

Funerary cones from the Polish-Egyptian excavations in the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari



Abstract: This paper presents a collection of funerary cones discovered by the Polish-Egyptian expedition in the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari between 1982 and 2022. One of these cones was found in the vicinity of its original context, while the others originated from various parts of the Theban necropolis. The latter belong to secondary materials brought to the temple by Coptic monks with the intention of repurposing them. This article examines the possible circumstances under which these cones were brought to the temple.

Keywords: funerary cone, Theban necropolis, Deir el-Bahari, the Temple of Hatshepsut, Coptic monks, reused

INTRODUCTION

Between the 1980s and early 2000s, the archaeological activity of the Polish-Egyptian expedition at Deir el-Bahari focused on the third terrace of the Temple of Hatshepsut (Stefanowicz 1982; Pawlicki 1999: 122; 2000: 165; Szafranski 2001: 196–199; Barwik 2003). The most significant result of this work was the full

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exposure of a cemetery established on the site during the Third Intermediate Period¹ (Barwik 2011; Szafranski 2015; Payraudeau 2018; Sheikholeslami 2018). In recent years, excavations have been carried out on the lower terraces of the monument, concentrating in particular on the Hathor Cult Complex, located in the southern part of the lower and middle courtyards (Chudzik 2021; 2022). This work led to the uncovering of another section of the post-New Kingdom necropolis and also focused on a long open avenue running along the southern edge of the middle terrace, where materials dating to the early construction phase of Hatshepsut's temple and the periods preceding it were uncovered (see, for instance, Weźranowska and Wodzińska 2021).

During these 40 years of exploration, the team found only a small collection of funerary cones, which should not be surprising, given that these objects were typically inserted above the entrances of private mortuary cult chapels (Galán and Borrego 2006: 203; Polz 2007: 254–264; Zenihiro 2009: 12–15). The assemblage in question consists of 10 pieces, all of which are in a fragmentary state of preservation. These were exposed in disturbed contexts, alongside the remains of burials and artifacts related to the activity of Coptic monks. Six cones were found in the secondary fills of shaft tombs dated to the Third Intermediate Period, located in different parts of the temple, while the other four were found in trenches opened in various spaces of the temenos.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MATERIAL

EARLY MIDDLE KINGDOM CONE (INV. NOS 2732 AND 2735)

The oldest cone, predating the construction of the Temple of Hatshepsut, was recently discovered during excavations in the western part of the long passageway running along the south side of the middle terrace, currently known as the Hathor Path [Fig. 1] (Chudzik 2021: 60, 65–66). The cone is preserved in three pieces, two of which were unearthed in sector O (Inv. No. 2735) and one in sector M (Inv. No. 2732). Both sectors are located near the entrance to tomb MMA

28, where the cone was originally placed. The name of the tomb's owner, and therefore of the cone's owner, remains unknown. However, it is most likely that the tomb was constructed for a member of Nebhepetra Mentuhotep II's family (Thomas 1966: 16; Chudzik 2021: 65). The fragments were uncovered in a layer of rock rubble, without any stratigraphic sequence, mixed together with fragments of decorated limestone blocks, pottery sherds, clay and faience shabti figurines, faience mummy beads, linen, fragments of wooden objects, and animal bones.

¹ All of these shaft tombs were discovered as far back as the 19th century but have never been the subject of any studies or publications. Early explorers generally sought complete artifacts of high antiquarian significance, while destroyed, broken, and fragmentarily preserved objects were of no interest to them and were thrown back into the tombs (see Sheikholeslami 2003: 133–136; Chudzik 2022: 125).

The flat, circular end of the cone was unstamped, which is typical of early Middle Kingdom cones in the Theban necropolis.² The object was hand-shaped,

as evidenced by delicate fingerprints [Fig. 2]. Its surface was colored red before firing and carelessly painted white afterward. The cone was very carefully

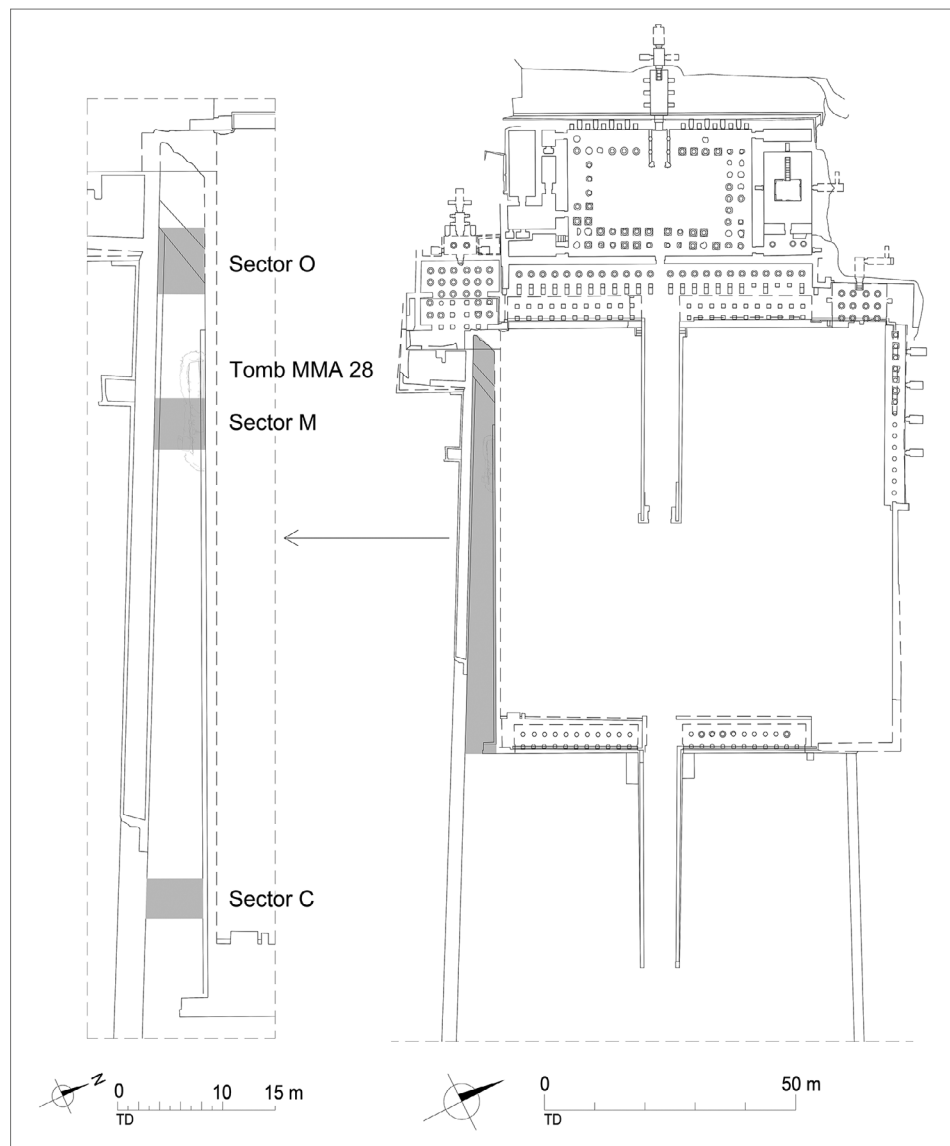


Fig. 1. Plan of the temple with the location of the findspots on the Hathor Path (PCMA UW | drawing T. Dziedzic, update U. Kraśniewska)

² The earliest stamped cones were found in two tombs of the Twelfth Dynasty at Naga el-Deir (see Sayce 1905: 163–164; Davies and Macadam 1957: No. 347 and No. 555; Zenihiro 2009: 150, 212–213).

executed, especially at the rounded end. In its present state, the cone measures approximately 16 cm in its greatest preserved length, and the diameter of its flat end is 7.4 cm.

Unstamped Middle Kingdom cones, typically much larger than their later counterparts, have been widely attested throughout the Theban necropolis. Similar cones were found, for example, by H.E. Winlock, still *in situ* in the façade of one of the Middle Kingdom tombs located near the sepulcher of Senenmut (TT 353) (Winlock 1928: 6–7, Figs 1 and 4). Analogous specimens have also been uncovered in the tombs of high-ranking officials at North Asasif (Chudzik 2016: 295; 2017: 193–195, Fig. 11).



Fig. 2. Early Middle Kingdom funerary cone found near tomb MMA 28 (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki)

FUNERARY CONES OF MENTUEMHAT

The collection of stamped cones is dominated by those belonging to Mentuemhat, a powerful mayor and priest of Thebes during the reigns of Taharqa and Psametik I (cf. Leclant 1961). The cones of Mentuemhat have been discovered in various parts of the Theban necropolis (Dziobek 1994: 42). The first two lines of these cones are virtually identical, but

they vary in the subsequent part of the text, which led to the identification of 14 types. In the collection in question, three of these types are attested.

Cones Inv. Nos 185 and 3837

Both cones belong to the same type as Daressy's cone No. 163 and Davies and Macadam's cone No. 461. Cones of this type record Mentuemhat's titles: hereditary noble, mayor (*jrj-p^t h3tj-^c*), fourth prophet of Amun (*hm-ntr 4 nw Imn*), scribe of the temple, house of Amun (*sš hwt-ntr pr-Imn*), vice-overseer of prophets in the temples (*shd hmw-ntr m hwt*), and overseer of Upper Egypt (*jmj-r^c sm^cw*). Two other examples of this type were unearthed at Medinet Habu (Teeter and Wilfong 2003: 182).

The first of these cones, Inv. No. 185, was found during excavations in the southwestern part of the Chapel of Hatshepsut in 1982, where the mouth of the shaft of an unfinished tomb (Tomb IX) was exposed [Fig. 3] (Wysocki 1992: 457; Szafranski 2008: 274–280, Fig. 5; 2015: 185–191, Figs 1 and 3, Table 1). The excavation brought to light remains of Third Intermediate Period burials, along with pottery sherds, mud stoppers, a leather-bound book board, and wooden furniture elements, all Coptic in date.

The smallest piece, measuring 2.3 cm in its greatest preserved length, is covered with the remains of a stamped impression of a hieroglyphic inscription containing the title and name of the owner [Fig. 4]. The text was originally written in four lines from right to left, although only fragments of the last two have been preserved. The text reads as follows:

Transliteration:

3. (→) ... [shd] hmw-[ntr] m hwt

4. (→) ...[Mntw]-m-h^ct m³c-hrw

Translation:

3. [vice-overseer] of prophets in the temples

4. [Mentu]emhat, the justified.

The second cone, Inv. No. 3837, was unearthed during the exploration of a shaft in Tomb XXVI, located in the northwest corner of the Hathor Shrine sanctuary [see Fig. 3] (Chudzik 2022: 144). The pit tomb dates to the Third Intermediate Period, but the uncovered material indicates that

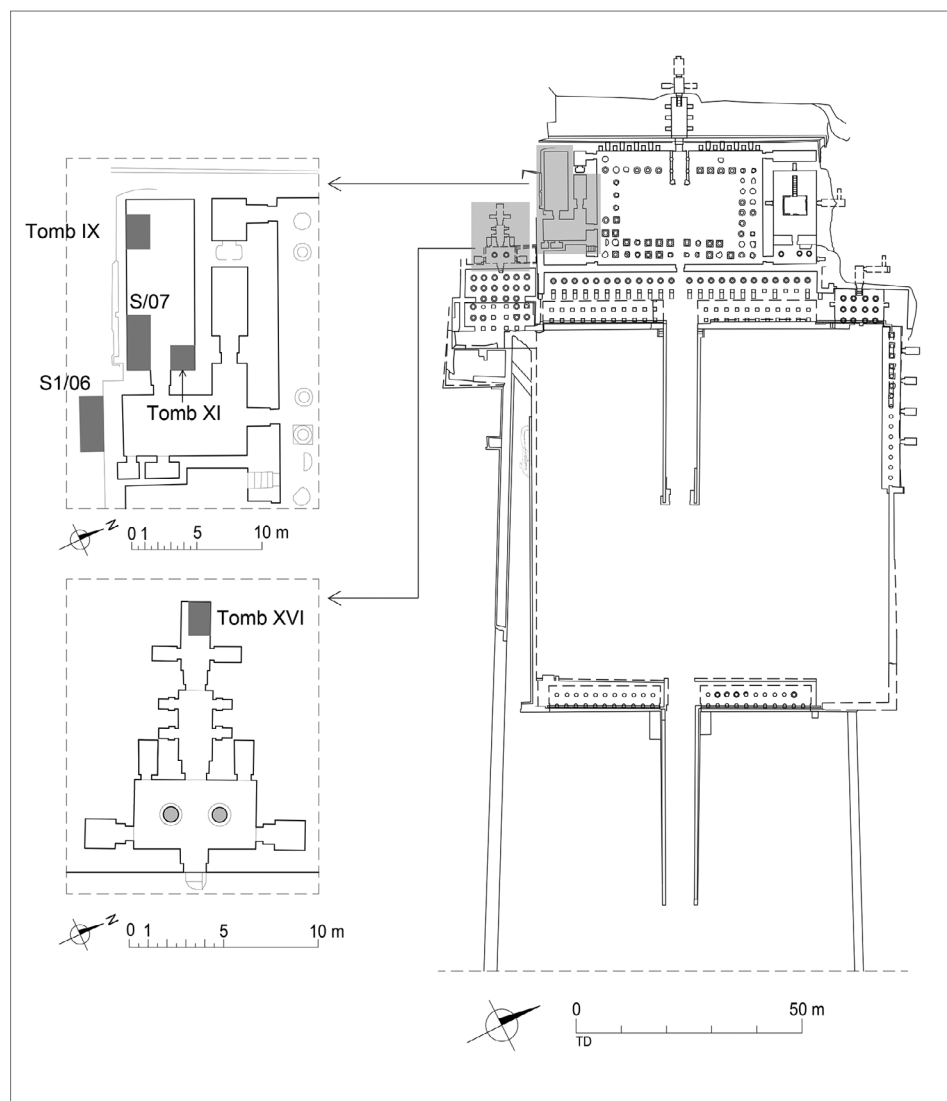


Fig. 3. Location of the findspots on the Middle and Upper Terraces (PCMA UW | drawing T. Dziedzic, update U. Kraśniewska)

it was looted in antiquity and rediscovered in modern times. The objects brought to light during the excavation belonged to several burials from both the beginning and end of the Third Intermediate Period, including fragments of decorated wooden coffins, cartonnages, and wooden funerary figurines. The Roman era is also represented, particularly by fragments of mummy masks and pottery sherds. At the current stage of research, it is unclear whether all these objects originated from burials within this tomb or were perhaps thrown into its underground chambers during backfilling by modern explorers. Fragments of human mummies and remains of grave goods were mixed with Coptic pottery and scraps of newspaper.

The cone discovered in the tomb was hand-shaped from Nile silt and covered with white paint, remnants of which can still be seen on its surface [Fig. 5]. The diameter of the round end is 8.4 cm, and its greatest preserved length is 12.0 cm.

Remains of the inscription, originally consisting of four lines, are preserved on the flat end, though only a very small part of the second line and some hieroglyphs from the last two lines have survived. The text reads:

Transliteration:

3. (→) ... *shd ḥmw ntr m ḥwt*,
4. (→) ... *M[ntw]-m-ḥ3t m3^c-[hrw]*

Translation:

3. ...vice-overseer of the prophets in the temples,
4. ...M[entu]emhat, the justified.

Cones Inv. Nos 356 and 357

These two cones can be classified as the same type as Daressy's cone No. 202 and Davies and Macadam's cone No. 418. The inscription on this type contains only one title of Mentuemhat (fourth prophet of Amun), but it also mentions the name of the last of his three wives, Wadjarenes, who had an Egyptian name but, as the granddaughter of King Piye, descended



Fig. 4. Funerary cone of Mentuemhat (Inv. No. 185) (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki, drawing A. Filipek)

from the Kushite royal family (Dodson and Hilton 2010: 236–237, 240). In addition to the funerary cones of Mentuemhat, she is also known from reliefs in his tomb (Russmann 1997: 24–39). Cones of this type were found, for example, in the

Middle Kingdom tomb of Dagi (TT 103), situated on the northern slope of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna (Davies 1913: 30–31).

The first of these cones, Inv. No. 356, was found during the exploration of Tomb XI, located in the northeastern



Fig. 5. Funerary cone of Mentuemhat (Inv. No. 3837) (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki, drawing A. Filipek)



Fig. 6. Funerary cone of Mentuemhat (Inv. No. 356) (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki, drawing A. Filipek)

corner of the Chapel of Hatshepsut, in 2004 [see Fig. 3] (Szafranski 2005: 226, 230, Figs 7–8). The fill of the tomb contained Coptic objects, such as pottery sherds and a piece of a tunic, as well as human remains, fragments of mud-brick, and decorated limestone blocks from the offering chapels of both Hatshepsut and Thutmose I.

The stamped end of this cone contains the name and title of the deceased [Fig. 6]. Its diameter is 8.0 cm, and its greatest preserved length is 7.6 cm. The inscription consists of four lines of text written from right to left, with the beginning of almost every line being diminished or very faint. The hieroglyphic inscription reads:

Transliteration:

1. (→) *jm3hy h[r 3sjr]*
2. (→) *[h]m-ntr 4 nw Tmn Mntw-m-ht m3-hrw*
3. (→) *[hmt]=f mrt=f rht-nswt nbt pr*
4. (→) *[Wd3]-rn=s m3t-hrw*

Translation:

1. Revered one before [Osiris],
2. fourth prophet of Amun, Mentuemhat justified,
3. his [wife] whom he loved, king's acquaintance, mistress of the house,
4. [Wdja]renes, the justified.

From the same context comes another cone of the same type, Inv. No. 357 [Fig. 7]. It is a fragment of a hand-shaped cone made from Nile silt, red-slipped before firing, and whitewashed afterward. In its present state, the diameter of the stamped end is 8.5 cm, and its greatest preserved length is 10.2 cm. The cone was sealed with four horizontal lines of hieroglyphic text, which, although heavily worn, can still be read from right to left as follows:

Transliteration:

1. (→) *jm3hy hr 3sjr*
2. (→) *[hm-ntr 4 nw T]mn Mntw-m-ht m3-hrw*
3. (→) *[hmt=f] mrt=f rht-nswt nbt pr*
4. (→) *[Wd3-r]n=s m3t-hrw*



Fig. 7. Funerary cone of Mentuemhat (Inv. No. 357) (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki, drawing A. Filipek)

Translation:

1. Revered one before Osiris,
2. [fourth prophet of A]mun, Mentuemhat justified,
3. [his wife] whom he loved, king's acquaintance, mistress of the house,
4. [Wdjare]nes, the justified.

Cone Inv. No. 524

The last cone of Mentuemhat belongs to the same type as Daressy's cone No. 203 and Davies and Macadam's cone No. 420. On the extant fragment, his titlature is not preserved, but from other examples of this type, it is known that the title "fourth prophet of Amun" was written at the beginning of the second line. The stamped inscription ends with a fragment of the name of Mentuemhat's second wife, Shepenmut. Similar to Wadjarenes, Shepenmut is known from several scenes in TT 34 (Russmann 1997: 22–24). Analogous cones were widely distributed throughout the Theban necropolis (Dziobek 1994: 42).

This cone was unearthed during the exploration of the southeastern portion of the Offering Chapel of Hatshepsut in 2007 (S/07) [see Fig. 3] (Szafranski 2010: 255–259, Figs 4–6). The excavation led to the discovery of the remains of the pavement of the Coptic church, rock-hewn structures of the same period, and Third Intermediate Period tombs later reused by monks. The material uncovered was dominated by Coptic burial shrouds and pottery sherds but also contained remains of pharaonic material.

A fragment of the flat end of a hand-shaped Nile silt cone with an inscription was also discovered [Fig. 8]. This piece is too small to determine its original diameter, but its greatest preserved length is 4.0 cm. Fragments of three of the four lines of text, inscribed from right to left, have survived. The cone was originally coated in white, as evidenced by the remains of paint preserved on its side. The inscription on the base reads:



Fig. 8. Funerary cone of Mentuemhat (Inv. No. 524) (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki, drawing A. Filipek)

Transliteration:

2. (→) ...[M]*nṯw-m-ḥ3t m3-ḥrw*,
3. (→) ... *rḥt-nswt nbt pr*,
4. (→) [*Šp-n*]-*mwt m3ṯt-ḥrw*

Translation:

2. ... [Me]ntuemhat, the justified,
3. ...king's acquaintance, mistress of the house,
4. ...[Shepen]mut, the justified.

FUNERARY CONE OF NAKHT (INV. NO. 3794)

Nakht was the owner of an unnumbered tomb discovered above TT 69 on the east face of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna (Taher 2008: 13–14). His title —“first king's son before Amun” (*s3-nswt tpy n ḥ3t Imn*)— is known from other examples found in TT 69 and near TT 253 on the northern side of el-Khokha (see Mond 1904: 103; Strudwick and Strudwick 1996: 130, 150 respectively). The cones of Nakht were classified as the same type as Daressy's cone No. 48 and Davies and Macadam's cone No. 76,

usually stamped with a matrix containing four columns of hieroglyphic text written from left to right. However, the piece in question contains only fragments of the third and fourth columns, mentioning the name of the owner and his wife, Mutnofret. The name Nakht was very popular during the Middle and New Kingdoms, but the latter date for our cone seems more plausible (see Ranke 1935: 209).

The cone of Nakht was unearthed during the exploration of a shaft in Tomb XXVI located in the northwest corner of the Hathor Shrine sanctuary [see Fig. 3] (Chudzik 2022: 144). The pit tomb dates to the Third Intermediate Period, but the material uncovered suggests that it had been looted in antiquity and rediscovered in modern times. The objects brought to light during the excavation belonged to several burials dated to both the beginning and end of the Third Intermediate Period, including fragments of decorated wooden coffins, cartonnages, and wooden funerary

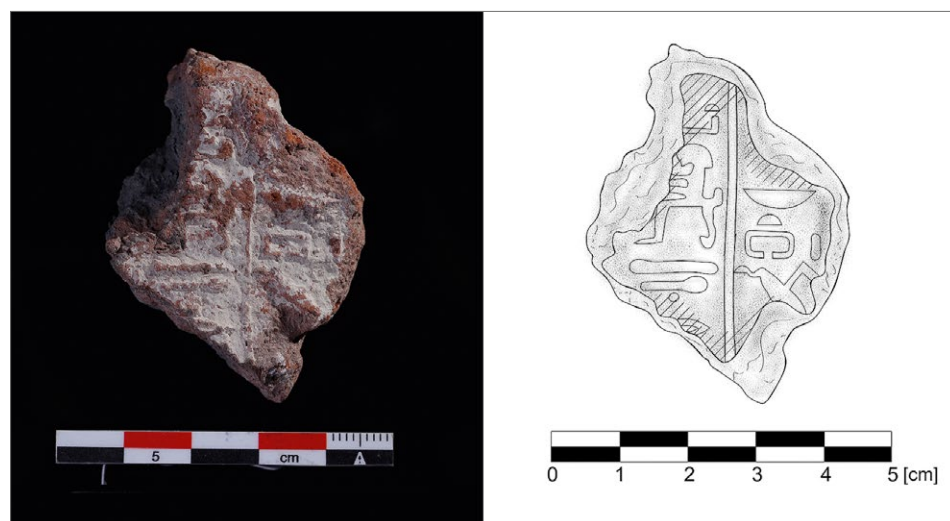


Fig. 9. Funerary cone of Nakht (Inv. No. 3794) (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki, drawing A. Filipek)

figurines. The Roman era is also represented, particularly by fragments of mummy masks and pottery sherds. At the current stage of research, it is unclear whether all these burials were originally deposited in this tomb, or were perhaps thrown into its underground chambers during backfilling by modern explorers. Fragments of human mummies and remains of grave goods were mixed with Coptic pottery and scraps of newspaper.

The small fragment of a cone discovered in this tomb is made of Nile silt, with the remains of a stamped impression [Fig. 9]. The maximum width reaches 5.3 cm, and its maximum length is 3.8 cm. The cone was molded and covered with a thin layer of white paint. The cones of Nakht were usually stamped with a matrix containing four columns of hieroglyphic text written from left to right, but the piece in question contains only fragments of the third and fourth columns, mentioning the name of the owner and his wife, Mutnofret. The text on the fragment can be read as follows:

Transliteration:

3. (←↓) ...[N]ht m3^c-hrw hr [Im]n,

4. (←↓) [sn]t=f nbt pr Mwt-...

Translation:

3. [N]akht, the justified before Amun,

4. his [wife], mistress of the house, Mut...

FUNERARY CONE OF HEBY (INV. NO. 507)

Heby was an accountant of cattle of Amun and of the Nomes of Upper and Lower Egypt (*sš ḥsb jḥw n Imn sp3t šm^cw mḥw*), most likely buried at Dra Abu el-Naga, though the exact location of his tomb remains unknown (cf. Serrano Delgado 2005: 92). His cones have been discovered in various parts of Dra Abu el-Naga (Gauthier 1908: 124; Northampton, Spiegelberg, and Newberry 1908: 4, Pls 2 and 25), with two additional examples brought to light in Armant (Drower and Myers 1940: 101). These cones belong to Daressy's category No. 10 and Davies and Macadam's category No. 15. Their exact date remains uncertain, but the male



Fig. 10. Funerary cone of Heby (Inv. No. 507) (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki, drawing A. Filipek)

name Heby is attested on several monuments from the New Kingdom (Ranke 1935: 236).

This cone was found in 2006 during excavations on the south side of the Vestibule of the Chapel of Hatshepsut, outside the boundaries of *Djeser-djeseru* [see Fig. 3]. The trench (S.01.06) was opened at the boundary between the temples of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III to examine the southern wall of the Vestibule and prepare it for further restoration and conservation work (Szafrński 2008: 280, Fig. 5). The exposed material consisted of dried and baked bricks, pottery from the New Kingdom, late Roman, and Coptic periods, fragments of funerary cones, as well as fragments of sandstone slabs and/or blocks possibly belonging to the temples of Mentuhotep II or Thutmose III. Stratigraphic analysis has established only that the destruction of this part of the temple occurred in Coptic times, likely when the discovered materials were deposited at the site.

The specimen discovered at Deir el-Bahari is a fragment of a hand-shaped cone made from Nile silt [Fig. 10]. Its stamped end is 8.1 cm in diameter, while its greatest preserved length reaches 15.6 cm. The cone was red-slipped before firing and whitewashed afterward. The text on the base is badly worn, but some hieroglyphs, inscribed in five columns from left to right, can still be read as follows:

Transliteration:

1. (→↓) [*jm3h*]y *hr 3sjr*
2. (→↓) ...[*Imn*] *sp3wt [šmꜥw mhw]*
3. (→↓) [*hb*]y *m3-hrw s3 sš ...*
4. (→↓) [*hw*] *n Imn Sn-ms [m3-hrw]*
5. (→↓) *ms.n nbt pr Rwj3*

Translation:

1. Revered one before Osiris,
2. ... [Amun] and of the Nomes of [Upper and Lower Egypt],
3. [Heb]y, the justified ...
4. ... [cattle] of Amun, born of Senmose, [the justified],
5. born of the mistress of the house Ruia.

During the work conducted on the south side of the Hatshepsut Chapel Vestibule, a fragment of another cone (Inv. No. 506) was discovered. Unfortunately, its inscription had already worn away to the point where it was impossible to read its contents. The dimensions of the cone are 8.0 cm in diameter and 15.6 cm in maximum length. Both the size and production technique of the cone are very similar to those of the previously mentioned cone of Heby, suggesting that it may belong to the same owner.

UNKNOWN OWNER (INV. NO. 4102)

During the exploration of sector C, located in the eastern part of the Hathor Path, at a depth of 0.8–1.0 m, another fragment of a funerary cone was found [see Fig. 1]. The layer of rock rubble contained numerous fragments of human bones, clay shabti figurines, cartonnages, linen, and pottery, most likely thrown out during the exploration of one of the nearby Tombs XXI or XXII dated to the Third Intermediate Period (Chudzik 2022: 127–130). In addition to the remains of dynastic burials, a small number of Coptic pottery sherds were unearthed.

The small funerary cone fragment discovered was molded from Nile silt. Its maximum width reaches 5.4 cm, and its greatest preserved length is 6.8 cm.

The flat end was originally stamped with a hieroglyphic inscription, which, however, has been almost completely worn away, making it impossible to read. The cone was covered with a thin layer of

pink paint on the sides and cream on the base. These colors were most likely obtained by first coating the surface of the cone with red paint and then applying white paint.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The funerary cones in question represent only a small part of the repertoire of finds from the Temple of Hatshepsut. Nevertheless, they are of significant value for several reasons. Firstly, the collection contains an early Middle Kingdom cone, which is the first example of its kind at the royal temple site at Deir el-Bahari. Furthermore, if the tomb to which it is attributed indeed belonged to a member of Mentuhotep II's family, this would be the first known example of a cone found in a royal context. From the perspective of the described assemblage, it is arguably the only item that was never reused afterward.

Secondly, the Temple of Hatshepsut was certainly not the original context of the cones with stamped inscriptions,

which, as the names of their owners indicate, originated from various parts of the Theban necropolis. These cones were brought to Deir el-Bahari and adapted by Coptic monks, as confirmed by observations made at other monastic sites in Western Thebes. Pharaonic objects, such as the funerary cones of Mentuemhat, stamped mud-bricks, and fragments of coffins, from the surrounding area, were found during the excavation of the monastery of St Epiphanius, erected on the courtyard of the Eleventh Dynasty tomb of Vizier Dagi (TT 103), situated on Sheikh Abd el-Qurna (Davies 1913: 30–31; Winlock and Crum 1926: 17, 26, 46). Another example of objects reused by the monks was recorded in the her-

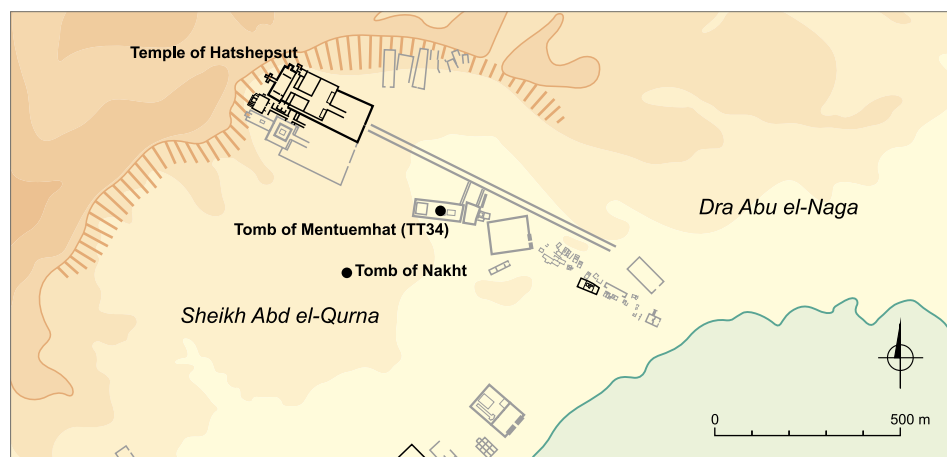


Fig. 11. Plan of the central part of the Theban necropolis with the original location of the cones discovered in the Temple of Hatshepsut (Drawing M. Momot)

mitage installed in two early Middle Kingdom tombs (MMA 1151 and 1152) located to the south of the unfinished royal temple in the Third Valley. Bricks with stamped cartouches of kings Thutmose IV and Siptah were reused as building material; New Kingdom stelae served as floor slabs; and funerary cones were used as stoppers for amphorae of the LR7 type (Górecki 2014: 142–144; see also Kopp 2014). Among the materials discovered in the Temple of Hatshepsut, other objects that were brought by the monks and reused in ways that differed from their original purpose can also be identified (see Godlewski 1986: 32–33, 116–117). The first of these are fragments of sandstone columns inscribed with the titulary of Ramesses II, which originated from the Ramesseum and were reused as basins (Barwik 1990–1991). From the same place came a slab of sandstone belonging to Ramesses II's brother-in-law, named Tia, found in one of the shaft

tombs in the Chapel of the Mortuary Cult of Hatshepsut (Barwik 2007).

Finally, identifying the original contexts of the cones in question also makes it possible to trace the paths taken by the monks living at Deir el-Bahari [Fig. 11]. This explains the predominance of cones from TT 34, which, being closest to the Hatshepsut temple, was on the route to other parts of Western Thebes. On the other hand, it cannot be excluded that cones from more remote parts of the necropolis were sent to Deir el-Bahari by monks living in those areas, as may be suggested by the intensive contacts between monastic sites in the Theban necropolis, documented in the form of exchanges of messages written on ostraca or objects made in individual monasteries or hermitages (cf. Górecki 2014: 134–135; Boud'hors and Heurtel 2015: 7–8, 18). Perhaps the subject of such exchanges was also, intentionally or not, pharaonic funerary cones.

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