

TT 209. Objectives of the *proyecto dos cero nueve* and the Name of the Tomb Owner

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The study and conservation of TT 209 is the basic objective of the Archaeological Mission of the University of La Laguna in Luxor. This is the core around which the Proyecto dos cero nueve (Project two zero nine) is organised. The name encompasses the activities carried out by its members within the site itself and the architecture, burial ritual and funerary liturgies during the Twenty-fifth Dynasty. This paper deals with the reasons that led the team to focus its archaeological activities in this site and the most important discoveries so far, one of which is the name of the tomb owner (Nisemro or Ashemro, Djuemro or even Yiemro). Name and titles, in addition to the style of the reliefs, suggest that it was prepared for man of Nubian provenance. Additionally, this provides a new dating for the monument.

El estudio y la conservación de la TT 209 son los objetivos básicos de la Misión Arqueológica de la Universidad de La Laguna en Luxor. Ésta es el núcleo en torno al cual se articula el Proyecto dos cero nueve, nombre con que denominamos al conjunto de actividades de los miembros de la Misión acerca del yacimiento mismo así como de la arquitectura funeraria, el ritual de enterramiento y sus liturgias durante la Dinastía XXV. El artículo presenta las razones que condujeron a centrar las actuaciones arqueológicas del grupo en esta tumba y los descubrimientos más importantes hasta este momento, de los que uno muy significativo es el nombre propio del propietario (Nisemro o Ashemro, Djuemro o quizás, incluso, Yiemro). Nombre y títulos además del estilo de los relieves permiten deducir la adscripción étnica del difunto –nubio– y la cronología del monumento.

Keywords: Ancient Egypt, Luxor, Theban tombs, Twenty-fifth Dynasty.

Palabras clave: Egipto antiguo, Luxor, tumbas tebanas, Dinastía XXV.

TT 209 is a Late Period tomb located on the West Bank of Luxor. It was built on the northern slope of the wadi facing the sector of the Theban necropolis dubbed by archaeologists as South Asasif. This is the name given by R. Lepsius in the 1840s¹. However, the people from Gurna referred to it differently while living there, until their forced displacement between 2007 and 2008: Hatasun (هاتسون) is the name provided by the local workers for the wadi itself²; Hurubat (حروبَات) was the set of hamlets locat-

1 Eigner, 1984: 33.

2 I thank Hassan Mohamed Ali for his efficient contribution on this subject. Hatasun is the local pronunciation of the name Hatshepsut. This raises some doubts about why the wadi where TT 209 was built was called thus. The Mansion of Millions of Years of the female king was not erected in it. Besides, the

ed at the bottom of the hill of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, on its eastern face³; Nag'el-Rasayla (نجع الرسايلة) is the designation given to the big mansion and its surrounding outbuildings south of the wadi, named after the Abd el-Rasul family, who lived there since the late nineteenth century.

1 | Objectives of the *Proyecto dos cero nueve*

The previous research experience of the members of the Archaeological Mission of the University of La Laguna led us to undertake a project focused on the Late Period, and more specifically on the Twenty-fifth (Kushite) and Twenty-sixth (Saite) Dynasties. The selection of Luxor as the location of the site was more circumstantial. In the years before the beginning of the project, several members of the team had been working in tombs of the Theban necropolis. Additionally, this Upper Egyptian city provides the greatest number of monuments dating to the period we wanted to deal with. Therefore, starting a project on a West Bank site became the most obvious extension to those previous activities.

When the first campaign started, the available information on TT 209 was very limited. It was one of the least known medium sized late Theban tombs. Since its inclusion in the catalogue of A. Gardiner and A. Weigall⁴ in 1913, it had always been attributed to a Saite chronology, but no explanation was proposed for that dating. The inner layout of what nowadays can be considered the underground chambers of the complex was known thanks to the studies of D. Eigner⁵ (fig. 1). However, he was forced to work without removing the deposits that filled the interior, so that it was necessary to clear them to confirm his preliminary data or to obtain any additional information. The most significant aspect that was lacking was the real name of the owner. Since the 1950s, he was known as Seremhatrekhyt⁶. However, it is now known that this term is a title and, therefore, it was one of the functions performed by the person who commissioned the construction of the mortuary complex, not his personal name.

These gaps, which at the same time could be seen as research possibilities, moved our research group⁷ to apply for the con-

only parallel that has been found, so far, for this toponym in literature and maps of the Theban necropolis is the “Chalet Hatasoo”. This was the kiosk built next to that monument by the tourism company Cook and Son to provide shade and refreshments to its customers (Humphreys, 2015: 114 and 116, text and photography respectively); the kiosk was built in the early twentieth century, and its remains were still visible until recently. It is likely that the name was chosen because this is the most convenient way to go from the area of the Ramesseum, specially from the house of the Abd el-Rasuls, to Deir el Bahari: it is, therefore, possible that this family had some implication on its creation.

3 The name is not a topographic but a social location: it refers to the villagers as members of a common gentilic group (van der Spek, 2011: 46).

4 Gardiner and Weigall, 1913: 34-35.

5 Eigner, 1984: I, 58 and II, Tafel 22.

6 Porter and Moss, 1985: 292 and 306.

7 In addition to the author of this article, the initial team comprised M.^a Covadonga Sevilla Cueva, Lucía E. Díaz-Iglesias Llanos and Daniel M. Méndez Rodríguez, as well as Hassaan Mohamed Ali and Saad Bakhit Abd el-Hafez in Egypt.

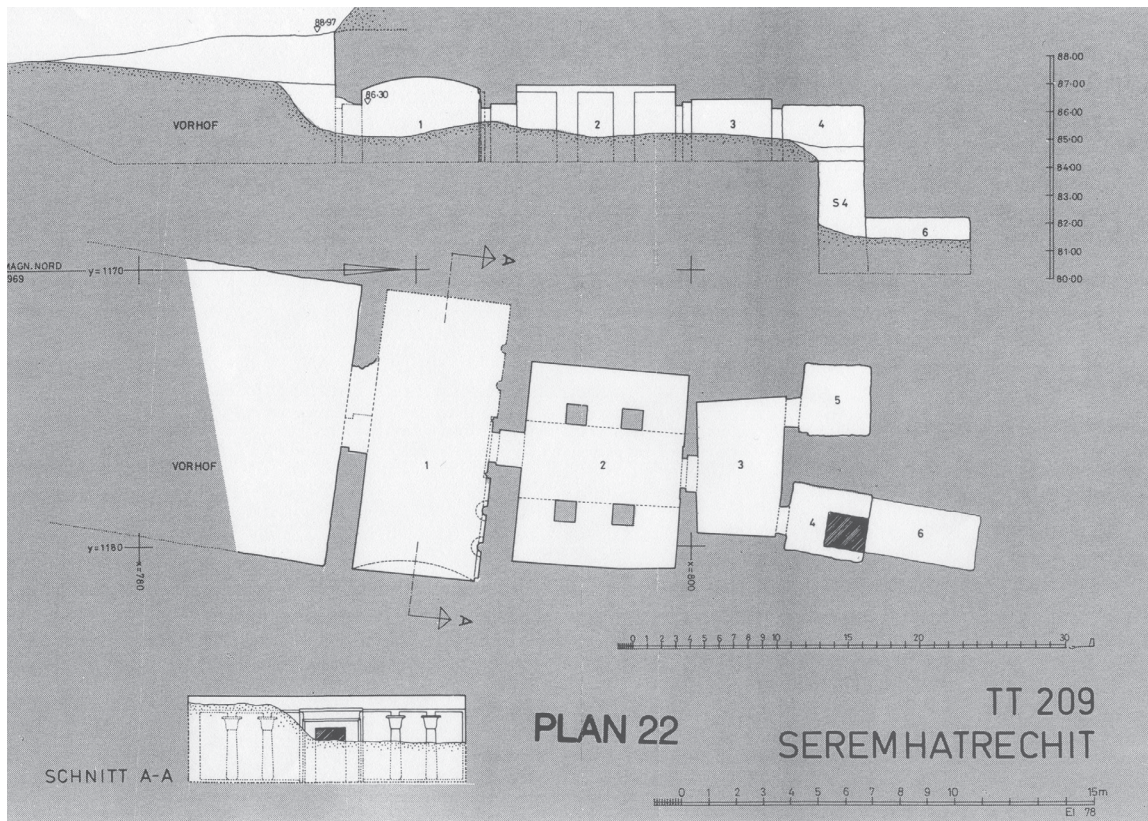


Figure 1. Plan of the underground chambers of TT 209 drawn by D. Eigner after his fieldnotes of April 1976 (Eigner, 1984: II, 22).

cession of TT 209 to the Ministry of State of Antiquities as the ideal site to conduct a multidisciplinary project combining a large number of interests and researchers. The reasons for this choice are related to the various kinds of historical problems revolving around Thebes and Upper Egypt in the Late Period: the chronological sequence of the South Asasif temple-tombs; the titles of the owner of TT 209 and the prosopography of the multi-ethnic Theban society during the middle of the First Millennium BCE; the architecture of the monument and its ritual implications; and, finally, the motivation for its location, since

it is atypical for being at the bottom of the slope of a wadi (fig. 2).

1. 1 | Chronological problems

TT 209 is located on the northern side of the wadi Hatasun, which has its source in the Valley of the Colours and enters the Nile valley next to the southern wall of the Mansion of Millions of Years of Ramesses II. The tombs located on the plateau over the southern side of the wadi (fig. 3) were built for high officials of the Twenty-fifth (Karbaskeni⁸, TT 391, and Karakhamani, TT

8 On the ending of the name in “-i”, see Molinero Polo, 2017: 225-227.



Figure 2. Wadi Hatasun seen from the site of TT 209 (photograph: J.M. Barrios Mufrege).

223) and Twenty-sixth Dynasties (Irtyeru, TT 390, in addition to several officials who reused the two aforementioned Kushite tombs⁹). The team that excavates this group of monuments, the South Asasif Conservation Project (SACP), maintains that the first two are currently the oldest known tombs

built in Thebes by Nubian dignitaries linked to the dynasty of Napata¹⁰.

Moreover, in the lower part of the wadi, in 1911, a German team led by G. Möller excavated a necropolis used from the beginning of the Twenty-first until the late Heracleopolitan/Theban Twenty-second-A¹¹ Dynas-

9 In TT 223, Padihor, Nespakashuty D and Ankhefendjehuty are documented. C14 cannot be attributed with certainty to the latter any longer, but some parts of the tomb of Karakhamani were reinscribed also for him (Pischikova, 2014: 64-65). In TT 391, some texts of a previously unknown high steward, Padibastet, have been discovered (E. Graefe: communication presented in the conference *Thebes in the First Millenium BC*, held in Luxor in september 2016).

10 The SACP's suggestion is based on different arguments. The style of the reliefs points to a date in the reign of Shabitqo (Pischikova, 2009: 11, 14 and 16). Moreover, the location of the tombs, with a building sequence from West to East on the basis of an apparent search for better quality limestone in the bedrock, and the gradual complexity of the architectural structures allow proposing an older date for the tomb of Karabaskeni than that of Karakhamani (Pischikova, 2014: 36-37).

11 Number given by J. von Beckerath (1984 and 1999). In the first edition of his book on the names of the kings, he describes the members of this line as first Theban priests (1984: 103-104, 262-263); in the second edition, in addition to making changes to the members of this dynasty, he referred to a "(dynastic) branch of Upper Egypt", giving the double title of king and first priest to some of them (Sheshonq, Horsiese) and even including Shepenupet I (1999: 192-199). D.A. Aston designated this Dynasty as Theban or Heracleopolitan/Theban XXIII; however, he currently thinks that XXIIA may be the most appropriate designation (Aston, 2014: 16, n. 7 and chart 2.1).

ties¹². There is a chance that TT 209 could be understood as the continuation of this necropolis upstream in the wadi and therefore close to it chronologically; or that it was related to the construction phase of the late tombs in the previously mentioned plateau, following the traditional dating.

Thus, one of the objectives of the project is to understand where TT 209 should be located within these two building sequences (the one of the lower part of the wadi, from the tenth to beginning of the eight century BCE; or that of the great tombs in the upper part of it, from the end of the eight to the sixth century BCE), with the prospect that it could even be the connecting element between both. By extension, the sharpening of the chronology of the tomb

would integrate its previously unknown owner into the succession of elite Theban officials.

1. 2 | Prosopographical issues

In the recent past, TT 209 was attributed to a person called Seremhatrekhyt¹³. This term is actually an administrative title documented from the Middle Kingdom onwards¹⁴. In the Late Period, it was used by some of the highest dignitaries of the Kushite and Saite courts of the God's Wife in Thebes¹⁵. By studying this tomb we are also trying to deepen our knowledge of the functions of an individual who held this scarcely known office; this was so conspicuously highlight-

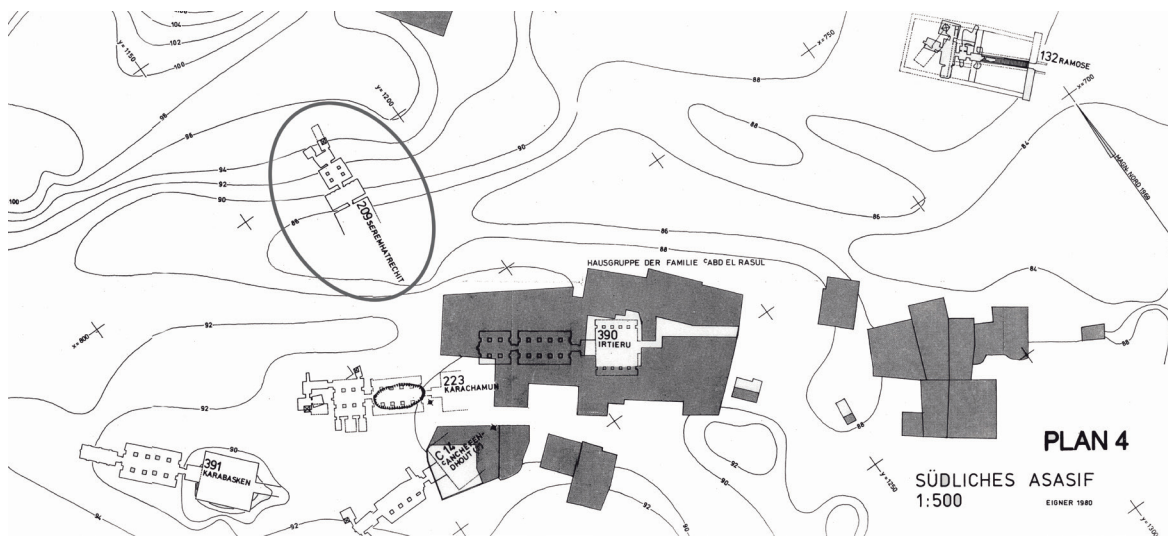


Figure 3. Necropolis of the South Asasif (Eigner, 1984: II, 4).

12 The excavation was not published by the researcher who directed it, but by Rudolf Anthes (1943).

13 Since B. Porter and R. Moss attributed that name to the owner of TT 209, it is included in all current lists of tombs in the Theban necropolis (cf. n. 6).

14 Hannig, 2006: 2278.

15 Naunton, 2014: 104.

ed by the tomb owner, to the extent that it was the part of his titularly most easily recognised by the first epigraphers entering the tomb and most often remarked in the literature previous to our project.

One of our main objectives is to analyse how this position is integrated into the sequence of titles borne by this individual and, by comparison, to gain more insight into the study of this function and the officials who exerted it. In the same way, the excavation of the tomb provides the opportunity to identify the owner's true name.

1. 3 | Architectural questions

Initially, the plan of TT 209—consisting of a courtyard on a hillside, an entrance through a transverse hall and a single pillared hall—differs from the typical late Theban temple-tomb layout¹⁶. It has no known parallel and, therefore, no straightforward comparison can be made between its components and other examples in respect to its chronology or functionality. For this reason, it was important to complete the available planimetric information by excavating the inner chambers and to confirm the possible existence of some kind of superstructure on the slope of the wadi.

In the light of a necropolis of smaller monuments in the Asasif, J. Budka proposes the existence of an “experimental period” in the architecture and funerary rituals (as reflected in the burial equipment) at the beginning of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty¹⁷. The lack of

correspondence between the plan of TT 209 and the characteristic patterns of Late Period tombs might be understood as related to that initial phase of the Nubian presence in Egypt. Additionally, an “early Kushite” chronology would explain the intermediate location of the tomb in the wadi, between the two sets of tombs already mentioned (see § 1.1). Once again, the archaeological excavation was essential to substantiate this possibility.

1. 4 | Analysis of the integration of TT 209 in its natural environment

In accordance with the principles of Landscape Archaeology, the first aim was to understand why the tomb was located in a wadi and what kind of paleoenvironmental information could be provided by its excavation; and, secondly, to establish how it was integrated in an area of obvious religious significance.

TT 209 is placed under a longitudinal walkway, seemingly man-made, which was located on the north side of the slope of the wadi. It has been interpreted as the causeway to a Middle Kingdom unfinished royal tomb prepared for Amenemhat I (according to its dating by Do. Arnold¹⁸). Nevertheless, there is no evidence to determine whether this path was once in use or if it witnessed any kind of re/activation related to the construction of the late tombs.

On the contrary, it is evident that, from the Twenty-first Dynasty onwards, both sides of

16 See in Eigner, 1984, especially the plates of the second volume.

17 Budka, 2010: 63.

18 Arnold, 1991.

the wadi were integrated into a ritualised landscape for two main reasons. On the one hand, there existed a necropolis that stretches from the Ramesseum into the desert, with the largest monuments erected during the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Dynasties, i.e., the temple-tombs of Karabaskeni, Karakhamani and Irtyeru on the southern side of the channel and that of Ramose and TT 209 on the northern side. On the other hand, the buildings in this area were theologically and ritually linked to other monuments on both banks of the Nile. This connection is manifested in the symbolism of their solar courtyards and their orientation towards Karnak, as well as on their integration into a cultic landscape reinvigorated by the Kushites; in it, the procession of the barque of Amun to the West Bank during the celebrations of the Beautiful Feast of the Valley or the Decade Procession were of utmost importance¹⁹.

As a concluding remark, it should be noted that the location of TT 209 within a wadi has allowed exploring further research possibilities. Already from the first season, it was possible to recognise that the sedimentary deposits were not formed by garbage from the nearby hamlets or by wind contributions, but almost exclusively by materials washed down the wadi by flash floods. Thus, the geoarchaeological study of the sediments should enable us to identify the rainfall across an

extended period in the Theban region. From the first seasons, an analysis combining the macroscopic distinction of each of the sedimentary units and the study of the material that they contain, drawn along by the waters, has been carried out. The aim is to obtain a chronological approach to the floods that have silted up the wadi. This is an innovative study in Theban Archaeology—albeit more common in the Delta—that is leading to very interesting results. As a first and locally focused result, it has already been possible to deduce, from a diachronic perspective, the pace of filling of the bed in front of the tomb and the date since when the water began to enter in TT 209.

1.5 | Conservation

A premise of Archaeology and one of the ethical principles governing professional codes of archaeologists in Europe and North America is that a non-threatened site should not be excavated and that investigations should be undertaken only where preservation is impossible²⁰. Unfortunately, TT 209 is threatened with serious deterioration. The wadi Hatasun has been filled since ancient times; each rainfall in the east of the Theban mountain results in a flood running through its bed, with the water soaking the hillsides

19 E. Pischikova (2014: 37-39) draws attention to the journey that connected, on the one hand, the sanctuary of Amun and the Osirian chapels at Karnak and, on the other, Deir el Bahari and Medinet Habu. M. Bietak (2013: 139-140, 142-144, 148, plates II and V) has also recently proposed that the causeway to the tomb of Amenemhat I, above TT 209, might have had some meaning for the Beautiful Feast of the Valley, despite having possibly remained unfinished. It might have been as a kind of southern route for the festival, as could be suggested by the location of the Ramesseum at the beginning of its journey, parallel to the Mansions of Hatshepsut and Amenhotep II at the head of the one reaching Deir el Bahari, and the presence of late temple-tombs midway through both routes.

20 Lynott and Wylie, 1995: 30. See also the European Association of Archaeologists: www.e-a-a.org, specifically: EAA Code of Practice.

and entering inside the tomb to the height of its ceiling. The destructive effect of the dissolution of the limestone salts due to the moisture on the pillars and walls causes irreparable consequences. Since neither periodical rain nor the circulation of the fallen waters into the valley can be avoided, the only way to reduce the danger posed by such precipitation to the tomb is to uncover the bed of the old channel. If it is deep enough, flash floods could circulate again without forcing the water into the underground chambers of the tomb. Thus, the excavation becomes the only way of ensuring the conservation of TT 209.

Finally, a goal that cannot be forgotten is the preparation of the site for long-term conservation and, eventually, for receiving visitors. In recent years, the Egyptian Ministry of State of Antiquities has prioritised the undertaking of consolidation and maintenance tasks of the excavated monuments, with a commitment of archaeologists to consolidate and maintain the excavated monuments. Therefore, for the project *dos cero nueve*, the valorisation of TT 209 and its surroundings is particularly relevant; they must be preserved as part of the Egyptian heritage and be loaded with social functions.

2 | Overview of the fieldwork results

So far, four excavation seasons have been conducted²¹. The preliminary research ended in a first action at the site in July 2012.

The second season was planned for spring 2013, but had to be delayed due to the political situation in the country; it finally took place from late December of that year, lasting nearly one month. The third one was held on the planned dates: six weeks from the 30th of April to the 10th of June 2014. The fourth season took place after the Iberian Congress of Egyptologists in Cuenca—where the first version of this text was presented—again with a duration of for six weeks, from the 11th of June to the 23th of July 2015.

When commencing fieldwork, an unexpected problem arose. The tomb was completely buried by recent flooding of the wadi, garbage fallen from the village of Hurubat and debris from the recent demolition of the houses. As a result, the structure had become invisible. Even more problematic was that, during the last process, topographic landmarks of the necropolis were moved by the trucks and mechanical shovels that worked in the area. The mission was allowed to open a square in an area of the wadi in order to document the existence of a cut in the bedrock making an angle. This was at a place of the slope where a vertical wall, which had been photographed a decade ago by members of the team when our research on the Late Period started, might be located. At the bed of the wadi at the time, a small gap that might be the top of the entrance bay to a tomb could be distinguished. Moreover, the area corresponded well with the location of

21 The first three seasons were funded by the Campus de Excelencia of the University of La Laguna (Campus Atlántico Tricontinental). The fourth, in part, through a project of the FECYT, Spanish Fundación para la Ciencia y la Tecnología, Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad. The fifth season, carried out when this paper was in the press, was funded by the Fundación Palarq, Barcelona, and the Consejería de Patrimonio Cultural [Cultural Heritage Council] of the Canarian Government. Additionally, we received funds from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (2013/14 season), the Association Isfet and some private donors.

TT 209 in the general plan of South Asasif made by D. Eigner (see fig. 3), although the clearest reference in that case, the plateau where the three large structures mentioned in §1.1 was rather transformed, since the three are currently under excavation by the SACP. Our inference of the location turned out to be accurate and, on the third day of work, the northwest corner of the courtyard came to light.

Thus, in addition to carrying out a “rediscovery” of the tomb, the first season allowed the mission to recognise a more complex architectural structure than previously acknowledged. The access to the underground chambers was cleared, and the team began to establish an idea of the variety of materials that could be provided by the sedimentary deposits of the site.

In the second season, the excavation area was enlarged towards the centre of the wadi. As mentioned previously, this provides information on the behaviour of the flash floods that have streamed down—and still do so periodically—through the channel. The walls forming the courtyard began to be clearly

delimited and the excavation reached what was then known as TT 209, which can now be understood as the underground chambers of a much wider complex with additional structures buildings on the surface.

The actions undertaken during the third season focused on reaching the bedrock in the courtyard, clearing the door that leads to the interior, expanding the work area to the north and east to identify the structures on the slope of the wadi, and excavating the first of the inner chambers. Another objective was the consolidation of the facade, which was weakened by the presence of a hole on the upper west side. To close this aperture firstly meant recovering the aesthetic value to this part of the tomb; secondly, it removed a potential weakening of the wall and, thus, consolidated the support of the vaulted ceiling of the transverse hall; thirdly, it would ensure the safety of everything kept inside, as well as the people working there (fig. 4).

Finally, in the fourth and fifth seasons, activities focused on the inner chambers. The excavation of the transverse hall was



Figure 4. Exterior of the site at the end of the third working season.

completed (fig. 5) and work in the pillared hall commenced. The antechamber was excavated as well as the two mortuary chambers: the north-eastern was well carved and carefully plastered while the north-western was never finished. Secondly, the removal of sediments was completed in what turned out to be a corridor leading from the transverse hall to a small chamber to the north. The latter shows a door to the west and probably a shaft or a ramp in the floor (fig. 6). The words “his mother” in the inscription of one of the lintels allow suspecting a second burial place for members of the owner’s family.

The stratigraphic excavation of the site has revealed a complex deposit of strata of an obvious historical interest. It allows identifying the combined erosive action

of the wadi, the ritual use of both inner and outer structures of the tomb—at least since the Persian Dynasty until late Ptolemaic Period—the gradual crumbling of the mudbrick building in late Antiquity, and, in more recent times, the periodic action of archaeologists, looters and residents of nearby villages. The record of this deposit has been made through a rigorous process of excavation, with macroscopic distinction of each unit, photographic documentation and planimetry using GIS. This careful method of extracting the sedimentary deposits ensures the correct stratigraphic and historical interpretation of the sequence, allowing the recognition of the process of formation of the archaeological site and obtaining a three-dimensional image of the entire record.



Figure 5. Transversal hall, from the east, at the end of its excavation in the fourth season.

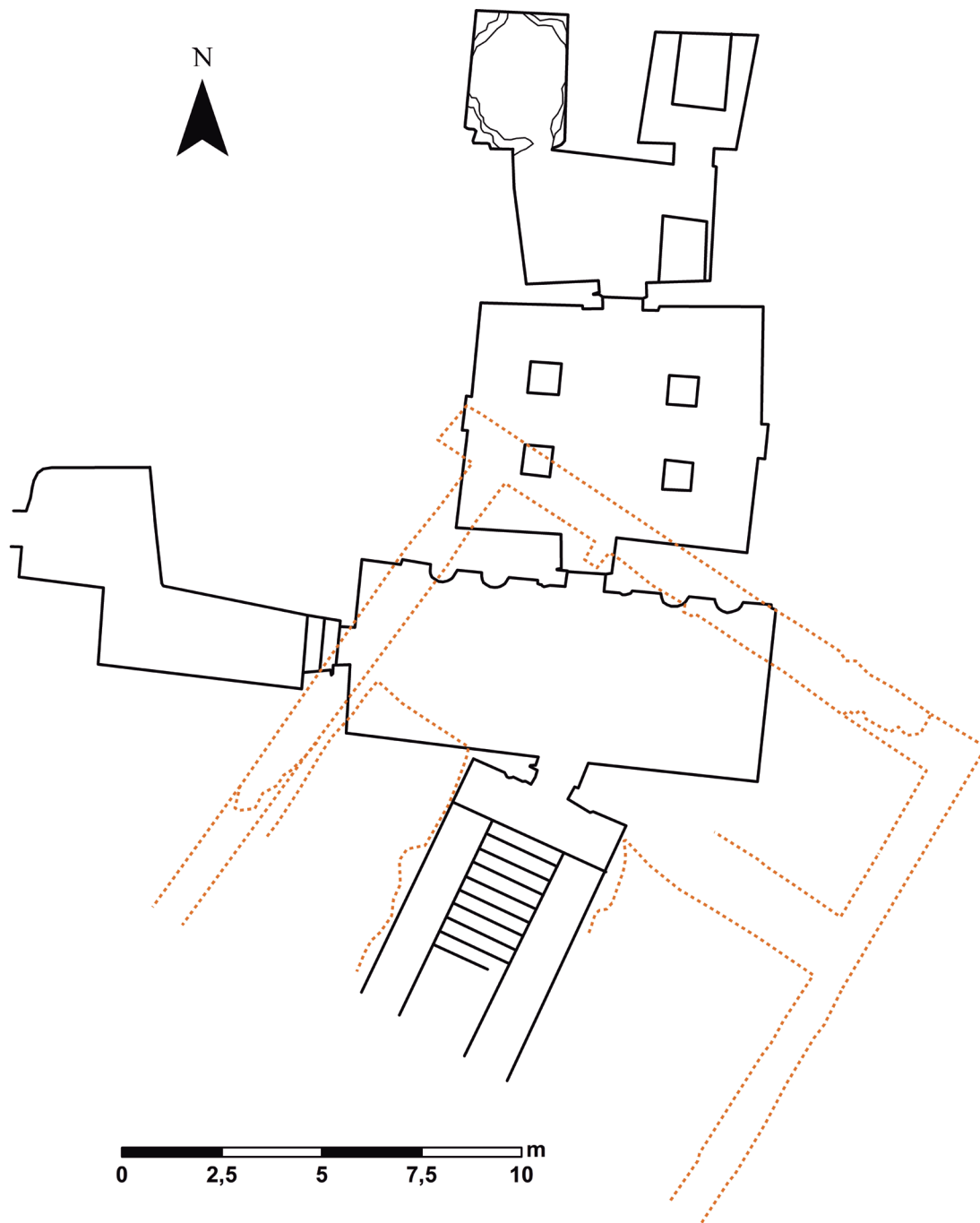


Figure 6. Plan of the underground chambers of TT 209 with the architectural innovations discovered by the MAULL, season 2016 (drawing: S. Pou Hernández).

A second set of new information is composed of broader and more complex architectural structures than hitherto documented. Outside the tomb, access to the underground chambers was formed by a staircase of monumental width with two side ramps descending from the western half of the courtyard (fig. 7). The walls that surround it on three sides, and those that close a longitudinal chamber or large space to the north, were also identified (fig. 8). The axis of the building differs from that which had been published: bent, with the underground chambers diverting with respect to the external ones (see fig. 5). Thus far, the explanation for this layout is unknown. The most radical change is found

in the plan of the inner chambers due to the existence of a side space of some length—in what looks like a wide corridor—that shows a door in its north-western corner. Yet, it is still not known to which chamber or space it leads. In any case, it represents a second set of chambers. They may be intended for the owner's mother, as she is represented in the decorative frame entering this corridor. This find would mean the existence of a secondary funerary complex of a significant size, and would imply that the TT 209 is bigger than previously thought and has a different internal structure. However, there is still not enough information to know the exact dimensions of those chambers.




Figure 7. Access staircase to the underground chambers.

3 | The name of the owner of TT 209

From the second season, every new door cleared in the underground chambers displayed a decorative frame carved on the front and, in the main door, also on the back side. The number of doorframes is higher than that indicated in publications prior to our project. In general, they are quite deteriorated, but the preserved signs can be read with some confidence by using proper lighting. In some doorframes, a pair of symmetrical reliefs of the owner—seated or standing—complements the textual information. Representations leave

no doubt about the sex of the individual. The absence of feminine endings in the name and the numerous titles are only further confirmation that he was a male. Furthermore, through texts and images it was possible to identify his name, the functions that he held and the ethnic group he belonged to.

In the five doorframes that have appeared so far²², the name is spelled consistently, so there is no doubt about its orthography:  (*m* appears in its two most common variants).

It can be transliterated as *njs-m-r3* or *š-m-r3* or *dw-m-r3* or even *j-m-r3*, and be transcribed

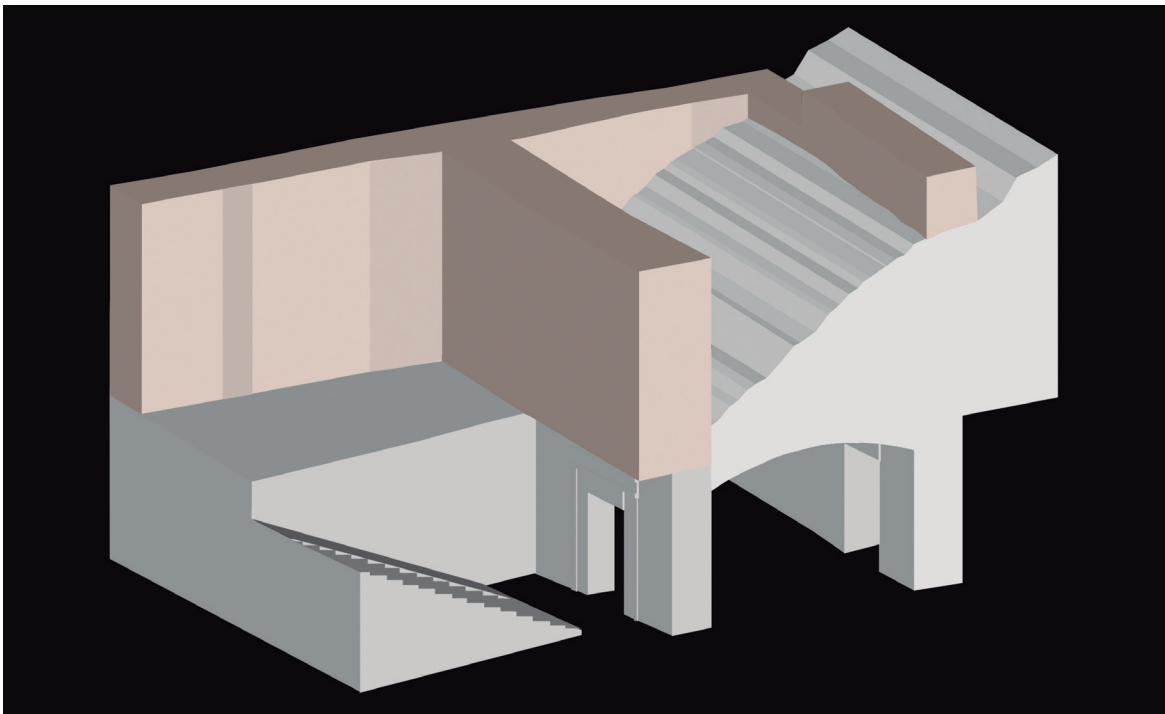






Figure 8. 3D reconstruction of the excavated area of the site in the exterior: on the slopes of the wadi are the structures constructed with mudbrick; on the floor of the courtyard the access staircase is represented; of the underground chambers, only the transversal hall is visible (drawing: P. Coll Tabanera).

²² They are referred to as: CN (courtyard north: frame of the door in the north side of the courtyard), THS (transverse hall south: frame of the door in the south wall of the transverse hall), THN (transverse hall north), THW (transverse hall west) and PHN (pillared hall north).



as Nisemro, Ashemro, Djuemro or Yiemro, respectively. The doubt on the reading derives from the first hieroglyph, Gardiner's A26, which can be read as *njs*, ʕš, *dw* or even *j*²³. As the name is not written with phonetic complements in any of the known inscriptions, it cannot be known for sure which of the readings is preferable.


In the above-mentioned transliterations,  must be understood as a phonogram, although the sign might have been originally used as a determinative²⁴. Its appearance in all the inscriptions as the initial sign of the name, including those that show it isolated horizontally over the figures, leaves no doubt about its role. This use of a determinative as a phonetic sign is not an exceptional case. Recently, J. Cervello Autuori has created a category of semagrams that he dubs “secondary logograms”²⁵, in which this use of A26 could be included. Different usages of the sign according to its reading include:

- In the spelling of the verb *dwj*, the sign  has been recognised as the most common determinative:  ²⁶.

- In the word ʕš (or *jšš*), , A26 is a scarcely attested determinative²⁷; but the title *sdm*-ʕš should be recalled here, because

in the latter the sign in question is used phonetically, as a logogram, to write the final substantive.

- A similar situation is encountered in the case of the verb *njs*, usually spelled as,  but also documented with A26 as a determinative. In this case, the term is sometimes written with  as a phonogram, instead with the combination of the three unilaterals plus determinative²⁸.

- Finally, from the Middle Kingdom onwards,  is found as a phonetic sign to write one of the variants of the interjection *j*²⁹, frequently used for that purpose since the Libyan Period³⁰.

None of the four described cases can be regarded as conclusive. Therefore, none of the four possibilities cannot be discarded. However, the documented use of A26 as a phonetic sign—as in TT 209—to write *njs*, *j* and, in one word, ʕš, would support the readings Nisemro, Yiemro, and even Ashemro, more than the fourth one, Djuemro.

Until La Laguna's team started its research, several names for the owner of TT 209 had been proposed but, in view of the new inscriptions, all have proved to be wrong. In 1905, R. Mond did not advance any suggestion,

23 Gardiner, 1973: 445. Nevertheless, in his sign list it is considered as a determinative of “call” (with the verbs *njs* and *dwj* as examples) and the interjection *j*, and as an abbreviation of ʕš in *sdm*-ʕš. R. Hannig, in the final list of hieroglyphs of his dictionary (2009: 1325), repeats Gardiner's explanation and qualifies A26 as “Determinativ: rufen, jubeln; Abkürzung: *sdm*-ʕš”. A third author, J.P. Allen, gives the briefest description (2010: 426) and describes in a rather different way the use of A26 as: “Determinative CALL. Ideogram for *j* ‘oh’ and ʕš ‘call’”.

24 Gardiner and Hannig qualify it as “abbreviation”, and Allen as “ideogram”. See note 23.

25 Cervelló Autuori, 2015: 344-345: “determinatives used as logograms, especially in epigraphic contexts that require economy of signs”: (original text in Spanish).

26 Hannig, 2009: 1075. Erman and Grapow, 1926-1961 (= Wb): V, 550-551.

27 Hannig, 2009: 171. Used since the New Kingdom, see Wb. I, 227.

28 Hannig, 2009: 415, who qualifies that use as Abk. Also in Wb. II, 204.

29 Wb. I, 25.

30 I thank Claus Jurman who called my attention to this frequent use of the sign and its appearance also in Napatan writings.

perhaps because he did not clear the jambs of the doors and could not see the texts, or could not identify the corresponding part in the inscriptions³¹. A. Gardiner and A. Weigall are the first to propose a reading: Hatashemro³²; but this term is a combination of the last sign of one of the titles held by the owner, ḥꜥ-ḥꜣt—which might have been unknown at the time when they published their work—and the proper name, adopting one of its possible readings, Ashemro. From the 1950s, B. Porter and R. Moss dismissed this proposal, probably at the lack of a known parallel in the Egyptian anthroponymy, and replaced it by Seremhatrekhyt. This term might have been written at the end of one of the copies of the inscriptions that A. Stoppelaëre sent to them from Egypt³³. However, today it is known that these words constitute an administrative title and, therefore, it was one of the functions exerted by the owner of the tomb, not his proper name. Thus, TT 209 has been constantly referred to with this wrong designation in previous scholarly literature.

None of the four possible readings of the name is documented in the lists of Egyp-

tian anthroponyms³⁴. This would open the possibility that the owner was of foreign origin. Given the location of the tomb between the two sets of burials already mentioned around the wadi and considering the ethnic origin of the elites buried in each of them, if it is accepted that the owner's name is that of a person coming from abroad, he could be a Libyan or a Nubian. The images of the deceased, especially the best preserved of the seated figures, points towards a Nubian origin, as they show a very characteristic style of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, in clear imitation of Old Kingdom reliefs (fig. 9).

Moreover, the name can be related to anthroponyms of the southern populations:

- So far, no Nubian names are known—or, at least they are not included in the consulted works—starting with a syllable identifiable to “ash-”.

- One Nubian name beginning with “dju-”³⁵ is documented. The spelling is unrelated to that of the word studied here, but that is not conclusive since the use of homophones is recognised in other cases.

31 Mond (1905: 66) refers to the tomb as the one that is “near the house of the Abd el-Rasul”.


32 Gardiner and Weigall, 1913: 34.

33 B. Porter and R. Moss (1985: 292 and 306) must have used the inscriptions on the back of the main door (THS) as the source to identify the name. This is one of the two areas with texts mentioned in their work. In the jambs of the doorframe, the lower part is lost. There must have originally been a relief, and looters who ripped it off must have also taken the owner's name, which usually appears in all preserved figures as a horizontal text written above. This situation means that the end of the last and outer column is occupied by the title *sr-m-ḥꜣt-rhyt*, which explains why they considered that this was the owner's name. The fact that it was A. Stoppelaëre who sent them copies of some inscriptions—and, surely, also a plan of the tomb—is confirmed by J. Malek, who kindly went through the documents kept in the archives of the Griffith Institute. I would like to express here my gratitude for his kindness for providing me with this information.

34 There are no similar names, for example, among the *Ägyptischen Personennamen* (they should be in Ranke, 1935 (PN): I, 71, 173-182, 406, 417, 422-423 or 432). In fact, very few names include the particles ḥꜣ (PN III: 36) or ḏw (PN III: 140), and none formed with *njs* (it should have been in PN III: 69) have been documented.

35 Zibelius-Chen, 2011: 282: *ḏw*^c.

· A cartonnage found in TT 99, dated to the reuse of this tomb during the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, belonged to a woman whose name starts with the sign A26. The term was transliterated *nynyiw*, but a possible reading *jnj* has also been proposed, based on the frequency with which A26 is used as a logogram for the interjection *j* in inscriptions of Napata. The reading would have parallels in the Meroitic anthroponymy in names that begin with a consonant “y” as prefix (Ye- / Yi- / Y-). However, the possibility that the sign could represent the writing of a vowel “i”³⁶ cannot be discarded.

· The Nubian lexeme “ns-” (var. “nse-”) is also documented at the beginning of some Meroitic names³⁷, and it also appears in several anthroponyms written in hieroglyphs³⁸. However, no case using the sign A26 for the transcription in the latter has thus far been identified, although phonetically it could have been possible. More meaningful is that an incomplete name , *njssm*[...], is documented in execration texts at the end of the Old Kingdom³⁹. This is the closest parallel found to one of the four possible readings of the anthroponym with which the owner of TT 209 was called.

In brief, of the four readings of the sign A26, *nsj* is the one bearing more parallels in the Nubian language, either transcribed in hieroglyphic or in meroitic writing. The

ending, *m-rʒ*, may correspond to the Nubian lexeme “mlo”, which means “good”, well-known and commonly used for both men and women⁴⁰.



G. Vittmann has proposed that between the different types of Kushite anthroponyms documented in Egypt, some were the result of the Egyptianisation of their original sound⁴¹. There were examples that looked Egyptian and were intelligible on the basis of Egyptian language, but conceal a Nubian name whose pronunciation resembled the Egyptian words. It might be possible that this is the case of the owner of TT 209. Two of the readings that have been proposed, *njs-m-rʒ* and *dw-m-rʒ*, could be translated, giving to *njs* and *dw* the function of active participles, as “The one who calls/summons with his mouth”⁴². As previously stated, neither is a known Egyptian name, but they make sense in this language and may even have an honorific meaning if related to a courtly position. It could be also understood as a passive participle, “The one who is summoned with the mouth” and still be understood in a palatial context. *ʕs-m-rʒ*, “He who serves through his mouth”, with *ʕs* as active participle, or “He who is served through his mouth”, with *ʕs* as passive participle, are equally possible readings of the hieroglyphic signs and also make some degree of sense. However, in the first case, the meaning does not seem too appropriate for someone

36 Zibelius-Chen, 2011: 48-49.

37 Zibelius-Chen, 2011: 49; see in n. 326 its possible meaning as “offering”.

38 Zibelius-Chen, 2011: 160-165.

39 Osing, 1976: 144, 162 and plate 47, fig. 34.

40 Zibelius-Chen (2011) includes numerous examples, with various hieroglyphic spellings. For two cases, among several ones, in which  and  are read as mlo—segmenting the name to which they belong—see Zibelius-Chen, 2011: 136 and 137.

41 Vittmann, 2007: 151-153.

42 A close expression is documented: *njs m rn*, “jemandem mit Namen rufen” (Wb. II, 204, 15).



Figure 9. Relief representing the owner of TT 209. Door THN, left jamb.

who occupies a distinguished position in the conquered Thebes. Therefore, it seems preferable to read the signs as Nisemro, in this case in parallel to Djuemro.

Finally, it should be noted that there is an additional prosopographical argument for dating the owner of TT 209 to the Twenty-fifth Dynasty. His titles have their closest parallel in those of another known member of the Kushite elite: Karakhamani, owner of TT 233⁴³. Twelve titles have been attested for both of them, and they have ten in common. However, unlike Karakhamani, one of them, *jmy-r htm*, identifies the function of Nisemro (or Djuemro, Ashemro, Yiemro) in the Theban court. Thus, the tomb and the man who commissioned it can be dated to the rule of the Nubian Dynasty.

Conclusions

The various architectural and decorative innovations of TT 209 can be understood as experimentations and adaptations of already existing models. They were created to meet the needs of the Nubian hierarchies willing to display status through buildings and funerary rituals. Specifically, the inner layout of the chambers, with a transverse hall that harkens back to the traditional New Kingdom Theban model, is a clear example of architectural archaism; while the decoration of the north wall of the first chamber, with a group of fourth pilasters sculpted as a facade of the inner chamber, is unparalleled in the necropolis but known in a contemporary temple⁴⁴. Moreo-

ver, the monumental staircase in the middle of the courtyard seems to correspond to an intermediate prototype between the tombs of the Theban Twenty-second-A Dynasty, namely that of king Horsiese A⁴⁵, and those developed by the early Twenty-fifth Dynasty, the latter representing the beginning of Egyptian Late Period funerary architecture.

Inscriptions and architecture have allowed refining the chronology of TT 209 and set it as one of the monuments built during the Kushite Dynasty in Egypt. The excavation is providing, at the same time, interesting information to understand the process of religious, social and administrative integration of the conquering Nubian elites in Egyptian territory.

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43 For his titles, see Naunton, 2014.

44 Arnold, 1999: 54-55 and fig. 26. Nevertheless, engaged columns are attested in several cult niches and door frames of Late Period tombs in Asasif (for example, in TT 223, Karakhamani, between the first and second pillared hall, or in the courtyard of TT 389, Basa).

45 Hölscher, 1954: 8-10; Aston, 2014: 18-21.

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