



PRELIMINARY REPORT
30th ARCHEOLOGICAL CAMPAIGN AT THE RAMESSEUM
NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2018
ASSOCIATION FOR THE SAFEGUARD OF THE RAMESSEUM (ASR)
CNRS (UMR 171-LAMS)
CENTER FOR STUDY AND DOCUMENTATION ON ANCIENT EGYPT
(CEDAE-MINISTRY OF ANTIQUITIES)
with the collaboration of
CENTRO DI EGITTOLOGIA FRANCESCO BALLERINI (CEFB)



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As part of the scientific collaboration established between the Center for Study and Documentation on Ancient Egypt (CEDAE, Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities), the Association for the Safeguard of the Ramesseum (ASR) and the Centro di Egittologia Francesco Ballerini (CEFB), the XXXth archaeological campaign began on November 6, 2018. Research, excavation and restoration work focused on several areas of the Ramesseum, both in the temple itself and in its outbuildings.

We wish to thank for their effective support, Dr. Mohamed Abdel Aziz, Director General of Antiquities of Upper Egypt, Mr. Fathy Yassin, Director General of Antiquities of Gurnah, Mr. Ramadan Ahmed, Director of the Office of the Missions, as well as the inspectors of the Supreme Council of Antiquities placed at the disposal of the mission: Mr. Khaled El-Tayeb Mohamed (CSA), Mr. Abdel Gawad Mahmoud Abdel Bari (CSA), Mrs. Abla Abdel Haq (CSA), Mr. Magdi Mahmoud Shaker (CEDAE) and Ms. Ayat Farouk Abdelouanis (CEDAE).

I.- FIRST COURT OF THE TEMPLE (PCR)

Team : Christian Leblanc, Eric Desèvre, Laurent Chazalviel and the team of restorers led by the reïs El-Azab Hassan Mohamed and Mohamed Hussein.

In the first courtyard, the aim was to enhance the facade of the royal palace by restoring the preserved remains of the south portico and reconstructing eight column bases that had disappeared. This work was undertaken last year and resumed this season. The sandstone blocks necessary for the new bases were delivered *in situ* and the stone cutters were able to install them on site. The existing ancient bases, twelve in number, have been restored. In order to complete this work, it will remain to restore the border of the portico and to restructure the preserved ancient pavement by supplementing it with new slabs where needed.

A levelling of the ground of the first court was also undertaken to fill the declivities of the ground.

Another project was carried out near the axial staircase restored last year and which constituted in Antiquity the main access from the first to the second courtyard

(PCR-SCR), access blocked today by the presence of the collapsed colossus Ramses II. To facilitate this passage, a wooden staircase had been built by the Gurnah Inspectorate of Antiquities many years ago, against the north aisle of the second pylon. It was removed this year and replaced by a stone staircase integrated into the thickness of the aisle supplemented by three wooden steps. On the same level as the landing of the axial staircase and adjoining the latter, a wooden platform, 3.50 m long and 1.70 m wide was placed, lined with a metal balustrade (high. 1,00 m) to accommodate visitors who will be able to access the second courtyard. This project was completed during this campaign.

II.- SOUTH SIDE OF THE TEMPLE (BCS)

Team : Christian Leblanc, Desèvre Eric, Laurent Chazalviel.

In this sector, the program was to continue the restitution of architectural spaces missing in elevation. Based on the archaeological survey following the excavation of the area between 2005 and 2009, it was possible to restore the layout of the rooms and courtyards that bordered, on this side, the main body of the temple. This restitution realized on the height of one course of stone masonry, originates at the level of the "Litanies Room" (SDL) and must make the junction with the second court (SCR). Well advanced, this operation entrusted to the team of stone cutters, should be completed during the next campaign (2019). The result is to ensure a better lisibility of the temple plan and spatial organization.

III.- NORTH SIDE OF THE TEMPLE (BCN-SHP)

Team : Sameh Mohamed Zaki, Magdi Mahmoud Shaker, Aboulayoun Gamaledin Hussein, Eraldo Livio.

Before carrying out reconstruction work identical to that undertaken for the south side, all the funerary shafts identified during the excavation conducted in recent years by Jean-François Carlotti (2009-2012) were to be excavated in this sector. In total, thirteen tombs could be located in the space along the "astronomical ceiling hall" (SDB) to the great hypostyle hall (SHP). Eight of them have already been explored between 2015 and 2017, their access shaft raised and protected by a metal grid.

This year, the tombs SHP.SA06.To01, SHP.SA05.To01, SHP.SA04.To01 and SHP.SA03.To01 dating from the Third Intermediate Period were excavated and surveyed, as well as that of the Middle Kingdom (SHP.ME = SHP.SA01.To02) whose access could be found and cleared. After the search, access to this tomb has been capped and a 3D restitution must be made.

IV.- NORTH-EAST STOREHOUSES SECTOR (STL-STG)

Team : Tommaso Quirino, Anna Consonni, Ossama Bassiouni, Paolo Marini.

Exploration of the STL sector was carried out last year and the planned program for this season was to proceed to the protection and restoration of the ancient walls of the rooms of this raw brick complex. The masons, therefore, took charge of this work, while the team of archaeologists continued to progress in direction of the west, in another set of buildings (STG sector).

In this other neighbourhood, the excavation revealed the existence of several

shafts, apparently of Third Intermediate Period date, dug inside the rooms themselves. In the burial chamber of one of these tombs, several corpses had been collected, one of which was still wrapped in cartonnage in a very bad state of preservation. Several levels of ground surface have also been identified and some discoveries have been made : a beautiful figurative ostrakon has, for example, been found in room STG.SA12, and represents the goddess Meretseger under the appearance of an erect cobra bearing a crown composed of two high straight feathers with which is associated a solar disk. It was transferred at the end of the mission to Carter's central store of antiquities.

In 2017, the restructuring and protection of the façade wall of STL and STG sectors overlooking the North Deambulatory (DBN) had been completed. This year, this work was able to resume progressing towards the west. It allowed the same restructuration for the front wall of the STH complex.

V.- NORTH-WEST DEPENDENCY SECTOR (STI)

Researcher in charge : Christian Leblanc

Checks could be carried out in the room STI.TR (annex of the Treasury) to locate more precisely the entrance of the tomb of the Middle Kingdom attributed to Sehetepibrê, discovered in 1896 by J. E. Quibell.

A survey carried out at the back of the room, at the level of the mud wall presenting a large indentation (east wall of the STI.TR room), made it possible to collect a certain number of indices on the entrance of this burial, completely disappeared since its identification.

During these investigations, a cache was found near the wall, containing a diorite bust of goddess Sekhmet figured with red eyes and a wooden box for oushebtis unfortunately destroyed by white ants. All that remained of it was the contours and its contents, made of earthen figurines, of a very crude form and in a state of advanced powderiness (Third Intermediate Period).

Not far from this cache, three wooden coffins, partially preserved and degraded were found in the thickness of the wall, as well as thick pieces of an earth wall covering. These fragments, painted with a floral pattern (flowers with red petals on a yellow background or black petals on a white background) probably belonged to the decoration of the ceiling of this tomb which will have to be cleared next year. It is on the path of its corridor, about fifteen meters in the direction of the west, that a shaft seems to have been dug during the 13th Dynasty, to serve as a tomb to a magician, owner of a box containing twenty-three medical and magical papyri (now preserved in the British Museum), found near the burial chamber of Sehetepibre. The exact location of this shaft could not yet be identified, but should be in room STI.SA09.

VI.- SOUTH-WEST SECTOR (STF)

Researcher in charge : Guy Lecuyot

In this area reserved to the temple workshops, the exploration is now coming to

an end, but some final checks are still needed to better determine the location of the ancient entrance to this district, accessed from the south ambulatory (DBS).

A survey conducted along the paved vestibule of this complex and the terrace built during the Third Intermediate Period should make it possible to specify the location of this entrance and to be able to propose an access of this district to the visitors, after having pierced a part of a secondary wall built during the transformation of dependencies of the Ramesseum into a necropolis. As soon as this work is completed, a trilingual and illustrated information panel will be set up near the opening.

In parallel with this research, the restoration and restructuring of the ramesseid wall that runs along this sector, on the north side, is underway (protection of the ancient foundations) as well as the paving of the ground floor of several of the large rooms now excavated that precede the courtyard of the complex.

VII.- WESTERN SECTOR. WESTERN PROCESSIONAL WAY (APO)

Team : H  l  ne Guichard, Victoria Asensi Amoros, Anne-H  l  ne Perrot, Eraldo Livio.

It was necessary to complete, during this season, the excavation of the tomb of the Middle Kingdom (APO.CN21) and more particularly the section of the corridor located just before the access to this burial.

The careful cleaning of the last archaeological levels has uncovered several contemporary remains of the first burial : a beautiful schist heart scarab, two tables of terracotta offerings associated with several potteries of various shapes were discovered during the search and should allow to define more precisely the dating of this tomb.

The next campaign, in 2019, will have for main objective to clear the facade of the burial, but it will be necessary, to reach there, to dismount on the surface a wall portion dating from the Third Intermediate Period, built on the western processional way on the location of this ancient entrance currently masked.

VIII.- SECTOR SOUTH. SOUTH PROCESSIONAL WAY (APS)

Team : Jocelyne Hottier, Gwenaelle Le Borgne, Ayat Farouk Abdelouanis, Sha  ma Shehaoui Mohamed.

The excavation started in 2013 in the southwest portion of the excavated cuttings. Digging has resumed this year to find the angle formed by the south and west processional ways. If the clearance is proceeding at a good pace, the thickness of the excavation remaining to be removed will probably not reach the ramesseid floor level during this mission. Another campaign will therefore still be necessary to reach the desired result.

So far the search has not revealed anything that could inform us about the type of animal-shaped monument that bordered the southern processional way. On the other hand, it has yielded other vestiges, in particular in relation with ramesseid economic dependencies (ostraca, jar labels, corks, wickerwork) and the reuse of these same annexes during the Third Intermediate Period (cartonnage fragments, shabtis, funeral adornments, human remains, etc ...).

IX.- CONDITIONING EXCAVATION OBJECTS AND PLANNING OF THE STONE RESERVE OF THE SITE

Team : Sylvie Ozenne, Jean-Marie Roger, Khaled El-Tayeb Mohamed.

As every year, the work of conditioning the excavation objects could continue in the STH.SA.17 reserve and included archaeological material from the areas ZSC (Sanctuary of the temple) and STO (House of Life).

In the lapidarium (room STH.SA16), it was possible to complete the tiled brick floor of the reserve where are stored on shelves scattered stone elements from the architecture and decoration of the temple.

An inventory of antiquities recorded and classified in these two reserves has been undertaken for some months by the Gurnah Inspectorate. To facilitate this work, the computerized database of MAFTO has been made available to Egyptian inspectors.

At the end of the mission, several antiquities stored in these two archaeological reserves were transferred to the Carter central storehouse of Antiquities, namely several objects from the excavations carried out in the various sectors of the site as well as all the fragments of Sekhmet statues and the incomplete seated statue of Mutemuia, wife of Thutmose IV.

Dr. Christian LEBLANC

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President of the Association for the Safeguard of the Ramesseum