

# More remarks on the enlarged doorway in the Djeser-akhet temple of Tuthmosis III at Deir el-Bahari

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**Abstract:** The issue of the enlargement of the entrance to the Bark Hall of the Djeser-akhet temple of Tuthmosis III at Deir el-Bahari was a major focus for the Polish restoration mission from the start. The widening of the passage was noted early on in the research and new data was forthcoming with every successive field season as the decoration of the entrance wall on either side of the Hypostyle Hall and of the Bark Hall was reconstructed. More detailed information continued to add to the recreation of the process of how and when these changes were introduced, as discussed by the author in earlier articles. Further fragments of relief decoration identified in recent years as originating from the cut sections of the walls have offered new data to supplement the author's view, being at the same time a significant source of information on the original decoration predating the destruction phase in the Amarna period.

**Keywords:** Tuthmosis III, Djeser-akhet, bark of Amun, granite doorway, temple decoration, Hypostyle Hall, Bark Hall

The Djeser-akhet temple of Tuthmosis III was discovered in 1961 by an archaeological mission from the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology University of Warsaw working at Deir el-Bahari. It was excavated in 1962–1967 and a restoration project was initiated in November 1978, this having continued ever since, albeit with a twelve-year gap in 1996–2007. The present project, which started in 2008, is focused on completing the study and publication of the temple, the third great temple at Deir el-Bahari (Dolińska 2012; 2014; 2015).

## EARLIER RESEARCH

One of the few elements of the temple surviving in place is the granite doorway in the entrance from the Hypostyle Hall to the Bark Hall, important for its state of preservation, location, iconography and color scheme. Jadwiga Lipińska (1968; 1977: 17–21) was the first to observe that it had been remodelled, the jambs having been pushed apart in order to widen the passageway. Her description of this part of the Djeser-akhet temple discusses the evidence found on the granite threshold: double sockets for mounting the pivots of

wooden double doors, as well as jambs partly protruding beyond the threshold edge.

The issue has been discussed extensively, the accumulated evidence helping to establish with greater precision the original dimensions of the entrance, its width after the remodelling, the initial appearance of the decoration and the reasons for the alteration. The outcome is a reconstruction of the building history of this complex, historical evidence for the last years of the reign of Tuthmosis III.

Fig. 1. *The Djeser-akhet temple: modified part highlighted in red (PCMA Tuthmosis III Temple Project/M. Caban)*

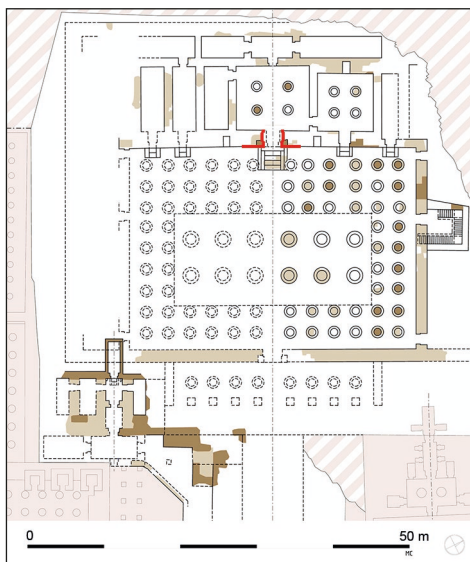


Fig. 2. *(and opposite page) Undamaged fragments of the torso, throne base and throne of Amun from the cut part of the west wall of the Hypostyle Hall, south of the granite doorway (PCMA Tuthmosis III Temple Project/photos Z. Doliński)*

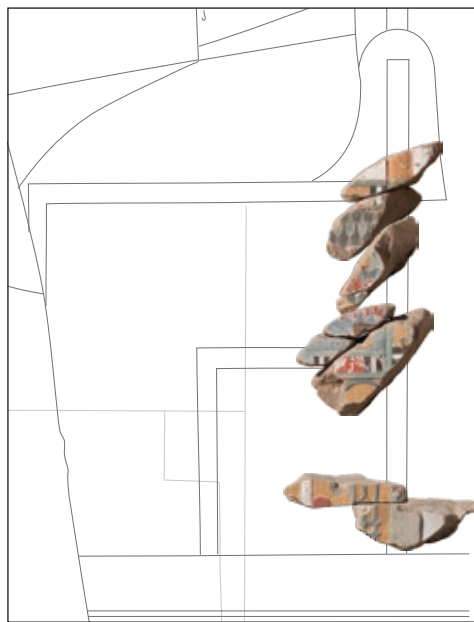
## ENLARGED DOORWAY

From the start, the entrance width seems to have been determined by the dimensions of the bark of Amun (Wiercińska 1992). A link between the two is evident considering that the entrance led to the Bark Hall [Fig. 1]. The bark was depicted twice on the walls of this room, and scenes that show it arriving in procession at the Djoser-akhet temple occupy a significant amount of space on the walls of the Hypostyle Hall (Górski and Wiercińska 1983; Wiercińska 1990; Górski 1990). The upper registers of the east, north and most likely the now lost south walls were entirely devoted to this subject.

Modification of the entrance was confirmed by the reconstruction of the decoration of the west wall of the Hypostyle Hall and the east wall of the Bark Hall. This also clarified in detail the hitherto unresolved issue of the dating of these changes. An in-depth analysis of the decoration of wall

sections located immediately next to the entrance, both on the side of the Hypostyle Hall and in the Bark Hall, proved beyond doubt that the scenes located in these places bore evidence of reworking — cutting and modification of the decoration — and that these changes occurred after the temple had been completed (Wiercińska 2010: see especially 221–222 and Figs 5, 6, 8 for a detailed description of the works conducted then). Fragments of walls adjacent to the entrance were cut away, permitting the jambs to be moved further apart: the southern by about 0.45 m and the northern by about 0.30 m. The result of these modifications was an entrance measuring 2.34 m in width (current state), compared to the original width of 1.60 m (Czerner and Melewska 1992: Fig. 3; Czerner 1997: Fig. 6).

Fragments of relief decoration from the sections of walls that had been cut away during this structural change were identified among the remains salvaged from the ruins. Notably fragments of the crown and torso of Amun bore no traces typical of the Amarna-period destruction (Wiercińska 2010: Figs 7, 9). More parts, usually small chips or mere flakes of blocks, were uncovered among thousands of wall fragments in the course of subsequent field seasons. Further fragments of the torso of Amun, as well as of the throne base and of the god's throne were also recorded [Fig. 2]. The assumption is that this decoration was largely removed and discarded during the remodelling. Considering that all the identified fragments discovered to date come from the excavations on the temple platform, it appears that the cut wall fragments were not discarded, but were deposited instead somewhere on the platform, most likely outside the walls, for later reuse, at least in some cases.



Today, these pieces are an invaluable source of knowledge on the original decoration from the time of Tuthmosis III. Needless to say, the Amarna-period destruction affected practically all representations of deities, particularly of Amun-Re, as well as inscriptions with the names of deities, their thrones, and chapels. Surviving divine images are products of a post-Amarna restoration, differing significantly from the Tuthmoside originals. The most notable difference indicated by the cut fragments and carelessly defaced parts of reliefs is that the figure of Amun was painted red; the blue color of the god's body was most likely a post-Amarna addition. Originally, the torso of the deity was adorned with colorful necklaces and bracelets, in which blue-and-green bands are separated by red segments. Throne bases, now a uniform dark blue framed with a narrow geometric band in yellow, were originally polychrome and decorated in relief, with groups of hieroglyphic signs *nh dd w3s* on top of the *nb* sign against a yellow background, encircled by a colorful band of geometrical decoration. The adornment of the divine throne in the post-Amarna version is much more modest than the original. It consists of color bands in a blue-green-blue-red sequence with a uniform red square field behind the throne. In an even more modest version, the color bands were replaced with a uniform dark blue. The original divine thrones did not differ from the royal ones. They were adorned with horizontal bands of multicolored plumes in a color sequence paralleling the one mentioned above, with a square field depicted behind the throne and the *sm3 t3wy* scene represented against a yellow background and framed by a band of multicolor geometrical decoration.

In the case of the decoration of the Hypostyle Hall, nearly all the fragments identified in recent seasons originate from the part of the wall located to the south of the granite doorway [Fig. 3]. They are fragmented blocks of limestone (the crown and necklace of Amun) and sandstone (the god's throne and its base). Masonry combining blocks of these two materials is hardly rare in the temple of Djoser-akhet. Of note is an inscription located in the original scene behind the enthroned Amun; its upper part is particularly well preserved on nine granite fragments, which had been part of the lintel above the doorway as determined already in the past (Wiercińska 2010: 222 and Fig. 5). This part of the granite doorway is not preserved. Like the south jamb, it must have been made with too long a block a part of which was then cut flush with the face of the wall. After the entrance had been widened, the vertical inscription behind Amun on the wall that was part of the south jamb was concealed under a coat of white paint (hence its legibility even today). Texts on the wall part of the lintel, namely the beginning of the inscription and the horizontal text reaching as far as the figure of the vulture goddess Nekhbet, as well as the border of the architrave extending into the wall, were cut away. Their discovery on the temple platform seems puzzling, especially since no other fragments attributable to the same lintel were recovered. The lintel dimensions: height about 1.35 m, width about 3.11–3.13 m, can be determined with relative precision thanks to the reconstructed decoration of the west wall of the Hypostyle Hall and the known width and height of the jambs in the doorway, as well as the dimensions of the threshold and architraves mounted

in the walls. The enlarged entrance required a lintel measuring nearly 3.87 m in length, therefore the original stone should have been replaced with a new one. Had that been the case, then it remains to be explained why the wall part of the lintel was cut off; such a solution

would be justified only if the lintel had been left in place and adapted to the new circumstances by shifting it to line up with the new axis of the doorway and extending it sideways with blocks, possibly even made of different material. The Djoser-akhet temple is replete with “construction flaws”;

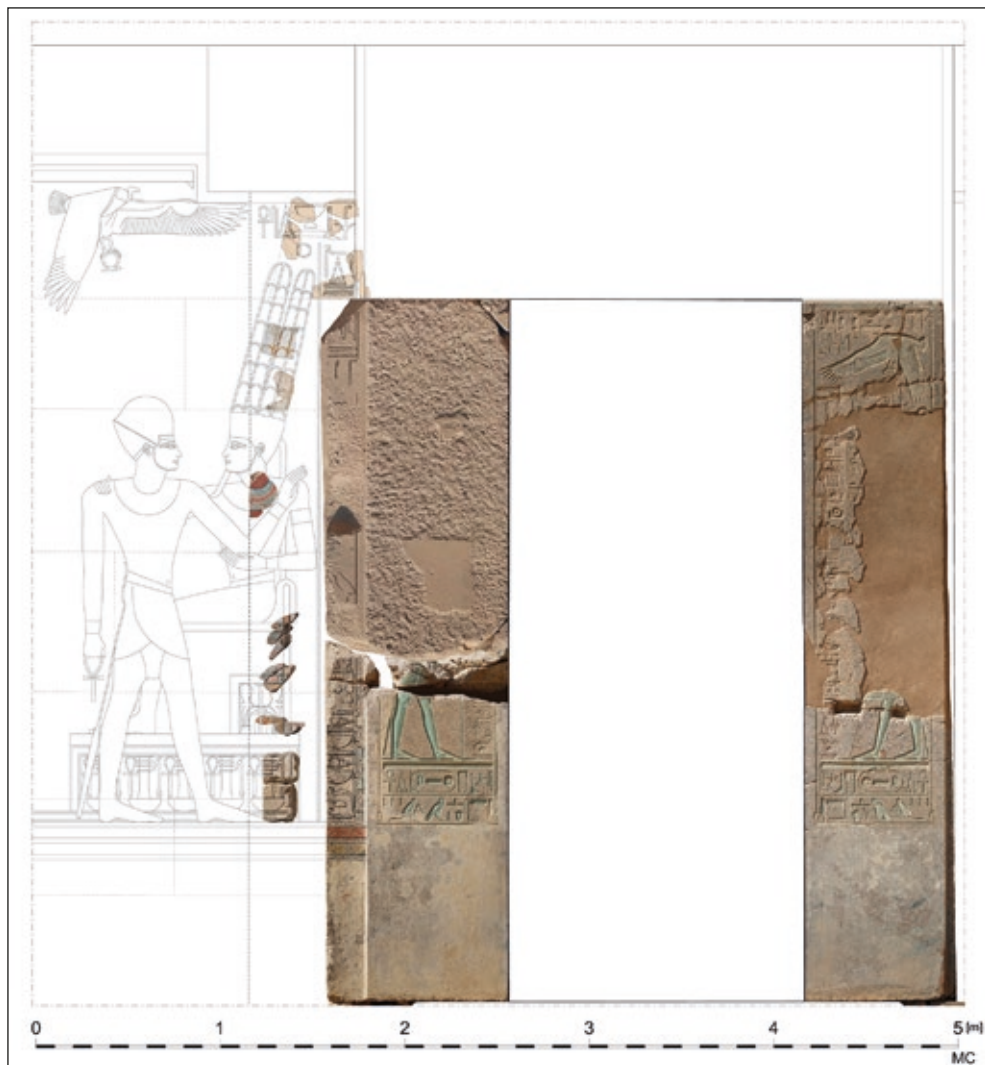


Fig. 3. Hypostyle Hall, granite doorway and the south scene, state before the widening of the doorway (PCMA Tuthmosis III Temple Project/drawing and photo M. Caban)



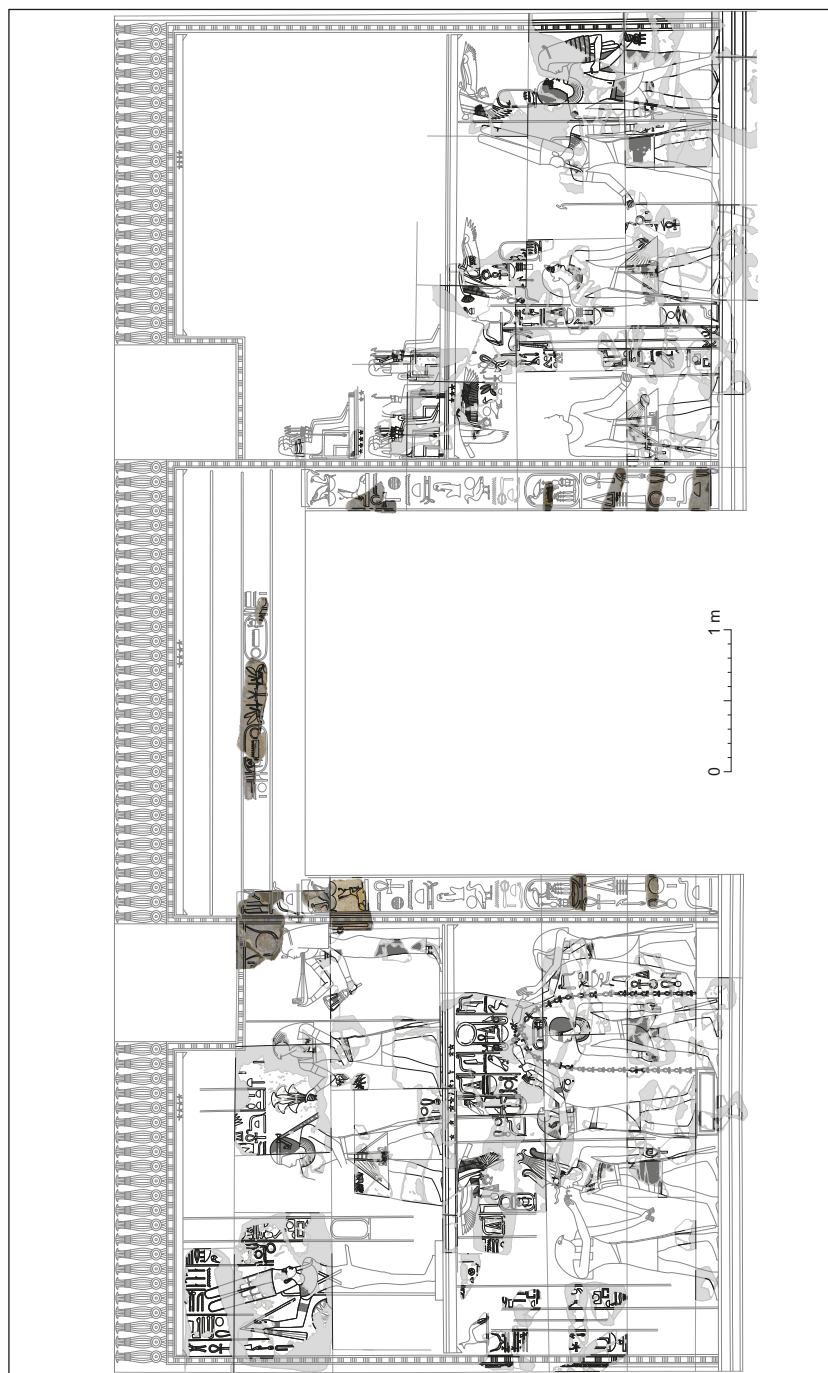


Fig. 4. Bark Hall, east wall with centrally located entrance, state after the widening of the doorway (PCMA Tutmosis III Temple Project/drawing K. Baturo, G. Zborowska, M. Momot)

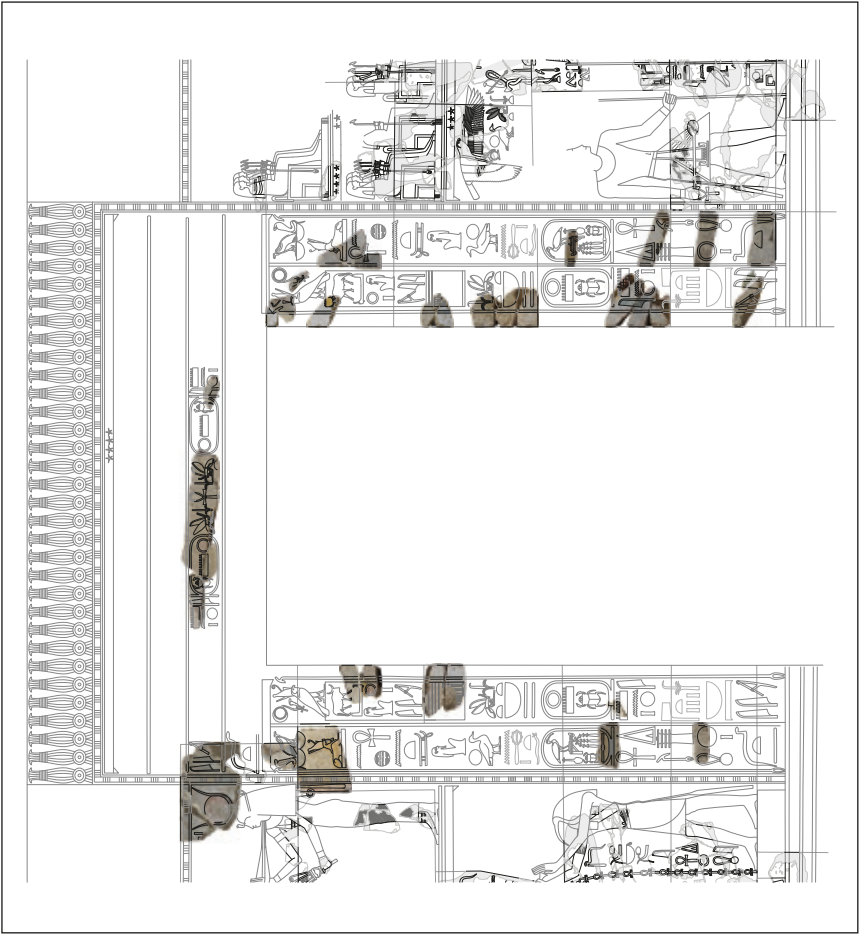


Fig. 5. Bark Hall, east wall with centrally located entrance, state before the widening of the doorway  
(PCMA Tuthmosis III Temple Project/drawing M. Momot)

the practice of inserting broken blocks into walls and concealing their damage with mortar and stone fill may also speak in favor of this particular reconstructed course of events.

Similar changes, albeit on a smaller scale, were made on the side of the Bark Hall. Evidence of the widening of the entrance may be observed in the decoration of the east wall. The reconstructed images indicate that the current width of the doorway is about 2.57 m. Its borders are single vertical columns of text topped with the sign for sky, as well as a lintel apparently decorated

with four horizontal bands topped with a band representing the heavens. The whole was enclosed within a narrow band of geometrical decoration [Fig. 4]. Striking at first glance is the atypical composition of the single column of text bearing the royal titulary of Tuthmosis III; it contains only the ruler's *nebty* name and a name inside the second cartouche (*nomen*). Also, on the side of the passageway the entrance lacks a border that is usually present in the form of a blue painted band framing the passage or the *w3s* sign in the same color. The entrance was made wider by cutting off one column of text on each side of its frame, precisely along the vertical line separating the columns, as one can see clearly on the preserved fragments [Fig. 6]. The initial widening of the passageway



Fig. 6. Fragments of the doorframe with the cut along the line separating columns of text (PCMA Tuthmosis III Temple Project/ photos Z. Doliński)



Fig. 7. Undamaged name of Amun on fragments of the cut doorframe in the Bark Hall (PCMA Tuthmosis III Temple Project/ photos Z. Doliński)



was most likely insufficient as additional cuts were made in the recesses for hosting the leaves of the doors (Czerner 1997: Fig. 7). Sandstone fragments with relief decoration, identified in recent field seasons as parts of the wall that had been cut away, permitted a reconstruction of the appearance of the first doorframe and its width [Fig. 5]. The original doorframe had two vertical columns of text with the titulary of Tuthmosis III; the first column, which was cut away, contained the Horus name and the first cartouche with the ruler's prenomen. Particularly noteworthy is the original Amun name, which bears no traces of obliteration [Fig. 7]. The second column mentioned above contained the nebty name (von Beckerath 1999: 137 [N5]) and the second cartouche with the king's nomen. As can be gathered from the reconstructed decoration, approximately 0.35 m was cut off on each side of the entrance; therefore, the original doorway must have been about 1.87 m wide.

#### DATING OF THE ALTERATION

The dimensions obtained are, of course, approximate. However, they indicate beyond doubt that the doorway was enlarged and suggest the cause of this alteration, while the decoration described above indicates the period when these changes were introduced. The imagery on the cut parts of the walls does not bear traces of effacement, meaning it was reworked before the Amarna period. In turn, the lack of any traces of changes to the decoration and architecture of the temple in a later period associates these operations with the reign of Tuthmosis III; research has shown that at the time the entrance was enlarged,

the space of the Hypostyle Hall was still a courtyard surrounded by a portico. It was Tuthmosis III who subsequently turned it into a hall by erecting taller columns in the central space.

#### CONCLUSION

To sum up, successive field seasons have contributed to our knowledge of the history of the Djoser-akhet temple but did not change the general conclusions reached to date. The building of the Djoser-akhet temple took place late in the reign of Tuthmosis III; the beginnings of construction work can be dated securely today to year 45 of the ruler's reign, even though royal building activity on this spot began several years earlier (Wiercińska 2010: 224–225). Destruction of the temple of Hatshepsut in Deir el-Bahari most likely began parallel to the building of Djoser-akhet. Also contemporary to Djoser-akhet is the construction of the granite bark shrine erected by Tuthmosis III in Karnak (Van Siclen 1984), replacing the quartzite bark shrine of Hatshepsut. Construction and demolition works in both places are dated to the same period. The entrance to the Djoser-akhet was enlarged when the temple was already standing and its decoration was complete. There is evidence to suggest this may have taken place in year 49 of Tuthmosis III (Wiercińska 2010: 224). One may suspect that after building the new sanctuary Tuthmosis III also funded a new, larger and more lavishly decorated bark for the Theban Amun, which required more priestly carriers. This, in turn, necessitated the widening of all entrances to spaces which the bark visited or which lay in its path during the festive procession.

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