

Niwiński, Andrzej

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ANDRZEJ NIWIŃSKI

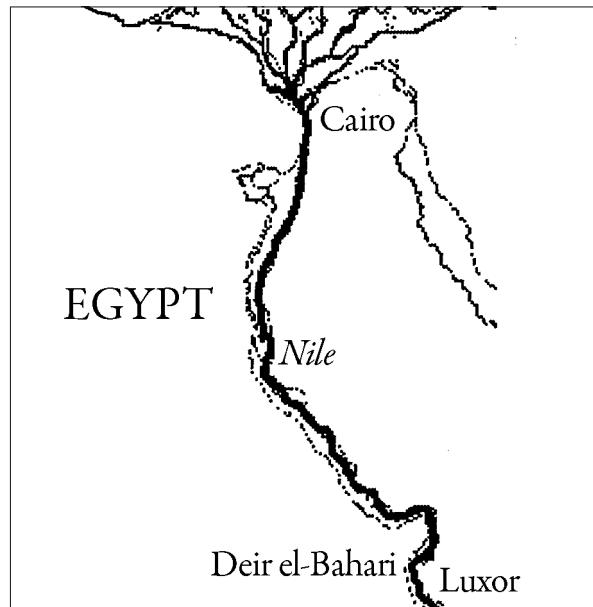
**INFORMATION ABOUT THE CLIFF MISSION AT DEIR EL-BAHARI, EGYPT, IN 2009
(PLS. 210–212)**

Site: Deir el-Bahari, District of Luxor, Egypt
Excavation Director: Andrzej Niwiński
Excavation team (IA UW): Sławomir Rzepka
Financial assistance: Ministry of Science and Higher Education, private sponsors
Fieldwork: 03–19.02.2009 and 12.10–14.11.2009

The Mission was created in 1999 in purpose of undertaking twofold research on the cliff overhanging the temple area at Deir el-Bahari (Upper Egypt, Luxor). One objective was to carry out an Egyptological examination of the cliff ledge situated above the temples of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III (**Fig. 1**), to detect all the traces of human activity. The other was a geological survey of the cliff face to estimate potential hazards to the temple of Hatshepsut.

The first of the aforementioned researches has brought since then numerous very important results. Some of them can be summarized as follows:

- over 250 ancient graffiti ranging in date from the 3rd millennium BC to the 5th c. AD have been found on the cliffs around the ledge; the most important are five inspection graffiti left by the Royal Scribe of the Necropolis, Butehamon, testifying to the importance of the place in the 11th century BC;
- ten robbery shafts (**Fig. 2**) have been discovered in the area being a hint of an important (royal?) tomb existence there;
- a system of ten ancient drains (**Fig. 3**) cut in the rock surface to control the speed and direction of rain waters has been discovered, suggestive of the existence of a tomb corridor underneath that was protected from humidity;
- the discovery of the man-made substance resembling very hard mortar, however used as a kind of artificial rock to camouflage openings made in the rock and to protect tectonic fissures cutting the area across, being probably in contact with the tomb corridor;
- the discovery of numerous remains of the ancient gigantic engineering works having for the purpose probably a protection of an entrance to the tomb in the area, including the use of many huge fragments of the rocks intentionally dropped down from the cliffs on a specially prepared artificial platform made of tons of debris accumulated on the slope;
- discovery of the bronze handle of a royal type dagger (**Fig. 4**) dated to the early 18th Dynasty (the 16th c. BC), together with several faience beads.



The discoveries testify to two main phases of the ancient activities on the ledge, both connected with an important tomb there: the ancient phase may probably be related to an early 18th Dynasty royal tomb, which can tentatively be identified with the tomb of the King Amenhotep I, known from various ancient sources, however not found so far. The tomb was plundered in the 11th century BC. The second phase may probably be related to the reusing of the tomb for a king soon after the robbery, in the 11th c. BC; the new owner may tentatively be identified with Herihor.

The second kind of the researches begun in 1999 resulted in the elimination of a number of the huge dangerous stones (**Fig. 5**) threatening the temple area below the ledge (the largest boulder weighted over 100 tons). Reports made by the geologists working with the mission have informed the Egyptian authorities about some other hazards from the weathered edge of the cliffs directly overhanging the temple of Hatshepsut. In the years 2007–2009 the activity of the Mission was concentrated on the removal of the last and most dangerous rock fragment (**Fig. 6**) weighting about 600 tons. This operation has successfully been accomplished, however the debris originated from the removed rock are still accumulated on the ledge, and must be transported down, with the use of modern debris transport device. This device was produced in 2010, and the transport operation will probably take place in

the Spring 2012. The next season of the excavations may bring, at the same time, the discovery of the tomb entrance.

Prof. dr hab. Andrzej Niwiński
Institute of Archaeology
University of Warsaw
andrzej.niwi.egypt@gmail.com

Bibliography

The results of the works done in the previous seasons have been presented, among others, in the following publications (in chronological order of publication):

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- 2009 *The tomb protection in the Theban 21st Dynasty: unknown archaeological facts gathered during the excavations of the Polish-Egyptian "Cliff Mission" at Deir el-Bahari in the seasons 1999–2006*, (in:) G.P.F. Broekman, R.J. Demarée, O.E. Kaper (eds.), *The Libyan Period in Egypt. Historical and cultural studies into the 21st–24th Dynasties: proceedings of a conference at Leiden University, 25–27 October 2007*, Leiden, 277–289.

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Information concerning the results of the Cliff Mission can be found on the web-site page: www.herhor.org.pl

ANDRZEJ NIWIŃSKI

INFORMACJA O PRACACH MISJI SKALNEJ W DEIR EL-BAHARI, EGIPT, W 2009 R.

Od 1999 trwają badania na skalnej półce usytuowanej ok. 100 m powyżej świątyń Hatszepsut i Totmesa III w Deir el-Bahari. Badania dostarczyły licznych przesłanek na istnienie w tym miejscu grobowca, prawdopodobnie królewskiego (są nimi m. in. prace starożytnych inżynierów, których celem było zabezpieczenie terenu przed rabusiami i wodą deszczową, inskrypcje inspekcyjne

starożytnych kontrolerów oraz starożytne wkopy rabunkowe).

Jednocześnie zadaniem Misji jest usuwanie zagrożeń dla niżej położonych świątyń ze strony groźnych kamieni zalegających na zboczu. Sezon 2009 był całkowicie poświęcony usuwaniu ostatniego z takich głazów; trudna operacja zakończyła się sukcesem.

PLATE 210

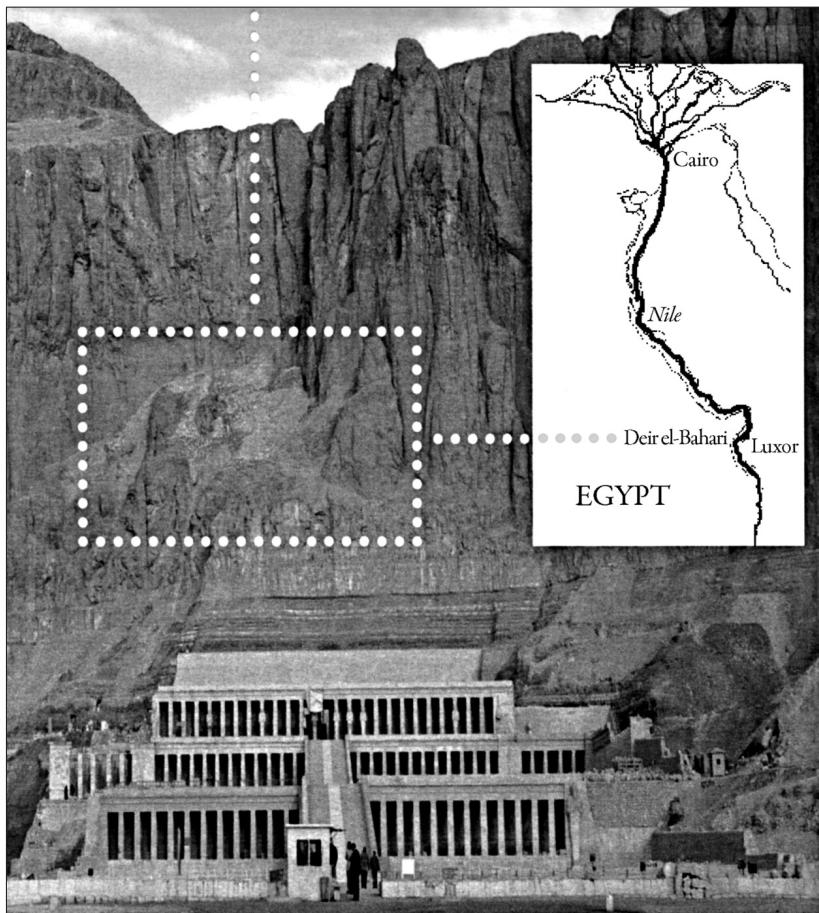


Fig. 1. Position of the excavation area above the temples of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III at Deir el-Bahari (K. Zachert).

Ryc. 1. Położenie rejonu wykopalisk nad świątyniami Hatszesput i Totmesa III w Deir el-Bahari.



Fig. 2. One of ten robbery shafts discovered on the area (Photo A. Niwiński).

Ryc. 2. Jeden z dziesięciu wkopów rabunkowych odkrytych w rejonie wykopalisk.

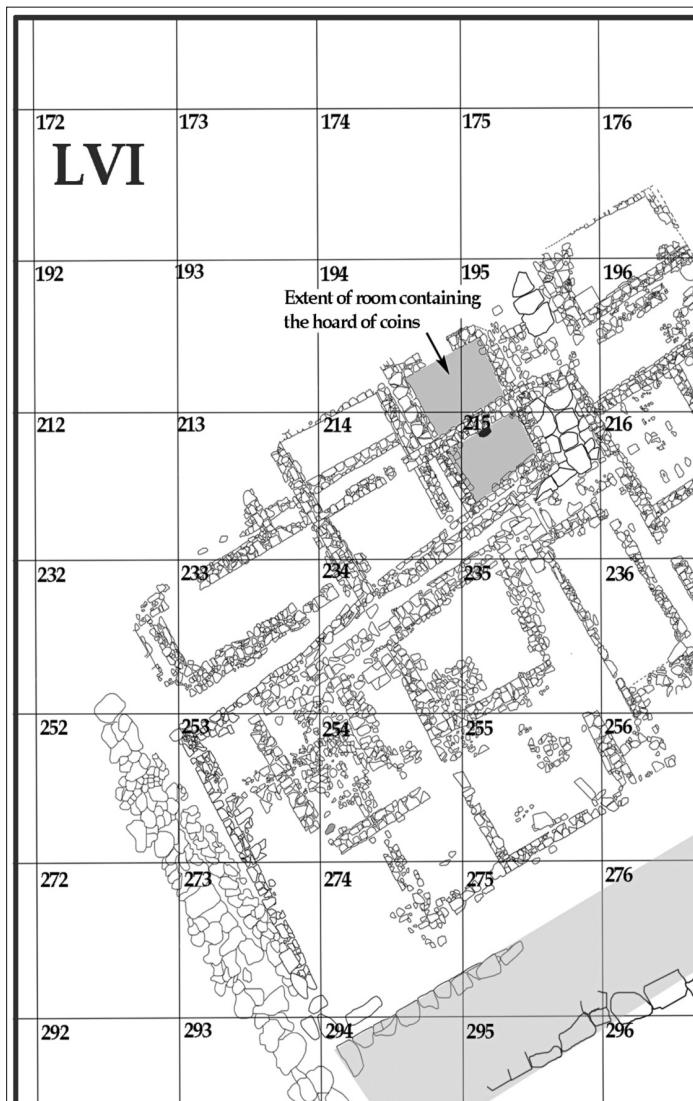


Fig. 3. One of the ancient drains serving to control the runoff of rain water (Photo A. Niwiński).

Ryc. 3. Jeden ze starożytnych drenów umożliwiających spływ wody deszczowej.



Fig. 4. The handle of the ceremonial dagger of the early 18th Dynasty type (16th c. BC) (Photo A. Niwiński).

Ryc. 4. Rękojeść ceremonialnego sztyletu, XVIII dynastia (XVI w. p.n.e.).

PLATE 212

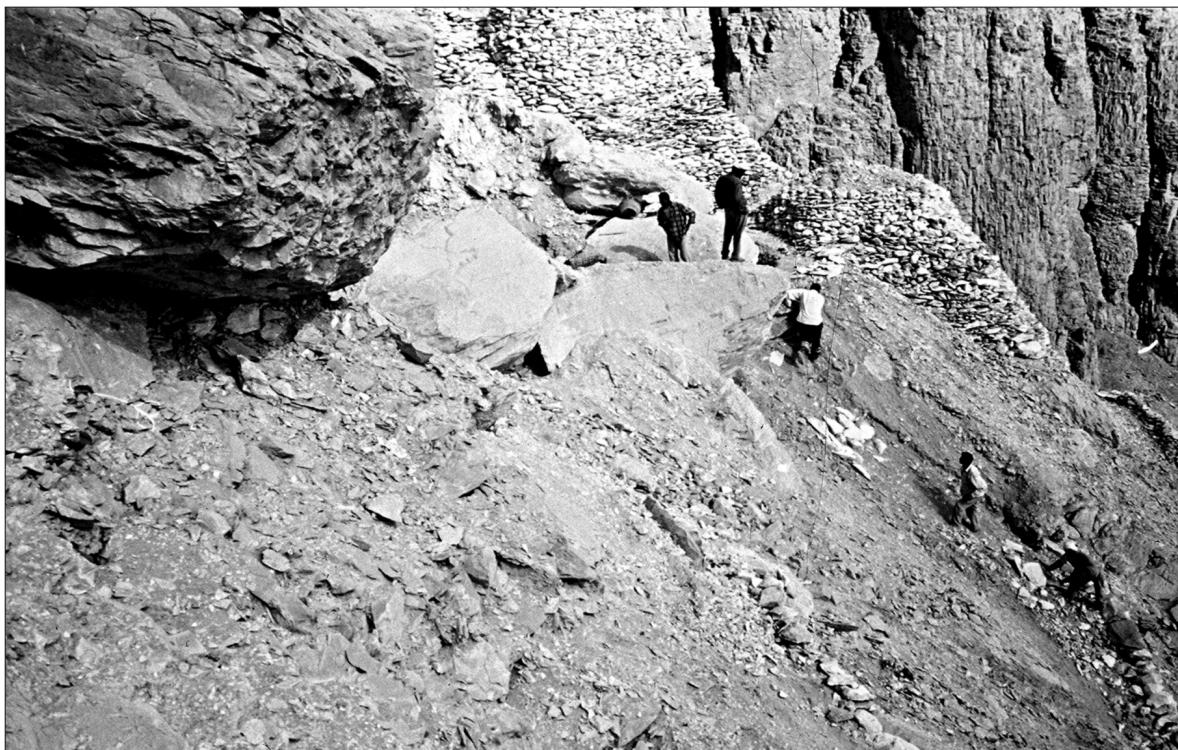


Fig. 5. The preparatory works (done in 2000) before the removal of one of the dangerous stones lying on the slope above the temple of Hatshepsut (Photo A. Niwiński).

Ryc. 5. Prace przygotowawcze w 2000 r. przed usunięciem jednego z niebezpiecznych głazów leżących na stoku nad świątynią Hatszepsut.

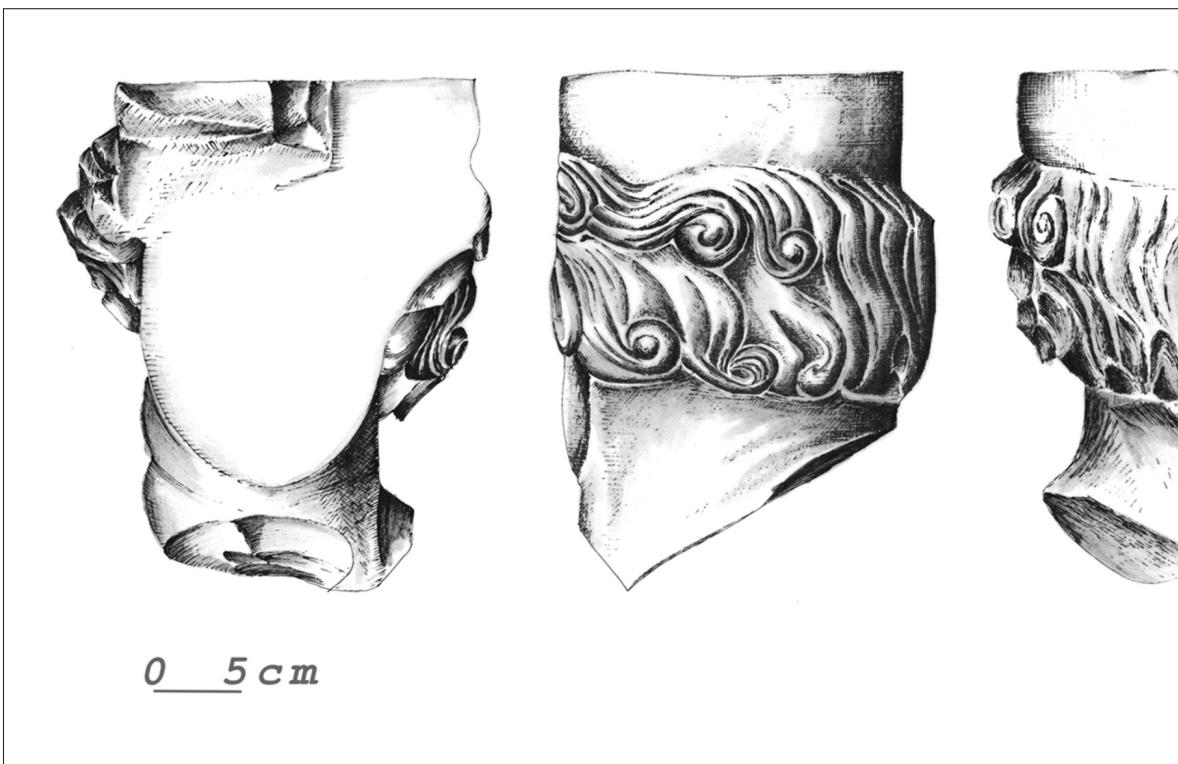


Fig. 6. The most dangerous rock fragment overhanging the temple of Thutmose III before the operation of its removal in 2009 (Photo A. Niwiński).

Ryc. 6. Najbardziej niebezpieczny blok skalny nad świątynią Totmesa III, przed jego usunięciem w 2009 r.