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COURTYARD OF THE ROYAL MORTUARY CULT COMPLEX

Olga Białostocka

The space of the small, open courtyard of the Royal Mortuary Cult Complex is limited on the north, east and west by walls decorated in yellow-painted sunk relief. During the fieldwork season of 2007, the author's research centered on the east wall, the southern part of which is decorated in raised relief and belongs already to the vestibule of the Chapel of Hatshepsut. The aim of the season was to finish collecting and attributing blocks to the said wall of the courtyard and to complete the documentation of this material in order to proceed to the restoration stage based on a project prepared in collaboration with the Mission's architect Teresa Kaczor.

Studies in the courtyard were initiated by the present author in 2005. The first season was mostly devoted to the documentation of the east wall as it stood then. The decoration was traced and a photographic record of the state of preservation of the wall was made. The wall stood twelve courses high (excluding the *kheker* frieze), the blocks making up five registers of decoration. Its

state was the result of previous restoration by Émile Baraize's team from the Service des Antiquités.¹ The said wall was erected on a still earlier reconstruction of parts of the first two registers of the decoration, made by Édouard Naville (1906: Pl. cxxviii).² Minor alterations may have been introduced also by Polish restorers working in the temple in the 1980s and 1990s,³ but nothing more extensive has been done on it since.

In the courtyard, as in many parts of the temple, Baraize's reconstructions have been shown to carry many inaccuracies, both egyptological and architectural. A considerable part of the east wall was established as incorrectly reconstructed, a significant percentage of the blocks being fitted in the wrong position. Moreover, more than 50 loose blocks have been attributed to the said wall during recent work on identifying decorated blocks from the courtyard. This has enabled an important part of the decoration to be reconstructed.

According to a new theoretical reconstruction project, the wall, which stretches

- 1 As the French architect's activities in the temple of Hatshepsut (in 1925-1944) were never properly documented, some of the present assumptions concerning his work are perforce uncertain.
- 2 The foundations of the east wall were checked during the recent fieldwork season. The mortar used by Naville's team was discovered beneath the wall, which led to the conclusion that the east wall must have been raised during Naville's work in the temple, and not found *in situ*, cf. Szafranski in this volume, 261.
- 3 I owe this information to Rajmund Gazda. This is not explicitly documented, but may be traced by comparing the arrangement of the east wall at the time that the present author took up the task of restoring it with previous architectural drawings of the wall executed by the Polish teams.

for 3.71 m, should be higher, consisting of 14 (not 12) courses of blocks, amounting to six and not five registers of decoration (and still surmounted by a *kbeker* frieze, as in other parts of the courtyard). Teresa Kaczor's architectural measurements and assessment have determined the height of the wall at 5.85 m.

Following up on these determinations, it has been decided to proceed with a new restoration of this wall according to a project currently under development. The first step was to dismantle the east wall to the state documented by Naville, that is, down to the first two registers of the decoration and this was accomplished in 2007 [Fig. 1]. Meanwhile, the documentation of loose blocks identified as belonging to the walls of the courtyard has progressed

regularly since 2005. The odd blocks ascribed to the east wall have been drawn and measured. Collations have been made with blocks now taken out from the dismantled wall. Four blocks discovered in shafts S.7A/82, S.7C/82, S.1/88 and S.2/07 (Szafranski 2005: 229–230; 2007: 247–248; 2010: 259) excavated in the Chapel of Hatshepsut have been fitted fortuitously in existing gaps in the decoration.

The scene decorating the east wall represents a procession of nome personifications [Fig. 2]. The uppermost three of six registers are filled with personifications of Upper Egyptian nomes, the three below them with those of Lower Egyptian provinces. They are male and female, depending on the toponym they personify.



Fig. 1. View of the courtyard in the Royal Mortuary Cult Complex during the dismantling of the east wall in 2007 (Photo O. Białostocka)

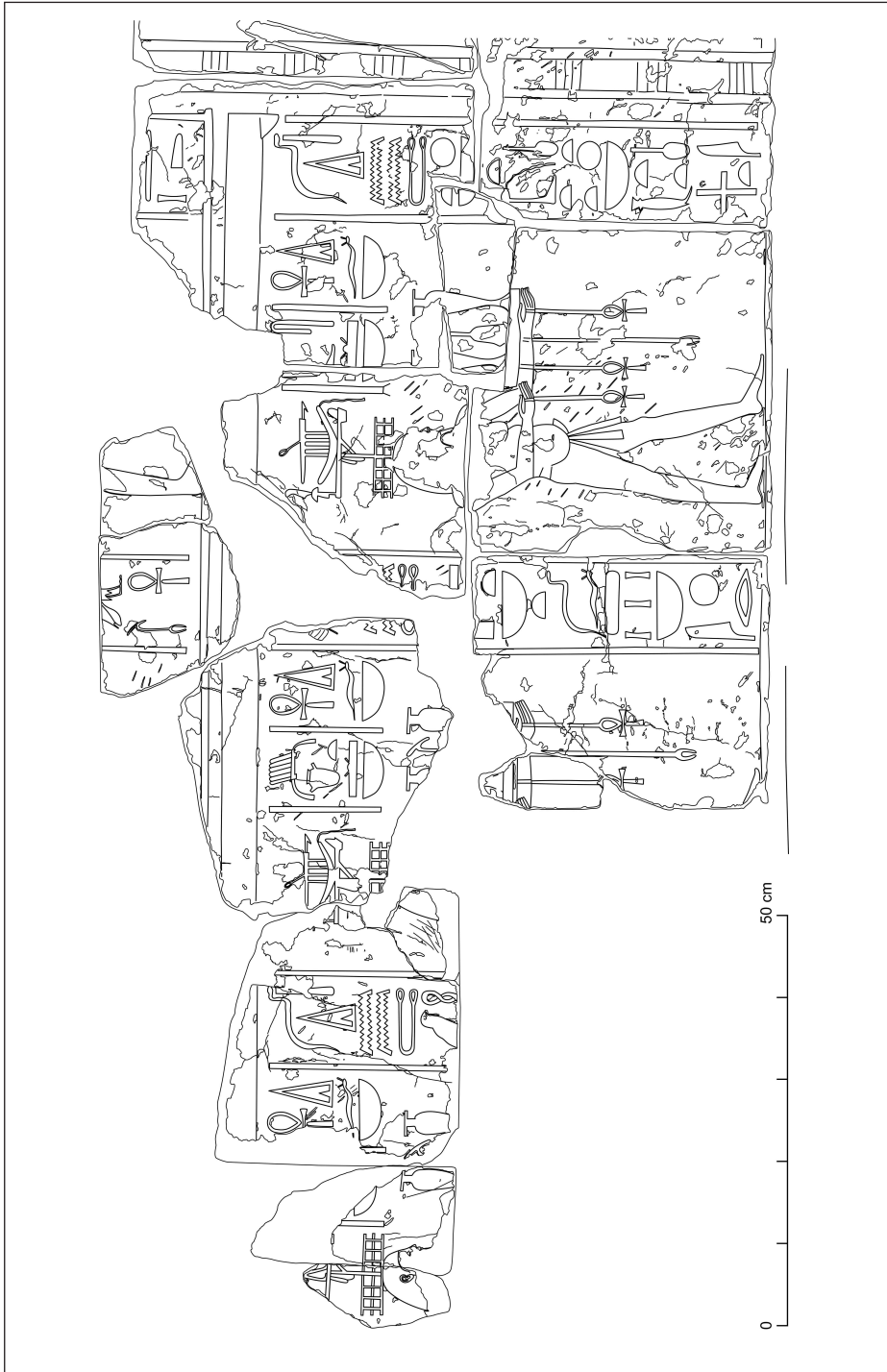


Fig. 2. Fragment from a theoretical reconstruction of the scene on the east wall of the courtyard in the Royal Mortuary Cult Complex (Tracing and digitizing O. Białostocka)

Additionally, one more unidentified estate personification and three *phw* figures are represented in the lowest part of the wall, closing the procession in question. Every register of the scene is divided into rectangular units, each approximately 0.50 m wide by 0.75 m high, with a single personification and the adjoining text in it. Given the space occupied by a single unit, and the inclination of the north corner of the east wall, as well as the size of the signs, it is possible to assess the number of these units found in every register of the decoration. It seems reasonable to conclude that, while the first four registers from the bottom up

were composed of seven units with the representations of personifications, the two uppermost might have been divided into as many as eight parts. This gives us 44 figures walking southwards, towards the vestibule and the Chapel of Hatshepsut, carrying offerings for the Queen from all regions of Egypt.

A reconstruction of the relief compositions and texts decorating the walls of the courtyard constitutes part of a larger project encompassing the compound of the Royal Cult Chapels and shall be included in the overall publication of the mortuary complex of Hatshepsut.

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