

Jadwiga Lipińska

Deir El-Bahari : Tuthmosis III Temple

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DEIR EL-BAHARI

TUTHMOSIS III TEMPLE

Jadwiga Lipińska

The Polish-Egyptian mission to Deir el-Bahari, entrusted with archaeological research and conservation of the Tuthmosis III temple, worked from January 10 to March 31, 1996.¹ Its program for the present season comprised: restoration of the polychrome wall reliefs and the temple's architectural elements preserved *in situ*, as well as research and documentation.

RESTORATION OF THE WALL RELIEFS

According to the project accepted for realization, the better preserved part of the eastern wall of the so-called sanctuary of the Tuthmosis III temple is to be restored and re-erected in the middle of the large hall of the current stores at Deir el-Bahari, planned as the future museum display of the temple's remains. The part of the wall chosen for restoration presents richly painted and sculpted decoration consisting of four scenes in which the king, Tuthmosis III, offers various goods to alternating forms of the god Amun: Amun-Re and Amun Kamutef.

¹ The members of the Mission were as follows: Prof. Jadwiga Lipińska, director; Barbara Pochwalska, artist; Piotr Zambrzycki, restorer; Monika Dolińska, archaeologist; Joanna Lis, restorer; Zbigniew Godziejewski, restorer, Marek Puszkarski, artist, Dr. Joanna Aksamit, archaeologist; Dr. Rafał Czerner, architect. The mission was assisted by Mr. Said Gibril Mohammed, Inspector of the SCA Inspectorate in Gurna, who was of great help in carrying out the season's program. We would like also to express our gratitude to the Secretary General of the SCA, Prof. Abdel-Halim Nur ed-Din, as well as to Dr. Mohammed Soghir, Director of the Luxor Inspectorate, and Mr. Sabri, Director of the Gurna Inspectorate, for their efficient help and continuous support.

Several blocks have already been restored in previous seasons, six were completed this year, six more are being consolidated in Wacker's stone-hardener in preparation for further restoration work, i.e., for reconstruction of entire blocks from smaller and bigger fragments previously assembled by the archaeologists.

Each of the scenes represents the king in front of the god with the offering table between them. Two red vases with flowers stand next to the blue-painted table support. Offerings of various kinds are piled upon the table.

The six blocks restored in 1996 were:²

No. 13. With dado and lower part of scene; 1.18 m long, 0.55 m high, 0.38 m thick; restored using 17 fragments.

No. 12. Also from the lowest level of decoration, restored from 30 fragments; 1.01 m long, 0.42 m high.

No. 12a. Small block, 0.60 m long and 0.41 m high, of which only two fragments were found.

No. 30. Contiguous with the former, continuing the lowest part of the decoration; 0.99 m long, 0.43 m high; 56 fragments used in its assembly.

No. 31. Corner block with part of the geometric pattern bordering the decoration; 0.99 m long, 0.42 m high; 11 fragments were located enabling its reconstruction. With this block the restoration of the lowest course of decorated wall was completed.

No. 28. Block from the second course; 0.69 m long, 0.65 m high; reconstructed from 31 fragments.

To begin the wall re-erection project, a special concrete bench was constructed in the hall of the stores and the first six blocks were placed upon it, giving the full height of the right-hand end of the restored wall. The part reconstructed this year is c. 2.40 m long (the full length will be over 6 m) and more than 2 m high.

² See drawings in *PAM V* (1994), Figs 1 and 2 on pp. 92, 94 respectively.

To complete the restoration of this wall six more blocks, which are already hardened and ready for mounting, should be placed in position. Three of them are almost complete, three other are broken into small fragments, but the percentage of their original surface is high. Once the wall is re-erected, only final touches will be needed (such as filling gaps between blocks, laying a surface-coloured layer of mortar on artificial stone).

Spring rains in 1995 caused some damage in the stores, especially in the northeastern part which is adjacent to the rocky slope. Water accumulating on the floor (seepage occurred from below the wall) had caused the stone blocks to absorb salts; once the stone started drying, the salts began to damage the painted reliefs. The restorers tried to save the paint on the worst affected reliefs, treating them against fungi at the same time.

RESTORATION OF TEMPLE ELEMENTS *IN SITU*

Consolidation of temple elements preserved *in situ* has proceeded for many years now in an extended process meant to protect the site of the ruined temple. This season, base no. III was completely dismantled in order for the reinforced concrete slab to be constructed and then restored in the original position. Several pieces of broken corners and edges were glued together and in some cases stainless steel clamps were used to reinforce the weakened stone. The missing southwest corner was made of a new sandstone block (31 x 100 x 75 cm). As an adhesive for the smaller broken fragments, epoxy resin was applied.

The few remaining bases of the 16-sided polygonal columns, which remain to be treated, should be restored in future seasons.

The season's main accomplishment was the restoration of the northern jamb of the great red granite doorway. The doorway, with a total width of 4.10 m, was once 3.80 m high (without the lintel); at the time when the temple was demolished, both jambs were cut for re-use. The southern one was split evenly and prepared for transportation but abandoned near its original

location; the northern jamb was shattered into several pieces. During the current season a number of small pieces were joined together (constituting the central part of the jamb, from the c. 1.60 m to 3.10 m level) restoring two columns of texts in their original position; the other two columns along with the upper part of the relief of the king are lost. The uppermost part of the jamb, found in two large and a few small pieces, was also consolidated. The most difficult operation was the restitution of the missing core using concrete reinforced by five 20 mm stainless steel bars. Then the top of the jamb, measuring c. 70 x 70 x 90 cm, was placed in its proper position. A layer of granite-colored mortar (c. 10 cm thick) to cover the jamb's concrete core remains to be applied in the 1997 season.

The re-erection of the southern jamb will cause more difficulties as the extremely heavy upper part (c. 2 x 0.85 x 1 m) requires special scaffolding to raise it.

RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION

Archaeologists assisted the restorers in helping to solve several problems of the reconstruction. Studies also progressed on the decoration in the western part of the temple. Two artists continued drawing the assembled scenes and some new additions were made in the process of removing pieces for recording. A complete set of drawings was made for the northern and southern wall of room "D", as well as the final drawing of the eastern wall of the "sanctuary" and the three sides of a niche in that room. Some smaller drawings of hitherto unrecorded scenes were also made.

In connection with the restoration of the granite doorway, it became necessary to re-examine all the fragments of red granite excavated in the ruined temple in order to be sure that nothing of importance had been overlooked. In the course of the re-examination, several pieces of red granite statues were joined together, providing grounds for the conclusion that there were

originally three, not four as previously stated, statues of Tuthmosis III striding. Unfortunately, not one of the three can be fully restored.