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## Conservation Work in the Hatshepsut Temple in Deir El-Bahari (2009)

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# CONSERVATION WORK IN THE HATSHEPSUT TEMPLE IN DEIR EL-BAHARI (2009)

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**Abstract:** The article reports on current conservation and restoration work being carried out in the Temple of Hatshepsut in Deir el-Bahari by a Polish-Egyptian Mission from the PCMA. This includes the North Chapel of Amun, the Bark Hall, and Osiride statues in the Coronation Portico, as well as preliminary preservation of about 4500 pieces of sandstone sphinxes from MMA excavations at the beginning of the 20th century, now rediscovered in the storeroom.

**Keywords:** Deir el-Bahari, Temple of Hatshepsut, Osiride, sphinx, stone conservation, restoration

Current conservation research and work were carried out on the Upper Terrace of the Hatshepsut Temple, in the Royal Cult Complex, North Chamber of Amun-Re, Bark Hall and reconstruction of the Osirides. Work started on the reconstruction of the sphinx statues of Hatshepsut. Monitoring started of the state of preservation of the complexes of the Chapel of Hathor, Lower Shrine of Anubis and individual blocks kept in the lapidaries.

## CONSERVATION WORK IN THE COMPLEX OF THE ROYAL MORTUARY CULT (CRC)

Decorated blocks and fragments of blocks with sunken relief from the southern end of the East Wall of the courtyard of the Complex of Royal Cult (CRC-C) were selected for conservation in preparation for an anastylosis of this part of the wall (see Szafranski 2011: 197–198). Thirteen blocks were cleaned of secondary mortar (gypsum and cement mortars from the mid 20th century) and structurally reinforced

with a silicon-organic preparation FUNCOSIL 300 (Remmers). Cracks were filled with modified renovation putty CERESIT (Henkel). The faces of the blocks were cleaned of secondary deposits with compresses made of powdered sepiolite and water. A similar method was used to clean the preserved northern section of the East Wall of the vestibule; 27 blocks were preserved with the silicon-organic preparation (this work was carried out by Krystyna Wadzyńska).

In the next stage two courses of the southern part of the east courtyard wall were reconstructed, the blocks being replaced in their original position based on a reconstruction project prepared by Olga Białostocka (epigraphical and iconographical analysis) and Teresa Kaczor (architectural inventory). The anastylosis was carried out by a team comprising Olga Białostocka, Rajmund W. Gazda, Krystyna Wadzyńska, Teresa Kaczor and the Project's rais, Ragab Yassin. The work is planned for three successive seasons,

hence no aesthetizing work was carried out. The structural bedding was left in full view [Fig. 1].

The southern section of the east wall of the Chapel of Hatshepsut (CH) was conserved up to the cornice. The wall had been reintegrated a hundred years ago by the Egypt Exploration Fund. It is currently built of 27 decorated blocks. The gaps are filled by bricks bonded with gypsum mortar and with limestone blocks. The bas relief was executed with precisely finished hieroglyphs. Partly preserved polychromy was studied to determine the character of the painterly execution.

Secondary gypsum putties were removed in order to reveal the edges of the blocks. The surface of the blocks was cleaned by the same methods as described above. PRIMAL was applied to surface cracking of the stone. The paint layer was fixed with a 5% solution of PARALOID B72 in toluene (conservation carried out by conservator Maria Lulkiewicz-Podkowińska).

#### FINISHING WORK IN THE NORTHERN CHAMBER OF AMUN-RE

Conservation of the Northern Chamber of Amun-Re (NA), started in the second



Fig. 1. Southern part of the east courtyard wall in the Royal Mortuary Cult Complex, view after anastylosis (All photos by the author)

#### Team

Artwork conservators: Rajmund W. Gazda (Chief Conservator), Maria Lulkiewicz-Podkowińska, Wojciech Myjak, Andrzej Sośnierz, Krystyna Wadzyńska, assisted by four technical restorers from the Supreme Council of Antiquities

half of the 1990s, reached a point at which consolidation and aesthetizing of the ceiling was carried out. The roofing structure had been introduced before the Polish conservation project started in 1961. Faults observed in the structure were repaired with HENKEL mortar and the cement mortar was removed from the original ceiling slab decorated with polychromy recreating the heavens in the southern part of the shrine (the work was carried out by Egyptian technical restorers under the supervision of conservator Rajmund W. Gazda). Professional spot lighting (designed by engineer Mieczysław Michiewicz) was mounted to bring out the decoration on the walls. Gaps by the edge of the blocks in the lower and central part of the east wall of the shrine and to a lesser extent the west wall (using renovation putty (carried out by conservator Rajmund W. Gazda). The interior jamb surfaces were cleared of grime and secondary mortar, revealing a text devoted to Sennemut on the western jamb (conservation carried out by Maria Lulkiewicz-Podkowińska). The text was known from the documentation prepared by the Egypt Exploration Fund and had disappeared under a deposit of grime. The walls of the jambs were unified aesthetically with modified mineral plaster after first protecting the stone with FUNCOSIL 300 (work carried out by Krystyna Wadzyńska).

#### BARK HALL (BH)

The previously reconstructed so-called *Sema-tawy* scene was supplemented with a fragment of a block carved with a representation of the head of the eastern (right) figure of a fertility deity. The Fragment was cleaned and protected with FUNCOSIL 300, then mounted back in the original position with a renovation mortar. The

bottom surface of the fragment corresponds with the course of wall blocks (conservation by Rajmund W. Gazda) [Fig. 2].

#### OSIRIAC STATUES FROM THE CORONATION PORTICO

The reconstruction and conservation program of the Osiriac statues from the Coronation Portico was continued (carried out by conservator-sculptor Wojciech Myjak). The work covered the faces and crowns of Osirides nos IV, XII and XIII [Fig. 3].

#### RECONSTRUCTION OF HATSHEPSUT'S SPHINX STATUES

The 4500 fragments of sandstone sphinxes brought to the Hatshepsut Temple lapidaries were documented (see Smilgin 2012, in this volume) and subjected to preliminary conservation (by conservator Andrzej Sośnierz).



Fig. 2. *Sema-tawy* scene from the Bark Hall, after reconstruction with a new fragment

## PRESERVATION MONITORING

Monitoring of the state of preservation of particular elements of the temple led to the following decisions regarding future projects:

- vestibule of the Hathor Shrine (HS-V): construction and consolidation work on the cracked structure of the ceiling slabs and architraves, removing at the same time the temporary wooden supports;
- Lower Shrine of Anubis (ASL): electronic

weather monitoring system and gypsum seals for the purpose of technical control of the shrine;

- storage space for decorated blocks (wooden shelves and linen/mat covering for blocks removed temporarily from the Chapel of Hatshepsut and from the Royal Cult Complex, as well as for the blocks from the store on the level of the Lower Terrace, which will be arranged in the future as an open lapidary.



*Fig. 3. Reconstructed Osirides in the Coronation Portico*

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