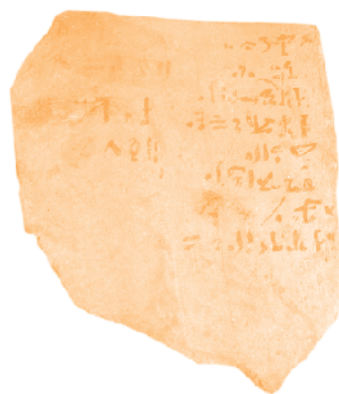


# A record of the transport of stone blocks on ostrakon DeB/F.608



**Abstract:** Ostrakon DeB/F.608 was found in the area of the Temple of Tuthmosis III at Deir el-Bahari. There are good reasons, however, to link it to the building of the Temple of Queen Hatshepsut and more precisely to the transport of stone blocks by a crew of eight men. Five of them can be identified as foreigners, presumably Asiatic slaves brought to Egypt as a result of military campaign(s) in the early Eighteenth Dynasty.

**Keywords:** Deir el-Bahari, hieratic ostrakon

Ostrakon DeB/F.608 was found in the early 1960s during excavations of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology University of Warsaw in the area of the Temple of Tuthmosis III.<sup>1</sup> Like most of the ostraka found in the temple area, it should be related in general to the building activity in the area of the Tuthmoside

<sup>1</sup> See Marciniak 1979: 453 (the comment on the contents of the ostrakon is inaccurate). It was kept in the storeroom of artifacts from the Tuthmosis III temple at Deir el-Bahari before being transferred to the newly organized Museum of Civilisation in Cairo.

**Miroslaw Barwik**

Institute of Archaeology,  
University of Warsaw

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temples at Deir el-Bahari. It was found in the upper layers of debris covering the Temple of Tuthmosis III,<sup>2</sup> so it must have made its way there from the nearby Temple of Hatshepsut at some point in

the past. One could suppose that this occurred when the burials of the Third Intermediate Period were being dug, or when construction was taking place in the Ptolemaic period, or else when the Coptic monks turned the temple area into a monastery. Nevertheless, the actual findspot of the ostrakon does not contradict its presumed relation to the Temple of Hatshepsut.

It is a pottery sherd (13.5 cm by 11 cm) inscribed on both sides (↕) with black ink [Fig. 1]. The text is completely preserved except for line 4 of the *recto*, and two lines on the *verso* that were deliberately erased in antiquity (lines 9–10). The height of the hieratic signs is approximately 0.8–0.9 cm.

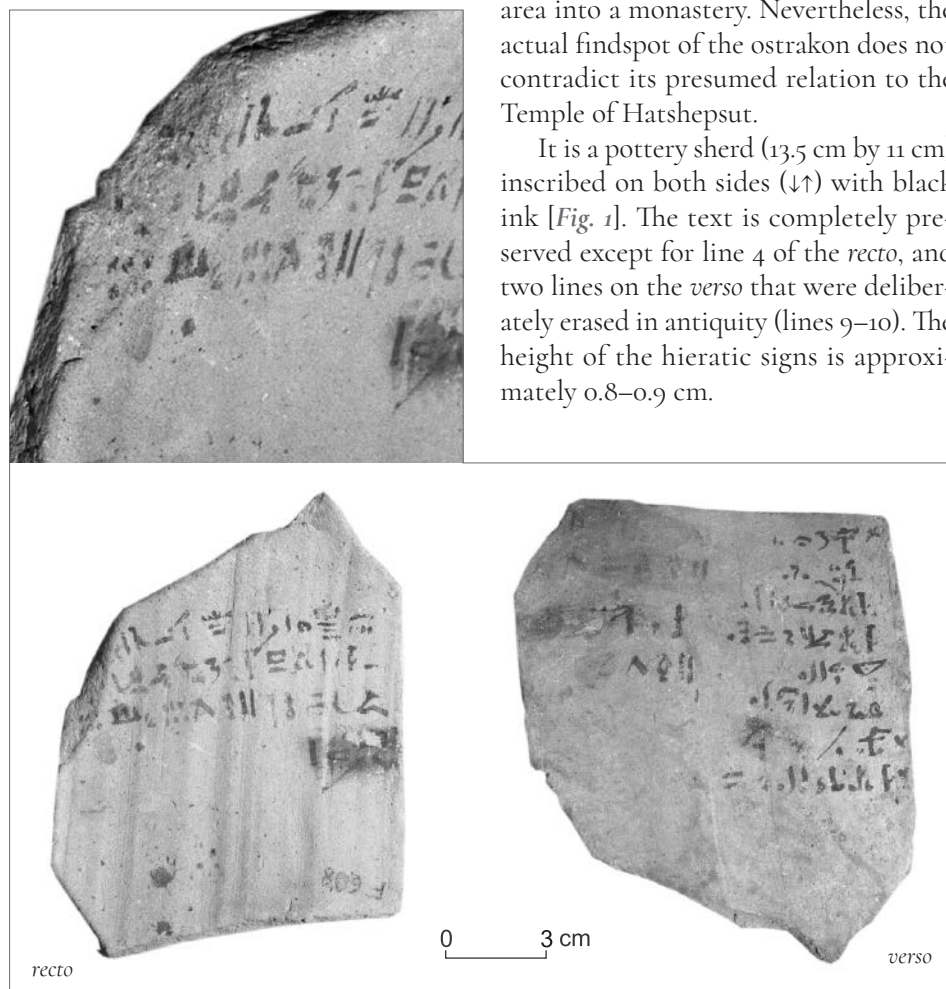


Fig. 1. Ostrakon DeB/F.608 from the area of the Temple of Tuthmosis III at Deir el-Bahari: top, view of the *recto* edge; bottom, *recto* and *verso* views (PCMA UW Deir el-Bahari Temple of Hatshepsut Project | photo M. Barwik)

- 2 Not recorded in the lists of objects excavated from the Tuthmosis III temple area and published in *ASAE* by Jadwiga Lipińska (1966; 1968) and Leszek Dąbrowski (1968). The low inventory number of the piece in question leaves no doubt, however, that it was found in the 1961/1962 season, see Lipińska 1966.

## Transliteration and commentary [Figs 2–3]:

Recto: (1) *3bd 4 šmw sw 28 snn n bh<sup>a)</sup>(2) n ith inr n Imn-m-ḥ3.t<sup>b)</sup> s3<sup>c)</sup> Ḳnbw(?)<sup>d)</sup>*  
 (3) *db.t nfr 52 w3s(y) 16; dmd 66*  
 (4) *[d3.]t<sup>e)</sup> inr<sup>f)</sup> 1*

Verso: (1) × *Mn(w)-m-i<sup>h</sup>*  
 (2) *Snwy(?)<sup>g)</sup>*  
 (3) *T-m-ry-y*  
 (4) *T-p3-nn-n3*  
 (5) *Hw-r-y*  
 (6) *Ḳ3-rw-k3*  
 (7) × *Dḥwty-ms(.w)<sup>h)</sup>*  
 (8) × *T-bw-y; dmd 8*  
 (9) *10 [+x]<sup>i)</sup>*  
 (10) *2 w3s(y) 18; 20<sup>j)</sup>*  
 (11) *nfr 5[2]<sup>j)</sup>*  
 (12) *2 w3s(y) 17(?)<sup>k)</sup>*

a) The determinative of *bh* is partly faded in its upper portion because it was written already on the edge of the sherd [see Fig. 1 top].

b) Apparently there is no space for the determinative (Λ1). The form of the *ḥ3.t* sign is not obvious in the Tuthmoside hieratic; compare, however, the unpublished hieratic inscription on a jar found in the temple of Hatshepsut (MMA photo M8C 328; courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

c) For the ligature used here, see, e.g., pap. Louvre 3226; Möller 1927: 19, note 2; Megally 1971: Pl. VI (j).

d) A possible reading of the name as *Ḳnbw* (or *Ḳrbw*) (suggested by M. Römer, personal communication) is not attested among Egyptian names (compare, however, *Ḳnbi*, Ranke 1952: 320,12). Neither has it been recorded among foreign (Asiatic) names (Schneider 1992; 1993). It may have

been a Nubian name (not recorded, however, in Zibelius-Chen 2011).

e) Partly obliterated still in antiquity; as regards orthography, see Wb. V, 517; Megally 1977b: 208. For the meaning of the term, see Megally 1977a: 73ff.

f) The reading *inr* is not certain due to traces of black ink above the sign in question, which cannot be interpreted convincingly in relation to the hypothetical *inr*.

g) There is no certainty as regards the reading of the name. It is hardly likely that this is the *Snw* known from sources of the period, see Hayes 1960: 40, Pl. XI (No. 13 ro. 14); Hassan 2015: 198–200, Pl. 5, Figs 15–16 (ostrakon Cairo DeB No. 488, 3); Černý 1933: 74\*, Pl. LXXI (o Cairo CG 25665, 13; commented on in Barwik 2008). As regards the form of the name suggested here, see Ranke 1935: 311 (4). It is difficult to interpret a note written to the left of it.

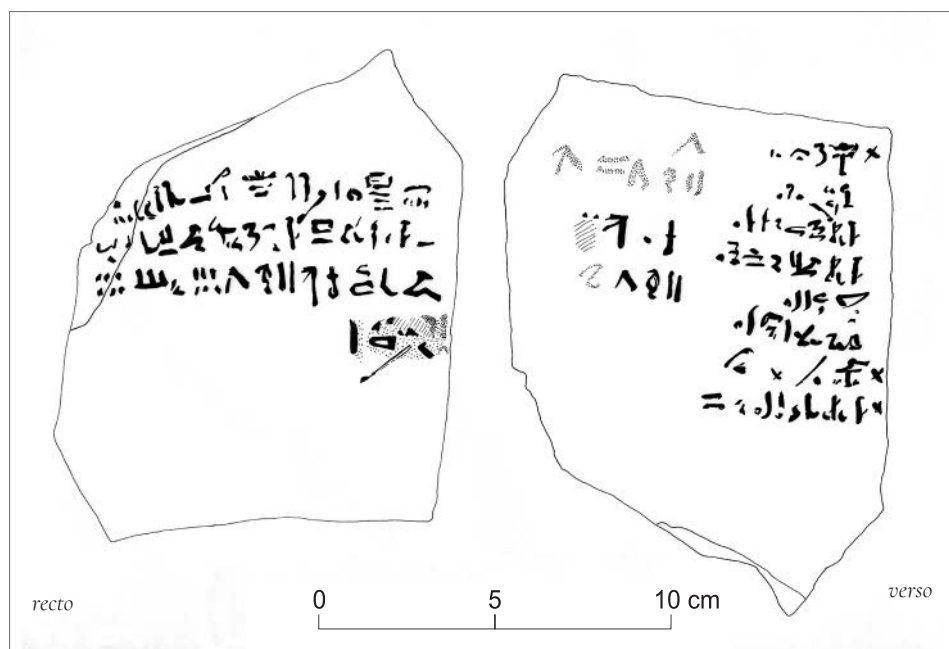


Fig. 2. Ostrakon DeB/F.608: facsimile of the text (PCMA UW Deir el-Bahari Temple of Hatshepsut Project | drawing M. Barwik)

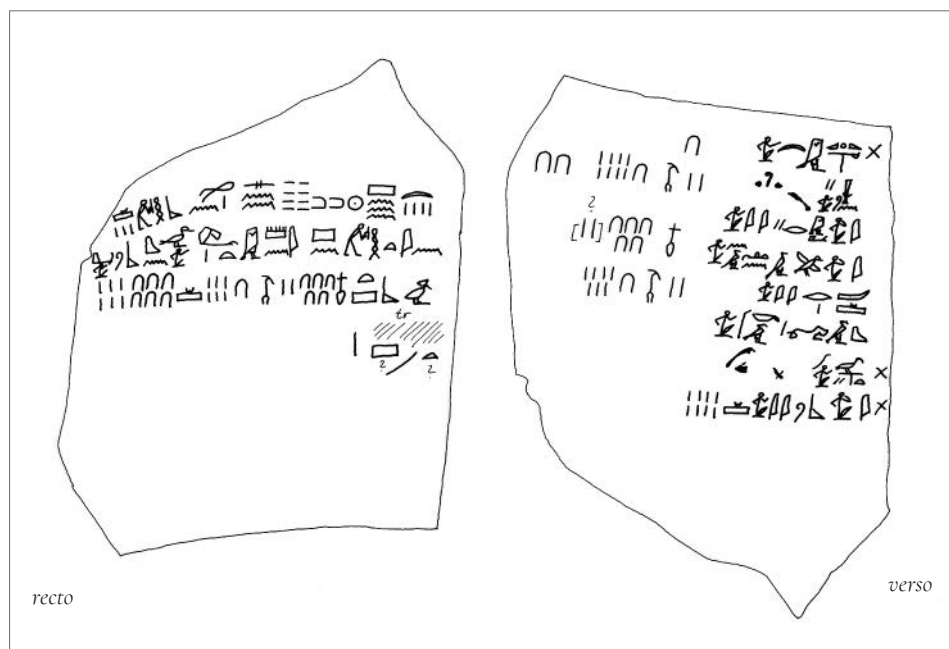


Fig. 3. Ostrakon DeB/F.608: transcription of the text (PCMA UW Deir el-Bahari Temple of Hatshepsut Project | drawing M. Barwik)

- h) What follows the name of Tuthmosis may be interpreted perhaps as the beginning of another name(?) preceded by an “x”-sign. For unknown reason, the signs were wiped off already in antiquity.
- i) Lines vo.9 and 10 obliterated in antiquity, but a group of signs is fairly well visible (especially in line 10).
- j) Only the upper parts of numeral 2 are visible; the rest of the surface here is damaged. It is open to question whether a blackened area to the left constitutes remnants of signs that were wiped off.
- k) Faint traces of numeral 7 are doubtful in fact; it seems that the sign in question had been obliterated in antiquity.
- a) As regards *snn* “list/account”, see Donker van Heel and Haring 2003: 106–108.
- b) For the meaning of *bh*, see remarks in Hayes 1942: 34; Edgerton 1947: 221, note 13 (“forced labour”); Hayes 1960: 31, note 1.
- c) For *db.t* as a block of stone, besides its basic meaning as “brick”, see Harris 1961: 30–31. There is no way to confuse it here with “brick” because of the introduction written on *recto* 1–2, informing explicitly about the transport of stone. Quite understandably, the number of bricks used in the building process is usually substantially higher, see, e.g., Demichelis 2003: 87–88, Pl. XA.
- d) It would be tempting perhaps to relate the category of *nfr* stones to the custom of marking stones used in masonry with the *nfr* sign (among others); for possible explanations of its meaning, see Wieczorek 2011: 210 (“team marks”); less likely Szafranski 1995: 373 (“zero level”); compare also Budka 2009: 186, and note 49. The present ostrakon would rather suggest a block destined for the foundations, roughly hewn, but ready for use.
- e) It is reasonable to translate the *w3s(y)* (perfective passive participle) blocks of the present text as “undressed” (or “dressed insufficiently?”), though the basic meaning of the word is “decayed” or “ruined”, see, e.g., Wb. I, 260–261; significantly it was used mainly in relation to ruined structures, see Sethe 1930: 169, 10–11; Vandersleyen 1967: 148 (53), Pl. 10 (18); Caminos 1998: 38–39, Pl. 22 (see Sethe 1909: 986, 10).

### Translation and commentary:

*Recto*: “(1) Month 4 of *shemu*, day 28. Account<sup>a)</sup> of corvée labour<sup>b)</sup> (2) of hauling stone (blocks) for Amenemhat, son of Kenbu (?). (3) Block(s)<sup>c)</sup> dressed (lit. good)<sup>d)</sup>: 52; undressed (lit. decayed)<sup>e)</sup>: 16. Total: 66. (4) [The rest?]: block of stone(?) 1.”

*Verso*: “(1) × Min-em-Jah  
 (2) Senuy  
 (3) Amriya  
 (4) Apannena  
 (5) Hury  
 (6) Qaruka  
 (7) × Tuthmosis  
 (8) × Abuy/A-bu-ya. Total: 8.  
 (9) 10 [+x]  
 (10) 2; undressed<sup>e)</sup>: 18; 20  
 (11) dressed (lit. good)<sup>d)</sup>: 5[2]  
 (12) 2; undressed<sup>e)</sup>: 17(?)”

The text written on the *recto* of the ostrakon informs us precisely about the kind of work done on that particular day, that is, IV *shemu*, 28. On the *verso*, a list of workmen was drawn up, probably those engaged in the transport of stone. It is interesting to note that a group of eight men transported 66 blocks of stone during one day. The result achieved can be compared with data given in other Tuthmoside ostraka from Deir el-Bahari where the numbers are usually much lower if the work involved large blocks destined for walls, columns or other elements of the temple architecture such as ceilings, gates, cornices, and balustrades.<sup>3</sup> It seems that the stones recorded on the ostrakon were only roughly worked blocks of small dimensions, destined for a building foundation or wall filling.<sup>4</sup> The term *db.t* used here seems to corroborate this idea, as it denotes a block of a specific size, presumably comparable to the size of a brick.<sup>5</sup> As regards the term *inr*, it denotes stone in general or else a block of stone of any dimensions (see Harris 1961: 31). Here *inr* was simply used in the

description of the action in general (ro. 1–2), with no reference to the particular blocks enumerated. Doubts arise, however, as to what seems to be the word *inr* in ro. 4, but the reading proposed here remains doubtful. A distinction made here between *nfr* and *w3s(y)* blocks, not recorded in any other published documents of this kind, must refer to differences in the state of preparation of blocks destined for the building site.

Evidently, the summing-up of the blocks, as recorded here (ro. 3), is incorrect.<sup>6</sup> The quantity of the blocks was also given on the *verso* (9–12), where the numbers cannot be related directly to the summing-up presented on the *recto*. This part of the text therefore seems to have had the character of provisional draft notes made by the scribe, a detailed summary of stone blocks transported to the temple area, divided into groups of uncertain significance. This impression seems to be strengthened by the fact that these four lines of subsidiary notes were set apart from the main text of the *verso*, and subsequently partly erased.

3 For example, the ostrakon published in Hayes 1960: 33–34 (No. 5 ro.), Pl. X.5; and ostraka relating to the work in the Temple of Tuthmosis III: Hayes 1960: 44–45 (No. 17 ro.), Pl. XII.17; *Hieratische Papyrus* 1911: Pl. 30 (o Berlin P 10621 ro., 3; see also Sethe 1909: 1174, 30); see also the comment on completing the stone blocks as recorded on ostrakon No. 16 in Hayes 1960: 43–44, Pl. XII.16.

4 Even larger numbers of blocks of stone (*inr*), transported during one day, are recorded on the published ostraka connected with the Hatshepsut temple: Hayes 1960: 31–32 (No. 2), 33–34 (No. 5 vo.), Pls IX.2, X.5; see Megally 1974: 305–306 (Doc. No. 4).

5 See comment by Harris 1961: 31. As a matter of fact, the rare terms *inr db.t* (ostrakon UCL, unpublished; see Harris 1961: 29, 31), and *db.t n inr* (Hayes 1960: 46 [No. 19 ro. 2, 4], Pl. XII, 19), must reflect the particular shape and size of such a small block of stone. For a general comment on the different size of stone blocks destined for a building site, see also Hayes 1960: 34, 44.

6 As regards accuracy in texts of administrative ostraka, see especially Janssen 2005.

One of the unsolved questions connected with the organisation of the transport of blocks, as recorded on the Tuthmoside ostraka, is the exact role of the supervisor of the work, the person responsible for the delivery of stone blocks.<sup>7</sup> Here it was a certain Amenemhat(?), the son of a person whose name remains obscure (ro. 2: end of line), and seems not to be recorded in other available sources. It is interesting to know, however, that a certain Amenemhat (no title attached) is also mentioned in an unpublished Tuthmoside hieratic graffito on the north wall of the Birth Portico on the middle terrace of the Hatshepsut temple. It is hardly likely that he is the same person as the captain or skipper (*nfw*) Amenemhat, whose name is attested on an ostrakon from the vicinity

of the tomb of Senenmut (TT 353), dated to Year 16 (Hayes 1960: 39–41, No. 13 vo. 2, Pl. XL13; see also Meyer 1982: 250–251; and a comment by Hassan 2015: 188), and an ostrakon found in the area of the Deir el-Bahari temples (Amenemhat is titled here as *nfw n Imn*, Hayes 1960: 35–36, No. 8, 5, Pl. X.8; see Meyer 1982: 7, 248; Eichler 2000: 175–176). It is open to question whether this is the same person as the captain Amenemhat attested on ostraka from the vicinity of TT 71 (Hayes 1942: Pls XVII, No. 84, 2, XIX, No. 93 ro. 1).<sup>8</sup>

Quite exceptionally, a high percentage of the names written on the *verso* of ostrakon DeB/F.608 could be identified as distinctly foreign names.<sup>9</sup> This is the case of Amriya (vo. 3),<sup>10</sup> Apannena (vo. 4),<sup>11</sup> Hury (vo. 5),<sup>12</sup> Qaruka (vo. 6),<sup>13</sup> and Abuy/A-bu-ya (vo. 8).<sup>14</sup> Only two or

- 7 The formula “transport (of stone blocks) for NN” is noted also on an unpublished ostrakon from the Polish excavations in the Temple of Tuthmosis III (F.8941; soon to be published by the present author).
- 8 Helck suggested, however, that this Amenemhat was Sennenmut’s brother, and identified him with *hm-ntr w3 n Imn* Amenemhat, see Helck 1958: 362–363, 478; as regards testimony of Senenmut’s brother Amenemhat, see Dorman 1991: 117, Pls 67, 82c.
- 9 For the value of hieroglyphic groups in syllable writing, see Helck 1971: 567–569; 1989; Schneider 1992: 360–402.
- 10 Compare a west Semitic name commented by Schneider 1992: 54–55 (N 95) and 103 (N 210).
- 11 Not commented by Schneider, but probably also an Asiatic name. As there is no clear Semitic etymology, a Nubian origin cannot be excluded (not recorded, however, in Zibelius-Chen 2011), see a general comment by Schneider 1993: 461. A variant of the name (*Tw-p3-nn-n3*) is also recorded on an ostrakon from the vicinity of TT 353, see Dorman 1991: 88, Pl. 47a,c (Cat. 26a: ro. 9), read wrongly as *Tw-p3-nn-hw*.
- 12 See Schneider 1992: 168–169 (N 359), identified as a west Semitic name; see also Ranke 1935: 253 (21); the name is written on an ostrakon found in the vicinity of TT 353, see Dorman 1991: 90, Pls 48c, 49c (Cat. 26d [here by mistake “26c”]: ro. 2); for the form of the name, see also the ostrakon Cairo CG 25662 ro. 6: Černý 1933: 53, 73\*, Pl. LXX.
- 13 Not commented by Schneider nor Zibelius-Chen, but it may be a “Nubian” name.
- 14 See Schneider 1992: 17 (N 7), also a west Semitic name. Abiya (*Ib3y*) of o Louvre 14354 (Posener 1937: 189–190, Pl. 30 [right; line 1]) may be connected with it; after all, the source can be dated convincingly to the early Nineteenth Dynasty, see Posener 1937: 188; Schneider 1992: 16–17, 299 (N 6). For the latter form of the name, see also Hoch 1994: 17–18.



three of these names (i.e., Hury, Abuy/A-bu-ya, and possibly also Amriya) are attested in other published sources, and can be identified as Semitic names.

Three of the names written on the *verso* have been marked with an “x”-sign and this is probably connected with some unknown circumstances connected with the course of work and its organisation. These are Min-em-Jah (vo. 1), Tuthmosis (vo. 7) and Abuy/A-bu-ya (vo. 8), whose names have been marked in this particular way. It is interesting to note that Min-em-Jah is possibly the same man as the person mentioned on one of the ostraka found in the vicinity of the lower tomb of Senenmut (TT 353) (Dorman 1991: 88, Pl. 47a,c, Cat. 26a: ro. 12). This can be considered a good clue to the dating of ostrakon F.608. Nothing certain can be said about the character of the work done by the crew listed on the *verso* of the ostrakon, but the assumption that they were engaged in the transport of stone seems to be highly plausible.

The presence of foreign names in the list poses the question of its dating. Interestingly, no foreign names are recorded in the group of ostraka appar-

ently from the late Seventeenth Dynasty, related perhaps to work in Deir el-Ballas.<sup>15</sup> No doubt the wars against the Hyksos during the reign of Kamose and Ahmose must have brought some Asiatic slaves taken as booty, but their number seems to have been rather small.<sup>16</sup> The situation changed rather abruptly following the conquests of Tuthmosis I and his immediate successors. Quite understandably, it is in the reign of Tuthmosis III that we see an apogee with regard to the number of foreigners documented in the Theban sources. Over 30 Syrians (*n3 n H3rw*) were engaged in the building of the temple of Tuthmosis III on the west side of Thebes under the supervision of the vizier Rekhmire, as related in the text of ostrakon Berlin P.10621 (vo. 3).<sup>17</sup> Although of unknown provenience, oLeipzig 495 gives a list of “the Syrians of the new (quota?)” (*n3 n H3rw n m3w.t*) (see Steindorff 1900), and can be dated perhaps to the reign of Tuthmosis III (or earlier?).<sup>18</sup>

There is no hitherto published testimony of Asiatic workmen engaged in the area of the temple of Hatshepsut, whereas Asiatic names appear

15 See *Hieratische Papyrus* 1911: Pls 29 (P.11296–7), 41–42 (P.12338–9, 12341–2, 12344) as regards the origin of the ostraka, see Parkinson 2009: 174–175.

16 As exemplified by the list of household slaves of Ahmose son of Abina; see Sethe 1930: 11, 4–14; for a comment, see Redford 1992: 129; Schneider 1992: 42 (N 68), 229–230 (N 487), 270–271 (N 595).

17 *Hieratische Papyrus* 1911: Pl. 30; see also Sethe 1909: 1175, 3. A gang of 60 Syrian workmen is recorded on an ostrakon dated to year 45 of Tuthmosis III; Hayes 1960: 44–45, Pl. XII (No. 17 vo. 3).

18 See Möller 1927: 8 (no. 7); Schneider 1992: 300 (N 19, N 21), 302 (N 47), 303 (N 52), 304–305 (N 73), 307 (N 97, N 106), 308 (N 108, N 113, N 119), 319 (N 257), 323 (N 311), 324 (N 317), 327 (N 350), 329 (N 380, N 382), 338 (N 491), 339 (N 503), 349 (N 640).

among ostraka found in the vicinity of the tombs of Senenmut, TT 71<sup>19</sup> and TT 353.<sup>20</sup> Significantly, one of these testimonies comprises the name of Hury, attested also in the text of ostrakon DeB/F.608 (see note 12). The origin of the Asiatics employed as building workers during the reign of Hatshepsut must remain an open question. Nothing certain is known about the queen's military activity in Asia,<sup>21</sup> so one can only presume that these were men who

had been taken to Egypt still during the reign of Tuthmosis I,<sup>22</sup> unless they were nomadic tribesmen from the regions adjacent to Egypt. The situation regarding the Nubians is entirely different, as they could have been captured during one of at least two Nubian campaigns conducted in her reign.<sup>23</sup> It is unfortunate that a proper identification of Nubian names among those attested in Egyptian sources of the period continues still to be a matter of conjecture.

**Assist. Prof. Mirosław Barwik**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1389-7457>

Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw  
00-927 Warsaw, Poland  
ul. Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28  
[mbarwik@uw.edu.pl](mailto:mbarwik@uw.edu.pl)

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19 Hayes 1942: Pl. 17 (No. 82, 5); see Schneider 1992: 200 (N 423).

20 Hayes 1960: 40–41, Pl. XI (No. 13 ro. 20: *Tw-š3-y*; vo. 1: *M<sup>c</sup>-rw-bn-r-ḥy*); for these, see also Schneider 1993: 460 (S 12), 464 (S 29).

21 See Redford 1992: 152–153; the same also concerns the short reign of Tuthmosis II, from which only a campaign against Shasu is documented. For the situation in Canaan in the early Eighteenth Dynasty, see, e.g., Morris 2005: 33ff.

22 Compare a description of an ostrakon of which no documentation has been preserved: Naville 1913: 18–19; for a comment, see Schneider 1992: 106, 317 (N 224).

23 See Reineke 1977; an undated inscription of chancellor Ty can be related to one of them, or else to the third Nubian campaign of Hatshepsut. As regards the Nubian workmen in the times of Hatshepsut, see, e.g., Hayes 1960: 32 (No. 4 ro. 7), 40 (No. 13 ro. 19); see also Hassan 2015: 200 (ostrakon Cairo DeB No. 488 of the Tuthmoside era, not dated precisely, see however a comment by Römer 2014: 214).

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