

The subject of proposed research is the courtyard of the Complex of the Royal Cult of the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari (15th century B.C., Central Egypt). It has of three walls: western (carved with inscription), northern (with a sequence of most likely ritual scenes), and eastern (with the procession of personifications of the nomes, administrative divisions of Ancient Egypt, bearing offerings for the sovereign) and, moreover, the gate leading from the Upper Terrace to the mentioned Complex. This part of the Hatshepsut's temple endured up to now in poor condition. The lower parts of the walls still exist, thus blocks are in their original positions, while most of the upper parts of walls have been deconstructed and dispersed, and some blocks have been lost or destroyed.

The studies will focus on the theoretical (in the form of drawings) reconstruction of the courtyard decoration as well as its comprehensive analysis and interpretation in ritual and ideological dimensions. It will allow determine a role the courtyard played in the royal mortuary cult, reason why such scenes appeared in this part of the temple, how they were related to the function of the courtyard, where inspirations were drawn, and how these ideas were used in later times.

During the study, a documentary work will be conducted to create detailed tracings of decorated walls and blocks, also in a digitalized form, as well as a verification work will be undertaken to validate the documentation made in previous years, correct it and adapt to the current standards. The next step will be the theoretical reconstruction of original decoration based on preserved fragments. The reconstruction of the sequence of scenes and information in hieroglyphic texts will serve as a starting point for further analysis and substantive elaboration of the whole courtyard decoration. At this stage, technical issues (relief techniques and polychrome) will be studied in detail, scenes will be described, and inscriptions will be translated. Furthermore, the composition of decoration will be analyzed in terms of functionality and symbolism (occurrence in the cult complexes of kings from other periods, traditions and innovations in the selection of motifs), and other issues requiring an extensive commentary will be investigated.

Studies on the decoration of the Complex of the Royal Cult courtyard have been undertaken on a limited scale so far. Only the eastern wall of the courtyard was published – first, fragments preserved in situ appeared as plates at the beginning of the 20th century, and then, in 2014, in the form of an article containing the proposed reconstruction and analysis of the depicted scene. The remaining parts of the courtyard are still incompletely undocumented, unreconstructed and unpublished, thus inaccessible to a wide range of researchers which is a significant inconvenience for studies of similar complexes in other temples, especially because new standards have been set in the planning of temples of million years during the times of Hatshepsut. In the longer term, the proposed reconstructions, a result of this project, can be used as a base to anastylosis of this part of the Complex of the Royal Cult, and, in consequence, to the opening the Complex to visitors which will contribute to the popularization of research undertaken as part of the activities of the Polish Mission that has been working in this area since 1961.