

External Examiner's Report on the Dissertation of CAVILLIER GIACOMO

The Cliff Tombs in the Theban necropolis:

Study of a funerary structure in the XVIII Dynasty

Submitted in 2024 at the Program of Historical Sciences, Department of Egyptology

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I. Brief summary of the dissertation

The present work, structured in i) Introduction; ii) three sections on the major tombs (with 14 internal chapters), a part of final considerations and an appendix, deals with the study of the so-called "cliff-tombs" in the area of Thebes, presenting their characteristics, typology, functions, and developments. For such an analysis, the candidate made use of the evidence attested in the Theban necropolis (West Bank), with architectural examples mainly from the area of the southern wadis (Wadi el-Gharby, Wadi Gabbanat el-Qurud, Wadi Sikkat Taqet Zaid) to the northern section of Asasif, Deir el-Bahari, and El-Tarif. The major hypothesis of the author is that the Middle Kingdom area of Deir el-Bahari, as well as some of its monuments, influenced the initial construction of early Eighteenth Dynasty (cliff) tombs, which were later reused as cachettes. The theoretical, theological, and cosmological contexts give path to the detailed typological and architectural analysis of the tombs, giving significance to this type of structure in the early New Kingdom and using the information to identify, locate, and organize the burials of some of the most important individuals of the royal family and elite of the early Eighteenth Dynasty.

II. Brief overall evaluation of the dissertation

The present dissertation is a valuable work of research dealing with a not-well treated topic, which the candidate seems to develop with enthusiasm, diligence, and sound ideas, though in some occasions the reader misses some deeper explanations that might have provided stronger support to the ideas. The idea of discussing the topic of the cliff tombs as a monumental burial type that offers a particular setting from the early Eighteenth Dynasty to the reigns of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, connecting the development of this type of tombs with the modifications and changes of plans during the initial reign of the Ahmoside and Thutmose families is interesting, and offers significant information to continue discussing the nature of these burials, the identity of their owners, the functions of their spaces (inner and outer), and the later reuse in the late New Kingdom and early Third Intermediate Period. The topic is complex due to the absence of textual evidence in some cases and the unfortunate scarce archaeological information recorded in the XIX and early XX century (e.g. TT/DB 320), but the author achieves a set of ideas that justify his opinions and hypotheses. The chapters of analytical nature, such as those dealing with the actual remains in the South-Western valleys, the cliff tombs of Deir el-Bahari valley, and the Valley of the Kings, demonstrate that the candidate has good archaeological knowledge, field experience (as attested for the candidate in Luxor), and capacity to develop research work adequately; therefore, his dissertation is clear evidence of his ability to analyze archaeological and epigraphic/iconographic materials, as well as of his entitlement to the doctoral degree.

III. Detailed evaluation of the dissertation and its individual aspects

In the following paragraphs, I have incorporated my notes from the reading of Giacomo Cavillier's dissertation, considering the fundamental aspects of structure of the argument, formal aspects of the dissertation, use of sources and/or material, and personal contribution to the subject. I have not included too detailed aspects of his dissertation that can be discussed upon the formal presentation of his doctoral work in the official PhD defense.

1. Structure of the argument

The argument is well established and clear, and the structure of the dissertation is organized, though in terms of contents, in occasions, the author reiterates or repeats questions discussed previously, which would require some review for the clarification of his points. The objectives are achieved by a proper structure, though sometimes it would need avoiding repetitions (as declared above).

2. Formal aspects of the dissertation

The first chapter (*Introduction*, pp. 1-27) constitutes, in my opinion, a clear, well-structured, and necessary chapter for the contextualization not only into the main topic and the meaning and function of the cliff tombs, but also for the theological, cultural, and religious/ritual aspects that involve the ancient Egyptian preparation of a burial (mainly for royal and elite individuals here). These aspects are important for the

consideration of the rest of the chapters, such as the general scope and foci of the dissertation research, the structure of the work, and the use of typological differences in the tomb categorization, dating, and settings.

In the case of **Section I** (*The cliff tombs in the South-Western Valleys*, pp. 29–80), the examination of the cliff tombs in wadis A, C and D, preceded by the geological and historical context, offers a valuable analysis of several of the monuments of importance in the area (Hatshepsut's tomb W-A D), the Baraize tomb (W-A C), and other interesting burials of the period for (prob.) princess Neferu (W-C A) and the well-known burial of Thutmosis III's Asian wives (W-D A). Two points are of significant value here in terms of "to be improved" aspect of the dissertation:

- 1) On the one hand, the doctoral candidate includes a series of well-produced figures and texts that accompany his discussions. However, I have the feeling that it might have been more valuable to have all of them together: each of the figures (no matter archaeological, textual, epigraphic, geological, etc) in the very spot/page where they are discussed, or all of them together in the appendix. That would have allowed the reader to manipulate easily all the information at once, in the main pages or all of them in the index. It is not detrimental how it was done, but it might have been better in the way in which all of them are presented together. For instance, in order to read the graffito No. 1037, one must see the transcription into hieroglyphs, transliteration, and translation in p. 98, and the image of it as well as its original transcription in the Appendix p. 220.
- 2) On the other hand, the reader already misses at this point a general map that should include all the areas, wadis, cemeteries, and tombs included in the dissertation. In these terms, it is true that the author includes several maps and plans (at times repetitively), but it is manifest that in occasions it would be necessary to have a single map where one could connect each of the points discussed in his work, the more if one considers that sometimes he moves from one site or monument to another with great pace.

Concerning **Section II** (*The cliff tombs in the Deir el-Bahari Valley*, pp. 81–142), the doctoral candidate of this dissertation continues with the examination of other cliff-tomb burials, this time in the central-focus section of Deir el-Bahari and surroundings. Here he discusses the tombs W-N A and B (at Wadi Nasir), the tomb V-C of the Valley of the Colours (or Valley C4), MMA 1021 at the Valley of Heqanakht (or Valley C3), the well-known Valley of the Royal Cache with the famous TT/DB 320 tomb (or Valley C2), and some other constructions in the areas of the temples of Thutmosis III and Hatshepsut in the horse-shoe shaped bay of Deir el-Bahari, under the Qurn. Although the Middle Kingdom construction of *Akh-sut Nebhepetre* marked the area as a sacred point of attraction for thousand of years, and some of the ideas proposed by the candidate are interesting, in occasions it is a bit forced-explanation to relate tombs that are associated with the temple of Hatshepsut (and, previously, with the field of elite tombs of the late Eleventh Dynasty in the area), such as TT 353 and TT 358, with tombs that are located in sections to the south such as MMA 1021, V-C A or even W-N A. Some of the explanations in terms of typologies, uses, and dates –even if some are probably certain– should not at times be used as generalizations for all these tombs. In this sense, I feel that some caution in the association of tombs to produce ideas that crossed necropolises (ancient and modern limits) must be imposed.

For instance, in p. 84, the author mentions that "[b]etween the end of the 11th Dynasty and the beginning of the Middle Kingdom, the construction of the temple of Amenemhat I in the Valley of Colours marks a different orientation of tombs toward this important complex". In some way, this global statements should be taken with caution since the late Eleventh Dynasty sees a development of tombs (between El-Tarif, Dra Abu el-Naga, El-Birabi, Deir el-Bahari, and the southern valleys C2, C3, and C4) that requires to get into consideration not only the construction of the unfinished temple of Amenemhat I in the area of the Valley of Colors but also other orientations and segmentations of the West Bank cemeteries of great importance. These segmentations and the careful analysis of the areas and characteristics behind might shed light –or at least add more knowledge– to the particular (and sometimes certain) ideas of the candidate.

As for **Section III** (*The cliff tombs in the Valley of the Kings*, pp. 143–184), the main aspect of this part of the dissertation is the fact that the candidate approaches the study of the Valley of the Kings in its early stage of formation, with the appearance of the village of Deir el-Medina, the village over the hill, and the construction of the cliff tomb (*k3y*) KV39 for Inhapi. The later constructions of other cliff tombs in the area (such as the Bab tombs in the area, KV 41, and V-P 1, and then KV 33) might be well-connected with the previous construction of KV 39, as the author mentions, but it is still a matter of "definition of the connections" how the author associates the Middle Kingdom construction of temples such as the ones of Mentuhotep II and Amenemhat I at the eastern area of the mountain with the construction of these cliff tombs at the top –in higher sections of the Theban mountain– to the West, just into the Valley of the Kings.

The final considerations (pp. 185–197) seem well presented, comprehensive, and summarizing well the main positions expressed in the rest of the dissertation. I consider that some particular pieces of information – such as the info condensed in table 1 in p. 186– would have been more adequately and worthy in the section where the different parts of the cliff tombs (by types) are described (pp. 2–3) and one could get a better sense

of what each tomb from sections I-III is going to present in geological, architectural, and decorative terms. Perhaps I would recommend the conclusions to be more directly oriented toward the demonstration of hypotheses, new ideas, and discoveries that might be of relevance, instead of re-discussing again some of the aspects already examined and well-discussed in sections I-III. In any case, the conclusions are clear and properly presented.

3. Use of sources and/or material

The candidate seems to work very well with secondary sources, though in my opinion, in some occasions it is missed some complementary bibliography and more extensive explanations and references that might sustain, support, or justify his ideas. Even if they seem sound, logical, and clear, at times it seems he might have added extra literature that is well-known and should control; mastering this information, he could use it on his behalf in multiple sections of his work. As for relevant uses, they are well used, mainly tombs from the early Eighteenth Dynasty (from the Valley of the Kings, Valley of the Queens, and Theban elite necropolises of the West Bank) until the reign of Thutmose III. As for the quotes, they are used in their original language without any problem. Regarding data analysis, one of the strong points of this dissertation perhaps is precisely the accumulation of archaeological, geological, and locational data, which will be very useful for other scholars that might wish to continue working on this topic (or, of course, the candidate himself).

Regarding the use of parallel sources, replications, etc, I have found a 50% of analogous sources in the internet (with produced report on 26 June 2024), which seems to indicate the existence of other work(s) with similar information, though considering the candidate's work, dedication, and diligence, I do not doubt that it is due probably to the existence of his own work already uploaded to the Carolingian University system, which implies a repetition of the texts between two copies or versions of the same work. I thought it would be significant to note this detail though *I do not see any malpractice at all*.

4. Personal contribution to the subject

This dissertation is not merely a compilation of information but an appropriate collection of data from several necropolises in the Theban area with the purpose of supporting the idea of the emergence of a type of tomb (cliff) in a particular moment of the early New Kingdom and its transmission for several reigns until the time of Thutmose III. In addition, the identification of this type of tomb and its definition of particular categories, parts, developments, changes, and dates, allows for the identification of several phases, which can help in the reinterpretation and dating of most of these monuments, which are associated with texts (graffiti) but not well-decorated or textually contextualized. The author formulates a hypothesis on the development of the types, though I believe that he should work more on the definition of the types, trying to present a clear information without the complexities of the internal associations he creates and presents, as well as contextualize the tombs taking into consideration not the global aspects (very general at times) that he employs but the particular details of each area of the Theban necropolises, much more complex than we have really visualized until now.

IV. Questions for the author

In general terms, I believe that I will be able to expose more particular points after a second reading of the manuscript, once I can take specific notes of several points -minor points, most of times- with which I disagree, I am not convinced, or I see not much of an explanation. In the next lines I basically propose to the author several questions that he might want to (re)consider by the time we go through the PhD public defense.

a. I would take with much caution the relationships of several of the tombs under examination with the historical, religious, and culture contexts the candidate mention. For instance, how can one explain what happens with tombs such as TT 358, DB/TT 320 or W-N A on the basis of a single frame such as "the importance of the temple of Amenemhat I at the early Middle Kingdom"? In my opinion, the answer is much more particularly connected with the specific areas of the Theban necropolis, not in general terms but in local terms.

b. I have noticed that there is not much discussion in terms of pragmatism and common sense in the explanation of the location of the tombs. Doesn't the author consider that perhaps the traditional aspects of access to materials, necessity to be near a path, connection with rituals and performances, existence of previous geological structures, might have had a great impact on the construction of many of these tombs during the early Eighteenth Dynasty?

c. Could be possible -on the basis of the introductory discussions on the cultural, theological and cosmological aspects of the ancient Egyptians- to be more specific on the ideas of hiding, showing, presenting, allowing access, that the author uses when discussing the characteristics of these tombs and their types. In other words, are there any particular aspects in the introduction that might be used to specify the implementation of false-doors, channels, cascade sections, corniches, crevices along the various types of tombs and constructions under the term "cliff tomb"? What about the particular religious ideas of the Theban necropolis (Hathor, Amenhotep and Ahmose-Nefertari, Amun-Re, Sokar, Mut, etc)?

d. At times the candidate poses ideas to justify some of the explanations that the texts offer us. For instance, in pp. 194-195, the candidate translates the reference in Pap. Abbott to the tomb W-N A (a Bab-tomb without crevice associated with Amenhotep I), expressing that perhaps the scribes of Ramses IX's reign provided topographical peculiarities and details of this tomb because he might have had more than one funerary monument. However, it is very normal for the scribes to offer details of many other monuments in a matter that shows a reference to an old construction, distant from their time at the end of the New Kingdom, and not possibly related to the idea of the existence of several tombs.

e. Changes in the religious, cultural, pragmatic, and social aspects of the necropoles might have had an impact on the modifications we witness along the passing of the dynasties... In the same path, I would like to know if there is a clear answer to the question of why these types of tombs were abandoned. I do not think the author refer to this in detail in his dissertation, and it might be a good idea to understand -with a section dedicated to it in the dissertation (perhaps in the conclusions)- why these structures were no longer of value (at least for the queens and princess(es) of the period) or why they were limited to the reuse in the Third Intermediate Period (and later times).

V. Conclusion

On the basis of the abovementioned notes, and considering that these notes (and some more detailed ones) will be taken into consideration for the final defense/examination of the candidate, I would like to express that the structure of the argument, formal aspects, quality in the selection and analysis (of both primary and secondary sources), and personal contribution to the understanding of the cliff tombs in the Theban necropoles have reached the expected **excellence of a doctoral candidate for the PhD degree**.

Therefore, I provisionally classify the submitted dissertation as *PASSED*.

26 June 2024

Antonio J. Morales