

# Archaeological investigations in the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari in the 2020/2021 season



**Abstract:** The paper presents the results of archaeological exploration in parts of the Hatshepsut Temple, carried out by the Polish–Egyptian team in the 2020/2021 season. Excavations focused on the Southern Room of Amun on the Third Terrace of the Temple, the platform of the Hathor Shrine on the Middle Terrace level, and the so-called Hathor Path located between the southern retaining wall of the Middle Terrace and the northern stone wall of the main enclosure of Mentuhotep II's mortuary complex. Of particular interest are the finds from an early Middle Kingdom rock-cut tomb in the western part of the Hathor Path, where remains of the original burial assemblage, a large deposit of votive offerings to the goddess Hathor and fragments of a yellow coffin were discovered.

**Keywords:** Theban Necropolis, Deir el-Bahari, Temple of Hatshepsut, Middle Kingdom, New Kingdom, goddess Hathor, rock-cut tomb, foundation deposit, votive offerings, Southern Room of Amun

The work in the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari, which is a flagship conservation project run by the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology University of Warsaw, demands prior archaeological exploration in order to proceed with the restoration and conservation activities. The excavations are carried out successively,

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so as to prepare the ground for conservation work in accordance with the project's overall schedule. In the 2020/2021 season, the Southern Room of Amun was one of the places where explorations proceeded. The other part of the temple where archaeological investigations were initiated is the terrace with the Hathor Shrine along with the path located on the southern side of the Middle Terrace. The latter work is part of the "Hathor Project", a dedicated program to complete the architectural investigations and con-

servation treatment in the Hathor Shrine, while contextualizing archaeologically the cult of the cow goddess within the Temple of Hatshepsut. To this end, specialists pursued studies of particular categories of finds, such as pharaonic pottery (see Weźranowska and Wodzińska 2021, in this volume), the Third Intermediate Period burial assemblages and everyday artifacts from the St Phoibammon monastery (for the latter see Kucharczyk 2021 and Pawlikowska-Gwiazda 2021, in this volume).

## THE SOUTHERN ROOM OF AMUN

The Southern Room of Amun (SA), in older publications also known as the Southern Chapel of Amun (see, for instance, Wysocki 1992: 243–244; Karkowski 2001: 136–137) or the Chapel of Amun-Min (Wysocki 1986), is located in the southwestern corner of the Upper Courtyard [Fig. 1]. It is approximately 3.20 m long and

2.70 m wide. Despite a well-preserved decoration, the function of the room has not been clarified; it could have been a store-room for textiles and oils (Iwaszczuk 2017: 121). The inner walls of the chamber were fully conserved in the 2006/2007 season by a team supervised by Izabela Uchman-Laskowska (2010). The results of Katarzyna Kapiec's epigraphic studies on the decoration of this room are soon to be published (Kapiec forthcoming).<sup>1</sup>

Previous archaeological and architectural research in the Southern Room of Amun was conducted by the Polish–Egyptian team in the 1980s (see Stefanowicz 1982: 3, Photos 13–17; 1984: 1–2, Photos 8–15; Wysocki 1986: 217–221, Fig. 4). From an architectural point of view, correlations were observed between this room and the Chapel of Thutmose I and the Upper Courtyard. Regarding the archaeology, excavations in the southwestern corner of the room uncovered a shaft-

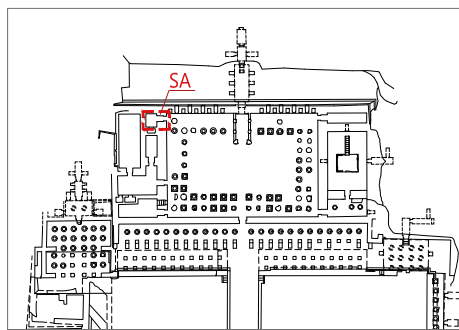


Fig. 1. Location of the Southern Room of Amun on the Upper Terrace of the Hatshepsut Temple (PCMA UW | drawing T. Dziedzic, update U. Kraśniewska)

1 For earlier publications of the Southern Room of Amun Project, see Kapiec 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020.

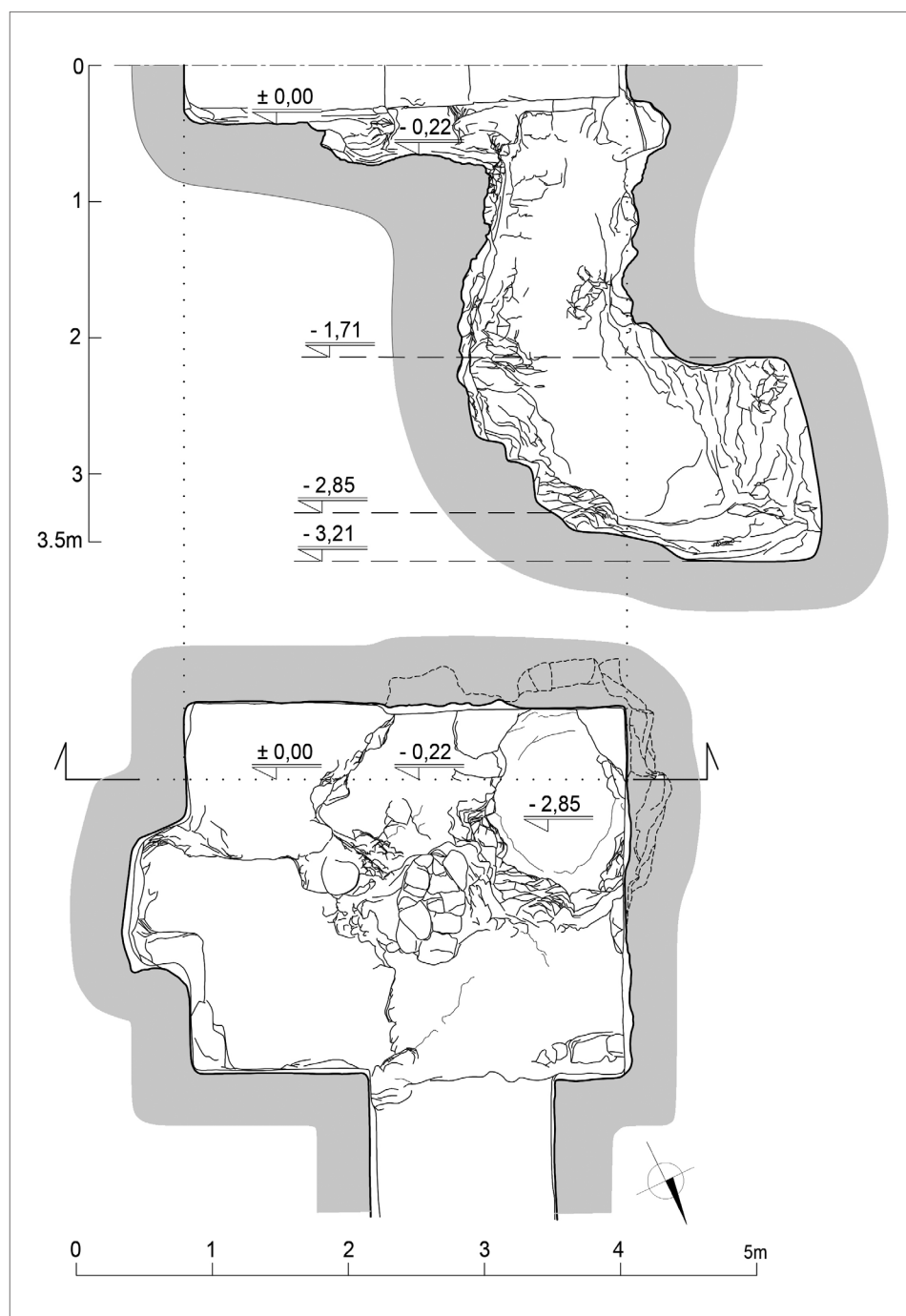


Fig. 2. Southern Room of Amun: top, plan of the excavated floor showing the location of the shaft of Tomb XIV; bottom, east-west section through the tomb looking south (PCMA UW | drawing U. Kraśniewska)

tomb and an opening cut in the east wall by the Coptic monks. Forty years later, the documentation of the inner part of the chamber floor was completed (S1/21).

The investigations uncovered both ancient and modern structures. The original pavement of limestone slabs was bedded directly on a thin layer of fine rock rubble, used to level out the irregular bedrock surface (identified here as the Esna shale formation) [Fig. 2]. This building technique was observed both inside the room and under its walls. Remnants of the original arrangement were observed in the form of single floor slabs still *in situ*, the paving having been mostly removed in later times. A bigger, heavily cracked slab lay in the center of the room. Some of these slabs were still covered with a mix of rock debris spread out on the bedrock. This layer of debris yielded a few fragments of Coptic-phase pottery and a fragment of a decorated block inscribed with the royal titulary from the north wall of the room, located directly above the doorway.

The shaft-tomb from the times of the Twenty-second Dynasty, labeled in

the Temple excavation records as Tomb XIV (see Szafrński 2015: 185–186, Figs 1–2, Table 1), was reexamined. The irregular mouth of the pit opened onto a vertical shaft over 3 m deep; it was aligned on the north–south axis. The bottom of the pit sloped down significantly from the east wall to the west, where the entrance to the burial crypt was located. The roughly carved burial chamber was aligned east–west. The finds uncovered now added to the assemblage from earlier excavations: fragments of a Twenty-second Dynasty cartonnage, remains of undecorated wooden objects, textiles and Coptic ceramic vessel sherds.

A modern floor of white cement mixed with small stones occupied the southeastern part of the chamber, presumably to level the irregular bedrock here and to secure the unstable wall foundation. It was probably introduced by Zygmunt Wysocki's team in the early 1980s. A small brick support in the eastern part of the north wall also served to stabilize the wall foundation.

## THE HATHOR PROJECT

The Hathor Path is a popular designation of an avenue that led from the Lower Courtyard (LC), through a long open passage, running between the Southern Retaining Wall (RW-S) and the Stone Wall of Mentuhotep II's Court (for the latter, see Arnold 1979: 10–11). A small gate to this passage was located in the southern part of the temenos, to the south of the Southern Lower Portico (LP-S). In the western part of this avenue, Hatshepsut's workmen began the construction of a ramp leading

to the Shrine of the cow goddess situated on the level of the Middle Terrace. Traces of these building works and changes in the building design, in the form of a sandstone threshold, red-ink marks and negatives on the Southern Retaining Wall, as well as fragments of a stone balustrade, can still be observed in various sections of the Hathor Path (see Somers Clarke's architectural description in Naville 1908: 17–31, Pls CLXIX–XLXXIV, as well as Wysocki 1985).

The Hathor Shrine (HS) was located in the southwestern end of the Middle Terrace, and was built as one of the earliest structures of *Djeser-djeseru* (Wysocki 1986: 226). Two Hypostyle Halls (HS-I and HS-II), constructed on a platform/terrace, made up the first part of the complex. At the western end, the structure was embedded in the Esna Shale rock formation; in the eastern part this platform was filled with rock-rubble. A doorway at the western end of the Hypostyle Halls led into the rock-hewn chambers. The first room of the speos was a transverse Vestibule, the ceiling supported on two columns. Niches were disposed symmetrically: one each in the north and south walls, and two more in the west wall, in the corners. A central doorway between these two niches opened into the Bark Hall, which was furnished with another four niches, two per north and south wall. The Sanctuary was situated in the westernmost room; single niches were cut in the lateral walls of this chamber. The architectural design of the Hathor Shrine was modified repeatedly, a fact studied in the past and extensively now.<sup>2</sup>

### RESEARCH ON THE TERRACE

The excavations in the autumn of 2020 searched for the eastern retaining wall of the terrace below the façade of the First Hypostyle Hall, which Nathalie Beaux and Janusz Karkowski placed in this location as a natural consequence of the extension of the Hypostyle Hall and the platform under it in subsequent stages of the construction works (Beaux and Karkowski 1993: 11, Fig. 1). They reconstructed the eastern

retaining wall of Phase A slightly further east, and suggested that the platform in the eastern part, which is now a tourist path, was created during the second stage of the work (Phase B). The final phase of construction, in their opinion, involved building an additional platform on the eastern and southern sides (Phase C), which is only partly preserved. Apart from resolving the issue of the reconstruction, the current work also aimed to examine the building structure in view of its planned use as a support for a new wooden bridge connecting the Middle Terrace to the Hathor Shrine.

Three small test-trenches were opened on the terrace: in front of the First Hypostyle Hall façade (S<sub>1</sub>/20), between the southern wall of the façade and the first pillar (S<sub>2</sub>/20), and at the edge of the reconstructed platform (S<sub>3</sub>/20) channeling the tourist traffic today [Fig. 3]. The platform floor is covered with irregular limestone slabs. At present, only part of the original floor has survived, while other parts were reconstructed by Émile Baraize in modern times (Beaux and Karkowski 1993: 7).

Instead of a retaining wall, the excavation under the present floor slabs, bedded on a thin layer of rock rubble, revealed another layer of irregular limestone slabs [Fig. 4]. Similar slabs were discovered on the same level in the other trial trenches dug in 2020. The upper surfaces of these slabs were roughly smoothed, while traces of stone tools and *dipinto* in red ink were observed on the other sides. Referring to these data, there is no doubt that the lower

2 For earlier ideas on the building history of the Hathor Shrine see Naville 1908: 22–24; Tefnin 1975: 136–144, Figs 1 and 4; Wysocki 1985: 300–301; Beaux and Karkowski 1993: 7–15, Figs 1 and 8.

layer of limestone slabs was the foundation under the platform floor.

Neither was the sought wall found in a trial trench S2/20 opened west of the first one. Foundation slabs were recorded below the floor and underneath them, the platform fill [Fig. 5 top]. The trench had to be abandoned when the adjacent floor and foundation slabs started to slip in. The last trench (S3/20), at the edge of the platform [Fig. 5 bottom], checked for a correlation between the foundation and the retaining wall of that platform [between T1 and T2, in Fig. 6].

The platform fill, especially S1/20, contained sherds of Dynastic pottery, heavily fragmented animal bones, wood, ropes and textiles, faience beads and a fragment of a faience bowl, and undecorated limestone block fragments, one of which is most likely a fragment of a column. An analysis of the assemblage suggests that a variety of broken objects and useless waste was dumped in with the rock rubble during the construction of the platform. However, the presence of modern material, the coins in particular, raises doubts about the contemporaneity

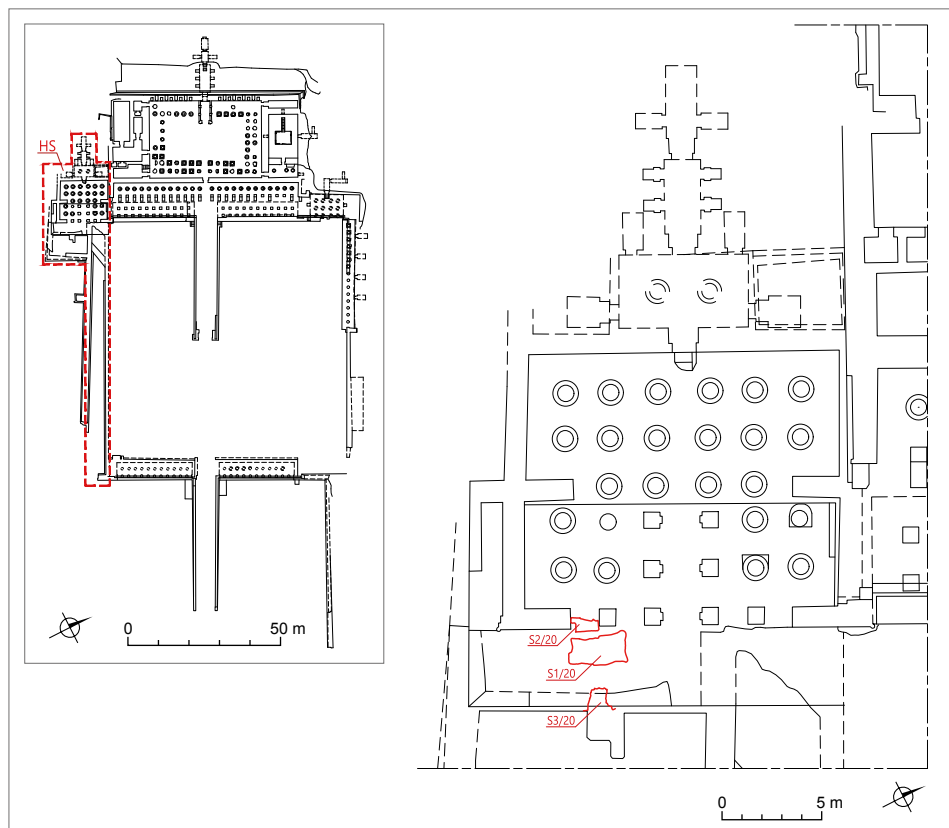
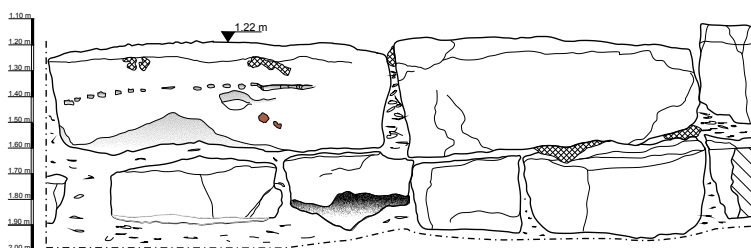


Fig. 3. Location of the trial trenches on the terrace of the Hathor Shrine; inset, location of the Hathor Shrine and the Hathor Path within the Temple of Hatshepsut complex (PCMA UW | drawing U. Kraśniewska; inset, drawing T. Dziedzic, update U. Kraśniewska)





Section W



Section N

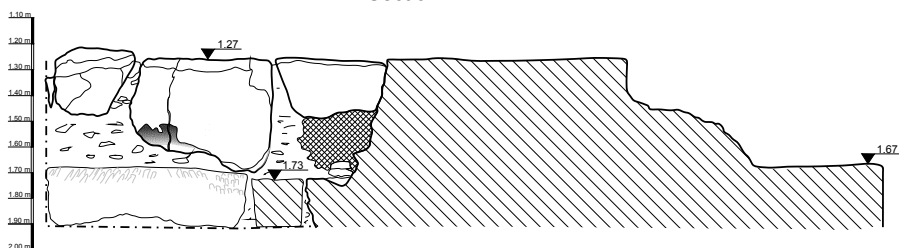


Fig. 4. Foundation limestone slabs under the platform floor: top, view of the northern side of the trench, revealing the sequence of floors; bottom, western and northern section through trial trench S1/20 (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki; drawing A. Pawlikowska-Gwiazda)



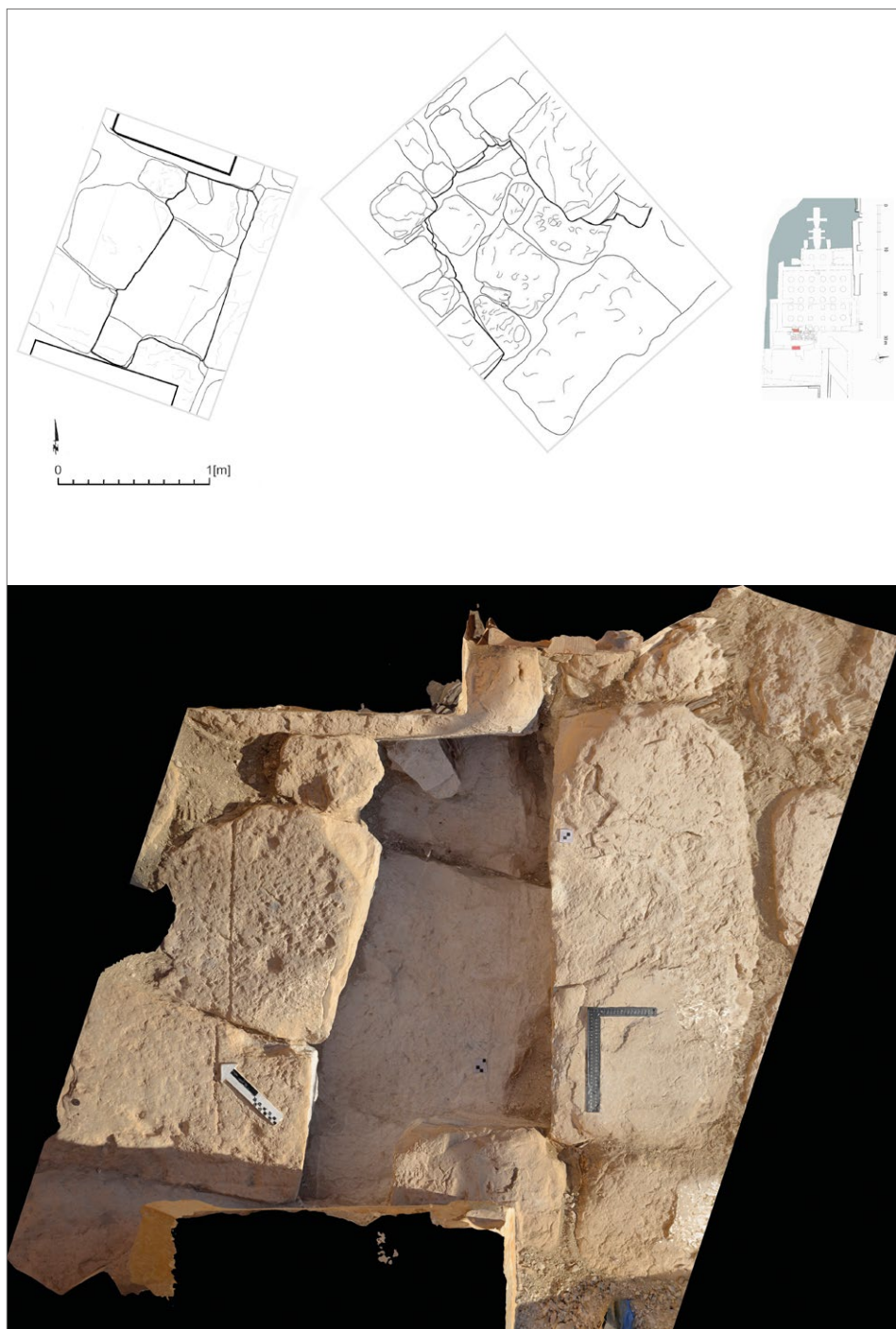


Fig. 5. Trial trenches S2/20 (top left and bottom) and S3/20 (top right) at the edge of the Hathor Shrine terrace (PCMA UW | drawing K. Andraka, G. Biczak; orthophoto K. Andraka)

of the entire fill with the construction of the Hathor Shrine; it is entirely possible that this part of the terrace was reconstructed in modern times.

In light of the above, several important conclusions emerge, shedding new light on the architectural design of the Hathor Shrine platform and the phases of its development [see *Fig. 6*]. They can be summarized as follows:

- The lower layer of limestone slabs uncovered below the final floor level of the platform was in fact the foundation of this extensive structure and not, as previously suggested, the floor of the terrace built during building Phase A.

- The absence of a retaining wall below or in front of the façade of the First Hypostyle Hall (HS-I) indicates that the platform labeled as T1 was erected in one building phase.

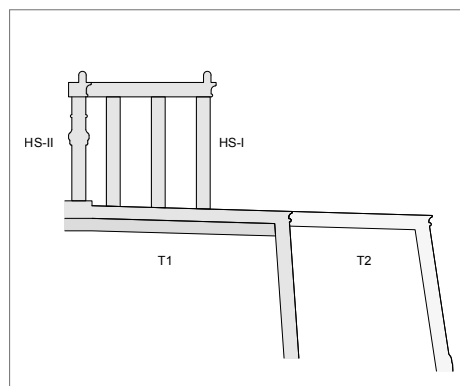
- In consequence, one should assume two instead of three phases of construction of the platforms in front of the Hathor Shrine. In the first phase, a platform (T1) and the Second Hypostyle Hall (HS-II) were built. In the second stage, the First Hypostyle Hall (HS-I)

was erected and the existing platform was enclosed by a new terrace (T2), which extended much further to the east and south.

### EXCAVATION ON THE HATHOR PATH

The Hathor Path (for the location see *Fig. 3*) has been explored several times in the past, but never fully, resulting in serious omissions in the collected material. The earliest work on the southern side of the Middle Terrace, conducted by Édouard Naville in the 1894/1895 winter season, was concentrated in the western part of the area (Naville 1894–1895). A foundation deposit (A) from the time of Hatshepsut and an early Middle Kingdom tomb (MMA 28) were unearthed. Over 20 years later, Herbert E. Winlock found another foundation deposit (B) in the eastern part of this area (Winlock 1942: 53, 89). Wysocki, who began work on the Hathor Path in the 1979/1980 season, focused his research on the architecture of the ramp system, without going into the archaeological context (Wysocki 1985). Zbigniew Szafrński devoted two seasons (2009/2010 and 2010/2011) to explore the eastern end of the Hathor Path, the gate (Szafrński 2013: 145). The investigations were determined by the need to reinforce the foundations of the gate before its reconstruction. The current comprehensive study of this feature of the temple, initiated in the spring of 2021, is designed to verify and complement previous research [*Fig. 7*].

In addition to the archaeology, the aim of the project is to study the architecture of the ramp system and complete epigraphic research on several hundred graffiti left on both sides of the stone wall



*Fig. 6.* Building phases of the Hathor Shrine terraces (PCMA UW | drawing G. Biczak)

of Mentuhotep II mostly by people visiting the shrine of the cow-goddess.

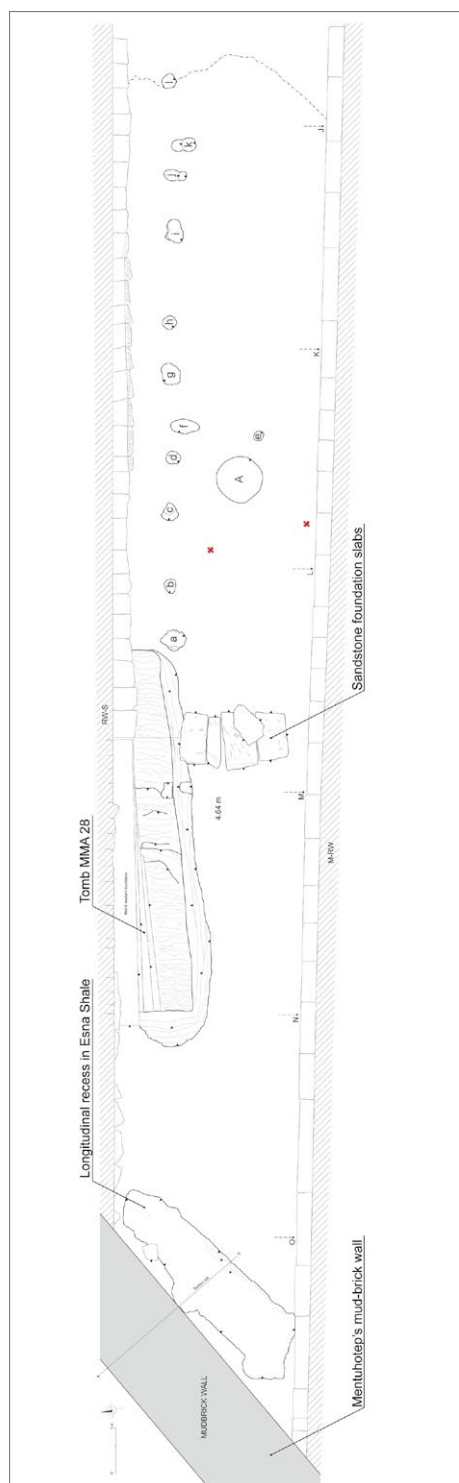
The 2021 exploration work was divided into fifteen sectors, each 5.00 m long, labeled from A to O (H-P SA – H-P SO), starting at the gate in the eastern end of the path and ending on Mentuhotep II's mud-brick wall in the west, which is situated just below the Hathor Shrine terrace. Excavations began in sector O (H-P SO) and proceeded east step by step [Fig. 8]. They were seriously hampered by an electrical cable running the length of the Hathor Path (by the Stone Wall) and crossing it in the eastern part. Sec-

tors from O to C were surveyed despite this, providing comprehensive data and material on structures from the time of Mentuhotep II, building activities from the reign of Hatshepsut, and the history of the site in later periods.

The westernmost structure excavated and studied this past season is the mud-brick wall of the so-called shield-shaped court of the Mentuhotep II mortuary complex (see Arnold 1971: 14–15), which marks the western boundary of sector O [Fig. 9]. Dieter Arnold dated this wall to building Phase C, preceding the construction of the Stone Wall (Arnold



Fig. 7. The Hathor Path: left, before excavation in 2020; right, state in April 2021; viewed from the west (PCMA UW | photos O. Ignatowska and P. Chudzik)



1979: 41–42). It was built on several thin layers of rock rubble consisting of smaller stones at the bottom and larger ones at the top [Fig. 9 above left]. Moreover, it is worth noting that along the line of the wall, the ground level was clearly lowered, that is, a regular trough was excavated in the Esna shale, the bottom of which is 0.50 m lower than the level of the rock further to the east of this structure. The embankment, on which the wall was built, was mounted in this trough. Excavation in this area yielded pottery sherds and fragments of undecorated funerary cones from the Middle Kingdom from the surface. A stratigraphic sequence was observed only in the lowest layers inside the trough, at and below the mud-brick wall; these layers, however, yielded no artifacts, while the assemblage from the upper part of the rubble was completely mixed. Ancient decorated and painted limestone blocks, animal bones, textiles, fragments of wooden objects and pottery sherds were accompanied by fragments of modern clay imitations of shabti figurines, cigarette boxes and shreds of newspapers.

Of particular interest is a fragment of a cobra (uraeus) from a large-scale statue of sandstone. Remnants of yellow, red, blue and green polychromy were observed on the object, suggesting that it had been part of one of the sphinxes of Hatshepsut (for this group of sculptures from the Deir el-Bahari Temple see Smilgin 2012). In the opinion of Andrzej Ćwiek (2014: 90), the avenue leading to the ramp of the Hathor Shrine was flanked by sphinxes with a tripartite wig, which could explain

Fig. 8. The western sectors of the Hathor Path (PCMA UW | drawing A. Pawlikowska-Gwiazda)



the presence of a sandstone uraeus in this particular spot.

The elongated dromos of a rock-cut tomb from the early Middle Kingdom can be seen some 5 m east of the mud-brick wall. While this monumnet will be described below, suffice it to say at this point that five slabs of sandstone were unearthed at the eastern edge of

the dromos, on its southern side [see *Fig. 8* and above, *Fig. 7 right*]. The slabs were arranged in a row, perpendicular to the Southern Retaining Wall and the Stone Wall. The southernmost slab was undoubtedly removed from its original location during the laying of the electrical cable; at the time it was laid on top of the other slabs. The slabs were of a gray and yellow sandstone, the material used in the time of Hatshepsut, contrasting with the brownish-violet sandstone characteristic of the Mentuhotep II Temple. The slabs were known to Clarke and Wysocki, who interpreted them as the foundation of the first ramp leading to the Hathor Shrine, corresponding to the westernmost red line on the Southern Retaining Wall (Clarke in Naville 1908: 23; Wysocki 1985: 299–302, *Fig. 3*).

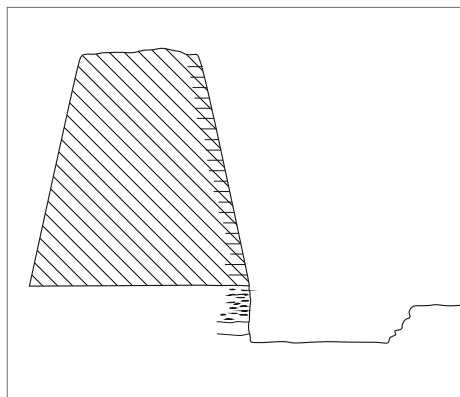


Fig. 9. Mentuhotep II's mud-brick wall at the western end of the Hathor Path; view from the east; above left, section through the mud-brick wall (PCMA UW | photo P. Chudzik; drawing A. Pawlikowska-Gwiazda)

Naville's foundation deposit (A) is located about 5 m east of the sandstone foundation slabs (Naville 1908: 9, Pl. 168) [A in Fig. 8]. It is one (and the first to be found) of the 11 foundation deposits known so far from the Temple of Hatshepsut (Carnarvon and Carter 1912: 30–33, Pls 21, 22, 24; Winlock 1922: 29; 1924: 16–18; 1926: 16–18; 1928: 24–30; 1942: 52–53, 89–90, 107–108, 132–135; for more on these pits see Weinstein 1973: 151–164; Spence 2007; Roehrig 2014). It is a round pit, over 1.00 m in diameter at the mouth

and 1.00 m deep, with a small niche at the bottom on the northern side, giving an L-shaped section as a result [Fig. 10]. The walls of the pit narrow toward the bottom, where the diameter is only 0.60 m. The pit was dug into the Esna shale without any lining. When Naville discovered this deposit, it contained, according to his account, around 150 objects, including model tools, ceremonial objects with the names of Hatshepsut, and bone remains of a young bullock. The excavation conducted in 2021 brought to light only fragments of ceramic vessels. Of particular interest were skull fragments of young bullocks and a well-preserved hoof of this animal found near the pit [red 'x' in Fig. 8]. However, it is not clear whether they came from this pit or the nearby tomb MMA 28.

Another enigmatic find was a row of small holes dug in the Esna shale layer east of the dromos of the tomb, parallel to the Southern Retaining Wall [see Fig. 8]. Eleven holes (a–d and f–l), were unearthed in this row, while the hole labelled 'e' was found on the eastern side of foundation deposit A. The mouths of these holes are either circular or oval in shape. The diameters range from 0.24 to 0.62 cm. Some of the holes have a flat bottom, others note two small steps, and the maximum depth is 0.49 cm [Fig. 11]. The holes were discovered filled with fine rock rubble, occasionally also including very fragmented potsherds, but it should be noted that this was not the original fill. At this stage of the research, their function and date are unknown. They seem to have been excavated during the reign of Hatshepsut and appear to be connected with building activities on one of the ramps leading to the Hathor Shrine, as indicated by their orientation in

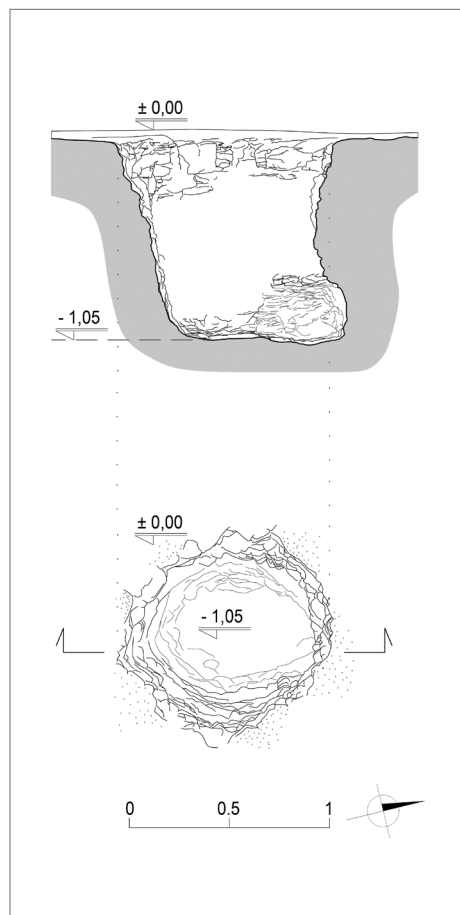


Fig. 10. Foundation deposit A: section and plan (PCMA UW | drawing U. Kraśniewska)

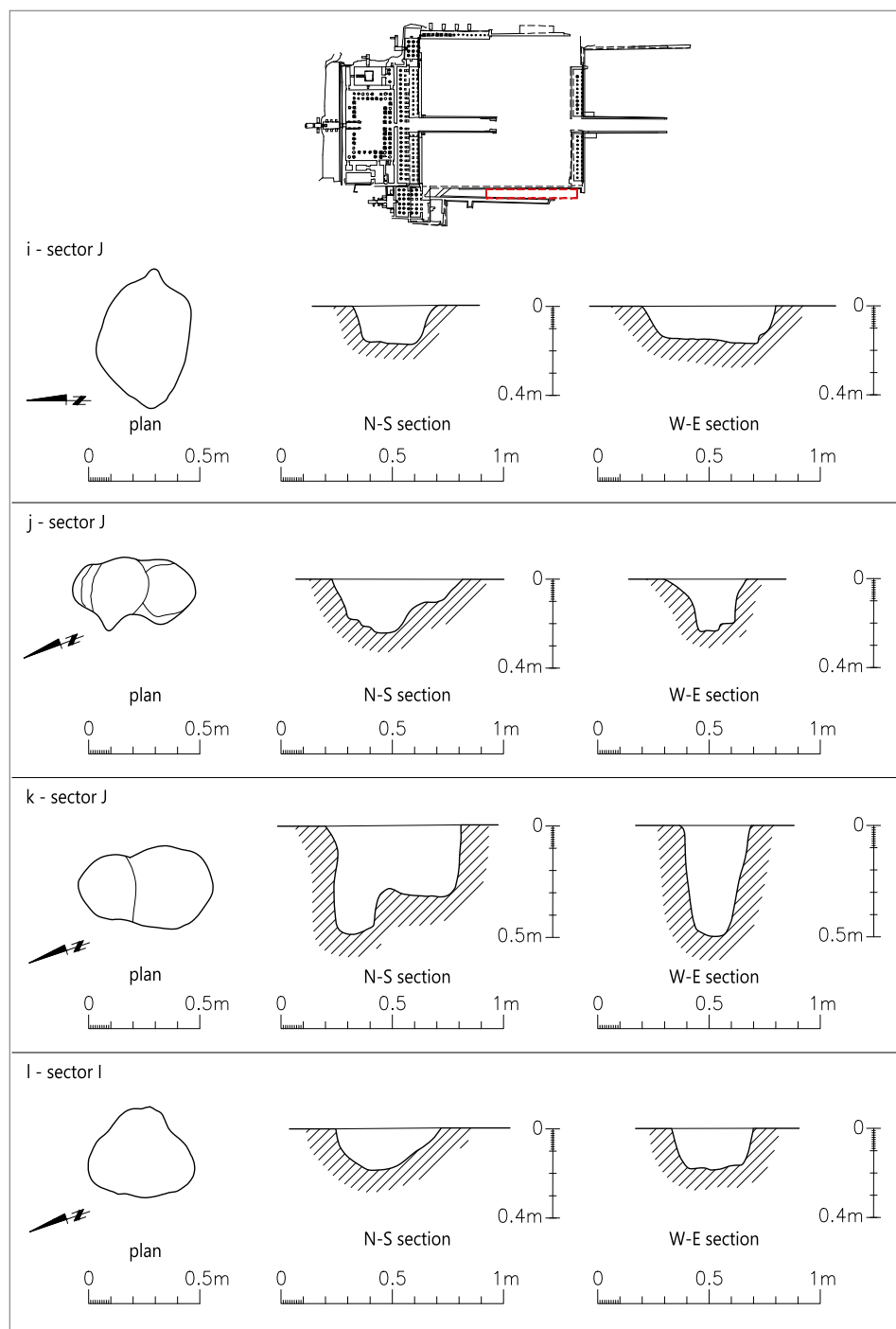


Fig. 11. Examples of small holes discovered along the Southern Retaining Wall (PCMA UW | drawing P. Chudzik, digitizing U. Kraśniewska)



relation to the Southern Retaining Wall. The shape and size of these holes suggest their function as sockets for beams of the scaffolding, for example.

It is also interesting to note that these holes were carved only in the Esna shale layer, the contact zone of which with the overlying Limestone Thebes Formation was discovered in the western part of sector J of the Hathor Path. This geological observation is extremely important for the study of the history of construction work and the development of the cultural landscape at Deir el-Bahari, because it shows the scale of the work carried out in the northern part of the rocky amphitheater at the time of Mentuhotep II. This boundary is located about 30 m from the mudbrick wall of Mentuhotep II in sector O, showing the scale of the rock-cutting accomplished by the builders of the Mid-

dle Kingdom edifice when preparing the building site for Mentuhotep's temple.


The assemblage of artifacts recovered from the current excavation of the Hathor Path comes from the time of Hatshepsut and from later periods. It includes pottery, unidentified wooden objects, but also modern newspapers found along the entire length of this area. In some sectors, however, the finds are clearly associated with features located nearby. For instance, faience artefacts from various sectors could be associated with a large deposit of votive offerings to Hathor discovered in the early Middle Kingdom tomb (MMA 28) (see below). But the small faience beads and shabti figurines from the eastern sectors may have come from a shaft tomb, most likely of the Third Intermediate Period, mentioned by Wysocki near foundation deposit B (Wysocki 1985: 298–299, Fig. 1).




Fig. 12. Blocks from the Southern Retaining Wall (PCMA UW | photo P. Chudzik)

Fragments of cartonnages and painted wooden coffins from the Twenty-second or Twenty-third Dynasty, found particularly in sectors C and D, may have also come from this tomb. Fragments of Horus figures and of a panelled wall with *serekhs* from the Southern Retaining Wall were discovered in sector I [Fig. 12].

### TOMB MMA 28

The tomb labeled as MMA 28 (Thomas 1966: 16) is located in the western part of the Hathor Path, just below the shrine of the cow goddess. This tomb was first recorded by Naville (1894–1895: 35–36).<sup>3</sup> Having found only “a poor wooden coffin” in the burial chamber of the tomb, Naville suggested that the founder of the tomb had not been buried here. Winlock, who worked in the area of Deir el-Bahari over 20 years later, opposed this view, attributing the tomb instead to prince Intef, son of king Mentuhotep II, depicted in a large rock-graffito at Wadi Shatt el-Rigal (Winlock 1942: 87–88; 1947: 62–64, Pls 12, 36). Winlock based his considerations additionally on the name of “Son of Ra, Intef, given life”, scratched on the northern face of the Stone Wall of the early Middle Kingdom royal temple at Deir el-Bahari, close to this tomb. One should note, however, that the orthography of the name written in cartouches on the wall of the main courtyard of Mentuhotep II was different from that known from Wadi Shatt el-Rigal. The name of Intef at Deir el-Bahari was written with a  sign, which is similar to the written form used for king Nubkheperre Intef VII, while the name of Mentuho-

tep II's son had a simpler form  (Thomas 1966: 16, Note 97; Rzepka 2004: 154, Fig. 5). The name of Intef VII, ruler of the Seventeenth Dynasty, is also attested in other places in the Deir el-Bahari area. In the mortuary Temple of Mentuhotep II, there was a wooden panel inscribed with the name of this king (Kamal 1938: 19–20, Pl. IV; Edwards 1965: 18–19), while the other graffiti mentioning Intef VII were found next to the “royal cache” DB 320 (Rzepka 2004: 151–154, Figs 1–4). Despite this, there is no doubt—based on location and architectural design—that tomb MMA 28 belonged to a person of special status in the early Middle Kingdom, most likely a royal child or a king's wife. Only four other similar structures from the said period are attested at Deir el-Bahari: the tomb of king Mentuhotep II (EN 14), the tombs of his wives, queen Tem (EN 15) and queen Neferu (TT 319), and an enigmatic structure known as Bab el-Hosan (Carter 1901; Thomas 1966: 11ff.).

Tomb MMA 28 is known only from the underground structures. Excavations in this area did not bring to light any remains of the mortuary cult chapel belonging to this tomb, although recent work in the western sectors of the Hathor Path, especially in the area around the tomb's dromos, uncovered fragments of clay funerary cones without stamp impressions typical of the Middle Kingdom. All of the fragments represent cones of the same size and revealing the same modeling and painting techniques. The base diameters are 7.8 cm and the cones were covered with red slip and whitewashed. Analogous cones were found, for instance, in

3 For the large relief see also Petrie 1888: 15, Pl. XVI (No. 489); Winlock 1940: 142, Fig. 7.

the funerary complexes of Intef (TT 386) (Arnold 1971: 17, Pl. XXIXa–b) and Khety (TT 311) (Chudzik 2016: 295). Since funerary cones of this kind would have formed a two-row frieze at the top of the tomb's façade or a free-standing shrine (Winlock 1928: 7, Figs 4–5; 1942: 127, Pl. 12), the presence of these fragments close to tomb MMA 28 could indicate a structure of this kind at the entrance. Assuming it existed, it seems to have been dismantled down to the ground by the builders of Hatshepsut's temple in the early Eighteenth Dynasty. One cannot exclude that the cones were transported here from another tomb complex, the nearest one being in the North Triangular Court of Mentuhotep II's temple, on the southern side of the stone wall of the courtyard. So far, however, no funerary cones were ever found there.<sup>4</sup>

There is another explanation for the presence of these terracotta cones in the close neighborhood of tomb MMA 28. According to some scholars, terracotta cones symbolized funerary bread loaves (Mariette 1864: 145; Petrie 1888: 23; Maspero 1889: 98; Bruyère 1927: 19, 53–55), which can also be observed in some tomb scenes (Roehrig 2002: 16, Fig. 27). Taking this into consideration, the funerary cones, rather than being part of the architectural decoration of funerary facades, could have had the function of symbolic offerings for the deceased, left by the tomb entrances, like the clay trays with representations of offerings. This meaning of the cones ap-

pears to be corroborated by the discovery of funerary cone fragments in the mortuary complex MMA 511 in North Asasif, in which the rock-cut façade did not have a lining of mud brick and therefore there was no portal with a decorative frieze of which they could be part. If so, then it is possible that MMA 28 never had a funerary shrine.

The tomb was located in the southwestern corner of the shield-shaped court of Mentuhotep II's mortuary complex, about 80 m southwest of the tomb of queen Neferu (TT 319) (Thomas 1966: 16; Arnold 1979: 14–16, Pls 38, 42–43). The entrance was carved at the bottom of an oblong dromos, 9.10 m long, with a steeply sloping floor from the southeast to the northwest. In the times of Hatshepsut, the dromos and the front part of the underground structures were partly covered by the foundations of the queen's temple; these were reinforced in the 20th century with a cemented stone wall. The doorway to the tomb opened onto a descending corridor, 15.60 m long, cut into the thin layers of Esna shale [Fig. 13]. The entrance to the burial crypt was located at the end of this passage, between two massive doorjambs hewn in bedrock. A vaulted sarcophagus chamber opened to the left, providing an arrangement oriented almost exactly north–south. The rectangular room is 4.00 m long (west wall) and 3.47 m wide (north wall), and its maxi-

4 Remains of a small cubical shrine of mud brick were found by Naville (1907: 20), who interpreted it as a watchman's hut. It was in fact a small funerary cult chapel, presumably belonging to the shaft-tomb MMA 22, similar to those erected for the royal minor wives and priestesses of Hathor in the western end of the Ambulatory of Mentuhotep's temple (see, for instance, Naville 1907: 43–52, Pl. II; 1910: 6–9, Pls XI–XXI; Winlock 1942: 36–46, Fig. 4).

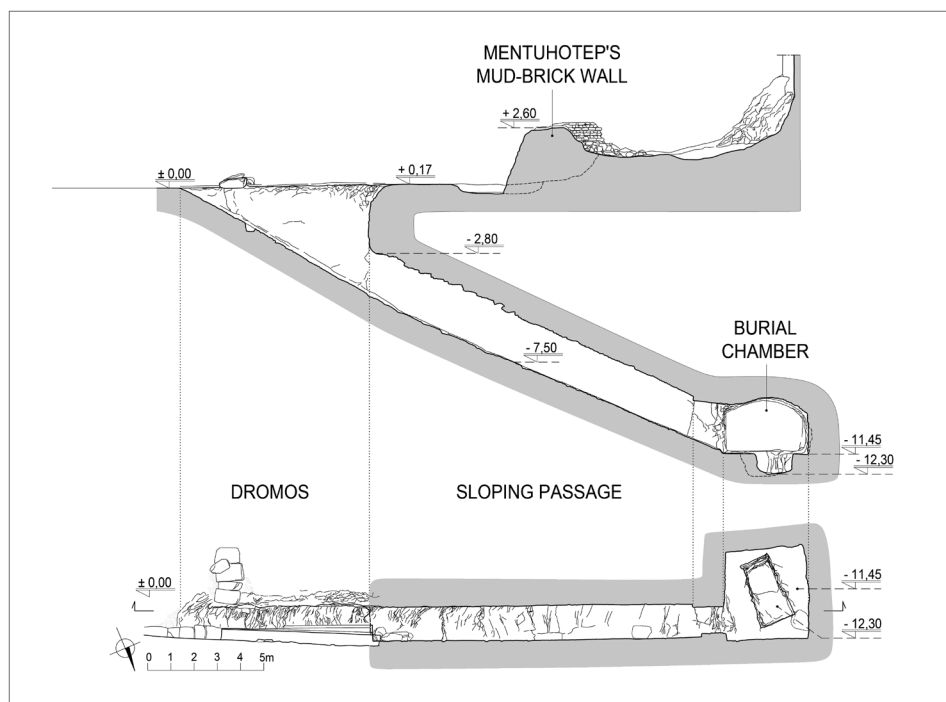


Fig. 13. Tomb MMA 28: section and plan (PCMA UW | drawing U. Kraśniewska)



Fig. 14. Descending corridor of tomb MMA 28 before exploration in 2021 (PCMA UW | photo P. Chudzik)



mum height, measured from the floor level to the highest point of the rocky arch, is 2.40 m. A rectangular sarcophagus recess, with a slightly modified orientation to ensure the north–south alignment of the coffin, occupied most of the floor. The oblong cavity is 2.70 m long, 1.27 m wide, and its depth ranges from 0.83 to 0.93 m.

When the tomb was discovered, Naville opined that the fill of the underground structures was “quite untouched”. The tomb remained unexplored until 2021. Once the exploration started, it became clear that the fill was disturbed and there was no stratigraphic sequence to be observed anywhere [Fig. 14]. It was composed of thousands of broken limestone



Fig. 15. Fragment of a pottery offering tray, early Middle Kingdom (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki)

5 For more on the pottery see Weźranowska and Wodzińska 2021, in this volume.

chips in a layer of dust, with only a few large blocks of local limestone in different places. Even so, the material served to draw some preliminary conclusions concerning the chronology of use of the tomb.

A small group of artifacts from the early Middle Kingdom counters Naville's opinion as to the earliest use of the structure as a burial place. Pottery constituted the most numerous category of finds, including a sizable representation of late Eleventh and early Twelfth Dynasty ceramics.<sup>5</sup> The exploration of the corridor also yielded a fragment of a pottery offering tray [Fig. 15]. It was an oval tray decorated with channels only, two fragments of which are preserved on this fragment. The upper surface was covered with red slip and whitewashed. Offering trays of a similar shape and simple design were found, for instance, by William Flinders Petrie in Eleventh-Dynasty contexts at Qurna in the Theban necropolis (Petrie 1909: Pl. 21). Ray Anita Slater (1974: 307, 312, 404) assigned the roughest forms of offering trays to the First Intermediate Period and early Middle Kingdom based on her study of material from Dendera; in later times their arrangement became more varied as a result of the addition of other channels, pools and offerings. Considering this, the simple design of the offering tray discovered in tomb MMA 28 dates this artifact to the early Middle Kingdom.

Another find that is to be attributed to the original burial assemblage is a fragment of a small wooden figurine of a man [Fig. 16]. The figurine is missing the left leg, which had been extended forward originally, as well as the feet and arms, and is very damaged in the face part. But a clearly



Fig. 16. Fragment of a small wooden figurine of a man, early Middle Kingdom (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki)



Fig. 17. Faience artifacts of New Kingdom date from a deposit of votive offerings to Hathor: above, set of female figurines; left, fragment of a faience mask with remnants of gold foil; inset, clay votive figurine of a cow (PCMA UW | photos M. Jawornicki)



sculpted wig on the head as well as other stylistic features are indications of its dating. The closest parallels are the wooden models from Mentuhotep II's tomb (Arnold 1981: 33–41, Pls 11–23), indicating an early Middle Kingdom date for this object.

Nonetheless, the Eleventh-Dynasty grave goods remaining in the fill of tomb MMA 28 are typical of sets found in many other tombs of this period, and tell us nothing about the owner's name

and social position. Neither is there anything to suggest when the tomb was first robbed and its burial equipment scattered, although the results of excavations at many Middle Kingdom tombs in North Asasif indicate that they were looted probably by Hatshepsut's workmen during the building of her causeway (see Carnarvon and Carter 1912: 5).

Of New Kingdom date is the second group of objects discovered in the tomb



Fig. 18. Fragment of a yellow coffin (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki)

during the present exploration. A striking number of faience female figurines, amulets, and bowls was recovered from all levels [Fig. 17]. They were not, however, part of the burial assemblages of the Third Intermediate Period burials as might have been thought at first, but together with small clay cow figurines [Fig. 17 inset], fragments of limestone statues, ceramic double bottles with modelled breasts, and many other small broken artifacts, they were part of a huge deposit of votive offerings to the goddess Hathor (for categories of Hathor votive offerings see Pinch 1993). Almost all the objects were greatly fragmented. While this could be an indication of robbing activities, it should be noted that the tomb was not their original place of deposition. This kind of deposit is not the first of its kind known from Deir el-Bahari. They have been found in various places inside the royal temples (Neville and Hall 1903–1904: 10–11; 1904–1905: 7–8; Neville 1907: 12, 17, 21, 36; 1913: 13–18, 28–31; Winlock 1922: 31–32; 1923: 28–39; 1942: 75, 81; Carnarvon and Carter 1912: 32; Arnold 1979: 28–29, Pl. 1; Lipińska 1984: 21ff). Earlier explorers suggested that worshippers would have brought these offerings to Hathor in her shrine and from time to time the priests serving in the temple would have cleared away to make room for new offerings. The broken remains of earlier offerings would then be buried in various convenient places within the Deir el-Bahari circus (see, for instance, Winlock 1922: 31–32).

After the New Kingdom, the tomb remained abandoned for many years until it was reused again as a burial place. Remains of this burial have survived in

fragmentary condition, e.g., small sections of a finely decorated coffin with a yellow background [Fig. 18]. Although the head end of the coffin is almost totally gone, many of the fragments of the middle and lower parts speak volumes about the decorative composition. Several fragments from the torso showing modelled breasts on a blue background and a dress with straps clearly indicate that the coffin belonged to a woman. The location of the motifs below is uncertain, but based on the preserved fragments one can assume a sequence of registers consisting of small zones, containing a scarab in the center with the



Fig. 19. New Kingdom limestone ostrakon of an owl, painted in black ink (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki)

sun-disk above, flanked by two seated deities holding a *uas*-sceptre and *ankh*-sign; a winged Isis and Nephtys sitting on baskets (*neb*-signs), and the four sons of Horus(?). One of the vignettes held the lower part of the body of the deceased standing in front of a *djed*-pillar. The lower part of the coffin was decorated with vertical columns of text, as well as empty spaces between the registers in the upper part. All the scenes and hieroglyphs were painted in dark colors, red or various shades of green. Yellow coffins with this decorative sequence are commonly dated to the turn of the Twentieth and Twenty-first Dynasties (Type II after Niwiński 1988: 68–69; Taylor 1989: 39–46; Type IA after Aston 2009: 271–272). The only other grave goods that have survived from this burial are some clay shabti figurines and a fragment of a canopic jar of limestone.

Several artifacts undoubtedly belonged to one of the above chronological contexts, but their fragmentary state of preservation precludes their identification and dating, especially at this early stage of research. Human bones, apparently from a single individual, were scattered throughout the tomb. The fill also contained some animal bones, although not too many. Other categories of finds recorded from the tomb included plain

textiles, unmarked or painted, mud-stoppers, some with badly preserved seal impressions, and small faience beads, most likely from necklaces.

The fill also contained objects that could not be attributed to any of the phases of use of the tomb. These included fragments of decorated sandstone and limestone blocks, and among them fragments from the Vestibule of the Chapel of Hatshepsut in the Complex of the Royal Mortuary Cult (CRC), as well as two fragments with *dipinti* from the Main Sanctuary of Amun-Ra (MSA) and the Ptolemaic Portico (PP). Other blocks come from the nearby Temple of Mentuhotep II, and there were also fragments from Ramesside buildings of unknown provenience. This material can be assigned to the period of destruction of the royal temples at Deir el-Bahari, when stone blocks from the demolished walls were reused to make large bowls, fragments of which were also discovered in the fill of the tomb. It is also possible that fragments of decorated blocks were thrown into the tomb in modern times, just like the cigarette packs and newspapers, mainly from the early 20th century. This was a sizable category, including also some dynastic [Fig. 19] and Coptic ostraca, as well as late Roman pottery sherds.

## CONCLUSIONS

The most recent excavations conducted in the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari have shed new light on the archaeological context of the cults performed in this monument. Of particular interest is the discovery of a deposit of votive offer-

ings to the goddess Hathor, found during the exploration of an early Middle Kingdom tomb located beneath the terrace of the Hathor Shrine, where hundreds of broken figurines, statues and amulets were left probably by the Temple priests.

Investigation of the Hathor Path and the Southern Room of Amun provided new data for the study of the necropolis in the Deir el-Bahari rocky amphitheater. The discovery of the Third Intermediate Period burials on the southern side of the Middle Terrace have significantly extended the range of the cemetery from this period.

Meriting interest are the architectural observations made during the exploration of small trial trenches dug on the terrace of the Hathor Shrine. The proposed

retaining wall of the earliest (western) terrace was not confirmed, while the excavation uncovered the foundations of this structure, indicating a different chronological sequence of building activities than previously assumed. The original platform in front of the Hathor Shrine turned out to be much larger than previously suggested. To verify these observations and to gain a thorough understanding of the construction phases of the Hathor Shrine complex more excavations and architectural studies are essential.

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