

## The Ramesside Temple in the Asasif:

Observations on its construction and function, based on the results  
of the Austrian Excavations<sup>1</sup>

Julia Budka

### 1 Introduction

Ramesses IV started a very ambitious building program in Western Thebes. Three or possibly even four temples can be attributed to this king.<sup>2</sup> From North to South the sites are as follows: a probably unfinished colonnade temple near the valley-temple of Hatshepsut;<sup>3</sup> the Asasif-temple, which is the subject of this paper;<sup>4</sup> an obscure building excavated by ROBICHON/VARILLE near the temple of Amenhotep son of Hapu;<sup>5</sup> and finally, close-by, a temple near the Aja/Haremhab-temple north of Medinet Habu excavated by HÖLSCHER,<sup>6</sup> mostly omitted in literature in favour of the building further north.<sup>7</sup> Common features of all of these structures are that they are heavily destroyed and mainly attested by foundation deposits. Their architecture remains unclear and they were probably never completely finished. Consequently, function and use of the buildings are not evident, or, as PEDEN put it: *“One of the most vexing problems concerning the rule of Ramesses IV remains the question*

- 
- 1 This paper is part of my ph.d.-thesis on the Austrian excavations at the Asasif back in the Seventies, supervised by Manfred Bietak (University of Vienna, 2006). I would like to thank Manfred Bietak for the possibility to work on the as of yet unpublished material. I am grateful to Amy Butner who edited my English.
  - 2 For an overview of the temples on the Theban west bank attributed to Ramesses IV see A.J. PEDEN, *Ramesses IV*, 37–42; J. BUDKA, *Die Tempelanlagen Ramses' IV. in Theben-West*, in: *Kemet* 10/2, Berlin, April 2001, 28–32; M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 524–542.
  - 3 The Earl of CARNARVON/H. CARTER, *Five Year's Explorations at Thebes*, 8–9, 48, pls. 30 and 40; W. HELCK, in: *LÄ V*, 120 with n. 9, s.v. *Ramses IV*; M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 527–529.
  - 4 H.E. WINLOCK, *Excavations at Deir el-Bahari*, 9–13; M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 17–26; A.J. PEDEN, *Ramesses IV*, 49–50; M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 524–527.
  - 5 C. ROBICHON/A. VARILLE, *Fouilles des temples funéraires thébains* (1937), in: *RdÉ* 3, 1938, 99–102; W. HELCK, in: *LÄ V*, 120 with n. 7, s.v. *Ramses IV.*; M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 529.
  - 6 U. HÖLSCHER, *The Excavations of Medinet Habu II*, OIP 41, 1939, 116–119, fig. 96, pl. 58; KRI VI, 50–51; M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit – Die Häuser der Millionen von Jahren*, 529–530.
  - 7 See M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 539 with n. 1763.

of which of the three (!) possible sites on the West Bank at Thebes is to be regarded as the location of his funerary temple.”<sup>8</sup>

## 2 The Asasif-temple

The largest of the buildings of Ramesses IV is situated at the entrance into the Asasif valley (fig. 1). The temple lies at the end of the royal causeways to the 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty-temples of Deir el-Bahari; it occupies the eastern part of the Mentuhotep Nebhepetre- and to some extent the southern part of the Tuthmosis III-causeway.<sup>9</sup> The temple can be attributed to Ramesses IV by means of several foundation deposits. Seven of these deposits were unearthed by Ambrose LANSING on behalf of the Metropolitan Museum of Art mission and a single one by the Austrian mission directed by Manfred BIETAK (see below). Although decoration of later kings (Ramesses V and VI) is attested, the oversized temple probably remained unfinished. It was used as a quarry soon after the 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and is therefore badly preserved, especially in its western part.<sup>10</sup> Ideas about the internal structure and rooms are hence limited to comparisons, particularly to the House of Millions of Years of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu.

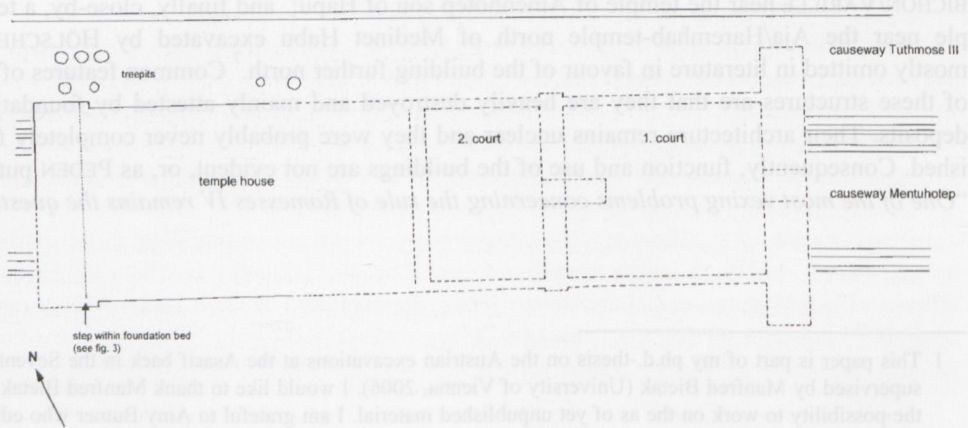


Fig. 1: Sketch plan of the Asasif-temple (after WINLOCK 1941, BIETAK 1972, EIGNER 1984).

- 8 A.J. PEDEN, *Ramesses IV*, 48–50; PEDEN refers to three sites because the dating of the building north of Amenhotep son of Hapu is not certain.
- 9 Cf. D. EIGNER, *Die monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit in der Thebanischen Nekropole*, DÖAW 8, 1984, Plan 1 and U. RUMMEL, 2.3. *Die ramessidischen Sandsteinfragmente aus K 93.11*, in: *Bericht über die 6., 7. und 8. Grabungskampagne in der Nekropole von Dra'Abu el-Naga/Theben-West*, in: MDAIK 55, 1999, 350–364 (for the topographical setting of the Asasif).
- 10 Cf. A.J. PEDEN, *Ramesses IV*, 50.



WINLOCK reconstructed the eastern part of the Asasif-temple according to the scarce archaeological remains and in assessment of Medinet Habu.<sup>11</sup> The following can be named as main elements: A pylon as monumental entrance, a large first court surrounded by columns/colonnades – also by one row of columns in the front, which is highly unusual during the New Kingdom<sup>12</sup> and a second court with a double-row of columns. The two courts have different elevations and the doorways comprise ramparts.<sup>13</sup> The layout of the western part remains unclear, but according to the New Kingdom type of temple it should have comprised a hypostyle and several rooms in front of the sanctuaries and on its side. In summation, the building recalls the arrangement of three units (two courtyards and the temple house in the back) in terraces, as is best illustrated by the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari and closely resembles the Great temple of Medinet Habu.<sup>14</sup>

### 3 History of the exploration of the Asasif-temple: Metropolitan Museum of Arts, New York (1912–13, 1934–35)

Herbert WINLOCK, director of the Theban-mission of the Metropolitan Museum of Arts, New York, excavated its eastern part, comprising pylon and courtyards (1912-1913).<sup>15</sup> These remains were unearthed during work on the causeways of Mentuhotep and Tuthmose III. A large granite block (labelled A) between the row of trees of the Tuthmosis-causeway was at first sight interpreted as relic of the 11<sup>th</sup> Dynasty-valley temple.<sup>16</sup> Soon after, a block of Ramesses II came to light next to block A and therefore implied a much later date for the structure of which then a very large foundation bed was cleared. All that is left from the temple are these foundations and loose blocks, which are mostly re-used ones and were once part of the filling of the foundation.<sup>17</sup> About 700 blocks of both lime- and sandstone

11 See H.E. WINLOCK, *Excavations at Deir el-Bahari*, 7, fig. 1.

12 But compare the double row of columns in the first court of Luxor-temple as a later addition by Ramesses II (for a plan see D. ARNOLD, *Die Tempel Ägyptens*, 128). As far as I know, a single row of columns in the first court is only attested in the Ptolemaic temple of Horus at Edfu, see D. ARNOLD, *Die Tempel Ägyptens*, 100. Given this meagre evidence for parallels of the arrangement of columns in the Asasif-temple as reconstructed by WINLOCK, it might be essential to re-examine the archaeological proof for this reconstruction. Cf. also A. DODSON, *After the Pyramids*, 128, fig. 106 where the author omits the row of columns in the first court on the plan – unfortunately, without comment.

13 Similar ramparts can be found at the great temple of Medinet Habu, see R. STADELMANN, *Tempel und Tempelnamen in Theben-Ost und -West*, in: *MDAIK* 34, 1978, 171 and n. 4; D. ARNOLD, *Die Tempel Ägyptens*, 150.

14 See R. STADELMANN, *Tempel und Tempelnamen in Theben-Ost und -West*, in: *MDAIK* 34, 1978, 171, n. 4 for the close parallels between the Hatshepsut- and Ramesses III-building. M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 542 proposed for the Asasif-temple a certain reminiscent of the temple of Mentuhotep in Deir el-Bahari which is located more or less in one line with it.

15 H.E. WINLOCK, *Excavations at Deir el-Bahari*, 9–11; *PM II*<sup>2</sup>, 424–426.

16 This valley temple has until now not been located; cf. D. ARNOLD/J. SETTGAST, *Die Architektur der 11. Dynastie. Das Grab des Nj j.t.f.*, *AV* 4, 1971, 32.

17 For the construction of foundations with re-used blocks as filling see D. ARNOLD, *Building in Egypt. Pharaonic Stone Masonry*, New York/Oxford 1991, 112, fig. 4.3.



were documented from various buildings of the surrounding areas and from different kings,<sup>18</sup> namely from the valley temple of Hatshepsut, the Tuthmosis III-temple *hnkt-nh* in Deir el-Bahari; from a subsidiary building within the Ramesseum and some Osiride-figures of Amenhotep I, originally placed in front of the Mentuhotep-temple in Deir el-Bahari.<sup>19</sup> WINLOCK found some blocks mentioning Amenhotep II, many blocks of Ramesses II,<sup>20</sup> one block of Merenptah, several of Ramesses III; a number of these were nicely painted and well preserved.<sup>21</sup>

That not a single block of Ramesses IV was discovered is in view of the evidence coming from the foundation deposits very puzzling (see below). Some pieces of Ramesses V and numerous of Ramesses VI (= 160 pieces) were documented, also some fragments from columns and other pieces in a rather coarse style. WINLOCK mentions several graffiti within the foundation that give dates – only day and month, no regnal years are mentioned. Unfortunately, as of yet, no detailed comment has been published on these specific features or the results of the American excavations in general.<sup>22</sup>

As an interesting detail, some incised lines were documented within the foundation and the pavement of the temple – they served as lines for the setting of blocks and columns.<sup>23</sup> These lines are essential for the reconstruction of the position of columns and the wall between the two courts.<sup>24</sup> Block A, which was mentioned above, turned out to belong to the façade of the temple – it was built within the central part of the entrance pylon and its position marks, therefore, the eastern end of the temple.<sup>25</sup>

In 1913, the dating of the monumental royal building was still open to considerations. Taking into account the enormous size of the temple and the short-lived reigns of most kings during the 20<sup>th</sup> dynasty, WINLOCK thought of the last rulers of this dynasty as presumably builders (Ramesses IX or Ramesses XII). More than 20 years after WINLOCK's work, additional evidence was unearthed – seven foundation deposits of Ramesses IV were uncovered in the years 1934–35 by Ambrose LANSING<sup>26</sup> and consequently the temple was dated to the reign of the king.<sup>27</sup> WINLOCK believed that it was in a later phase a shared project of Ramesses V and Ramesses VI<sup>28</sup> – he was considering both the large amount of relief

18 For a summary see M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 526.

19 For a discussion of this temple of Amenhotep I see A. DODSON, *Amenhotep I and Deir el-Bahari*, in: *Journal of the Ancient Chronology Forum* 3, 1989/1990, 42–44.

20 W.C. HAYES, *The Scepter of Egypt II*, 372.

21 See H.E. WINLOCK, *Excavations at Deir el-Bahari*, 8; M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 526.

22 H.E. WINLOCK, *Excavations at Deir el-Bahari*, 8.

23 For construction marks and setting lines in general see D. ARNOLD, *Building in Egypt*, 16–20.

24 Similar setting lines for the columns on paving slabs were found at the colonnade next to the valley temple of Hatshepsut; see The Earl of CARNARVON/H. CARTER, *Five Year's Explorations at Thebes*, 48.

25 H.E. WINLOCK, *Excavations at Deir el-Bahari*, 8.

26 A. LANSING, *The Egyptian Expedition 1934–1935. The Museum's Excavations at Thebes*, in: *BMMA*, Part II, Nov. 1935, 7–8; W.C. HAYES, *The Scepter of Egypt II*, 372, fig. 234; J. WEINSTEIN, *Foundation Deposits in Ancient Egypt*, *Ann Arbor* 1973, 278–279.

27 W.C. HAYES, *The Scepter of Egypt II*, 371–373.

28 H.E. WINLOCK, *Excavations at Deir el-Bahari*, 13.



blocks from the temple and the textual evidence for a joint House of Millions of years of these two kings.<sup>29</sup>

No exact location of the seven foundation deposits which LANSING excavated is published. Three were found near the axis in the western part of the American concession; two may have once marked the ramp between the second court and the hypostyle; one was found below the north wall, another one below the south wall.<sup>30</sup> The contents of five deposits comprised pottery vessels which served as containers and serving plates for food and offerings. Most informative of the finds are numerous plaques of bronze or faience with the name of the king. Very few show the early prenomen, the others the later variant of Ramesses IV – thus implying a date of the deposits after year 2.<sup>31</sup>

#### 4 The Austrian Excavation (1971–72)

In 1969–77 an Austrian excavation team directed by Manfred BIETAK (University of Vienna and Austrian Archaeological Institute) worked next to the American concession in the Asasif.<sup>32</sup> Work focused during the first years on the area of the royal causeways. Between 1971 and 1972, the Austrians unearthed the foundations of the western part of the Ramesside building and found another foundation deposit in its northwestern corner.<sup>33</sup> During these excavations many re-used 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty relief blocks and one of Ramesses VI came to light – in general these works provided a similar picture like the excavations by WINLOCK.<sup>34</sup> Loads of blocks were originally used within a building of Hatshepsut – sometimes implying a secondary use within the valley temple of Tuthmosis III, since this king did modify several inscriptions – and later rebuilt in a subsidiary structure within the

29 H.E. WINLOCK, *Excavations at Deir el-Bahari*, 13. But see also D. POLZ, *The Ramsesnacht Dynasty and the Fall of the New Kingdom: A New Monument in Thebes*, in: SAK 25, 1998, 280: the mortuary temples of Ramesses V and VI “which probably existed only on paper.”

30 A. LANSING, *The Egyptian Expedition 1934–1935. The Museum’s Excavations at Thebes*, in: BMMA, Part II, Nov. 1935, 7–8; see also J. WEINSTEIN, *Foundation Deposits in Ancient Egypt*, 278–279.

31 See W.C. HAYES, *The Scepter of Egypt II*, fig. 234 and KRI VI, 48–49. For the variants of Ramesses’ IV names see W. HELCK, in: LÄ V, 1984, 120 with n. 1, s.v. Ramses IV; A.J. PEDEN, *Ramesses IV*, 15 with n. 2.

32 On these excavations several articles and monographs were published: M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*; M. BIETAK, *Ausgrabungen in Theben West – Asasif*, in: AfO 24, 1973, 230–239; M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Vorbericht für 1973 und 1974)*, in: *Jahrbuch des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts* 51, Beiheft, Wien 1976–1977, 46–53; M. BIETAK, 2. *Bauforschungsprojekt: Die großen Saitengräber in der thebanischen Nekropole*, in: AfO 25, 1974–1977, 328–330; M. BIETAK/E. REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Anch-Hor*; D. EIGNER, *Die monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit*; J. BUDKA, *Tomb Nr. VII in the Asasif – Its Owners, Date and Implications*, in: J.-C. GOYON, C. CARDIN (eds.), *Proceedings of the IX<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Egyptologists, Grenoble, OLA 150*, 227–236 (in press).

33 M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 19–20.

34 M. BIETAK, in: M. BIETAK/E. REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Anch-Hor*, I, 28 and M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 526.

Ramesseum before they were transported to the Asasif.<sup>35</sup> Some blocks found as part of the Asasif-temple thus had a very long life-span and were used not once but several times as *spolia*.<sup>36</sup> More fragments of statues by Amenhotep I were unearthed during the Austrian excavations.<sup>37</sup> A large amount of blocks from the causeways of Tutmosis and Mentuhotep came to light – both rough filling and well smoothed outer blocks.<sup>38</sup> In some cases the name *Jmn* was chiselled out on inscribed blocks, thus implying an original 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty date and destruction of the relief during the Amarna period. Several blocks attest the beginning of wall decoration in the Asasif-temple – re-used blocks were covered with plaster and hence prepared for new decoration.<sup>39</sup>

A large number of masons' marks were found on loose blocks but they have not yet been studied in detail.<sup>40</sup> Some of them are similar to so called funny signs known from Deir el-Medine and recently studied by MCDOWELL<sup>41</sup> and HARING.<sup>42</sup> Others fall in the category of *team marks*, which are well known since the Old Kingdom.<sup>43</sup>

The foundation deposit which came to light in square K/28 of the Austrian concession was dug in the sandy filling of the foundations and was originally covered by the northern wall of the temple.<sup>44</sup> It was not found intact as the ones reported by LANSING but disturbed due to later activities of stone robbing in the area.<sup>45</sup> In general, the western part of the temple is more destroyed than the eastern part. The contents of the deposit are comparable to the ones unearthed by the Metropolitan Museum mission. Strings of beads and faience plaques were deposited on the top layers and were found scattered around in the area. Small faience model offerings – the heads and forelegs of bulls –, amulets and rings of faience are

35 The blocks in question are of limestone; the main temple of Ramesses was built in sandstone, but the temple magazine had doorways and other features in limestone; see M. BIETAK, Theben-West (Luqsor), 25 and M. BIETAK, in: M. BIETAK/E. REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Anch-Hor*, I, 28.

36 M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 25.

37 M. BIETAK, in: M. BIETAK/E. REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Anch-Hor*, Obersthofmeister der Gottesgemahlin Nitokris I, 25 with n. 63.

38 M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 24–25.

39 See M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 26 and M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 526, n. 1736. But it is also possible that the plaster was intended for fixing these blocks together within the foundation, see D. ARNOLD, *Building in Egypt*, 291.

40 For similar marks see D. ARNOLD (from the notes of Herbert WINLOCK), *The Temple of Mentuhotep at Deir el-Bahari*, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expeditions*, New York 1979, 27–28.

41 A.G. MCDOWELL, *Hieratic Ostraca from the Hunterian Museum*, Glasgow (The Colin Campbell ostraca), Oxford 1993.

42 B.J.J. HARING, *Towards decoding the necropolis workmen's funny signs*, in: *GM 178*, 2000, 45–58; a publication of these funny signs from the Asasif by the author is in preparation.

43 Vgl. F. ARNOLD, *The Control Notes and Team Marks*, *The South Cemeteries of Lisht*, Vol. II, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition*, New York 1990, 14–19.

44 More plaques with the name of the king came up in square R/28 – thus attesting another heavily destroyed foundation deposit below the Southern wall. Cf. the deposits found by LANSING further east under the North- and South wall (see above).

45 Many blocks from the foundation filling of the Ramesside temple were found re-built in Late period tombs in the surrounding area; see my ph.-thesis for details (publication in preparation).



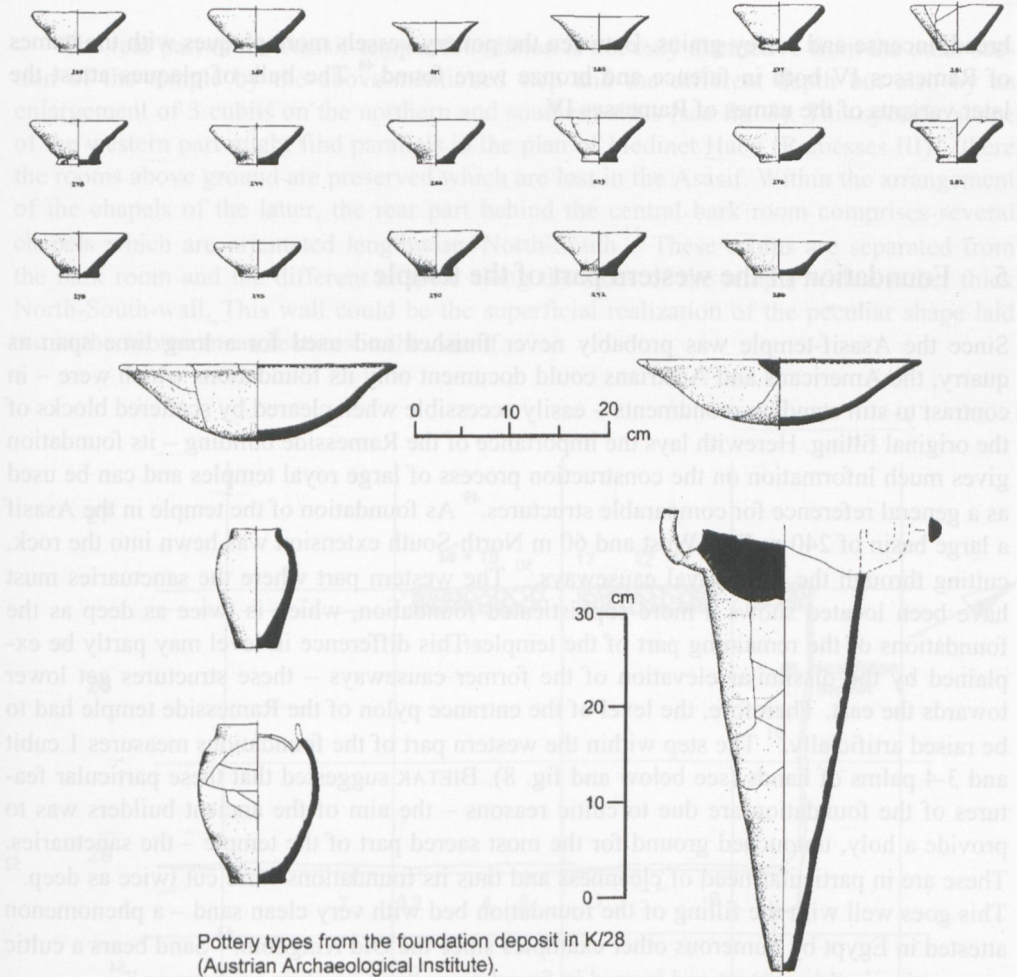


Fig. 2: Pottery from the foundation deposit discovered by the Austrian mission  
(Courtesy of the Austrian Archaeological Institute Cairo).

common parts of foundation deposits.<sup>46</sup> The pottery corpus (fig. 2) comprises one large amphora, a minimum of 6 beer jars and small jars as well as 7 large, shallow plates with red rim and 17 small model cups.<sup>47</sup> Some of the vessels show traces of burning and of libation (remains of liquids). Several plates contained the remnants of food and other offerings:

46 See M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 19–20, pl. 13. For a detailed study on foundation deposits in general see J. WEINSTEIN, *Foundation Deposits*.

47 The beer jars and shallow plates find parallels in the pottery from the tomb of Ramesses IV, see D. ASTON/B. ASTON/E.C. BROCK, *Pottery from the Valley of the Kings – Tombs of Merenptah, Ramesses III, Ramesses IV, Ramesses VI and Ramesses VII*, in: *E & L VIII*, Vienna 1998, 137–214, nr. 215, 217 and nr. 96.

bread, incense and barley grains. Between the pottery vessels more plaques with the names of Ramesses IV both in faience and bronze were found.<sup>48</sup> The bulk of plaques attest the later variants of the names of Ramesses IV.

## 5 Foundation of the western part of the temple

Since the Asasif-temple was probably never finished and used for a long time span as quarry, the Americans and Austrians could document only its foundations which were – in contrast to still standing monuments – easily accessible when cleared by scattered blocks of the original filling. Herewith lays the importance of the Ramesside building – its foundation gives much information on the construction process of large royal temples and can be used as a general reference for comparable structures.<sup>49</sup> As foundation of the temple in the Asasif a large basin of 240 m East-West and 60 m North-South extension was hewn into the rock, cutting through the elder royal causeways.<sup>50</sup> The western part where the sanctuaries must have been located shows a more sophisticated foundation, which is twice as deep as the foundations of the remaining part of the temple. This difference in level may partly be explained by the dissimilar elevation of the former causeways – these structures get lower towards the east. Therefore, the level of the entrance pylon of the Ramesside temple had to be raised artificially.<sup>51</sup> The step within the western part of the foundations measures 1 cubit and 3–4 palms of hands (see below and fig. 8). BIETAK suggested that these particular features of the foundation are due to cultic reasons – the aim of the ancient builders was to provide a holy, untouched ground for the most sacred part of the temple – the sanctuaries. These are in particular need of cleanness and thus its foundations were cut twice as deep.<sup>52</sup> This goes well with the filling of the foundation bed with very clean sand – a phenomenon attested in Egypt by numerous other examples since the Old Kingdom.<sup>53</sup> Sand bears a cultic connotation in this context and is used in foundations “as a purifying substance.”<sup>54</sup>

48 See H. SATZINGER, in: *Funde aus Ägypten. Österreichische Ausgrabungen seit 1961*, Exhibition catalogue, Vienna 1979, 97–99.

49 Another importance of the temple lays within the possibility to partly reconstruct older buildings that were dismantled during the 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and used as foundation filling blocks; cf. M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 26. This work still awaits further research which is planned for the near future.

50 M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 18. This large, one-piece basin contradicts the theory of D. ARNOLD, *Building in Egypt*, 114 “that foundations of Pharaonic buildings were made separately for each part of the structure.”

51 M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 18.

52 M. BIETAK, *Ausgrabungen in Theben West – Asasif*, in: *AfO* 24, 1973, 233–234.

53 See D. ARNOLD, *Building in Egypt*, 110 with n. 10 and 113.

54 R.K. RITNER, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, *SAOC* 54, 1993, 155, with note 705. See also M. BIETAK, in: M. BIETAK/E. REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Anch-Hor*, I, 28 for the purifying sand bed with n. 91 = reference to WINLOCK concerning the Asasif-temple. Cf. J. WEINSTEIN, *Foundation deposits*, 422: “This layer of clean sand is surely to be related to foundation rite.”



The rear part of the Asasif-temple foundation is not only distinctive from the other section of the temple by the above-mentioned step and the different depth but also by an enlargement of 3 cubits on the northern and southern sides (see fig. 3). This specific shape of the western part might find parallels in the plan of Medinet Habu (Ramesses III) – there the rooms above ground are preserved which are lost in the Asasif. Within the arrangement of the chapels of the latter, the rear part behind the central bark room comprises several chapels which are orientated lengthwise, North-South.<sup>55</sup> These rooms are separated from the bark room and the different chapels along the sides of the temple with a rather thick North-South-wall. This wall could be the superficial realization of the peculiar shape laid out in the subterranean features in the Asasif.

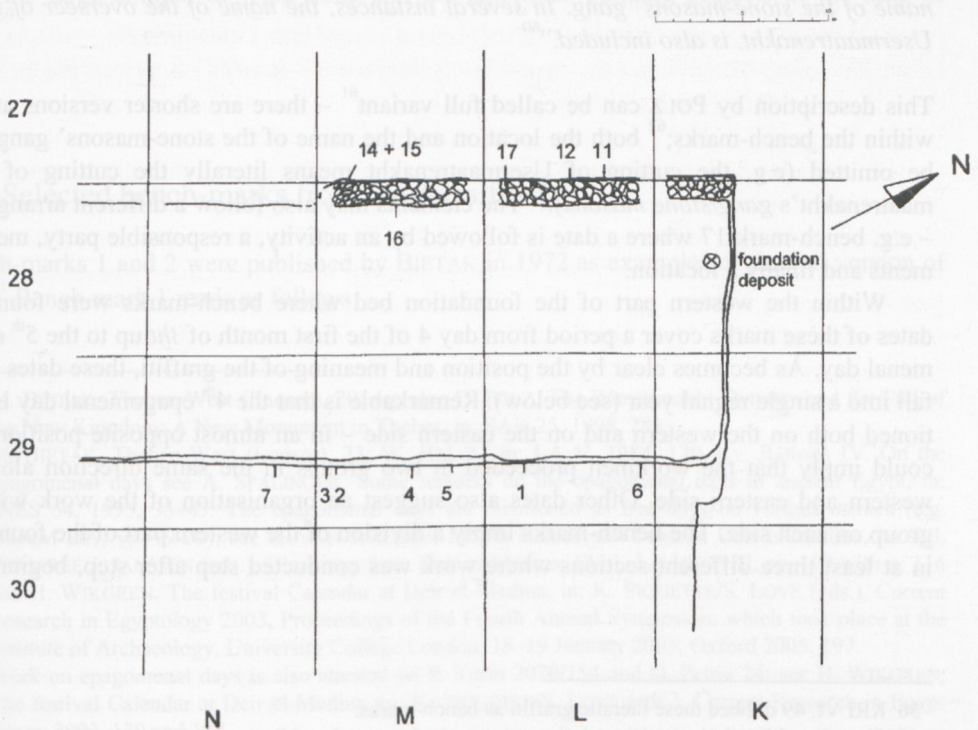


Fig. 3: Sketch of the westernmost part of the foundation with the location of the bench-marks (after BIETAK).

55 For a plan of this temple see D. ARNOLD, *Die Tempel Ägyptens*, 150.

## 6 Bench-marks – evidence for construction and organization of work

Seven hieratic epigraphs ('bench-marks')<sup>56</sup> were found by the Austrian mission written in black ink on the taffl-stone at the step of the foundations (east side);<sup>57</sup> more graffiti were documented on the opposite side and on other places within the foundation bed (fig. 3). These bench-marks are control marks to check the development and the output of the construction work as well as guiding data for measurements, particularly for levelling heights.<sup>58</sup>

POLZ summarizes the structure of these texts, first published by BIETAK,<sup>59</sup> as follows:

*"They include a date, followed by a measurement (in cubits and palms), and the specific place of a certain activity. At the end of these "bench-marks" (Kitchen) follows the name of the stone-masons' gang. In several instances, the name of the overseer of works, Usermaatrenakht, is also included."*<sup>60</sup>

This description by POLZ can be called full variant<sup>61</sup> – there are shorter versions attested within the bench-marks;<sup>62</sup> both the location and the name of the stone-masons' gangs may be omitted (e.g. the cutting of Usermaatrenakht means literally the cutting of Usermaatrenakht's gang/stone masons).<sup>63</sup> The elements may also follow a different arrangement – e.g. bench-mark 17 where a date is followed by an activity, a responsible party, measurements and finally a location.

Within the western part of the foundation bed where bench-marks were found, the dates of these marks cover a period from day 4 of the first month of *3ht* up to the 5<sup>th</sup> epagomenal day. As becomes clear by the position and meaning of the graffiti, these dates do not fall into a single regnal year (see below). Remarkable is that the 4<sup>th</sup> epagomenal day is mentioned both on the western and on the eastern side – in an almost opposite position. This could imply that the workmen proceeded in two groups in the same direction along the western and eastern side. Other dates also suggest an organisation of the work with one group on each side. The bench-marks imply a division of the western part of the foundation in at least three different sections where work was conducted step after step, beginning in

56 KRI VI, 49 dubbed these hieratic graffiti as bench-marks.

57 Six minor hieratic incised inscription next to the large stela of Ramesses IV in Wadi Hammamat are quite comparable in character, see J. COUYAT, P. MONTET, *Les inscriptions hiéroglyphiques et hiératiques du Ouâdi Hammâmât*, MIFAO 34, 1912, 109–110, nos. 231–236.

58 M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 20.

59 M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 20–24.

60 D. POLZ, *The Ramsesnakht Dynasty and the Fall of the New Kingdom: A New Monument in Thebes*, in: SAK 25, 1998, 281.

61 Cf. similar control marks from Old and Middle Kingdom after HAYES, see F. ARNOLD, *The Control Notes and Team Marks, The South Cemeteries of Lisht*, Vol. II, 19.

62 See already M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 20–23.

63 Well attested on quarry marks of the Old Kingdom; personal communication Petra ANDRÁSSY (and lecture in Berlin, 28/05/2006, publication in preparation: *Zur Organisation und Finanzierung von Tempelbauten im Alten Ägypten*, in: M. FITZENREITER (Hg.), *Das Heilige und die Ware. Eigentum, Austausch und Kapitalisierung im Spannungsfeld von Religion und Ökonomie*, IBAES VII.).



the centre and working towards North or South, and not in a linear movement from North to South, as BIETAK has suggested.<sup>64</sup>

Some bench-marks were written on epagomenal days – in fact, all five epagomenal days are mentioned. Thus, these epigraphs seem to indicate that work was conducted during normally work-free days as well<sup>65</sup>, implying a large work force.<sup>66</sup> There are several hints of an excessive working policy under Ramesses IV. It is known from an ostrakon from Deir el-Medine (oDeM 149) and a papyrus that the number of workmen was doubled in his second year and counted now 120 workmen.<sup>67</sup> Thus, his tomb in the Valley of the Kings was completed during his short reign which must have been a major effort.<sup>68</sup> Several expeditions were sent during the early reign of Ramesses to the quarries of Wadi Hammamat – in fact, these were the largest expeditions in the period of the New Kingdom and they illustrate the large amount of work done and the ambitious building projects of the king as well.<sup>69</sup>

## 7 Selected bench-marks from the Asasif<sup>70</sup>

Bench-marks 1 and 2 were published by BIETAK in 1972 as examples of the full version of text.<sup>71</sup> Bench-mark 1 reads as follows:

64 M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqсор)*, 20; see also D. POLZ, *The Ramsesnakht Dynasty and the Fall of the New Kingdom: A New Monument in Thebes*, in: SAK 25, 1998, 281.

65 M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqсор)*, 23; W. HELCK, in: LÄ V, 1984, 120, s.v. Ramses IV. On the epagomenal days see A. SPALINGER, *Some remarks on the epagomenal days in ancient Egypt*, in: JNES 54, 1995, 33–47. The epagomenal days are mentioned as free days on various ostraca (e.g. O.DeM 209, vs. 19–20); see R. VAN WALSEM, *Month Names and Feast at Deir el-Medine*, in: R.J. DEMARÉE/J. JANSSEN (eds.), *Gleanings from Deir el-Medina*, EU 1, Leiden 1982, nr. 119 with n. 116 and H. WIKGREN, *The festival Calendar at Deir el-Medina*, in: K. PIQUETTE/S. LOVE (eds.), *Current Research in Egyptology 2003*, Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Symposium which took place at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, 18–19 January 2003, Oxford 2005, 197.

66 Work on epagomenal days is also attested on P. Turin 2020/154 and O. Petrie 24; see H. WIKGREN, *The festival Calendar at Deir el-Medina*, in: K. PIQUETTE/S. LOVE (eds.), *Current Research in Egyptology 2003*, 179 and 197.

67 The increase in the tomb workforce at Deir el-Medina in year 2 is confirmed in P. Turin Cat. 1891, Recto; see W. HELCK, in: LÄ V, 1984, 120 with n. 12, s.v. Ramses IV.; E. HORNING, *Zwei ramessidische Königsgräber*, 23; A.J. PEDEN, *Ramesses IV*, 92–93.

68 On the tomb see E. HORNING, *Zwei ramessidische Königsgräber*, 22–31 for the working process on the monument.

69 Cf. M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqсор)*, 23–24 with n. 30; W. HELCK, in: LÄ V, 1984, 120, s.v. Ramses IV.; lately T. HIKADE, *Das Expeditionswesen im ägyptischen Neuen Reich*, Ein Beitrag zu Rohstoffversorgung und Außenhandel, SAGA 21, Heidelberg 2001, 38–46. The main aims of these expeditions were the quarrying of hard stone for statues.

70 In general, the following is largely based on notes and observations by Manfred BIETAK and Helmut SATZINGER. I am very grateful to both of them that I could use their observations as starting point for my analysis.

71 After M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqсор)*, 20–23; see also KRI VI, 49.

$\overline{\overline{1}}$  hrww 5 (hrjw rnpt) mswt Jst mh 1 šsp 4 iwjt=f $\overline{\overline{1}}$  m hd (n3) n hrt[jw-ntr...]
   
 $\overline{\overline{1}}$  The five epagomenal days, the birthday of Isis, 1 cubit 4 palms, his iwjt,  $\overline{\overline{2}}$  northwards, the stone masons...

The measurement in bench-mark 1 could refer to the height of material excavated down from the surface during the first working step (cf. bench-mark 12). Thus, the mark would be connected with levelling height. For the organisation of the working process on the foundation the terminus *northwards* is interesting. It most probably refers to a division of the foundation bed in several working units – meant to avoid confusion and crowding between the workmen. Bench-mark 2 displays the full variant described above:

$\overline{\overline{1}}$  hrww 5 (hrjw rnpt) mswt Nbt-hwt (mh 1?) $\overline{\overline{2}}$  šsp 3 iwjt=f n3 n hrtjw-ntr n Wsr-m3<sup>c</sup>t-R<sup>c</sup>-nh<sup>t</sup>
  
 $\overline{\overline{1}}$  The five epagomenal days, the birthday of Nephtys, (1 cubit?) $\overline{\overline{2}}$  3 palms, his iwjt, the stone masons of Usermaatrenakht.

In both bench-marks, *iwjt=f*, his *iwjt*, is the keyword. BIETAK translated it as temple.<sup>72</sup> I would like to tentatively propose a direct relation between the term in the bench-mark and the type of structure which is addressed by it. As possible origin of the word, the verb *iw* comes to mind since it refers to the act which took place in our case – *excavating*.<sup>73</sup> *iwjt* would thus mean *that what is cut out/taken away/excavated* and can be translated as *foundation bed/basin*. Since it is classified with the *pr*-sign (GSL O1), the word is clearly connected with some kind of building/habitat.<sup>74</sup> Different meanings are attested for the word *iwjt*, depending on the individual context of the text<sup>75</sup> – the Asasif bench-marks obviously illustrate a further usage of it. We still know very little about the repertoire of hieratic inscriptions on building sites or quarries. In general, the character of the epigraphs written during the working process on the natural rock is quite different than building texts and dedicatory inscriptions, which were inscribed in hieroglyphs on architraves and walls when the temple/building was already standing. Hence, it would come as no surprise if the terminology is somehow dissimilar and *iwjt* finds no parallels among the latter.<sup>76</sup>

Usermaatrenakht, deeply involved into the construction work of the Asasif-temple according to the mentioned bench-marks, is probably identical with a priest of this name who led an expedition to Wadi Hammamat in year 1 (priest of the temple of Min, Horus, and Isis

72 M. BIETAK, Theben-West (Luqsor), 23 (Haus/Heiligtum) – referring to Wb I, 49 *iwjt* – Haus, Götterwohnung.

73 Wb I, 48: *iw* – abtrennen, etw. abschneiden.

74 For the *pr* as habitat-classifier see O. GOLDWASSER, Prophets, Lovers and Giraffes: Wor(l)d Classification in Ancient Egypt, GOF IV. 38, 2002, 16.

75 See Wb I, 49: Haus, Götterwohnung, Strasse and Stadtviertel and especially in close relation to my translation as foundation bed see R. HANNIG/P. VOMBERG, Wortschatz der Pharaonen in Sachgruppen, Kulturhandbuch Ägyptens, Hannig-Lexikon 2, Kulturgeschichte der Antiken Welt, Bd. 72, Mainz am Rhein 1999, 627 *jwyt* as foundation deposit.

76 For a study on terms of such texts see P. SPENCER, The Egyptian Temple, A Lexicographical Study, London/Boston/Melbourne/Henley 1984.





East-West-extension of the deep step in the westernmost part of the foundations (cf. fig. 3). Bench-mark 7 most probably describes the results of some work on the foundation and the final layout for the deepening of the basin.<sup>86</sup>

Just next to bench-mark 2, on its southern side, bench-mark 3 was documented (fig. 4). A short note was written on the side slope of the rock.

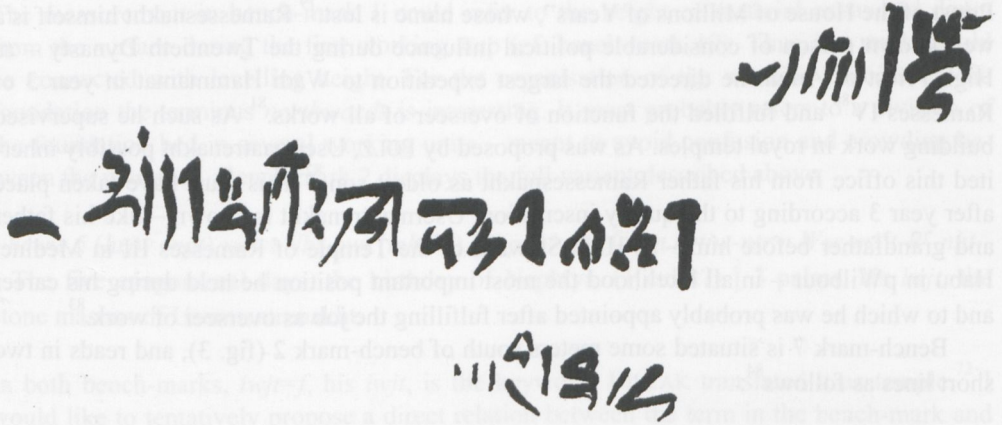

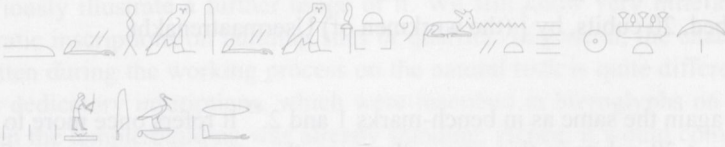


Fig. 4: Bench-mark 3 (Courtesy of the Austrian Archaeological Institute Cairo).

It can be interpreted as a personal name without any title:  *Pth-ms*, Ptah-mose.<sup>87</sup> Two more lines on the vertical side of the rock are of descriptive nature and perhaps refer to the separation of the westernmost part of the foundation from the eastern side:



$\overset{1}{j} jbd \ 1 \ 3ht \ hrw \ 4 \ ntj \ iwjt \ wnmj \ smhj \ m \ \overset{2}{r} r3\text{-}^c \ b3kw$   
 $\overset{1}{j}$  Akhet 1, day 4, concerning the foundation bed: the right and the left side, in  $\overset{2}{j}$  unfinished state<sup>88</sup>.

This epigraph is of significance since it is the only example within the Asasif-group mentioning the right and the left side. These terms are well known for the two gangs of workmen from Deir el-Medine<sup>89</sup>, but here a reference to the temple is also likely since the bench-

85 Cf. the transliteration by KRI VI, 49.

86 Since no date is given in the inscription, this assumption can not be specified. The mark could also have served as instruction to cut out a specific distance – the mentioned 20 cubits.

87 This reading was proposed by G. POSENER, written correspondence with M. BIETAK in 1972.

88 See Wb II, 395: *m r3-c b3kw* = im unvollendeten Zustand.

89 See Wb IV, 140. Numerous documents from Deir el-Medine, e.g. P. GRANDET, Catalogue de ostraca hiératiques non littéraires de Deir el-Médine, Tome IX – Nos 831-1000, DIFAO 41, 2003, nos. 855, 882 and 905.



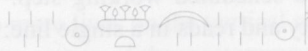


Bench-mark 12 was written 1 year before bench-mark 11 – it refers to the height from the surface level to the height of the mark and can thus be called descriptive; the distance was measured after the work process and then the mark was written.<sup>91</sup> In contrast, bench-mark 11 is of prospective character – the step of work that is indicated in the inscription is not yet done, because the mark was afterwards covered (fig. 8).

By the example of bench-marks 11 and 12 one can differentiate two types of epigraphs which imply various functions of these marks.<sup>92</sup> First, there are so called prospective marks like bench-mark 11 – these were written on stone before the work as instructions for the masons/supervisors of work, probably during an inspection. When the activity they mention was fulfilled, the marks were in some cases no longer visible. Secondly there are bench-marks of documentary character as epigraph 12 indicates – these were composed and written after the stage of work they are referring to was completed. These served as reference points for the surrounding area which had to be levelled to the same height.

Of special importance is one block in the foundations of the Asasif-temple with a graffito which gives a date and includes the mention of a regnal year. This block was used for the correction of the western extent of the foundations (see bench-mark 11). Unfortunately the two graffiti were not recognized *in situ* but only when the block had already been taken out. But according to BIETAK, there can be no doubt that the graffiti were written on the block in its final position and not earlier because of its material and patination.<sup>93</sup> The stone was moved twice, as said by the two graffiti within 10 days.

The first graffito (bench-mark 14) mentions year 6 (fig. 9):



*rnpt 6, 3ht 2 hrw 5*

year 6, second month of the Akhet period, day 5.

The second one (bench-mark 15) just gives the month and day:



*3ht 2 hrw 15*

second month of the Akhet period, day 15.

91 For bench-marks used for levelling heights see also D. ARNOLD (from the notes of Herbert WINLOCK), *The Temple of Mentuhotep at Deir el-Bahari*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expeditions, New York 1979, 27.

92 These ideas are largely based on observations by Helmut SATZINGER in 1971.

93 Cf. M. BIETAK, in: M. BIETAK/E. REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Anch-Hor*, I, 28 and excavation notebooks.



The second graffito was therefore written 10 days later than the first with the year date. It can be written

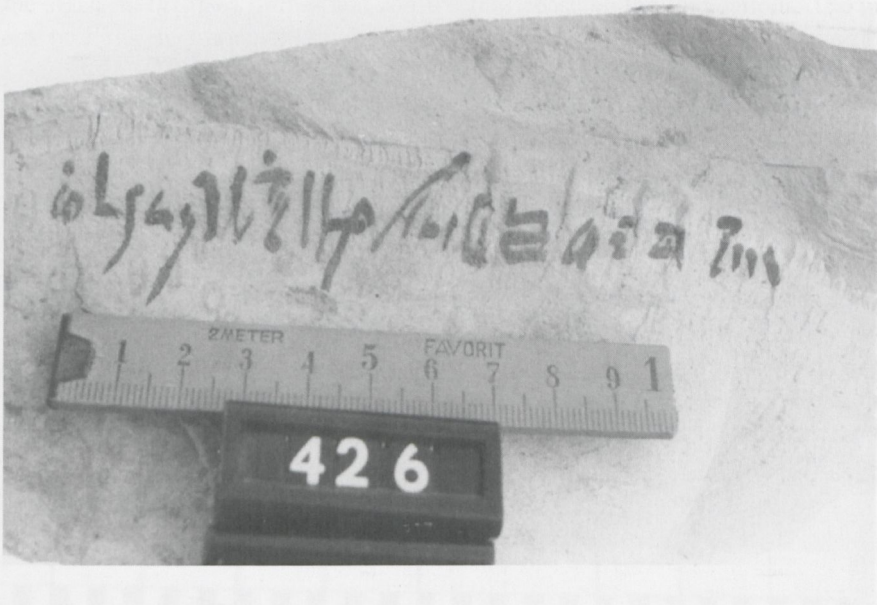


Fig. 6: Bench-mark 11 (Courtesy of the Austrian Archaeological Institute Cairo).

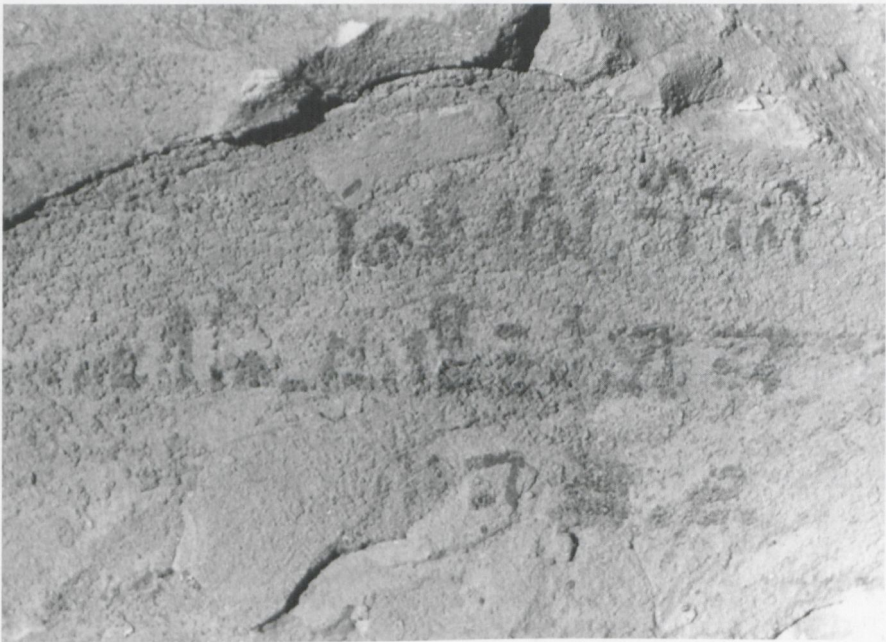


Fig. 5: Bench-mark 17 (Courtesy of the Austrian Archaeological Institute Cairo).



Fig. 7: Bench-mark 12 (Courtesy of the Austrian Archaeological Institute Cairo).

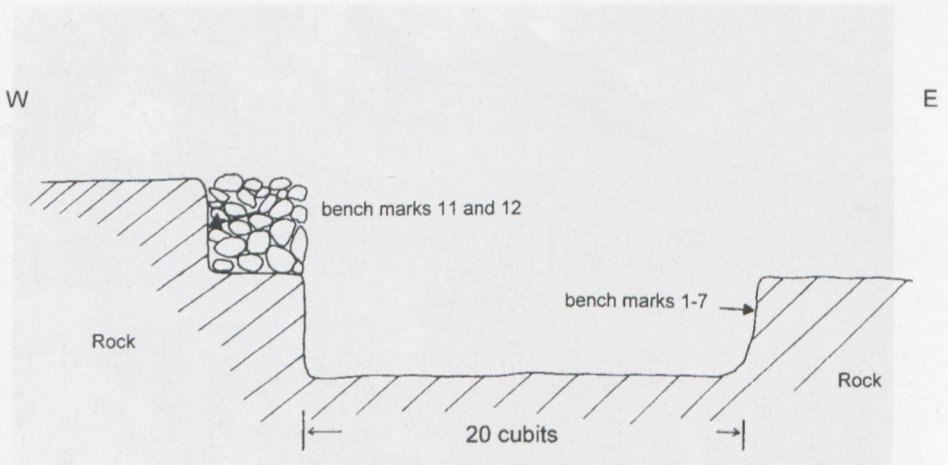


Fig. 8: The location of some bench-marks and their relation to the size of the foundations in the rear part (sketch of East-West-section, J. Budka).



The second graffito was therefore written 10 days later than the first with the year date. It can be assumed that the dates on this block mark the end of the works on the foundations since the stone itself is part of the final construction phase on the foundations. The graffito mentions year 6 – according to the foundation deposit this can only refer to the reign of Ramesses IV. This sets a fixed date for the work on the temple foundation in the Asasif.

In summation, the bench-marks in the foundation bed give not only an idea about the process of work, the different phases of construction and their dating (table 1), but they tell us, who was the officer in charge and responsible by his name – Usermaatrenakht. Ptahmose, a person mentioned in bench-mark 3, may be a supervisor and/or the author of the epigraph, indicating his responsibility for a certain stage of work and documenting his participation on the royal building project. The texts of the bench-marks are difficult to interpret since we still lack close parallels. The most common term within the epigraphs is *iw(j)t*. I have suggested that it is connected with the activity the bench-marks imply – *excavating* – and that it can be translated as an expression of foundation bed. Of further importance is the evidence of *wnmj smhj* – the Right and the Left side, which underlines that the process of excavating a foundation basin was carried out step by step and in several sections.

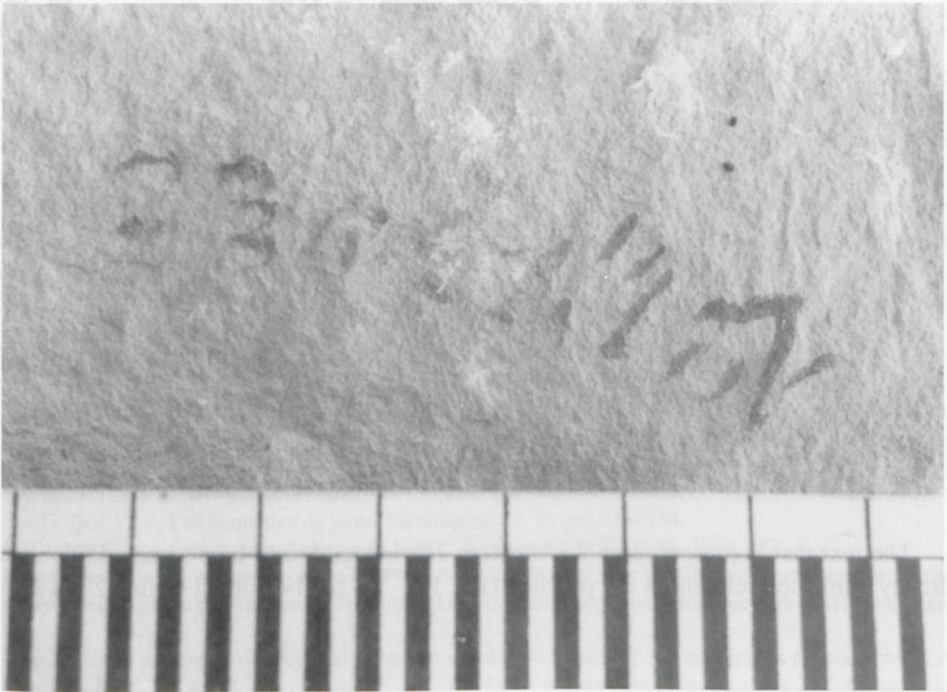
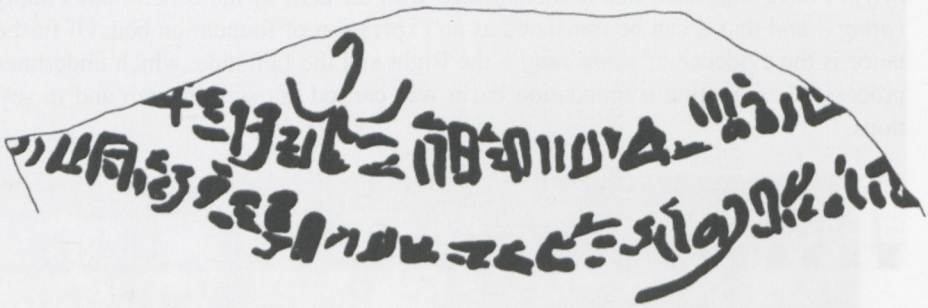


Fig. 9: Graffito on block with regnal year 6

(Courtesy of the Austrian Archaeological Institute Cairo).

## 8 Jar docket from the Austrian excavations

BIETAK's team discovered two large amphora-body sherds with hieratic docket. One sherd (Reg. 218, JE 94474) mentions a "House of Millions of Years" and a sem-priest known from other sources dated to the reign of Ramesses IV, the other docket (Reg. 219, JE 94475) gives the name of that king. Reg. 218 was found near the foundation deposit, and was probably once part of it or of a similar deposit.<sup>94</sup> The sherds have been interpreted several times as important textual evidence for the function of the Asasif-temple. But TALLET<sup>95</sup> and ULLMANN<sup>96</sup> corrected the reading as proposed by BIETAK<sup>97</sup>: The docket does not mention wine for the House of Millions of years but wine from the wine yard of the *hwt nt hhw m rnpwt*. Thus, the jar docket is no clear indication for the function of the Asasif-temple.<sup>98</sup>



Reg. 218, JE 94474



Fig. 10: Jar docket Reg. 218, JE 94474  
(hieratic text and hieroglyphic transliteration, J. Budka).

The text that is preserved on docket Reg. 218 is legible and here some additions to the already published references are possible (fig. 10).<sup>99</sup> In the beginning of line 2 the last part

94 M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 19, pl. 13b.

95 P. TALLET, *Deux prêtres-sem thébains de la XX<sup>e</sup> dynastie*, in: BIFAO 99, 1999, 416–418.

96 M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 524–525.

97 M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 19.

98 For a summary see M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 524–525 and 540–542.

99 The following reading is in some aspects a correction of the one by K.A. KITCHEN (KRI VI, 49.7–8) and P. TALLET, *Deux prêtres-sem thébains de la XX<sup>e</sup> dynastie*, in: BIFAO 99, 1999, 417.



of *Jmn* is preserved and belongs to the name of the House of Millions of years.<sup>100</sup> The text reads as follows:

<sup>1</sup> [rnpwt-sp...jr]p [n] hrw 3 n p3 k3mw t3 hwt nt hhw m rnpwt n nswt-[bjtj (*Wsr-M3<sup>c</sup>t-R<sup>c</sup> stp-n-Jmn*) m pr <sup>2</sup> J]mn r ht sm h $\overline{k}$ 3-m3<sup>c</sup>t-R<sup>c</sup>-nh $\overline{t}$  ntj p3 k3mw Jn3n3 m drt hrj-k3[mww]  
<sup>1</sup> [Regnal year...] wine [of] day 3 from the vineyard of the House of Millions of years of the king of Upper- [and Lower Egypt, *Wsr-M3<sup>c</sup>t-R<sup>c</sup> stp-n-Jmn*, in the House of] <sup>2</sup> Amun, under the direction of the sm-priest h $\overline{k}$ 3-m3<sup>c</sup>t-R<sup>c</sup>-nh $\overline{t}$ , which is the vineyard of *Jn3n3*, in the hand (= on the responsibility)<sup>101</sup> of the chief vintager...

The formula “wine of day x” is well known from jar docketts coming from Deir el-Medine and the Ramesseum.<sup>102</sup> This specific passage is rather unusual on Reg. 218 and leaves some doubt on the transcription as first proposed by TALLET<sup>103</sup> and as repeated here – while the sun-disc (GSL N5) is quite clear and definitely indicates the reading as “day”, the sequence of the number of day and the day contradicts the one known from numerous other examples (3 hrw instead of hrw 3; the “n” of the indirect genitive is missing on Reg. 218 and *jr*p was spelt without the otherwise almost indispensable strokes as classifier of plural/quantity (GSL Z2)).<sup>104</sup> The palaeography of the name h $\overline{k}$ 3-m3<sup>c</sup>t-R<sup>c</sup>-nh $\overline{t}$  as given on Reg. 218 is rather peculiar<sup>105</sup> – especially in comparison to the docket Reg. 219, where h $\overline{k}$ 3-m3<sup>c</sup>t-R<sup>c</sup>-nh $\overline{t}$  is spelt in a more common way.<sup>106</sup>

The text of Reg. 219 is partly unclear in the first line;<sup>107</sup> the following can be read (fig. 11):

<sup>1</sup> ...t3 hwt [nt] hhw (?) [m rnpwt] nswt-bjtj (h $\overline{k}$ 3-M3<sup>c</sup>t-R<sup>c</sup> stp-n-[*Jmn*) m pr *Jmn*] <sup>2</sup> r ht sm h $\overline{k}$ 3-m3<sup>c</sup>t-R<sup>c</sup>-nh $\overline{t}$   
<sup>1</sup> ...the temple [of] Millions (?) [of years] of the king of Upper- and Lower Egypt, *Wsr-M3<sup>c</sup>t-R<sup>c</sup> stp-n-[Jmn*, in the House of Amun], <sup>2</sup> under the direction of the sm-priest h $\overline{k}$ 3-m3<sup>c</sup>t-R<sup>c</sup>-nh $\overline{t}$

100 The addition *m pr Jmn* is found in the graffito of the same priest in Deir el-Bahari as well (M. ULLMANN, König für die Ewigkeit, 540 was still careful of reconstructing this part of the name of the temple on the Asasif-jar docket since the published photos were rather unclear).

101 See B.J.J. HARING, Divine Housholds, 346 for jar docketts and the difference between *m dr.t* and *r ht*.

102 See G. BOUVIER, Les étiquettes de jarres hiératiques, 42, Ib and 226–234.

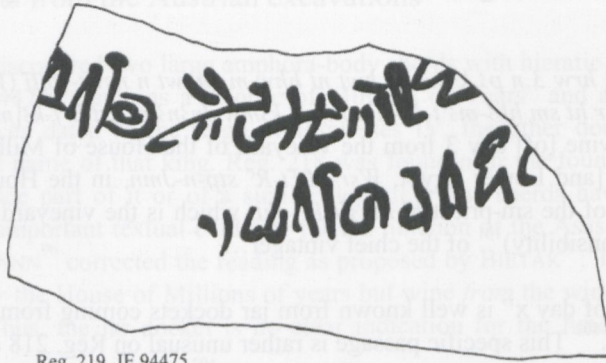
103 P. TALLET, Deux prêtres-sem thébains de la XX<sup>e</sup> dynastie, in: BIFAO 99, 1999, 417.

104 If one interprets the written strokes as the number 3 for the day. For parallels of the rather rare writing of *jr*p without plural strokes see G. BOUVIER, Les étiquettes de jarres hiératiques, 90 (VIIIe and f) and 82.

105 I am indebted to Petra ANDRÁSSY who helped me with the reading; the spelling as proposed by K.A. KITCHEN (KRI VI, 49.8), followed by P. TALLET, Deux prêtres-sem thébains de la XX<sup>e</sup> dynastie, in: BIFAO 99, 1999, 417 does not correspond with the written evidence.

106 Cf. the graffito of this priest at Deir el-Bahari, M. MARCINIAK, Les inscriptions hiératiques du temple de Thoutmosis III, (= Deir el-Bahari I), Warsaw 1974, 151–152, Nr. 129; KRI VI, 97; B.J.J. HARING, Divine Housholds; 218; P. TALLET, Deux prêtres-sem thébains de la XX<sup>e</sup> dynastie, in: BIFAO 99, 1999, 417; M. ULLMANN, König für die Ewigkeit, 524 and 531.

107 I would like to thank Petra ANDRÁSSY, Günter BURKARD, Frank KAMMERZELL and Alexandra VON LIEVEN, who all made valuable suggestions for the reading of this docket.



Reg. 219, JE 94475

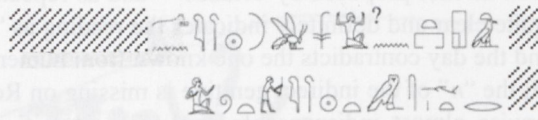


Fig. 11: Jar docket Reg. 219, JE 94475

(hieratic text and hieroglyphic transliteration, J. Budka).

The name of the king is almost completely preserved, but the institution from which the wine was brought to the temple remains vague – the terminus *hwt* is part of its name<sup>108</sup>, but a reading as *hwt nt hhw m rnpwt* as was proposed by BIETAK and SATZINGER is not certain. But it might be an abbreviated form of writing – I would very cautiously suggest as the sign in question between *t3 hwt* and the king's name a person with raised hands (GSL A73) – it should be read as *hhw*, meaning *hhw m rnpwt*.<sup>109</sup> Short versions like this are attested as variants of names of Houses of Millions of years.<sup>110</sup>

It is important to note that the jar docket from the Austrian excavations are no evidence for the function of the Asasif-temple. ULLMANN gave a complete overview of all proposed interpretations of the temple<sup>111</sup> – the Asasif-temple is often understood as House of Millions of Years.<sup>112</sup> BIETAK and others have offered the interpretation that Ramesses moved his memorial temple further south as soon as he discovered that the major project in the Asasif could not be finished (to the temple near complex Amenhotep son of Hapu)<sup>113</sup> –

108 For a similar palaeography of the *hwt*-sign see A.S. VON BOMHARD, *Paléographie du Papyrus Wilbour, L'écriture hiératique cursive dans les papyri documentaires*, Paris 1998, 55; for this reference I am grateful to Frank KAMMERZELL.

109 For similar signs within temple names instead of GSL C11 see M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 608–609 (Tuthmose IV and Amenhotep III).

110 Cf. M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 610 (Sethos I).

111 M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 530–536.

112 D. ARNOLD, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, New York, Oxford University Press 1999, 28: as the last monumental example for this specific architecture.

113 M. BIETAK, *Theben-West* (Luqsor), 19; W. HELCK, in: LÄ V, 1984, 120, s.v. Ramses IV; W.C. HAYES, *The Scepter of Egypt II*; 372; J. BUDKA, *Die Tempelanlagen Ramses' IV. in Theben-West*, in:



an idea, which is for several reasons very unlikely in my opinion. First of all, it does not correlate with the building process as it can be reconstructed by means of evidence from the Austrian excavations.

Table 1: Construction phases on the western foundations of the Asasif-temple according to the bench-marks.

phase	duration	date	bench-marks	activity	remark
1	unclear	year 4-5 <sup>114</sup>	none	cutting of upper layer	first excavation phase
2	1 month	epagomenal days of year 5	1, 2, 5 and 6 (East) 12 and 17 (West)	measurements of achieved depths of foundations; layout for western basin (oulines)	levelling heights
3	10 months	1 and 2 akhet of year 5	3 and 4 (East)	separation of western and eastern part by step – excavation of western part	final depth of basin reached – deeper foundations on western side
4	2 months or shorter	4 <i>šmw</i> of year 6	11 (West)	correction phase of step in North-west corner	started after measurements and levels were taken
5	10 days + x	2 akhet of year 6	14 and 15 (West, block of filling)	filling of North-west corner – last corrections	graffito with regnal year 6
6	unclear	—	none	foundation deposits?; filling of basin with blocks and sand	most probably until death of Ramesses IV <sup>115</sup>

Kemet 10/2, 2001, 31; cf. also A. DODSON, *After the Pyramids*, 128 and M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 530.

114 Considering the beginning of the reign of Ramesses IV on day 15 of *šmw* 3 (see E. HORNUNG, *Zwei ramessidische Königsgräber*, 23), this would leave a short period to complete the first excavation phase until the epagomenal days of that year – a start earlier in the year, during the *3ḫt*-period is much more likely and would thus date the beginning of work to year 4.

115 If one dates the death of the king with E. HORNUNG, *Zwei ramessidische Königsgräber*, 14 to 4 *pri* of year 7, phase 6 comprised a minimum of 10 months. Notable are the dates which give year 8 of the king, see below, note 123.

## 9 Date of construction of the Asasif-temple

Despite the large work force, the Asasif-temple was never finished during the reign of Ramesses IV. It was left incomplete by his successors Ramesses V and VI as well – wall decoration was begun but this was probably as far as the rulers of the 20<sup>th</sup> dynasty got.<sup>116</sup> Several scholars, including recently Martina ULLMANN, understand the monumental building in the Asasif as the earliest project by Ramesses IV within his extensive Theban building activity of which the layout was already set up during the first regnal year.<sup>117</sup> Considering the archaeological evidence coming from the Austrian excavations, there are several arguments for a late date of the construction of the Asasif-temple,<sup>118</sup> suggesting its very beginning in year 4 and lasting to year 6 and later (until the death of the king). The building clearly remained unfinished and there is no single indication that the temple was erected early in the reign of Ramesses IV. The main arguments are the following:

1. The most important hint of a late dating of the temple is the block that was built in the filling (phase 5) of the foundations and inscribed with “year 6” (bench-mark 14). Considering the foundation deposits of the structure dating to the reign of Ramesses IV, the regnal year must refer to that king.

2. The various bench-marks within the temple foundation are valuable sources for the reconstruction of the building process and its date.<sup>119</sup> They attest to the construction of the foundation bed in several steps. In analyzing their contents and different meanings (descriptive vs. prospective) they seem to cover a time span of 14 months. Considering the mention of year 6 on the block stated above, I would reconstruct the working steps as follows (see table 1): By the time of the epagomenal days of year 5 the uppermost layers of the temple foundations were already cut out (approximately 1 cubit and 3 palms). The excavation of the western part of the deeper foundations started shortly after during *ꜥꜣt* of year 5 (bench-marks 3 und 7). Unfortunately, the only bench-mark on the lower western edge, opposite of bench-mark 4, is not legible (bench-mark 16). It is a very short epigraph and I believe it gives a year date, probably year 5.<sup>120</sup> This mark is of importance since it attests that during phase 3 the mistake in the Northwest corner was discovered. Consequently, the deep excavation pit in this area followed the measurements taken from the eastern side and the step at the corner was left unfinished.<sup>121</sup> During the last month of year 5 the excavations (Phase 3) came to a preliminary stop, having reached the final dimensions. Now measurements and levels were taken and these revealed the exact proportions of the error in the North-west

116 Cf. M. BIETAK, *Theben–West (Luqsor)*, 26; M. BIETAK, in: M. BIETAK/E. REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Anch-Hor*, I, 28 and A.J. PEDEN, *Ramesses IV*, 50.

117 See M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 535 und 541; M.L. BIERBRIER, *The Late New Kingdom*, Liverpool 1975, 11 as well as my earlier opinion, in: *Kemet* 10/2, April 2001, 31.

118 For a late date see also A.J. PEDEN, *Ramesses IV*, 48–51 and D. POLZ, *The Ramsesnacht Dynasty and the Fall of the New Kingdom: A New Monument in Thebes*, in: *SAK* 25, 1998, 281, Anm. 89.

119 Cf. D. POLZ, *The Ramsesnacht Dynasty and the Fall of the New Kingdom: A New Monument in Thebes*, in: *SAK* 25, 1998, 281, Anm. 89.

120 This bench-mark was documented by photos only and unfortunately not in best quality; this is also, why it can not be illustrated here.

121 It was not until phases 4 and 5 that care was taken of the misshapen back wall and the step was filled with stone blocks (see below).



corner. Necessary corrections were instructed and marked on the rock (bench-mark 11). A phase of filling the misshapen step on the western edge followed. The final correction of this part can be dated to 3<sup>h</sup>t of year 6 (bench-marks 14 and 15). An early date for the construction of the Asasif-temple is thus unlikely since by year 6 just the foundations were finished. But in view of the fact that the number and content of graffiti and possible bench-marks from the American concession, the eastern part of the temple, are not known, the picture reconstructed on the basis of the results from the Austrian excavations is still incomplete.

3. Strong arguments against an early start of the building of the Asasif-temple are the missing cartouches and decoration of Ramesses IV. There was obviously not much time left for Ramesses IV to start with the wall decoration and building of the interior of the temple.<sup>122</sup> Preserved parts of the decoration date, according to their inscriptions, to his successors Ramesses V and VI. This makes perfect sense if one considers that by year 6 the foundation bed was just ready to be filled in with blocks.<sup>123</sup> This filling of the large stone basin for which mainly the hundreds of re-used blocks found by the Americans and Austrians were used would take time – time Ramesses IV did not have left to rule. The king died at the latest in his 8<sup>th</sup> year.<sup>124</sup>

4. The *cursus honorum* of Usermaatrenakht can be regarded as kind of indirect evidence for a late date of the temple. We know from several inscriptions that this official was occupied during the first years of the king with expeditions to Wadi Hammamat. Possibly after year 3 Usermaatrenakht followed his father Ramessesnakht as overseer of works and was in this new position responsible for the building activities in the Asasif.

5. Another indirect proof for a construction of the temple later in the reign of Ramesses IV may be the jar docket Reg. 218, JE 94474 and Reg. 219, JE 94475 that mention Heqamaatrenakht, a priest who is attested in year 4 of the king by a graffito in Deir el Bahari.<sup>125</sup> Since the wine jars with the docket were probably once part of the foundation deposit, this would correspond with the reconstructed process of cutting the foundation bed during the years 5 to 6.

6. Finally, the foundation deposits are arguments for a later dating of the temple since on the different plaques later variants of the name of the king appear more often than the earlier form. This is notably different from the deposits at the colonnade temple and the Asasif-temple is therefore almost certainly later in date.<sup>126</sup>

122 Cf. A.J. PEDEN, Ramesses IV, 51: "The resources needed to complete such a mammoth task were by this time probably not available."

123 For this common technique on Egyptian foundations see D. ARNOLD, *Building in Egypt*, 112, fig. 4.3.

124 New dates mentioning year 8 are attested from Deir el-Medineh, see W. HELCK, *Die datierten und datierbaren Ostraka, Papyri und Graffiti von Deir el-Medineh*, bearbeitet von Adelheid SCHLOTT, *ÄA* 63, 2002, 346–348, 407.

125 See note 101 for this graffito (M. MARCINIAK, *Les inscriptions hiéراتiques*, 151–152, Nr. 129).

126 Cf. H.E. WINLOCK, *Excavations at Deir el Bahri*, 13: it is very likely that some plaques with earlier names were for a certain timespan kept in stock since they were mass produced. Since in the foundation deposits of the temple near Medinet Habu both the earlier and later form appeared (M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 529) and I followed ULLMANN in identifying this building as House of Millions of years which was founded in year 1 (see below), the name variants found in the deposits are in general a rather weak dating evidence; all deposits in Western Thebes could date in or after year 2; cf. M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 534.



## 10 Setting and function of the Asasif-temple

As was shown above, the hieratic docketts from the Asasif mentioning a House of Millions of Years of Ramesses IV are no evidence for the function of the temple. A *hwt nswt n hh rnpwt* is already attested in the kings first year<sup>127</sup> – a date when according to my reconstruction the Asasif-temple was as of yet not even planned. ULLMANN suggested as most reasonable candidate for the House of Millions of Years the temple at the enclosure of Aya/Haremhab.<sup>128</sup> This would make sense in my opinion – especially the closeness to the temple of his father Ramesses III makes it very likely, but this proposal is still highly hypothetical since nothing except foundation deposits remain of the structure in question.

The distribution of Ramesses IV-monuments on both the East and West bank is significant and has to be considered for an interpretation of the Asasif-temple. The emphasis during his reign was obviously laid on four axes which are all associated with the major festivals of the region. Two of these axes cross the river (East-West) (Karnak – Asasif/Deir el-Bahari: Festival of the Valley; Luxor – Medinet Habu: Opet-festival) and two run North-South (Karnak – Luxor<sup>129</sup>; Deir el-Bahari – Medinet Habu).<sup>130</sup> Thus, Ramesses IV designed early in his reign one North-South axis on each riverbank – on the East bank from Karnak to Luxor and on the West bank from Deir el-Bahari to Medinet Habu.<sup>131</sup> The northern- and southernmost extensions of the kings building activity were already set from the start. I have argued above that the construction of the Asasif-temple dates to the later phase of the reign of Ramesses IV; consequently, this temple is an addition to the North-South axis on the west bank.

The buildings of Ramesses IV in Western Thebes are situated near structures of Hatshepsut – this holds above all true for the colonnade near the queen's valley temple, the Asasif-temple with its references in architecture and location to the Deir el-Bahari-group and the House of Millions of Years north of Medinet Habu which is thus close to the 18th Dynasty-temple in the precinct of Ramesses III.<sup>132</sup> Either Ramesses just copied the building program of the queen, or – and this seems more likely – he built sanctuaries and temples according to a specific plan which relies on the cultic landscape of Western Thebes as established since the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Hatshepsut revived the importance of the sacred valley of Deir el-Bahari and, closely connected with this place, the popularity of the Beautiful Feast

127 M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 532 and 535.

128 M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 541.

129 PM II<sup>2</sup>, 315: 82–86 (Luxor colonnade with five scenes of the Festival of Opet, procession of barks from Luxor to Karnak); see A.J. PEDEN, *Ramesses IV*, fig. 3 for inscriptions of Ramesses IV along the southern axis of Karnak.

130 For the ritual connections between temples on the East and West bank see R. STADELMANN, *Tempel und Tempelnamen in Theben-Ost und -West*, in: MDAIK 34, 1978, 180; D. ARNOLD, *Die Tempel Ägyptens*, 113–114 and fig on p. 110.

131 Evidence for an early date are the foundation deposits at the colonnade temple on the West bank; the data for a House of Millions of years in year 1 (= Medinet Habu?) and the bands of inscription in Karnak with the early variant of the king's name.

132 See J. BUDKA, *Die Tempelanlagen Ramses' IV. in Theben-West*, in: *Kemet* 10/2, April 2001, 28–32.



of the Valley.<sup>133</sup> This festival played an important role for the royal temples on the West Bank, the Houses of Millions of Years, and the cult for the living and deceased kings.<sup>134</sup>

In my opinion Ramesses IV tried to connect his own cult closely with the Feast of the Valley and decided to build his own new cult-installations in prominent places. The colonnade next to the valley-temple of Hatshepsut functioned as a bark sanctuary during the festival since its axis is orientated along the former causeway which was then used as a processional route.<sup>135</sup> It is as a monumental *Stationsheiligtum* comparable to the colonnade of the Luxor-temple.<sup>136</sup> During the early reign of Ramesses IV the bark would therefore come across the river, be stationed in the newly built colonnade, then moved on to Deir el-Bahari and continue its journey later further south to the royal House of Millions of years, situated close to the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty temple at Medinet Habu. In his 4<sup>th</sup> year the king decided to use the only place in front of Deir el-Bahari which was still vacant of structures and large enough to construct a large new building – the Asasif. This temple is strongly connected with the Feast of the Valley and Deir el-Bahari – both referring to architecture and location;<sup>137</sup> the royal cult was associated with this procession and therefore the building represented a fundamental addition to the cultic landscape of Late New Kingdom Thebes. It was the first monumental station for the bark of Amun on its way from Deir el-Bahari to Medinet Habu.<sup>138</sup> Probably for this reason, Ramesses V and VI continued work on the unfinished project which was never completed. The Asasif-temple might have been transformed into a House of Millions of years of these two kings.<sup>139</sup> As Ben HARING has pointed out, the ritual role of these temples was limited during the Twentieth Dynasty to their function as resting-places for the barks during the Feast of the Valley.<sup>140</sup> This aspect could have motivated a privileged status of the still unfinished Asasif-temple because of its top location in reference to the Festival – together with the lack of other available construction sites for royal temples on the West bank.

133 Cf. R. STADELMANN, in: LÄ VI, 1986, 706, s.v. Totentempel III, NR.

134 Cf. B.J.J. HARING, *Divine Housholds*, 210 and passim; M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 661–670.

135 Cf. J. BUDKA, *Die Tempelanlagen Ramses' IV.* in Theben-West, in: *Kemet* 10/2, 2001, 31; see also M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 542.

136 For small 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty barque shrines on the causeways see D. ARNOLD, in: LÄ I, 1975, 1019 (Hatshepsut); 1023 (Tuthmosis III.), s.v. Deir el Bahari I-III.

137 Cf. M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit*, 542.

138 For a similar interpretation, but in the role as mortuary temple see C.A. KELLER, *Speculations concerning interconnections between the royal policy and reputation of Ramesses IV.*, in: D.P. SILVERMAN (ed.), *For His Ka*, Essays offered in Memory of Klaus Baer, SAOC 55, 1994, 150.

139 It is also possible that these kings used Medinet Habu as House of Millions of years, cf. D. POLZ, *The Ramsesnakht Dynasty and the Fall of the New Kingdom: A New Monument in Thebes*, in: SAK 25, 1998, 280: "Judging by the alternations and additions by later kings, especially Ramesses IV and VI, in the text program of the Temple of Medinet Habu, it seems that this temple was also used as a mortuary complex for later Ramesside kings."

140 B.J.J. HARING, *Divine Housholds*, 210.

## 11 Concluding remarks

The Asasif-temple is closely connected with the Beautiful Feast of the Valley and forms part of a new ritual landscape the king intended to create on the West bank, in Medinet Habu as well as at the causeways to Deir el Bahari. This attempt was started early in his reign by means of the colonnade temple at the former Hatshepsut valley temple. The Asasif-temple represents a later phase of this project which was never finished but contributed fundamentally to the later development of the area. In blocking the causeways of Mentuhotep and Tuthmosis III, the Hatshepsut causeway became the only procession route during the Festival of the Valley. Consequently, her temple remained in use up into Ptolemaic times, whereas the other temples in Deir el-Bahari were dismantled.<sup>141</sup> Because the causeways to the later temples were not needed any longer, they were destroyed as well and thus a large area was gained in front of the holy valley of Deir el-Bahari. As a result, Ramesses IV influenced the ritual landscapes of later times and created the preconditions for the Asasif to become the most important part of the Western Theban necropolis during the Late Period.<sup>142</sup>

## Abbreviations

- ARNOLD, Building in Egypt: D. ARNOLD, Building in Egypt. Pharaonic Stone Masonry, New York/Oxford 1991.
- ARNOLD, Die Tempel Ägyptens: D. ARNOLD, Die Tempel Ägyptens. Götterwohnungen, Kultstätten, Baudenkmäler, Zürich 1992.
- BIETAK, Theben-West (Luqсор): M. BIETAK, Theben-West (Luqсор). Vorbericht über die ersten vier Grabungskampagnen (1969–1971), SÖAW 278.4., 1972.
- BIETAK/REISER-HASLAUER, Das Grab des Anch-Hor: M. BIETAK/E. REISER-HASLAUER, Das Grab des Anch-Hor, Obersthofmeister der Gottesgemahlin Nitokris, 2 Vols., DÖAW 6 and 7, 1978 and 1982.
- BOUVIER, Les étiquettes de jarres hiératiques: G. BOUVIER, Les étiquettes de jarres hiératiques de l'Institut d'Égyptologie de Strasbourg, Fascicle 5, DFIFAO 43, 2003.
- The Earl of CARNARVON/CARTER, Five Year's Explorations at Thebes: The Earl of CARNARVON/H. CARTER, Five Year's Explorations at Thebes, A Record of Work Done 1907–1911, Oxford University Press, London/New York/Toronto/Melbourne 1912.
- DODSON, After the Pyramids: A. DODSON, After the Pyramids. The Valley of the Kings and Beyond, London 2000.

141 Cf. M. BIETAK/E. REISER-HASLAUER, Das Grab des Anch-Hor I, 29 and D. ARNOLD/J. SETTGAST, Bericht über die Arbeiten des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo in Qurna von 1963–1970, in: ASAE 61, 1973, 184. For the dismantling of the Mentuhotep-temple since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty see already E. NAVILLE, The XIth Dynasty Temple III, EEF, 1898, 1.

142 Cf. M. BIETAK/E. REISER-HASLAUER, Das Grab des Anch-Hor, I, 29 and D. EIGNER, Die monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit, 22–24.



- EIGNER, Die monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit: D. EIGNER, Die monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit in der Thebanischen Nekropole, DÖAW 8, 1984.
- HARING, Divine Housholds: B.J.J. HARING, Divine Housholds. Administrative and economic aspects of the New Kingdom Royal Memorial Temples in Western Thebes, Egyptologische Uitgraven XII, Leiden 1997.
- HAYES, The Scepter of Egypt II: W.C. HAYES, The Scepter of Egypt. A Background for the Study of the Egyptian Antiquities in The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Part II: New Kingdom, New York 1990.
- HORNUNG, Zwei ramessidische Königsgräber: E. HORNUNG, Zwei ramessidische Königsgräber: Ramses IV. und Ramses VII. Theben 11, Mainz am Rhein 1990.
- MARCINIAK, Les inscriptions hiératiques: M. MARCINIAK, Les inscriptions hiératiques du Tempel de Thoutmosis III (= Deir el-Bahari I), Warsaw 1974.
- PEDEN, Ramesses IV: A.J. PEDEN, The reign of Ramesses IV, Warminster 1994.
- PEDEN, Egyptian Historical Inscriptions: A.J. PEDEN, Egyptian Historical Inscriptions of the Twentieth Dynasty, Documenta Mundi, Aegyptiaca 3, Jonsered 1994.
- WEINSTEIN, Foundation Deposits: J. WEINSTEIN, Foundation Deposits in Ancient Egypt, Ann Arbor 1973.
- ULLMANN, König für die Ewigkeit: M. ULLMANN, König für die Ewigkeit – Die Häuser der Millionen von Jahren. Eine Untersuchung zu Königskult und Tempeltypologie in Ägypten, ÄUAT 51, 2002.
- WINLOCK, Excavations at Deir el-Bahari: H.E. WINLOCK, Excavations at Deir el-Bahari 1911–1931, New York 1942.

1 J.L. GRIFFIN/P.F. NEWBURY, El-Barsih Part II, London 1994, 35–66; D. KLEINER/K. KLEINER, Steing und Steinbrüche im Alten Ägypten, Berlin 1993, 115–124.

2 J.A. HARRILL, Ancient Egyptian limestone quarries – a petrological survey, in: Archaeometry 34 n° 2, 1992, 195–212; D. KLEINER/K. KLEINER, *ibid.*

3 D. DEPRATERE/M. DEPAUW, Research in the quarries, Archaeological Survey, in: H. WILLEMSEN, DE MEYER/D. DEPRATERE/C. PETERSEN, HENDRICKX/T. HERBICHT/D. KLEINER, KLEINER, OF DE BECK/M. DEPAUW, Preliminary report of the 2002 Campaign of the Belgian Mission to Deir el-Bahari, in: MDAIK 60, 2004, 272–282 & Taf. 33, 38–40; D. DEPRATERE, Research in the quarries and survey results, in: H. WILLEMSEN, DE MEYER/D. DEPRATERE/C. PETERSEN, OF DE BECK/S. VERHOEVEN, VERHOEVEN, DEPAUW, Preliminary report of the 2003 Campaign of the Belgian Mission to Deir el-Bahari, in: MDAIK 62, 2006 (in press).

4 D. DEPRATERE/M. DEPAUW, Deir el-Bahari III. The Quarries of Nectanebo I (Wall of Nakhia), (in preparation, to appear in OLA, Leuven).