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The Hatshepsut Temple at Deir El-Bahari, Season 1992

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THE HATSHEPSUT TEMPLE AT DEIR EL-BAHARI SEASON 1992

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The Hatshepsut Temple at Deir el-Bahari Epigraphic Mission started work on 21 October 1992 and continued until 13 January 1993.¹

The mission concentrated on completing the recording of the bark room in the main sanctuary and the colonnade of the Hathor shrine.

In the bark room, the most important element of the decoration are the two depictions of the bark of Amun, that were restored after Amarna by Horemheb (Fig. 1).² Already in ancient times the barks were covered by smoke deposits obscuring

¹ The mission was composed of the following: Dr. Janusz Karkowski (director of the mission), Dr. Nathalie Beaux, Dr. Maria Garcia Martinez, Dr. Rosanna Pirelli, egyptologists; Mrs. Dorota Bielińska, archaeologist, documentalist; Mr. Boleslaw Kobielski, architect; Ms Katherine Spence, architect, student of egyptology; Ms Joanna Kusek, artist and Mr. Andrzej Szandomirski, photographer.

The Mission would like to express its thanks to the Authorities of the Egyptian Antiquities Organization's offices in Luxor and Gurna, Dr. Mohamed el-Sughair and Dr. Saied el-Hegazi, for their continuous help and support which permitted the mission members to fulfill the season's program. The mission is also grateful to Mr. Mahmud Sadek and Mr. Salah el-Baiumi, inspectors assigned to the mission.

² *PM* II.2 (132.2), and 366 (133.2).

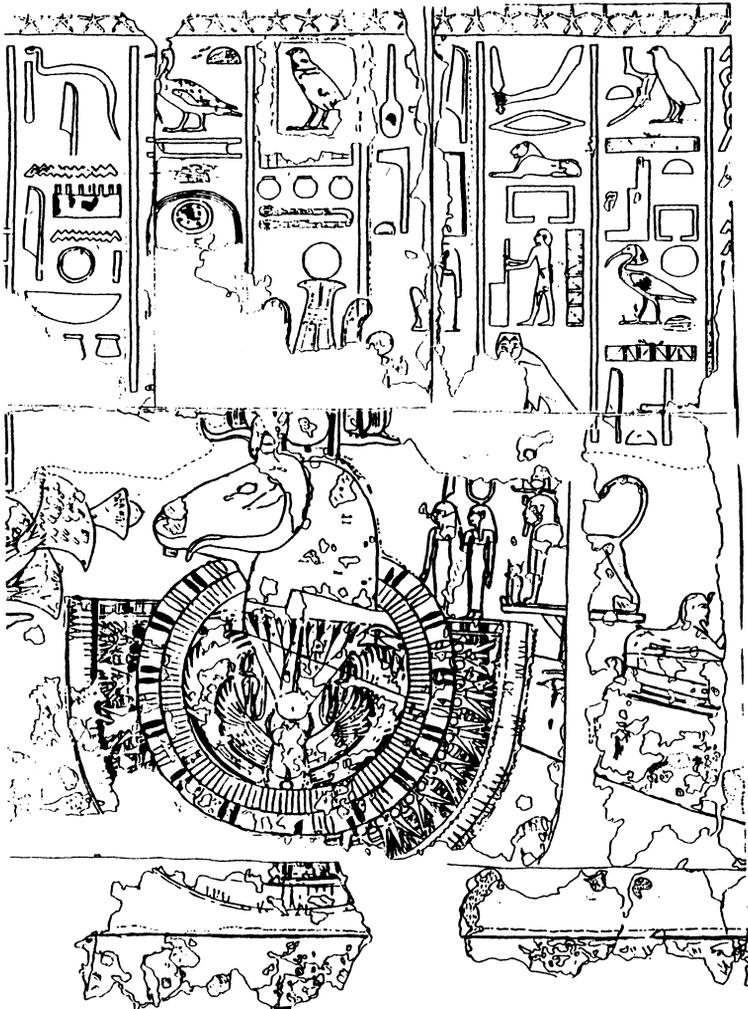


Fig. 1. Bark room of the Amun sanctuary, southern wall: Aegis on the prow of Amun's bark and the accompanying text. Tracing from the wall by the author.

the motif. Cleaning was carried out in some places in modern times (by the British expedition), but the ancient paint has been affected in the process. Consequently recording the rich decoration of the barks proved to be one of the most difficult epigraphic tasks in the temple. In the case of many details repeated examinations were necessary to identify the particular elements of the decoration and recover the rich symbolic significance of the composition (Fig. 2).³

The walls of the bark room were damaged during some ancient catastrophe and then repaired by Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II.⁴ A number of reused blocks reveal an older decoration that assigns the blocks to other parts of the temple. The search for blocks from the bark room in the temple stores and their documentation permits the theoretical restoration of the decoration under Hatshepsut. For example, some huge blocks will fill in the gaps around the entrance to the bark room. Unfortunately, the original relief is not well preserved, and a number of high quality reliefs, like the sema-tawy depiction under the bark of Amun, was completely destroyed on one wall under the Ptolemies, when this part of the wall surface was chiseled and from the opposite wall only small fragments remain in the temple stores.

An important feature of the Hatshepsut sanctuary is the system of the windows by which room with the cult statue was

³ Two foreign colleagues, R. Pirelli and K. Spence, played an essential role in the documentation of the bark room, which was a part of their epigraphic training with the mission.

⁴ Z. Wysocki, *Mélanges Mokhtar* (Cairo 1985), 361-372, with 4 pls; Karkowski, *MDAIK* 39 (1983), 95f., fig. 1.



Fig. 2. Bark room of the Amun sanctuary, southern wall: successive stages of the decoration of the Amun bark. The kneeling king offering mat to a seated Amun-Re is clear on the last study. Drawing K. Spence.

lighted. Measurements and a study of the decoration of the windows revealed that the outer window had apparently been positioned to permit the sun's rays to penetrate into the room, where the cult statue stood on a fixed day. The two occasions marked the coldest part of the year around the winter solstice when the sun action is at its weakest. Observations were made on the effects of lighting the temple by the sun rays. The temple axis apparently points to the winter-solstice sunrise, thus the sun rays penetrated deepest into all the rooms on the axis and lighted up a major part of the rear walls.⁵ Some graffiti in the northern colonnade which may have astronomical significance were traced.⁶

The walls of the colonnade of the Hathor shrine were the second part of the temple that was recorded by the mission.⁷ In addition to the northern and western walls of the inner colonnade, published already by E. Naville,⁸ also the remaining not so well preserved episodes of the Hathor feast on the southern wall were recorded together with selected other blocks. They showed a procession with the cow statue and in the upper, unpreserved part of the wall, a procession with the bark of Amon-Re.

⁵ For the orientation of the temple, cf. R.A. Wells, *SÄK* 12 (1985), 290.

⁶ By the author and M. Martinez.

⁷ By the author and Dr. N. Beaux from the French Institute in Cairo as part of a joint project.

⁸ Naville, *Temple*, pls LXXXVIII-XCVII.

The unpublished walls of the outer colonnade had been restored to full height by Baraize. All the decoration preserved in situ, as well as the decorated blocks which Baraize built into the reconstructed wall together with more than 20 large blocks from temple stores apparently belonging to these walls, were recorded. The main problem now is to correct the obvious mistakes made during the old restoration and to propose the corrected version of scenes based on a new arrangement of existing blocks. The northern wall of the outer hypostyle may serve as an example, only a few blocks were built into it more or less correctly. All the decorated blocks from the top of the wall come from other walls. There is even one which comes from the solar complex on the upper terrace!⁹

Recording and studies of the temple architecture were continued. The plan of the Hathor shrine was made this year, (Fig. 3), contributing new data on the building history of the Hathor shrine and the temple as a whole, differing from theories published so far.¹⁰

Documentation of the royal iconography was completed this season and the study of depictions of ships and ceremonial barks is advanced. Work continued also on preparing a complete list of the hieroglyphic signs appearing in the temple.

Texts previously omitted were hand-copied to add to the corpus of texts from the temple. A word index has been started

⁹ Cf. *EtTrav* IX (1976), fig. 5 on p. 76.

¹⁰ Recently summed up by Wysocki, *MDAIK* 38 (1992), 233-254.

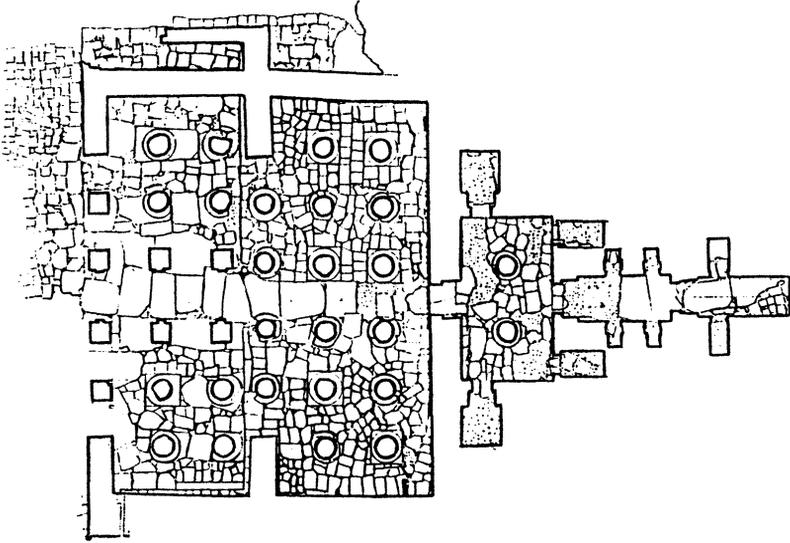


Fig. 3. Plan of the Hathor shrine.
Drawing B. Kobielski.

with a database being established in Poland to organize all the iconographic and textual data.¹¹

Important corrections to previous analyses will allow for a much more accurate restoration of the creation process of one of the most important sacral monuments produced by Pharaonic Egypt over the millennia.

¹¹ In cooperation with the Center of Computer-Aided Egyptological Research of Utrecht University, cf. J. Karkowski, D. Van der Plas, "HATTY, a database for the Hatshepsut Temple at Deir el-Bahari", in press in the proceedings of the 1992 Mainz conference on *Ägyptische Tempelbauprogramme*.