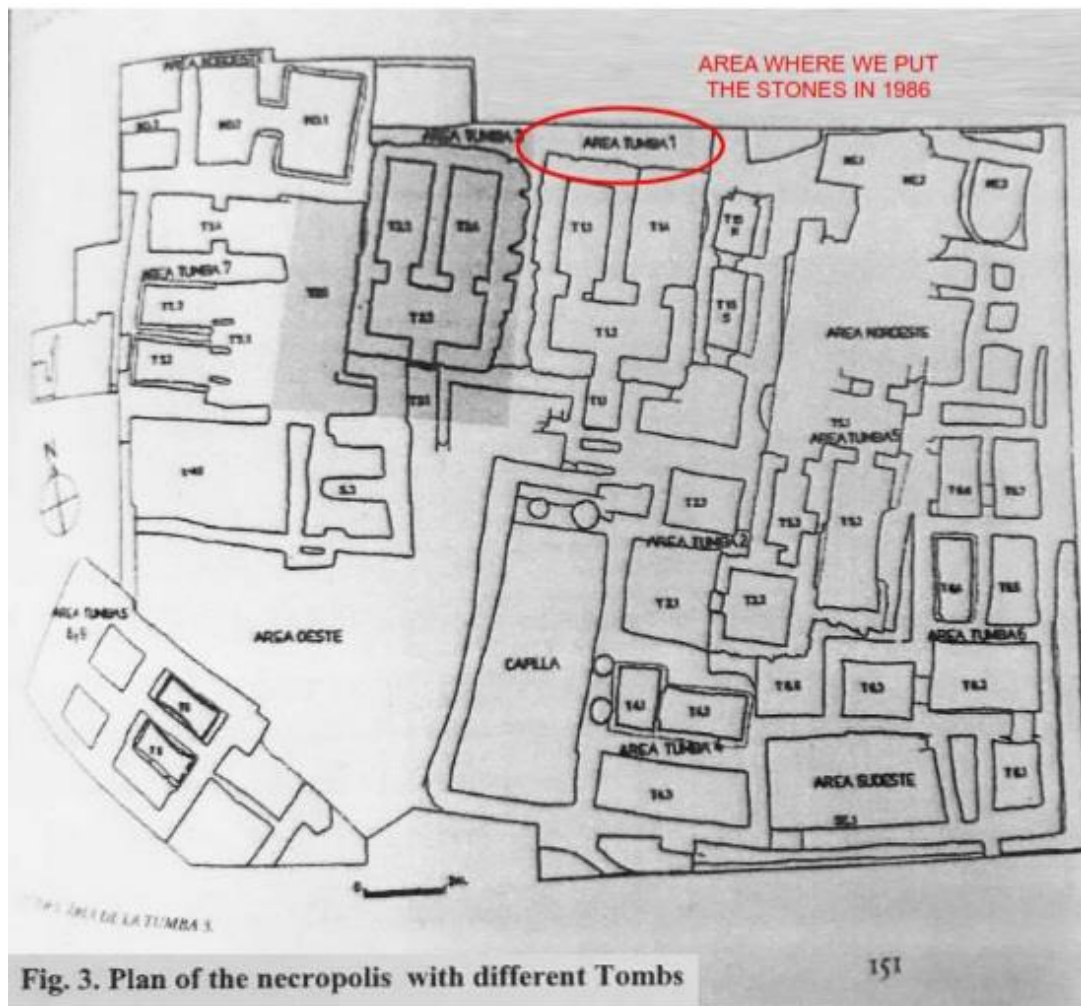


Fig. 3. Plan of the necropolis with different Tombs

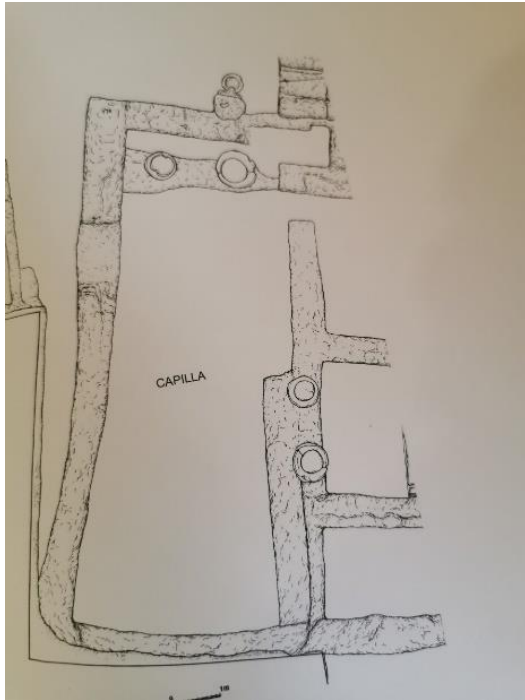
In the campaign of 2021, the area around the tombs number 1 and 3 has been cleaned. And in the campaign of 2022 The Inspector Mr. Walid cleaned again this place, but he did not find nothing.



Place where we put the stones in 1986. Now it is empty, and the stones have disappeared



**2, Two Artifacts.** A libation Stone and a Rounded Pile with two Holes of limestone was found into the Chapel or Temple of the necropolis in front of Tomb 1. In 1984, this stone was left “in Situ” In front of tomb number 1, according the Instruction of our Inspector.



with holes

Libation pile rounded and Stone rounded



Place where the two object were disposed in 1984 . Cleaned in 2022



Mr. Walid cleaned a part of the necropolis, paid by Spanish Mission. After the efforts of findings the stones in 2021 and in 2022 and therefore fulfilling achieving all the requirements after cleaning the area, cutting all the vegetation around and removing all the sand covering the structures,

**WE HAVE NOT FOUND SUCH STONE WHERE THE WAS SUPPORTED TO REMAIN UNTIL NOWADAYS. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SPANISH MISSION IS FINISHED.**

Furthermore, it is important to point out that this necropolis was excavated 35 years ago. And was severely expoiled and destructed during the revolution in 2011

Necropolis of Third IntermediatePperiod After Revolution. Ceiling of the tomb fallen down





Necropolis of Third Intermediate Period after Revolution, supports of ceilings of tombs