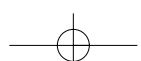
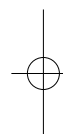
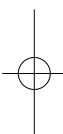


Jadwiga Lipińska



**DEIR EL-BAHARI
TEMPLE OF TUTHMOSIS III**





In 1961, when a Polish-Egyptian team embarked on studies for the reconstruction of the Queen Hatshepsut temple at Deir el-Bahari, Kazimierz Michałowski ordered the clearance of a huge heap of rocky debris outside the southwestern part of the third terrace of the great temple. Previous excavators had left the place unexplored and it had served them as a convenient spot for depositing garbage. Michałowski wanted to expose the southwestern part of the temple and in the process to check for architectural fragments for the reconstruction of the great temple. Unexpectedly, just two weeks after starting the clearance, early in 1962, partly preserved columns still standing on their bases were discovered and scattered among them were parts of broken statues and fragmentary polychrome reliefs. A hitherto unknown temple had been discovered.

The newly discovered temple soon proved to be one of the many edifices

founded by the great warrior and builder Tuthmosis III; it was called *Djeser-akhet* (Holy of Horizon) and was constructed in the last decade of the pharaoh's reign, about 1435-1425 BC, under the supervision of the vizier Rekhmire. The earliest written record of building activity dates to the pharaoh's 43rd regnal year. The site chosen for erecting the edifice was very unsuitable – a steep rocky slope between two standing temples of Mentuhotep-Nebhepetre and Hatshepsut. The rock surface had to be cut both vertically and horizontally to create a platform for the new building. Even so, the resulting space was irregular in shape and too narrow, and had to be widened by means of an artificial platform constructed as a huge stone frame filled with debris and covered with slabs. This created a temple terrace about 3.50 m higher than the neighboring upper part of the Hatshepsut temple and about 14 m higher than

the Mentuhotep temple platform. Pavement slabs were then laid and huge sandstone blocks placed for the bases of the columns, and then the building was constructed.

It was the uppermost part of the temple, because like other edifices at Deir el-Bahari the *Djeser-akhet* was a terraced structure with sloping ramps leading to the higher levels. The facades of these temples consisted of colonnaded or pillared porticoes flanking the ramps. With their three parallel processional avenues, the Deir el-Bahari temples created a harmonious architectural complex that is unmatched in the history of architecture; all the greater the pity that only one of these edifices, reconstructed, stands today.

The lower end of the Tuthmosis III temple ramp can still be seen, unlike the porticoes of which only meager foundations can be traced. A number of decorated fragments of square pillars from the porticoes were also found. The only part of the temple that escaped destruction was the innermost part of the shrine of the cow-goddess Hathor. The finely decorated shrine, discovered in 1906 behind the northwestern corner of the Mentuhotep temple, had been transferred to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo together with its beautiful statue of the goddess Hathor as a cow.

Clearing of the upper, main part of the temple continued until 1967 and in recent decades the site was partly restored to stop further destruction. The ruins consisted of the remnants of a great colonnaded hall preceded by the entrance portico and a row of shrines behind it. An earthquake at the end of the New Kingdom destroyed part of the building, including the artificial platform and all of the constructions on it. Those built

on the rock platform were damaged but survived: the lower drums of some polygonal columns still in place on their bases, parts of the pavements and wall foundations, the door jambs (including lower parts of a red granite doorway) and many scattered elements. On this basis it was possible to reconstruct theoretically the original shape of the building.

The great colonnaded hall was the most impressive part of the building and one of great importance for the history of ancient Egyptian architecture. In size (38 x 26.50 m) it conformed to the so called Upper Court of the Hatshepsut temple, and it was likewise furnished with colonnades framing the center. Were it not for rebuilding even while the temple was under construction, it would have probably been an exact copy of Hatshepsut's court. It had 76 sixteen-sided polygonal columns (c. 0.90 m in diameter, 5.60 m high) surrounding a double row of twelve larger 32-faceted columns (1.10 m in diameter) evidently supporting a roof on a level higher than in the aisles. Judging by the fragments of mullioned windows, the interior was lighted from above and constructed as a basilica, the second one in Egyptian temple architecture after the earlier Karnak hall of the Jubilee temple *Akh-menu* founded also by Tuthmosis III. But the architectural scheme of that basilica is quite different and the one at Deir el-Bahari appears to be a step forward toward the hypostyles of the Nineteenth Dynasty.

From the hypostyle one entered a Bark Room and sanctuary or possibly even two sanctuaries, one for each of the two forms of Amun worshipped in the temple, Amun-Re and Amun-Kamutef. After the Eighteenth Dynasty the goddess Hathor appears to have become mistress of the whole

temple, as witnessed by numerous pilgrims' graffiti left on the walls and columns.

The debris covering the ruins yielded thousands of pieces of fragmentary wall decoration with admirably fresh polychromy preserved on the delicate reliefs. This state of preservation is certainly due to the comparatively short, in terms of ancient Egypt, existence of the temple (from the 15th to the 11th century BC) and the limited time during which the roofless shrines stood open to the elements. In the partly ruined building stonemasons took over and wall blocks, architraves, ceiling slabs and other elements of the temple were dismantled, then cut for re-use and the decoration chiseled away. The resulting flakes of stone can be fitted together, like a gigantic jigsaw puzzle, but without an expensive program for the restoration and recreation of missing blocks the reconstruction of the temple decoration remains a purely theoretical undertaking.

Archaeologists began studying the five thousand complete or only partly damaged wall blocks of limestone and sandstone, and the innumerable smaller fragments and paper-thin flakes in 1978 and they have still to finish the work (which was interrupted in 1996). Nonetheless, the iconographic scheme has been worked out for most of the temple walls and a publication is under preparation. This work was carried out by a Polish-Egyptian team of archaeologists, restorers and artists, and supported financially by the Supreme Council of Antiquities of Egypt and the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw, supervised by the author of this contribution.

The decoration was typical of the period, encompassing three main themes: Offering Ritual with the king offering alter-

nately to two forms of Amun, scenes of royal cult (e.g. symbolic coronation, purification, leading the king or embracing him by the god or goddess and suckling him by Hathor, and lastly, the procession of the *Beautiful Feast of the Valley* with the sacred bark of Amun carried by priests or standing on its stand. All the images of gods, except Atum, were destroyed during the Amarna period and later restored. The sacred bark of Amun was also hacked away, a layer of plaster was spread on the uneven surface in place of the original relief and a new image of a bark with the name of Horemheb was painted on it. It is likely that all the restorations in the temple were ordered by this king. All the inscriptions concerning the gods were destroyed and later restored, and their background was painted white, unlike the original Tuthmoside gray-blue. All the untouched images of the king retained their original appearance and polychromy, and in some cases they are the only existing records of colors of the royal attire, as e.g. the red kilt (*sendjot*) worn together with the Red Crown in some scenes of the king running to the god. Indeed, the materials brought to light in the ruined temple of Tuthmosis III contain representations never encountered in contemporary tombs or in other temples where the colors have vanished. Consequently, their importance for studies of the art of the first half of the Eighteenth Dynasty cannot be underestimated. Other finds from the ruins of the temple included royal, divine and private statuary, votive stelae and other offerings. One of the most important finds was a statue of Tuthmosis III enthroned, made of dark gray quartz-diorite and almost 2 m tall. Another discovered statue, sculpted of white, partly polychromed marble, depicted a striding king. In the early 20th cen-

ture, Edouard Naville excavating in the temple of Mentuhotep found a faceless head with torso which he sent to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The face and several other fragments were recovered by the Polish team from the ruins of the Tuthmosis III temple; the face is now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, but other fragments which could be used in a partial restoration of the statue, are still in the stores. Parts of four or five red-granite headless statues of the same king were also discovered, as well as a head which may have belonged to a statue of Amenhotep III. The statuary found in the temple of Mentuhotep must have slid there from the edifice of Tuthmosis III at the time of its destruction. But how did some pretty big stone fragments from the ruined Mentuhotep temple ascend almost 17 m to be left in the debris covering the site of the Tuthmosis III temple? Fragmentary reliefs

from the building of Hatshepsut were also found there, but in their case it seems likely that they were moved there in effect of Ptolemaic or Coptic activity inside the queen's temple.

Once the ancient stonecutters ceased quarrying the ruins for materials, the remains of the temple slowly disappeared under a mound of rubble. In Coptic times, the area was made into a burial ground: several naturally mummified bodies of the monks from the nearby monastery installed inside the Hatshepsut temple were found on the site.

In considering the Tuthmosis III temple today, we must imagine how it once dominated the complex of temples at Deir el-Bahari, creating in effect a perfect architectural setting – like a stage – for the function it was made to serve, that is, receiving processions during the *Beautiful Feast of the Valley*.

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*Amun Kamutef, wall block from the temple of Tuthmosis III
(Photo J. Lipińska's archives)*





Remains of the colonnaded hall in the
Tuthmosis III temple at Deir el-Bahari
(Photo J. Lipińska's archives)

Tuthmosis III on partly assembled
fragments of a wall block
(Photo J. Lipińska's archives)



*Statue of Tuthmosis III discovered in 1965
(Photo J. Lipińska's archives)*





Wall blocks and fragments of blocks
from the temple of Tuthmosis in storage
(Photo J. Lipińska's archives)

Model of three temples at Deir el-Bahari, from left
to right, Mentuhotep, Tuthmosis III, Queen Hatshepsut
(Photo J. Lipińska's archives)

