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Deir El-Bahari: Hatshepsut Temple Epigraphic Documentation

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DEIR EL-BAHARI

HATSHEPSUT TEMPLE EPIGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION

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RECORDING THE DECORATION OF THE HATHOR SHRINE

The study and documentation of the Hathor Shrine (26 February – 10 April 1997) were the main objective of the mission.¹ An attempt was made to prepare the restoration projects of some of the walls of the double colonnade of the shrine. These walls had been destroyed in ancient times and already under the Ptolemies some of their decorated stones were re-used in the walls built in this period on the Upper Terrace. The construction of the colonnade walls with many oblique or irregular block joints made this task much more complex than the restoration of the walls of the Upper Terrace built of regular horizontal layers. An additional difficulty in the case of the blocks built into the walls during the old restoration of E. Baraize is that one is never sure of the size of the blocks. The true shape of these blocks is usually masked by mortar used in the restoration. Several trial restorations on paper were necessary. Each trial was in turn analyzed and confronted with the original fragments to eliminate errors. At the end the final drawing of the scene of presentation of the *menat*-necklace by Hathor to Hatshepsut was done.

¹ Members of the Mission: Dr. Janusz Karkowski, director, egyptologist; Liza Majerus, artist; Michel Dabas and Albert Hesse, geophysicists; Tomasz Herbich, archaeologist-geophysicist; Mr Said Gebril was appointed the inspector of the mission. The mission is very much indebted to the SCA with its Secretary General, Dr. Ali Hassan, for the support without which the mission could not achieve its goals. In the field, the mission could always count on help on the part of the SCA authorities in Luxor and Gurna, Dr. Mohammed el-Soghir and Dr. Mohammed Nasr, and all the remaining Egyptian colleagues from the Gurna Office. The project for the publication of the Hathor Shrine is carried out in cooperation with the Institut Français d'Archeologie Orientale in Cairo.

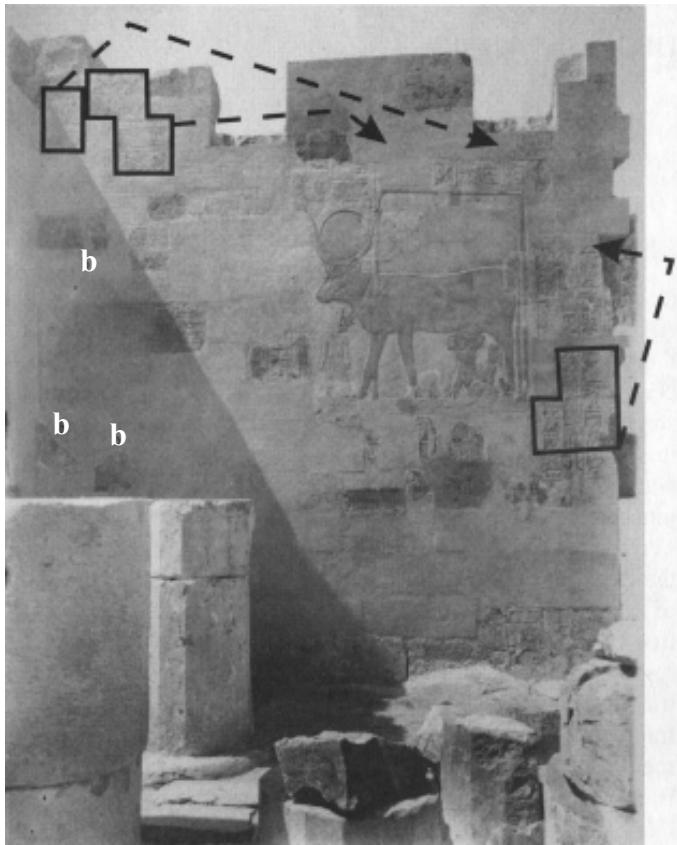


Fig. 1. South wall of the Outer Colonnade of the Hathor Shrine as restored by E. Baraize with errors marked: a - not from this particular place; b - from the northern wing of the east wall of the Outer Colonnade.

Then the same procedure was applied to the south wall of the outer colonnade, which showed a large scene of a presentation of offerings to the statue of the Hathor cow. This scene, together

with the symmetrically placed, identical scene on the north wall most probably shows the processional statue of Hathor as it emerges from the inner part of the shrine where, between the feasts, it was permanently kept in the Bark Room.

The restoration of the north wall of the Outer Colonnade proved even more difficult. Unlike the south wall, a part of it was preserved *in situ*, but in the temple stores we could find much less blocks than could be ascribed to it. The blocks placed in this wall by E. Baraize either belong to other parts of the Hathor Chapel or are misplaced. The decoration on the uppermost blocks shows reworking already by Hatsheput. This is due to modifications in the architecture of the shrine. At first the façade of the Hathor Shrine was further west and was limited to the colonnade composed of three rows of columns. The Punt Portico was built at the same time and the southern side of its south wall formed a large blank surface. A text in a single line of large hieroglyphs in sunk relief was started on the wall just below its top.

The east face of this wall was decorated with a *serekh* and most probably contained the titular of Hatshepsut. The lower part of this *serekh* is still preserved *in situ*. At some later date the outer colonnade was added and the original decoration on the north wall of the added outer colonnade was reworked. Apparently the incised signs were filled in with plaster and a new decoration was carved in low relief on the entire wall. Since the blocks from the two top layers of the wall all showed traces of the text in incised signs, it is apparent that all blocks with the uraei frieze, which were built into the wall by E. Baraize and have no traces of incised decoration, had to belong to other parts of the Hathor Shrine.

An attempt was also made to correct the restoration of the façade of the shrine. In principle E. Baraize built a majority of blocks from the eastern face of the two pylons into it. However, in restoring the southern pylon he committed an error in the theoretical restoration of the almost complete sequence of blocks

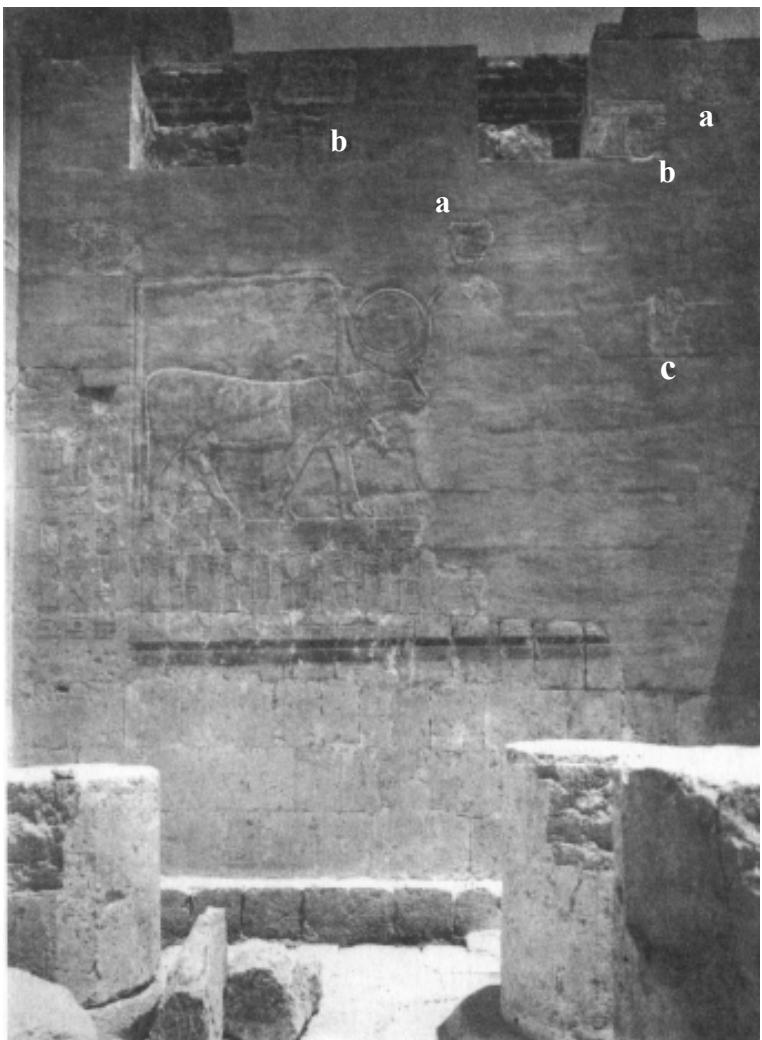


Fig. 2. North wall of the Outer Colonnade of the Hathor Shrine as restored by E. Baraize with errors marked: a - not from this particular wall; b - from the northern wing of the east wall of the Outer Colonnade; c - not from the Hathor Shrine.

from the upper part of the wall. The incorrect angle at which this layer was restored on the drawn restoration that preceded the rebuilding, resulted in many difficulties in placing the blocks from the remaining parts of the wall. The discovery of this error should make it possible to correct the drawn restoration of the pylon. It was already stated before that in his restoration of the southern wing of the façade Baraize committed an error in establishing its length. In fact it was some 40 cm shorter, which is apparent from the study of the text over the Hathor cow. In addition, it has been established that contrary to the restoration there was no figure of a god behind the cow.

The northern pylon of the façade has more original blocks preserved and its lower part remained in situ when the restoration started. However, even here some errors in the orientation of particular blocks were committed during the rebuilding. This is especially apparent in the case of blocks with text that have the lines of separation running through many layers of blocks. Particular sections of these lines of separation deviate from the vertical. In a few cases, the workmen who worked for Baraize filled in the original lines of separation with mortar and cut new ones in the surface of the original stones to hide this apparent error!

The advance in the study and restoration of the walls of the Hathor Shrine permitted a number of smaller fragments to be placed in particular walls. In general, the study and restoration of particular scenes of the outer part of the Hathor Shrine would have been much easier and less time-consuming were the blocks available for examination and measurement in the storage area.

Apart from work on the restoration of the colonnade walls, the mission continued the recording of the inner, completely preserved rooms of the Hathor Shrine. The documentation of the Sanctuary walls, which had already been advanced in 1996, was completed. Also the scenes of the west and east walls of the Vestibule were all recorded in 1:1 scale. Also the texts on the

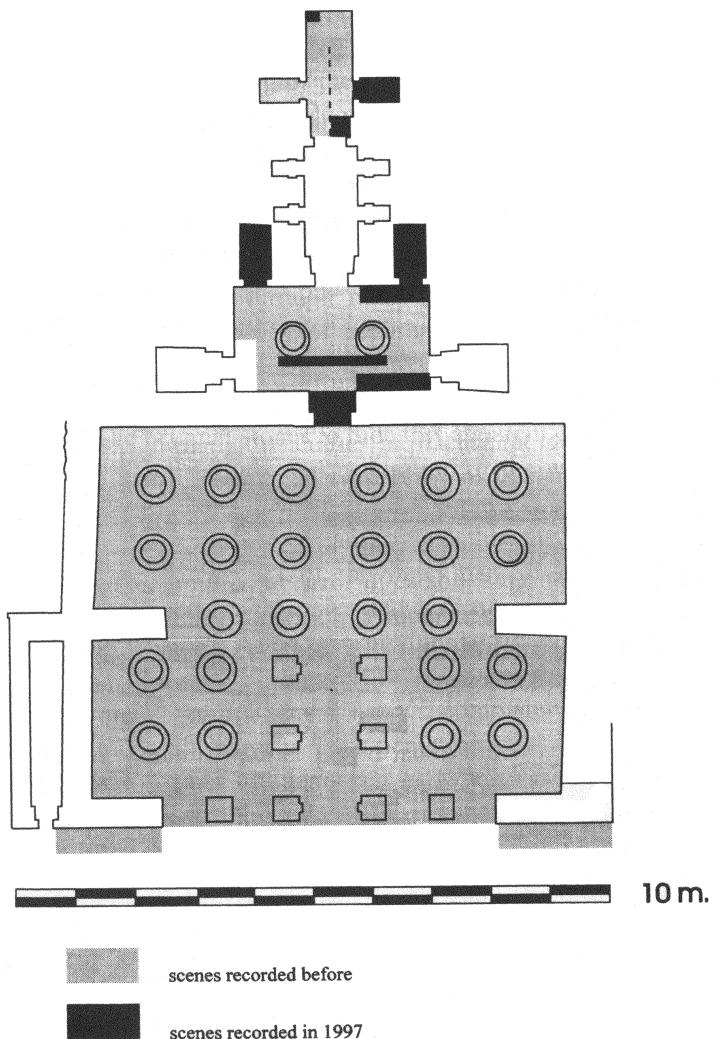


Fig. 3. Progress in recording the Hathor Shrine decoration.

columns of the Vestibule were traced. The mission began to record the side chapels accessed from the vestibule. This season the two chapels with entrances in the west wall of the vestibule were traced. Remaining to be recorded is the decoration of the Bark Shrine, east part of the south wall of the vestibule and two adjoining chapels with entrances in the south and north walls of the same room. This will require another season of work in the chapel. The final plates for the publication require at least one more verification in the chapel to eliminate errors and omissions.

The inking of the final plates was continued by E. Majerus and J.F. Gout completed the photographic recording of the decoration of the Hathor Shrine.

At the end of the season a routine check of the condition of the walls and roofs of the Hathor Shrine resulted in the discovery of cracks in the northernmost architrave and in one of the roofing slabs of the vestibule. After getting SCA approval, wooden supports were installed to make the place secure.

RADAR EXAMINATION OF THE HATHOR TEMPLE PLATFORM

Thanks to cooperation with the French Institute in Cairo the Mission could make a radar examination of the floor of the Hathor Shrine. A team of French geophysicists performed this. The objective of this examination was to detect eventual tomb shafts in the shrine and to verify the hypothesis about the existence of an older shrine of Hathor, possibly covered by the platform of Hatshepsut's shrine. Unfortunately, the rock on which the Hatshepsut temple is built – so-called "Esna shale" – proved extremely resistant to radar. A calibration trial was made over the known sloping corridor of the Mentuhotep temple with no change at all when the instrument was placed over the empty space of the corridor, whose ceiling was no more than 2.50-3.00 m below the instrument. The only registered

anomalies were apparently reflections from the existing walls and pillars. The trial showed that the Hathor Shrine is too complicated for radar examination.

At the request of Dr. Mohamed el-Soghir, the same team made a radar examination of a section of the corridor that precedes the burial chamber in the tomb of Sethos I in the Valley of the Kings. Contrary with the negative result at Deir el-Bahari, the examination revealed a clear anomaly that may be caused by a depression in the limestone rock sealed with a different material. Unfortunately, the instrument could not establish how deep the depression is; thus its nature must be established by drilling or excavation.