

Hatshepsut and the Apis Race New Quartzite Relief Fragments from Dra' Abu el-Naga

HASSAN AGLAN

Abstract: The reconstruction of a scene sculpted on some quartzite stone fragments discovered recently at Dra' Abu el-Naga and dating from the reign of Hatshepsut is the subject of this paper. The relief resembles the scenes known from the Red Chapel at Karnak and seems to be a part of the *wdi sh.t* ritual performed on the occasion of the Opet and/or Valley Festivals.

Keywords: New Kingdom Egypt, Dra' Abu el-Naga, West Bank, Luxor, Hatshepsut, Opet Festival, Valley Festival

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The present paper discusses fragments of decorated blocks found during excavations in central Dra' Abu el-Naga, carried out between 2009 and 2011 by the Ministry of State for Antiquities (MSA). The site is situated *c.* 700km south of Cairo, opposite the modern city of Luxor on the West Bank of the Nile. Dra' Abu el-Naga is the modern name of the northern area of the Theban necropolis. Central Dra' Abu el-Naga lies to the north of the causeway of Queen Hatshepsut's temple and just south of the German and Spanish concessions, overlooking the valley where a Temple of Amenhotep I was once erected. The reliefs analysed below were found in area situated just below the hilltop of the middle range of the Dra' Abu el-Naga hills (**Fig. 1**).

RELIEF FRAGMENTS

Many blocks were discovered during the removing of debris from the middle part of the valley, which was done in order to reach the bed-rock and the lowermost level of the tombs in central Dra' Abu el-Naga. These fragments were presumably once used as building material for the then contemporary houses. Eleven of them are made of red quartzite and decorated with relief. Some of them are clearly joining to each other, and based on this criteria, the whole collection could be divided into three groups. The fragments are 3–4cm thick



1. Satellite image of Central Dra' Abu el-Naga and Deir el-Bahari temple (Phot. © GoogleEarth).

and smooth on the back. After arranging them in their reconstructed original position, it became clear that only one piece preserves the lower edge of a block. The decoration is carved in shallow sunken relief and no traces of colour are preserved. The inscription seems to be unfinished (see: **Fig. 2b**). The style of the relief resembles the best examples from the early Eighteenth Dynasty.

GROUP 1 (**Fig. 2a**)

Dimensions: W. 9cm; H. 6cm; T. 3–4cm

No. of fragments: 1

Description:

Remains of two columns of text divided by a vertical line. On the left side, above the top portions of the signs *h* and *p*, one stroke and a fragment of another one are visible. In the right column, the signs *mr* (Gardiner N36).*t* ($\frac{\overline{\text{m}}}{\Delta}$), and the upper part of a cartouche can be seen.

GROUP 2 (**Fig. 2b**)

Dimensions: W. 27cm; H. 18cm; T. 3–4cm

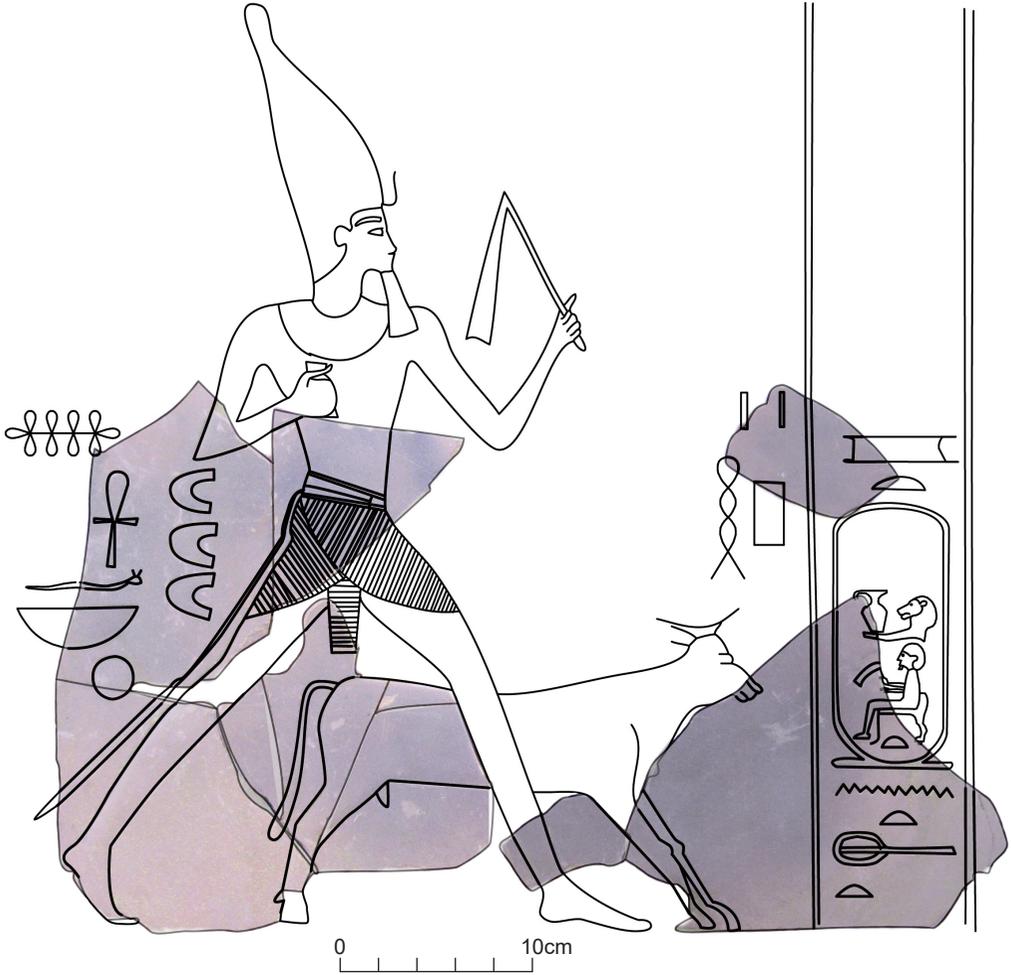
No. of fragments: 3

Description:

Preserved is a part of the name of Queen Hatshepsut, followed by *n.t h.t* ($\frac{\overline{\text{m}}}{\Delta} \frac{\overline{\text{h}}}{\Delta}$) at the bottom of a column. Adjacent to this is a representation of a bull, including the front leg and tip of the nose. To the left of the animal's legs there is a part of a leg of a striding human figure.

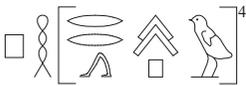


2. Quartzite relief fragments from Dra' Abu el-Naga: a. fragment showing remains of hieroglyphic signs; b. two joined fragments showing the lower part of Hatshepsut's name as well as front leg and tip of the nose of the bull; c. seven joined fragments showing the rear part of the bull, a running figure, and the *dnb.w*-signs (Phot. H. Aglan).



3. Theoretical reconstruction of the scene sculpted on the quartzite fragments (Drawing and digitising: H. Aglan).

Above the bull:



ph[rr Hp]

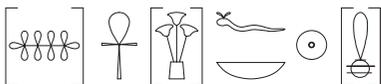
The racing of [Apis].

The reconstruction indicates that Hatshepsut was accompanied by the Apis bull.⁵

⁴ *Wb* I, 541, 12.

⁵ Lacau, Chevrier 1977: 428.

The signs behind the figure of Hatshepsut are part of a protection formula:



[s3] ^cnh [h3]f nb [mi] R^c

All [protection] and all life [to] him⁶ [like] Re.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on parallels from the Red Chapel, it is clear that these fragments are part of a larger scene that represents Hatshepsut performing rituals of *wdi sh.t* on the occasion of the Opet and/or Valley Festivals, i.e. in the context where she was depicted once as a ruler of Upper Egypt and once as a ruler of Lower Egypt. Hatshepsut probably holds in one hand the *nekhakha*-whip and in the other hand the *mekes*-container. It can be proposed that on the discussed fragments she was depicted as the ruler of Upper Egypt (**Fig. 4**).⁷

The text under Hatshepsut's name, *n.t h.t*, , seems to be unfinished (**Fig. 2b**), indicating that the whole scene was not completed, as mentioned above.

The fact that at the site no other quartzite blocks were found that could match the above discussed fragments makes it difficult to determine the exact original location and function of these reliefs. However, it is possible to contextualise them. The scene is exactly of the same scale as the rituals of *wdi sh.t* scene in the Red Chapel, and both reliefs are made of the same material, so one could posit that the blocks found at Dra' Abu el-Naga were brought from Karnak. However, the thickness of the analysed fragments, which is about 3 to 4cm, clearly differs from that of the blocks in the Red Chapel, which are either 70–80cm thick or about half of these dimensions. It cannot be ruled out that the fragments from Dra' Abu el-Naga once had the same thickness and that they have been hacked and smoothed.⁸ However, a more likely explanation is that the 3–4cm represents the original thickness of the reliefs and that these were used as casing slabs of a wall, such as is attested for the Mentuhotep II temple at Deir el-Bahari and Pylons VII and VIII at Karnak.⁹ Also Hatshepsut used this technique in her tomb with respect to the slabs on which Amduat scenes are represented.¹⁰ Such slabs could face both stone walls as well as those built of soft material (a mud brick wall, a wall cut in the bedrock etc.). In the case

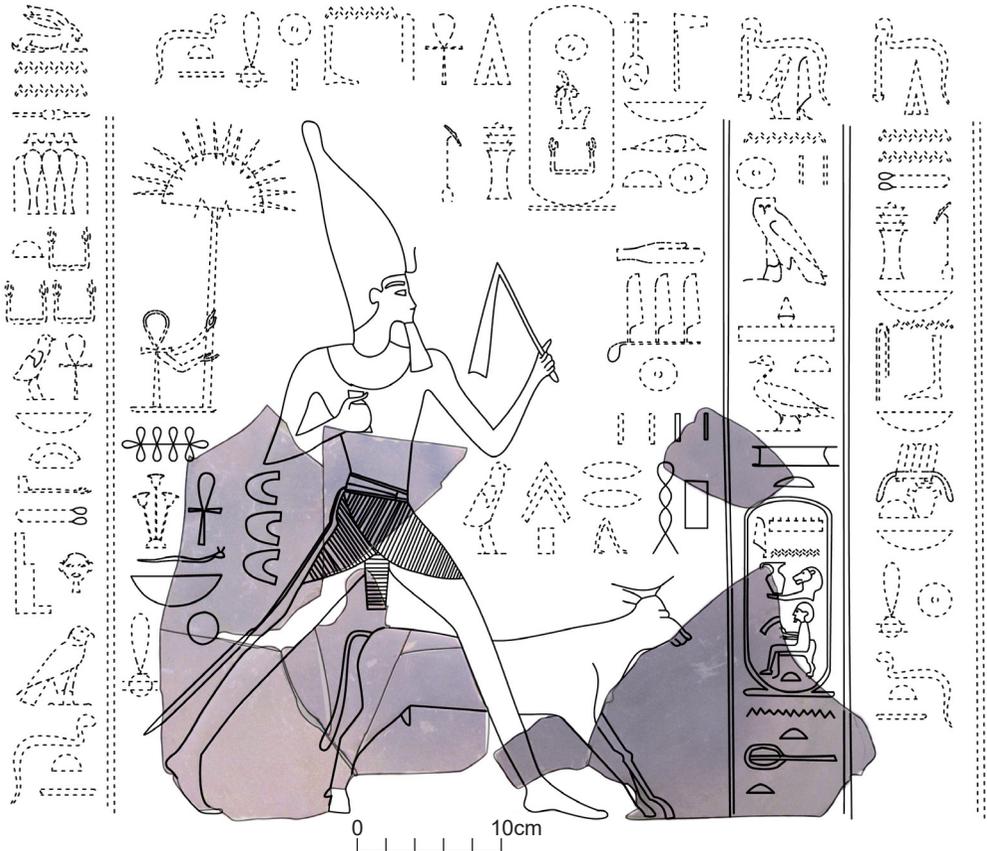
⁶ Suffix *f* for masculine was used instead of *s* suffix for feminine: Lacau, Chevrier 1977: 196.

⁷ This proposal is based on the *wdi sh.t* scene of Hatshepsut in the Red Chapel, where she is wearing the White Crown and in front of her there is an inscription '*dd mdw ii.w(y) n.t m htp s3t[.i] mri.t <Hnmt-Imn-h3t-šps[.w]t> n.t h.t[.i]*', while in the other scene where she is wearing the Red Crown there is no text in front of her but instead the barque of Amun-Re (Lacau, Chevrier 1977: 195).

⁸ The fragments are now stored in the MSA magazine, so it was not possible to re-examine the reliefs and check this point.

⁹ Arnold 1991: 148.

¹⁰ Mauric-Barberio 2001: 315–350.



4. Reconstruction of the Runnig of Apis scene, based on representation from the Red Chapel (Drawing and digitising: H. Aglan).

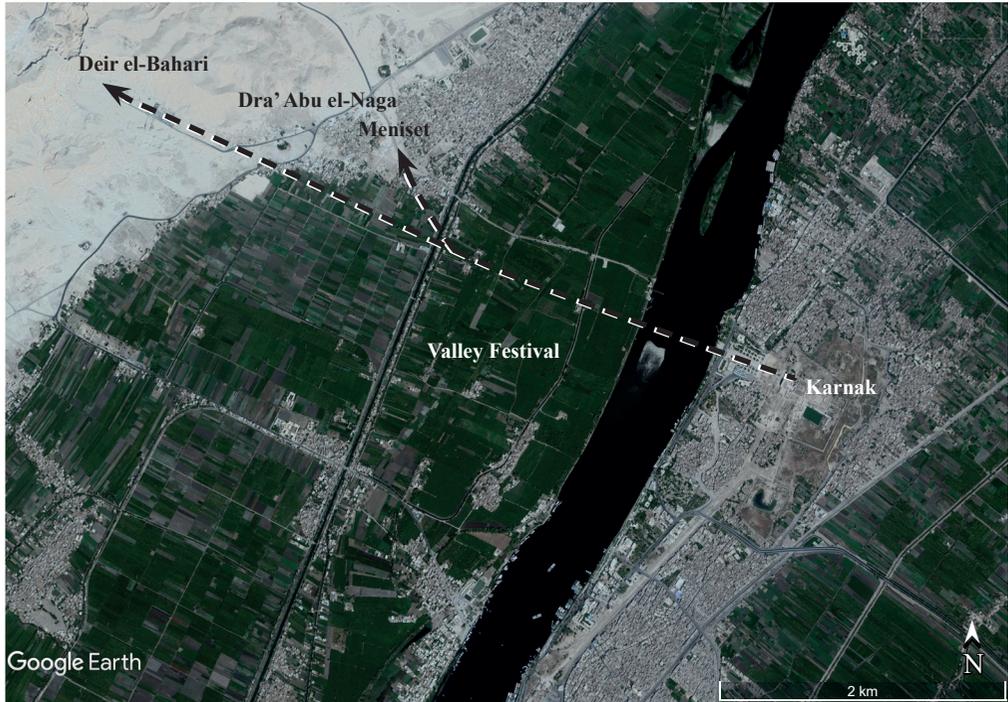
of the VIII Pylon in Karnak, there were limestone blocks, and not a very rare quartzite one. Moreover, they were inscribed with a text, and placed at the foot of the pylon, while those from Dra' Abu el-Naga, must have been placed much higher on the wall, since they were decorated with a scene.

The presence of this very material should be noted and stressed because during Hatshepsut's reign in the royal constructions it appears very rarely, i.e. in the the Red Chapel, in two sarcophagi of the queen¹¹ and some minor objects like name stones.¹²

The author would like to suggest that the newly discovered fragments once were part of a barque shrine of Hatshepsut on the West Bank, related to the processional way leading to Deir el-Bahari (**Fig. 5**). Jean-Baptiste Prosper Jollois and Édouard de Villiers du Terrage, who participated in the French expedition of 1798, made a plan that is the earliest

¹¹ Iwaszczuk 2016: 319, 325–326.

¹² Iwaszczuk 2016: 21–22.



5. Satellite image illustrating the suggested procession way of Valley Festival between Karnak and Deir el-Bahari in the reign of Hatshepsut; the polygon shape in Dra' Abu el-Naga indicates the location of discovered fragments (Phot. © GoogleEarth).

detailed documentation of the processional way to Deir el-Bahari.¹³ The plan shows that the processional way was lined by sphinx bases, and that there is a gap in the half of its length, where a limestone barque shrine was placed,¹⁴ of which remains are still visible *in situ*. There is of course a possibility this barque shrine was not connected with Deir el-Bahari, although the Temple of Hatshepsut is the nearest attested construction of the queen, or at least its easternmost part, i.e. the Valley Temple which, however, according to the explorers, was never finished.¹⁵

Nonetheless, if one assumes that the discussed reliefs from Dra' Abu el-Naga were originally part of a barque shrine of Hatshepsut on the West Bank, they had to belong to another barque shrine, since they were made of quartzite, and not limestone. Perhaps it was located on one of the terraces at Deir el-Bahari. It could have been in the lower terrace.

¹³ Naville 1894: 1, n. 1.

¹⁴ Arnold 2008: 22, Fig. 8. A possible reconstruction of what the road might have looked like under Hatshepsut was proposed by Felix Arnold, who suggests that the causeway leading to her mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahari also served as a road for processions. The barque shrine divided the processional way into an upper and a lower section. In the upper section, which is 525m long, there are two rows of sphinxes along the way grouped in two parallel tracks. Between the sphinxes were small trees. The 37m wide road was bordered on both sides by high walls. The width of the passage itself is 5.5m, so there remained plenty of room for spectators.

¹⁵ Carter 1912: 38–39; Lythgoe, Lansing, Davies 1917: 10.

The only known remains from the terrace are the T-shaped water tanks for papyrus and circular plantings beds for two trees, therefore there was plenty of space left.¹⁶ The barque shrine could serve there as a stop for priests before they climb up on the stairs.

Since the scene depicted on the new blocks is unfinished and the name of the queen is not chiseled out, this indicates that the building did not survive the reign of Hatshepsut. On the other hand this can also suggest that the barque shrine was planned to be added in a later phase of construction of the temple itself, and that the work was stopped because of the queen's death, and blocks from the barque were destroyed by her successors.¹⁷

We may conclude that the new fragments from Dra' Abu el-Naga are likely to attest a presence of another barque shrine of Hatshepsut on the West Bank of the Nile. Significantly different in building technique from the Red Chapel in Karnak, this new quartzite shrine had a remarkably similar design, including one of the festival scenes. It would require further fragments to establish any further arguments supporting links to the scenes found on the Red Chapel.

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¹⁶ Winlock 1942: 90, Pl. 46; Arnold 1979: Pl. 6; 1980: 1014, 1019 [6], Fig. 1 [11].

¹⁷ However, it is also possible that the blocks broke during the work and were therefore thrown away.

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