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Some Remarks on Dates in the Building-*Dipinti* Discovered in the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari*

Research work in the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari

In season 2005/2006, during excavation work¹ of the Polish-Egyptian Archaeological and Conservation Mission, a process of documentation and studies of building-*dipinti* has begun. The works started with an unexpected discovery of quite a large corpus of building-*dipinti* written on the blocks of the outer face of the southern wall of the vestibule of the chapel of Hatshepsut's funerary cult (CH-V-OFSW), in the Sondage S.1/06, located right behind the temple's wall (**fig. 105**). During excavation work the southern wall was unearthed on the length of ca. 5.30 m and down to the depth of ca. 1.50 m below the level of the vestibule pavement. On the blocks of the incomplete outer face, 29 building-*dipinti* were revealed (**fig. 106**). In addition 4 more were discovered on the outer face of the chapel of Hatshepsut's funerary cult (CH-OFSW) and 71 on loose blocks explored from the filling of the sondage. Next two excavation seasons 2007/2008² and 2008/2009 provided the discovery of a new inscriptional material, in the area of the southern temple's wall. They included the outer face of southern wall of the so-called 'Room with window' (L.1/08 N wall)³ and the so-called 'Negative of ramp' (MT-RW-S)⁴ located on the face of the southern retaining wall of the Middle Terrace of the temple, the ramp which previously led to the Hathor Shrine (**fig. 105**). Here successively 86 and 93 *dipinti* were recorded. Among discovered building-*dipinti* there are mainly hieratic dates but also groups of signs, which seem to be connected with the preparation and processing of the stone building material.

Dates – their form and meaning in documents

If we see carefully the dates written by ancient scribes on documents of all kinds from the Old to the New Kingdom Period, we can distinguish two basic types of dates:⁵

I. Independent date called also **complete date**:

year + month + season + day and

* I wish to thank Magdalena GROCHOWALSKA for correcting my English.

¹ For the report from the excavation work see Z.E. SZAFRAŃSKI, Deir el-Bahari, The Temple of Hatshepsut, Season 2005/2006, *PAM XVIII* (2008), pp. 269-284 and D.F. WIECZOREK, Building *dipinti* in the Temple of Hatshepsut, Preliminary Remarks, 2005/2006, *PAM XVIII* (2008), pp. 285-289.

² D.F. WIECZOREK, Observations on Building *dipinti* in the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari, [in:] Tempeltagung 8th (forecoming) and D.F. WIECZOREK, Building *Dipinti* in the Temple of Hatshepsut, Documentation Work Season 2007/2008, *PAM XIX* (forecoming).

³ The outer face of the southern wall of the so-called 'Room with window' belongs to one of the four walls constructed in an unusual way – they are architectural wasteland (L.1/08) created by an addition to the Hathor Shrine in the Middle Terrace, ca. 3.5 metre deep from the Royal Mortuary Cult Complex Vestibule pavement. In this way, mentioned above, outer face of the southern wall forms northern wall of L.1/08 (L.1/08 N wall).

⁴ MT-RW-S = Middle Terrace, southern retaining wall.

⁵ Cf. M. MEGALLY, Un intéressant ostracon de la XVIIIe dynastie de Thèbes, *Suppl. BIFAO* 81 (1981), pp. 300, 301.

II. Dependent date which is included in the following two types of dates:


1. **Incomplete date:** *month + season + day* and
2. **Day date:** *day of month*


Based on this division, we can surely introduce the same division into hieratic ostraca, grouping them into two types of documents:⁶

I. Independent document called also **main document** and

II. Dependent document

It is certain that during every kind of work, which was under administrative supervision, particularly building and construction works, many documents connected with the same work, were compiled daily. Egyptian scribes were quite practical and they did not mark the documents included in the group of one report with the same date. There is only one independent document which was a kind of the first page in a long daily report, bearing independent date *year + month + season + day* and a note in a title, for example:

 “(...) Amount of the labour carried out on the stonework (...).”⁸

The rest of ostraca is a dependent document which is not dated. It was written on the same day and begins with a phrase, for example:  “Work on this day. (...).”⁸

However in case of a report containing a group of documents written in the course of several days, only a few documents bear complete dates. The rest of them, namely dependent documents, are dated to the next days. They are written in form of dependent dates. An example of the above-mentioned may be the Hayes’ Ostrakon no. 21,⁹ where *recto* serves as independent document and bears complete date, whereas *verso* contains a text of a dependent document dated by an incomplete date *month + season + day*. Next very interesting document is Hayes’ Ostrakon no. 16,¹⁰ which bears a report from two days on *recto* and *verso*. Similarly to the above-mentioned one its *recto* serving as independent document with a complete date and a *verso* dependent document where two dates were noted: incomplete date and a day date.

Based on the discussed ostraca we can say that the so-called dependent document formed a supplement to an independent document which was the basis for compiling the final report from all works done. A good example of such report can be Ostrakon CG 25542,¹¹ dated to the end of Nineteenth Dynasty, found in the Valley of the Kings, which is a report of giving olive lamps from the storeroom, day by day. Unfortunately not too many documents of this kind remain, especially from the times of early Eighteenth Dynasty. The most known hieratic ostraca are mainly dependent documents, because they were written the most often.

The Types of dates discovered among the building-*dipinti* in the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari

Until now among all documented material on the area of the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari, we can distinguish nine types of the building-*dipinti*. Four of them are dates written in hieratic with elements of hieroglyphic cursive. They are written in red paint – probably by ochre, with a thin brush. They do not exceed a dozen centimetres in height and width ca. 10 x 15 cm.

⁶ Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 300, 301.

⁷ W.C. HAYES, A selection of tuthmoside ostraca from Der el-Bahari, *JEA* 46 (1960), pp. 44, 45, pls XII/XIIA, no. 17r. MMA Field no. 23.001.51.

⁸ HAYES, *JEA* 46 (1960), pp. 32, 33, pls IX/IXA, no. 4r. MMA Field no. 23.001.48.

⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 47, 48, pls XIII/XIIIA, no. 21r&v. MMA Field no. 23.001.108.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 43, 44, pls XII/XIIA, no. 16r&v. MMA Field no. 23.001.66.

¹¹ J. ČERNÝ, *Ostraca Hiératiques – Catalogue Général Des Antiquités Égyptiennes Du Musée Du Caire. No 25501-25832 I*, Le Caire 1935, p. 18, pls 37, 38: CG 25542r&v.

beyond day-dates. They knew the exact year and month date and usually did not need them in a weekly or a monthly time scale.

The dates and their notes in the building-*dipinti* in the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari

Among four types of the dates attested in the documented material two are distinguished by short notes and provide day-dates:

Type II. Day-date + (group of signs) $\{ \text{𓆎} \text{ rnp.t-nfr}$ (**fig. 107C**) and

Type III. Day-date + (group of signs) $\{ \text{𓆎} \text{ j+A24}$ (**fig. 107D**)

Both types of day-dates followed by short notes are quite enigmatic and surprisingly they do not have any known analogy. While the most often recorded textual material is almost identical and refers to the discovered one in the area of the Temple of Tuthmosis III at Deir el-Bahari,¹⁶ these types of dates are attested only in the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari.

Type II. Day-date + (group of signs) $\{ \text{𓆎} \text{ rnp.t-nfr}$

There are only 9 known examples from the whole examined area. Seven of them are attested on the outer face of the southern wall of the vestibule of the chapel of Hatshepsut's funerary cult, and only 2 times on the outer face of the southern wall of the so-called 'Room with window'. Unfortunately the meaning of the group of signs $\{ \text{𓆎} \text{ rnp.t-nfr}$ is not clear and translating it as: 'the good year' brings much more questions than answers.

Interesting is that the group occurs in the area of the temple also as a single group which is not preceded by the day-date – there are 29 examples known (**fig. 107E**). They are distinguished in large size, ca. 20 x 30 cm, and were written with a large brush. Context in which they are attested seems to indicate that in fact two identical groups had two different meanings. The single group rnp.t-nfr occurs in the lower and upper part of the walls, on their faces and in cores. Whereas day-date + (group of signs) rnp.t-nfr is attested only in the upper part of the walls and starts to appear from the level of the pavement of the Upper Terrace of the Temple. It seems to mark the level of the proper wall which was started to be erected above the level of the ground.

Type III. Day-date + (group of signs) $\{ \text{𓆎} \text{ j+A24}$

This group is also very difficult to interpret. It occurs in large quantity – 20 times. The biggest number is recognised on the outer face of the southern wall of the so-called 'Room with window'. The way of notation of the short note is quite untypical – it is half cursive half hieratic. The group $\{ \text{𓆎} \text{ j+A24}$ was interpreted by Jadwiga Lipińska as the abbreviation of the title 'stonecutter'¹⁸ or 'miner' as I suppose as $\{ \text{𓆎} \text{ jky}$.¹⁹ However, this theory we should definitely reject mainly from the paleographical point of view. The second hieratic sign was obviously incorrectly read. Evidently the sign $\{ \text{𓆎}$ = $\{ \text{𓆎}$ 'man striking with stick'²⁰ was mistaken with the sign $\{ \text{𓆎}$ = $\{ \text{𓆎}$ 'bent man leaning on stick',²¹ which is

¹⁶ J. LIPIŃSKA, *The temple of Tuthmosis III. Architecture*, Deir el-Bahari II, Warsaw 1977 (hereinafter referred to as: LIPIŃSKA, *Architecture*), pp. 21-25.





¹⁷ *Dipinto* L.1/08 N Wall 31 located on the outer face of southern wall of the so-called 'Room with window'.

¹⁸ LIPIŃSKA, *Architecture*, p. 23.

¹⁹ See *Wb.* I, p. 139: 10, 11; R.O. FAULKNER, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, Oxford 1988, p. 32; L.H. LESKO, B. SWITALSKI LESKO, *A Dictionary of Late Egyptian* I, 2nd ed., Berkeley – California 2002-2004, p. 14.

²⁰ G. MÖLLER, *Hieratische Paläographie II*, Leipzig 1927 (hereinafter referred to as: MÖLLER, *Hieratische Paläographie II*), 1965, pl. 2: 15; A.H. GARDINER, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3rd ed., Oxford 1957 (hereinafter referred to as: GARDINER, *Egyptian Grammar*), Sign-list: A24.

²¹ MÖLLER, *Hieratische Paläographie II*, pl. 2: 14; GARDINER, *Egyptian Grammar*, Sign-list: A19.

a determinative or a phonogram of the above-mentioned title  *jky* = ‘stonecutter’. Furthermore, considering that the documented dates were written right after putting blocks into the wall, presence of the *jky* title in this place would not make any sense, because it refers to a group of stonecutters connected rather with extraction of the stone building material than with building or construction work.²² Moreover, hieratic ostraca from Deir el-Bahari, similarly as Hayes’ Ostrakon no. 16,²³ dated to the reign of Tuthmosis III, mentioned a few times groups of the stonecutters  *hrtyw-ntr* as working and responsible for masonry work on the building area. We read *verso*: “Month 3 of peret, day 21. Completing white stone for the mi, 6 (blocks) – done by 1[5?] masons *hrtyw-ntr*. Day 22. Completing white stone for the mi, 6 (blocks) – done by 15 masons *hrtyw-ntr*.”²⁴ So, it seems that the group  *j+A24* is an abbreviation of some kind of building term rather than a title, which is in opposition to the above described day-date followed by a group of sign  *rnp.t-nfr*. This theory can be confirmed by the fact that a day-date + (group of sign) *j+A24* is attested only in the lower parts of the walls, below the level of the pavement of the Upper Terrace of the Temple below the line marked by day-date + (group of signs) *rnp.t-nfr*.

²² I. SHAW, Quarries and Mines, [in:] D.B. REDFORD, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* III, Oxford 2001, pp. 99-104.

²³ HAYES, *JEA* 46 (1960), pp. 43, 44, pl XII/XIIA, no. 16.r&v. MMA Field no. 23.001.66.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 43.

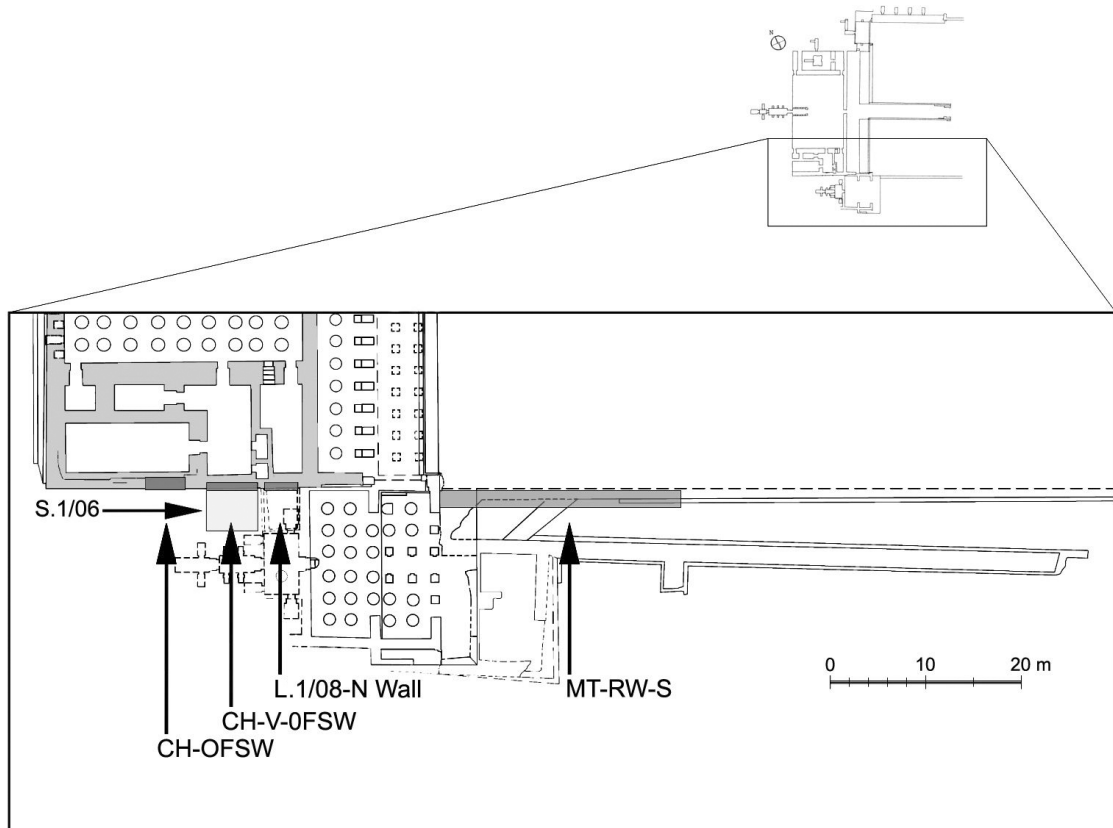


Fig. 105. Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari. Southern wall of the temple with marked areas of archaeological and epigraphic works carried out in the last three seasons (drawing by D.F. Wiczorek after T. Kaczor)

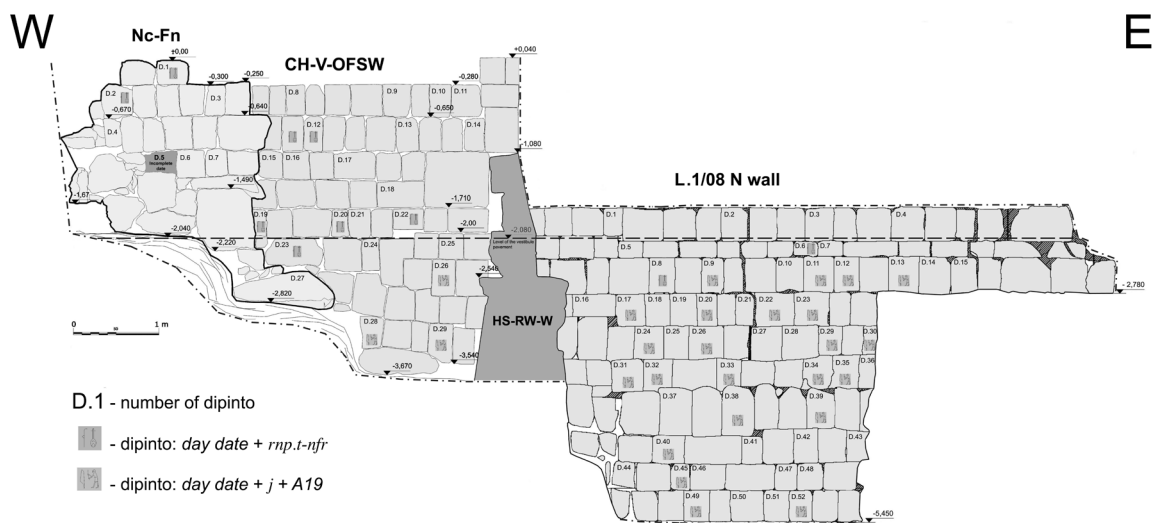


Fig. 106. Outer face of the southern wall of the Vestibule of the chapel of Hatshepsut's funerary cult (CH-V-OFSW) with marked foundation of the niche (Fn-Nc) and outer face of the southern wall of the so-called "Room with window" (S.1/08 N wall) (drawing by D.F. Wiczorek after T. Kaczor and M. Caban)

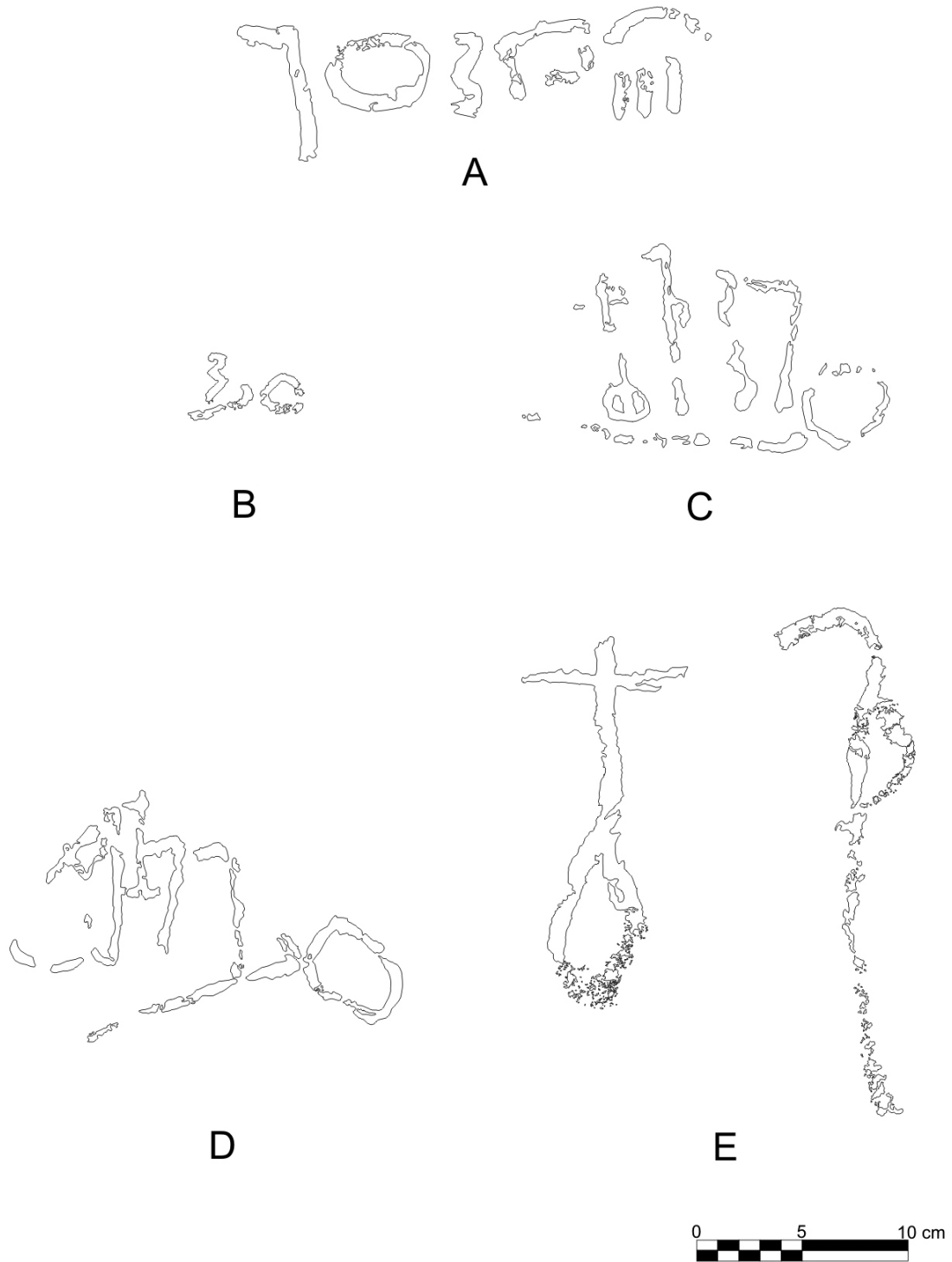


Fig. 107. *Facsimile of building-dipinti* (drawing by D. F. Wieczorek)