

**PYRAMIDIA OF QUEEN HATSHEPSUT'S EASTERN OBELISKS AT  
KARNAK AND THEIR ATTRIBUTION TO PARTICULAR BASES.\***

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Inscriptions and representations on obelisks erected at the entrance to Egyptian temples were oriented according to strictly defined rules.<sup>1</sup> On the front and the rear side of the obelisk, representations of the king and inscriptions related to him faced the temple axis; on the lateral sides, however, they were oriented to the interior of the temple. The orientation of texts and representations related to the god was opposite to that of the king. Knowing that the front side of the obelisk was the one decorated with the dedication formula, one can have no doubt regarding either the attribution of a particular obelisk to one of the two related bases or the orientation of the monolith in relation to the cardinal points.

In case of a fragmentarily preserved obelisk without dedication formula available to identify the front side, there are two alternative possibilities of attribution to bases of the obelisks, providing that orientation of scenes and/or inscriptions is apparent on at least two sides of a fragment. But there is only one possible orientation of the fragment in respect to the cardinal points regarding each of the bases.

Sometimes a specific fragment of an obelisk may be oriented in relation to the cardinal points and thus attributed to a particular base. The type of crown worn by the

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<sup>1</sup> R. Engelbach, "The Direction of the Inscriptions on Obelisks", *ASAE* 29 (1929), pp. 25-30; J. Leclant, J. Yoyotte, "Les obélisques de Tanis (deuxième article). Observations concernant la série des obélisques employés", *Kémi* 11 (1959), pp. 80-81 and pl. LX; J. Yoyotte, "À propos de l'obélisque unique", *Kémi* 14 (1957), p. 81.

king occurring on particular sides of a fragment may also be a diagnostic element. This the case of the attribution of an upper part of Thutmose III's obelisk, which had once stood in the court in front of the fourth pylon at Karnak, to the southern base in the pair.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding queen Hatshepsut's pair of obelisks once erected in the eastern part of the temple of Amon at Karnak, only fragments have been preserved.<sup>3</sup> One of these

<sup>2</sup> Cl. Traunecker, "Estimation des dimensions de l'obélisque Ouest du VII<sup>e</sup> pylône", *Cahiers de Karnak* VII, Paris 1982, p. 205 fig. 2.

<sup>3</sup> The bibliography given in B. Portier, R. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings* II, Oxford 1972, p. 218 should be complemented with: L. Borchardt, *Ägyptische Tempel mit Umgang*, BeiträgeBf 2, Kairo 1938, p. 67; J. Vandier, *Manuel d'archéologie égyptienne II.2. L'architecture religieuse et civile*, Paris 1955, p. 797; L. Habachi, "Two Graffiti at Sehel from the Reign of Queen Hatshepsut", *JNES* 16 (1957), pp. 92-95, 99; H. Kees, "Die weiße Kapelle Sesostris' I. in Karnak und das Sedfest", *MDAIK* 16 (1958), p. 208; P. Barguet, *Le temple d'Amon-Ré à Karnak. Essai d'exégèse*, RAPH 21, Le Caire 1962, pp. 219-22, 305; W.C. Hayes, *Internal Affairs from Tuthmosis I to the Death of Amenophis III. Part I*, CAH II, Cambridge 1962, pp. 20-21; W. Westendorf, *Altägyptische Darstellungen des Sonnenlaufes auf der abschüssigen Himmelsbahn*, MÄS 10, Berlin 1966 (hereafter referred to as *Darstellungen*), pp. 86-87; G. Björkman, *Kings at Karnak. A Study of the Treatment of the Monuments of Royal Predecessors in the Early New Kingdom*, Uppsala 1971, pp. 64, 72, 88; Ch.F. Nims, "The Eastern Temple at Karnak", BeiträgeBf. 12, Wiesbaden 1971, pp. 110-11; K. Martin, *Ein Garantsymbol des Lebens. Untersuchung zu Ursprung und Geschichte der altägyptischen Obelisken bis zum Ende des Neuen Reiches*, HÄB 3, Hildesheim 1977, pp. 148-53; L. Habachi, *Obelisks of Egypt. Skyscrapers of the Past*, New York 1977, pp. 60, 67-68, S. Ratié, *La reine Hatchepsout: sources et problèmes*, Orientalia Monspeliensia I, Leiden 1979, p. 190; Ch. Meyer, *Senenmut: eine prosopographische Untersuchung*, HÄS 2, Hamburg 1982, pp. 129-37; W.J. de Jong, "De tempels van Karnak 8: De Oostempel", *De Ibis* 12 (1987), pp. 53-54, 56-57; L. Gabolde, "À propos de deux obélisques de Thoutmosis II, dédiés à son père Thoutmosis I et érigés sous le règne d'Hatchepsout-pharaon à l'ouest du IV<sup>e</sup> pylône", *Cahiers de Karnak* VIII, Paris 1987, p. 149; P. Dorman, *The Monuments of Senenmut. Problems in Historical Methodology*, London 1988, pp. 115-16; A.-K. Selim, *Les obélisques égyptiens. Histoire et archéologie*, CASAE 26, Le Caire 1991, vol. I, pp. 88-92, vol. II, pp. 53-55; J.-Cl. Golvin, "Hatchepsout et les obélisques de Karnak", *Les dossiers d'archéologie* 187 (1993), pp. 40-41; Cl. Vandersleyen, *L'Égypte et la vallée du Nil. Tome II: De la fin de l'Ancien Empire à la fin du Nouvel Empire*, Paris 1995, pp. 291-93; N. Grimal, F. Larché, "Karnak, 1992-1994", *Cahiers de Karnak* X, Paris 1995, p. XIII; J. Karkowski, "Hatchepsut. Eine Frau, die sich des Pharaonenthrones bemächtigte", in: *Geheimnisvolle Königin Hatshepsut. Ägyptische Kunst des 15. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.*, Warschau 1997, p. 24; D. Niedziółka, "Die Bauten der Königin Hatshepsut", *ibidem*, p. 32; D. Laboury, *La statuaire de Thoutmosis III. Essai d'interprétation d'un portait royal dans son contexte historique*, Ægyptiaca Leodiensia 5, Liège 1998, pp. 23, 37-38, 552-55, 566, 625; see also D. Niedziółka, *Sektor wschodni Karnaku w czasach Totmesa III*, unpublished M.A. thesis, Instytut Archeologii Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 1989, pp. 85-88, 100-01.

is a pyramidion, now at the entrance to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (CG 17012).<sup>4</sup> A fragment of the other pyramidion, with three decorated sides partly preserved, is still at Karnak; fragments of the obelisk shafts have also been discovered, and they are now at Karnak as well. There is only one criterion which could help to orient these pyramidia and ascribe them to particular bases, i.e., the orientation of scenes scheme available for each of them. As it is impossible to attribute any fragment bearing the dedication formula to a particular pyramidion in the pair, one cannot determine which side of each pyramidion was the front one. Representations of the queen on the pyramidia are not preserved since they were hammered out in the reign of Thutmose III. But even if the *damnatio memoriae* of Hatshepsut had not occurred, it would probably still have been impossible to ascribe these pyramidia to their bases. The scanty remains of the original decoration imply that the sides were decorated with representations of Hatshepsut wearing the blue crown and kneeling before the god,<sup>5</sup> as it is on the pyramidia of Hatshepsut's obelisks erected in the hall between the fourth and fifth pylon at Karnak.<sup>6</sup> As this kind of decoration is not diagnostic, it would not have helped to identify the orientation of these pyramidia in regard to the cardinal points, even if it had been preserved.

The pyramidion at the entrance to the Cairo museum is generally ascribed to the southern obelisk in the pair. A thorough review of the scholarly discussion regarding this pyramidion shows how, step by step, a hypothesis became "fact".

The pyramidion was discovered in 1861 in the eastern part of Karnak, according to the *Journal d'entrée* "derrière le promenoir de Thoutmès III", and, as Legrain ascertained and Daressy confirmed, it originated from one of the obelisks of the pair that had stood to the north and south of the temple of Thutmose III, built outside, against the wall of the great temple of Amon.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Regarding the pyramidion in the Cairo museum, see Ch. Kuentz, *Obélisques*, CGC, Le Caire 1932, pp. 20-24 and Pls. VII-IX.

<sup>5</sup> As already observed by K. Sethe, "Altes und Neues zur Geschichte der Thronstreitigkeiten unter den Nachfolgern Thutmosis' I.", *ZÄS* 36 (1898), p. 43 and Pl. IIa; see also Kuentz, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> For the representations on the pyramidia of the obelisks of Hatshepsut in the hall between the fourth and fifth pylon, see PM, II<sup>2</sup>, pp. 81-82.

<sup>7</sup> After Kuentz, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21.

In Kuentz's publication, in a figure showing the orientation of scenes scheme, face 2 has been treated as the front side.<sup>8</sup> This arrangement is possible only under the assumption that this pyramidion originates from the southern obelisk. The author, however, did not state *expressis verbis* in the text that face 2 is the front side. One cannot exclude that the orientation of Kuentz' figure 25 merely corresponds to the object's orientation at the museum entrance. Anyhow, nothing allows for a conclusive identification of face 2 as the front side of the pyramidion. Nevertheless, considering the orientation of scenes on the sides of this pyramidion, it is obvious that this face is one of the two possible candidates for the front side, the other one being the face designated by Kuentz as 3. Only on the sides adjoining these two are the representations of Amon oriented toward the alleged front face.<sup>9</sup> Biased by the present orientation of the pyramidion at the museum entrance and the figure in Kuentz's publication, all the subsequent authors have attributed this pyramidion to the southern obelisk.<sup>10</sup>

As suggested above, there is no argument against recognising face 3 as the front side and, consequently, ascribing the pyramidion in Cairo to the northern obelisk. Moreover, some of its particularities, especially those concerning its decoration, can be explained only if one rejects the common attribution of this pyramidion to the southern obelisk. It should be noted, however, that none of these particularities provides an irrefutable argument, and they are rather premises for a reassessment of the current opinion.

The first of these particularities is the obliquity of the heaven-signs surmounting the scenes on the sides of the pyramidion. This distinctive feature has already been observed and discussed by Wolfhart Westendorf<sup>11</sup> and then reconsidered by Karl Martin.<sup>12</sup> In respect to this particular object, their efforts, however, have not resulted in

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>9</sup> According to the rules concerning the orientation of scenes scheme on obelisks, mentioned above.

<sup>10</sup> A. Varille, "Description sommaire du sanctuaire oriental d'Amon-Ré à Karnak", *ASAE* 50 (1950), p. 141; Vandier, *op. cit.*, p. 797; Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 21; Westendorf, *Darstellungen*, pp. 86-87; PM, II<sup>2</sup>, p. 218; Björkman, *op. cit.*, p. 64; Martin, *op. cit.*, pp. 148.

<sup>11</sup> *Darstellungen*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>12</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 149-50.

convincing conclusions for they accepted *a priori* the common attribution of this monument to the southern obelisk.

In Westendorf's opinion, the direction of descent of the heaven-sign should be in accordance with the direction the god is looking, thus probably representing the journey of the sun from the east to the west, i.e., its progressive setting.<sup>13</sup> He has observed this particularity on various groups of monuments, including scenes on the pyramidion of Hatshepsut's southern obelisk belonging to the pair erected in the hall of Thutmose I, which now lies near the Sacred Lake of Karnak.<sup>14</sup>

As Westendorf himself has observed, this rule does not apply to the pyramidion of the obelisk of Hatshepsut, which is now in Cairo.<sup>15</sup> Although on its faces 1 and 4 the heaven-sign descends in accordance with the direction in which the god is looking, still on sides 2 and 3 it descends in the opposite direction, i.e., not in conformity with the rule suggested by Westendorf. Therefore, in the latter instances the god would be looking to the east. Trying to explain such a circumstance, Westendorf has suggested that the full solar cycle, divided into four phases: 1. the eastern horizon, 2. the heaven, 3. the western horizon, 4. the underworld, could have been represented on this obelisk. His alternative rendering would imply that the two sides of the pyramidion could have been conceived as the diurnal journey of the sun and the remaining two sides as the nocturnal stage of its peregrination.<sup>16</sup> If one accepted his interpretation however, and with it the traditional orientation of this pyramidion, i.e., considering its face 2 as the front one (eastern), its corners 1/4 (north-western) and 2/3 (south-eastern) should represent the east, while corners 1/2 (north-eastern) and 3/4 (south-western) should symbolise the west. This seems improbable, however, for both the east and the west would have been represented by a pair of opposite corners. On the other hand, the change of direction of the heaven-sign descending on the pyramidion's particular sides, would result in the lack of contact between these signs at the pyramidion corners, something avoided wherever possible, as Westendorf has pertinently

<sup>13</sup> *Darstellungen*, pp. 8, 14-21, 83.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15 and fig. 3; regarding the possibility of a new interpretation of the obliquity of the heaven-signs on this pyramidion, see below pp. 11-12 of the manuscript.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

remarked.<sup>17</sup> A change of the mutual orientation of the god and king on faces 2 and 3 would also have been impossible - as again observed by Westendorf - because the direction in which the god is looking was precisely determined by the position of the obelisk in relation to the temple. Westendorf suggests that the numerous interdependencies that determine the final form of decoration were incompatible sometimes and it would have been the reason why the descending heaven-signs on the Cairo pyramidion do not follow a rule that is observable elsewhere. Such an explanation seems to imply that Westendorf considered the requirements resulting from the position of the obelisk in relation to the temple and the necessity of contact at the ends of heaven-signs on the adjoining sides of the pyramidion as superior to the rule implying that the heaven-sign descends in accordance with the direction of the sun god's looking.<sup>18</sup>

Martin is of a different opinion. He believes that the descent of the heaven-sign to the right side of a particular scene was the predominant rule.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, on faces 2 (eastern) and 4 (western) - still accepting the traditional attribution of the pyramidion in Cairo to the southern obelisk - the heaven-signs descend to the right, i.e. to the north on the eastern side and to the south on the western side. Martin then suggests that on the front (eastern) side the north stands for the west, and on the rear (western) side the west is represented by the south. Moreover, in his opinion, the heaven-signs crossing each other obliquely on the front and back side "sollen ... den ewigen Zyklus ausdrücken, in dem die durch die beiden Obeliskens symbolisch dargestellte königliche Funktion wirken soll."<sup>20</sup>

Martin's suggestions evoke serious doubts. Firstly, the west would be concurrently represented by the north on the front (eastern) face and by the south on the rear (western) one. Secondly, on faces 1 (northern) and 3 (southern) the heaven-sign is also oblique, but in each of these instances it descends to the left. Martin's opinion that the obliquities of the heaven-signs on faces 1 and 3 are hardly

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<sup>16</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87 and n. 7.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>19</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 150.

perceivable, almost non-existing,<sup>21</sup> must be rejected for in such a case the heaven-signs on adjoining sides could not meet at least at one of the pyramidion corners. Thirdly, in the case of the pyramidion of the southern obelisk belonging to the pair erected between the fourth and fifth pylon, the heaven-sign descends to the right on the front (western) side and to the left on the back (eastern) one.<sup>22</sup> Thus, this hypothesis fails to explain some of the existing data and therefore should rather not be accepted.

If one took into consideration the opposite possibility, i.e., recognised the pyramidion at the entrance to the Cairo museum as a fragment of the northern obelisk, its face 3 would be the front (eastern) side. This would explain the direction in which the heaven-signs represented on the pyramidion sides descend. Corner 3/4 (south-eastern, according to this attribution) would stand for the sunrise or the eastern horizon. Corners 2/3 (north-eastern) and 1/4 (south-western), or rather the peak of the pyramidion, would symbolise the sun at the zenith. It should not be overlooked that the heaven-signs ascend from corner 3/4 on both face 3 (eastern) and face 4 (southern), thus these sides would represent the journey of the sun disk on the firmament between the sunrise and the zenith. In such a case the two remaining sides of the pyramidion would symbolise the second stage of the sun's daily journey, that is, between the zenith and the sunset. Corner 1/2 (north-western) would stand for the sunset, which would be shown by the descent of the heaven-signs on both face 1 (western) and face 2 (northern) toward this corner.

The present hypothesis seems to be confirmed by the fact that on the single face of the other pyramidion in this pair of obelisks, which is preserved to a degree enabling one to ascertain the direction of the heaven-sign's obliquity, this sign presumably descended to the right.<sup>23</sup> The attribution of this fragmentarily preserved

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<sup>20</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>21</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>22</sup> See Westendorf, *Darstellungen*, p. 15 n. 4; see also below pp. 10-11 of this manuscript.

<sup>23</sup> This was already observed on the monument itself by Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 149, n. 4. Though the heaven-sign surmounting this scene is not preserved, nevertheless given the circumstance that the right uraeus at the sun disk hangs further down than the left one, one can assume a similarly oriented obliquity of the unpreserved heaven-sign above the disk with uraei. The observation, made by the author of the present article in Karnak in 1992,

pyramidion to the southern obelisk implies that the presently discussed face has to be part of the southern side of the obelisk, the right corner of this pyramidion fragment must be the south-eastern one, while its left corner is the south-western one.<sup>24</sup> In such a case the heaven-sign would ascend from the east to the west. Thus, this (southern) face would represent the journey of the sun from its rising (south-eastern = right corner) up to the zenith (south-western = left corner). This would correspond to the southern face of the pyramidion in Cairo, providing the new attribution is accepted.

As has already been suggested by Westendorf<sup>25</sup> and Jan Assmann,<sup>26</sup> the region south-east of Egypt was sometimes considered by the Egyptians to be the place of the sunrise. Such an idea would imply an axis running from the south-east to the north-west. It should also be remarked that the exit from the *dw3.t* at the south-eastern rim of the sky and the entrance to it in the north-west is already implied in the Pyramid Texts.<sup>27</sup> One should also notice that the northward movement of the daily bark is explicitly attested in Spell 44 of the Coffin Texts.<sup>28</sup> The same direction of this movement sometimes occurs in the decoration of temple walls, e.g. on the eastern wall in the antechamber of the solar court in the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari,<sup>29</sup> or

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confirms Martin's remark. This detail may also be observed on an excellent photograph published by de Jong, *op. cit.*, p. 57 fig. 26.

<sup>24</sup> This is implied by the orientation of scenes on the remaining, still unpublished adjoining sides of this fragment, on which the representations of Amon-Re are oriented towards the presently discussed face. Accepting the traditional attribution, it would be the front (eastern) side of the northern obelisk. Other possibilities are excluded considering rules on the orientation of obelisk decoration.

<sup>25</sup> *Darstellungen*, pp. 23, 46 and 61 see also *idem*, "Vom Sonnentier zum Sonnenboot", in: *Festschrift Elmar Edel* (ed. by M. Görg and E. Pusch), ÄAT 1, Bamberg 1979, p. 433 n. 3.

<sup>26</sup> *Der König als Sonnenpriester. Ein kosmographischer Begleittext zur kultischen Sonnenhymnik in thebanischen Tempeln und Gräbern*, ADAIK 7, Glückstadt 1970, p. 31.

<sup>27</sup> See J. P. Allen, "The Cosmology of the Pyramid Texts", *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt* (ed. by W.K. Simpson), YES 3, New Haven 1989, p. 23.

<sup>28</sup> *CT* I, p. 184g.

<sup>29</sup> See Assmann, *Sonnenpriester*, pp. 10-13; J. Karkowski, "Studies on the Decoration of the Eastern Wall of the Vestibule of Re-Horakhty in Hatshepsut's Temple at Deir el-Bahari", *ET* 9 (1976), pp. 67-80; *id.*, "Deir el Bahari 1974-1975 (Travaux égyptologiques)", *ET* 11 (1979), p. 217 and Fig. 3 on p. 219; Assmann, "Das Dekorationsprogramm der königlichen Sonnenheiligtümer des Neuen Reiches nach einer Fassung der Spätzeit", *ZÄS* 110 (1983), pp. 91-98 (especially p. 95 and n. 40); Karkowski, "The Epigraphic Mission to the Hatshepsut Temple 1995", *PAM* 7 (1996), p. 63 and Fig. 3 on p. 66; F. Pawlicki, "Hatshepsut Temple. Conservation and

on the eastern wall of room XVII of the temple at Luxor.<sup>30</sup> The phenomenon may be observed in the decoration of several stelae and other monuments as well.<sup>31</sup> One should notice that in Theban tombs, hymns to the rising sun, or Re-Horakhty, usually occur on the southern side of the entrance, while those to the setting sun, or Atum, on the northern one.<sup>32</sup> Thus, an equivalence of the east and south, as well as the west and north, and concurrently the movement of the sun from the south-east to the north-west seems to be well attested in Egyptian texts and representations.<sup>33</sup> One should note, however, that Egyptian texts and representations often associated the cardinal points in just the opposite way, i.e., the north with east and the south with west, which was frequently represented by the northward movement of the nocturnal sun, and the diurnal sun's southward run. This observation is particularly valid in cases when the entire solar cycle was represented.<sup>34</sup>

There are, however, some additional data that have not been observed so far, and that appear to support the equivalence of the south and east, and concurrently the existence of the axis running from the south-east to the north-west, which would support the attribution of the pyramidion in Cairo to the northern obelisk.

In this context it would be very significant to notice the orientation of scenes on the pyramidion of Thutmose III's single obelisk and those on the upper end of its shaft,

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Preservation Project 1996/97", *PAM* 9 (1998), pp. 57-58. It should also be observed that the night bark of the sun here was probably oriented in the opposite direction, i.e. to the south, contrary to its orientation in the temple in Luxor, where both barks are directed northwards.

<sup>30</sup> See Assmann, *Sonnenpriester*, pp. 2-5; H. Brunner, *Die südlichen Räume des Tempels von Luxor*, AV 18, Mainz 1977, pp. 42, 80-82 (especially p. 81) and Pls. 65-66, 187ab.

<sup>31</sup> Westendorf, *Darstellungen*, pp. 32-33, 46, 61-62.

<sup>32</sup> See Assmann, *Sonnenhymnen in thebanischen Gräbern*, Theben I, Mainz 1983, pp. XIV-XV.

<sup>33</sup> See also O. Neugebauer, R.A. Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts III. Decans, Planets, Constellations and Zodiacs*, London 1969, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> See K. Sethe, *Altägyptische Vorstellungen vom Lauf der Sonne*, SPAW 22, Berlin 1928, pp. 281-82; E. Thomas, "Solar Barks Prow to Prow", *JEA* 42 (1956), pp. 65-79, and especially pp. 74, 77-78; Assmann, *Liturgische Lieder an den Sonnengott. Untersuchungen zur altägyptischen Hymnik I*, MÄS 19, Berlin 1969, pp. 131-32; Allen, *Genesis in Egypt. The Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation Accounts*, YES 2, New Haven 1988, p. 5.

which appears to be a monument with explicitly emphasised solar connotations.<sup>35</sup> As has pertinently been observed by Martin, the front side of this obelisk, i.e., the one adorned with the dedication formula of Thutmose III, was once oriented eastwards.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the sun god was facing northwards on both the front (eastern) and back (western) side, while he was oriented westwards on the lateral (southern and northern) ones. This implies that the sun, as represented on this pyramidion, would begin its journey at the south-eastern corner of the obelisk and would finish it at the north-western one. Therefore, the daily journey of the sun on the firmament, which would implicitly be expressed by the obliquity of the heaven-signs on the subsequent faces of the pyramidia belonging to the eastern obelisks of Hatshepsut, was explicitly demonstrated on Thutmose III's monolith by means of the orientation of particular scenes. It should be emphasised that in the case of the single obelisk, the idea of representing the sun's daily journey appeared even superior to the rule that the god should be oriented toward the front face on the lateral sides of the obelisk.

The manner of showing the sun's daily journey on the eastern obelisks of Hatshepsut and the single obelisk of Thutmose III is in evident contradiction to the situation found on the pyramidion of the southern obelisk of Hatshepsut in the pair

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<sup>35</sup> See G. Lefebvre, "Sur l'obélisque du Latran", *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire offerts à Charles Picard à l'occasion de son 65e anniversaire* (=Rev.Arch., 6e Série 31/32 [1949]), pp. 586-93; Ch. Desroches-Noblecourt, "Nouveaux commentaires sur l'obélisque de Saint-Jean de Latran", *Rev.Arch.*, 6e Série 37 (1951), pp. 5-13; Yoyotte, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-91; Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 166 n. 1.

<sup>36</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 164-65. As observed by Martin, the crowns worn by the king in the scenes on the pyramidion are diagnostic enough to orient the obelisk in relation to the cardinal points. Moreover, Martin's suggestion that the epithet *ḥq3-jwnw* in a ring with the throne name of Thutmose III should occur on the northern face of the obelisk, finds confirmation in the decoration of this king's temple at Deir el-Bahari, where the epithet in the ring is found on the northern wall of the Bark Room (A) and on the eastern wall of the Sanctuary (C). Despite the fact that in the latter instance the epithet appears on the eastern wall and not on the northern one, it seems there is no contradiction to the rule, since the epithet occurred after the turning right (northwards) of the functional axis of the temple, i.e., still to the right of this axis, similarly as in the case of the northern wall of the Bark Room. The epithet is attested more frequently in the decoration of this temple, but the remaining occurrences are not yet ascribed to particular walls or columns. The epithet *ḥq3-jwnw* in the ring of Thutmose III will be discussed by the present author in a separate article. I would like to express my acknowledgements to Professor Jadwiga Lipińska and Ms. Janina Wiercińska for access to the unpublished documentation of the decoration of Thutmose III's temple at Deir el-Bahari.

erected in the thutmoside hypostyle, the one that now lies in the neighbourhood of the Sacred Lake at Karnak. As observed by Westendorf, the heaven-signs surmounting the scenes sculpted on this pyramidion are oblique only on the front (western) and back (eastern) faces, in both cases ascending northwards.<sup>37</sup> They are horizontal, however, on the lateral, i.e., northern and southern sides. It would be useful to examine the obliquity of the heaven-signs on the pyramidion of the still standing northern monument belonging to this pair. If it were proved that these signs descend northwards on the front and rear sides, i.e., opposite to the obliquities of the southern obelisk, it would demonstrate that also in this case the journey of the sun has been shown. In this instance, however, the southern side of the southern obelisk would represent the eastern horizon, i.e. the sunrise, and its western and eastern faces would symbolise a stage between the sunrise and the zenith, whilst the same faces (front and rear) of the northern monolith would represent the afternoon stage of the sun disk's journey, and the northern side of this obelisk would symbolise the sunset or the western horizon. In this case the zenith would find its place in a space between the obelisks, which was concurrently the space between the towers of the pylons on the main axis of Amon-Re's temple. One should not forget, however, that this interpretation remains purely speculative until the decoration of the still standing northern obelisk of Hatshepsut is studied. The new interpretation seems to find support in Traunecker's observation that on the processional north-south axis of the temple in Karnak the eastern side is frequently an equivalent of the southern one.<sup>38</sup> It might be that the reason for considering the east as a counterpart of the south, and concurrently the west as an equivalent of the north, had its origin in the equation of the journey of the sun on the firmament with the course of the Nile. As the sun rises on the east and sets on the west, so the Nile begins its flow in the south and finishes it in the north.<sup>39</sup>

In respect to the eastern obelisks of Hatshepsut, one might still try to defend the traditional attribution of the pyramidion which is now in Cairo, to the southern obelisk.

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<sup>37</sup> *Darstellungen*, p. 15.

<sup>38</sup> Traunecker, "Textes et reliefs mis au jour dans la grande cour du temple de Karnak", *Kémi* 20 (1970), p. 175 n. 39 and p. 176 n. 40; idem, *Cahiers de Karnak* VII, p. 205; see also Laboury, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

In such a case, however, the journey of the sun as represented on its faces would be bound to start at corner 1/2 (north-eastern, accepting the traditional attribution) and to end at corner 3/4 (south-western), which would be in clear contradiction to the above suggested interpretation of the scenes orientation on the single obelisk. Thus, accepting the traditional attribution of the Cairo pyramidion, one should consider the heaven-sign obliquities on this monument as totally unimportant with regard to their symbolism. This would simply betray carelessness on the part of the craftsmen executing its decoration, which seems rather improbable in the case of such an important monument.<sup>40</sup>

There is still another factor that might determine association of the east with south and concurrently the west with north, thus creating the axis running from the south-east to the north-west,<sup>41</sup> and this despite the equally conceivable possibility of combining the east with the north and the west with the south, which would concurrently imply an axis from the north-east to the south-west.<sup>42</sup> The choice of the former possibility might have been in relation to the mutual location of Hatshepsut's eastern obelisks, the palace of the queen situated northward of the main axis of the temple at Karnak,<sup>43</sup> and especially her Mansion of Millions of Years at Deir el-Bahari. The same relation might concern the single obelisk of Thutmose III, on which the king is represented moving from the north-western to the south-eastern corner of the pyramidion, i.e., in the opposite direction as that of the sun.<sup>44</sup> This would express the

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<sup>39</sup> Such an explanation has already been suggested by Westendorf, *Darstellungen*, p. 46; see also Ch. E. Loeben, "Bemerkungen zum Horustempel des Neuen Reiches in Edfu", *BSEG* 14 (1990), pp. 65-68.

<sup>40</sup> Westendorf (*Darstellungen*, p. 15) is against considering the heaven-sign obliquities above the scenes on the pyramidion lying beside the Sacred Lake as an effect of craftsmen carelessness. The present author shares his opinion, the more so as a re-examination of the sign obliquities provides data which should be considered in the context of the orientation of scenes on the single obelisk, and these obviously are not accidental.

<sup>41</sup> See above pp. 8-9 of this manuscript.

<sup>42</sup> See above, p. 9 of the manuscript.

<sup>43</sup> Concerning the location of this palace, see E. Otto, *Topographie des thebanischen Gaus*, UGAÄ 16, Leipzig 1952, pp. 25-26, M. Gitton, "Le palais de Karnak", *BIFAO* 74 (1974), pp. 63-73 and D. B. O'Connor, "City and Palace in New Kingdom Egypt", *CRIPPEL* 11 (1989), pp. 79; id., "Beloved of Maat, the Horizon of Re: The Royal Palace in the New Kingdom Egypt", *Ancient Egyptian Kingship* (ed. by D. O'Connor and D. P. Silverman), PdÄ 9, Leiden - New York - Köln 1995, pp. 270-83.

<sup>44</sup> See above pp. 10-11 of the manuscript.

king's movement from his palace located in the north-west toward the sun rising on the eastern horizon, represented in this case by the south-east. The relation between this obelisk, executed in the last decade of this king's reign,<sup>45</sup> and his temple at Deir el-Bahari, which had also been erected in this period,<sup>46</sup> as well as his temple at Gurna, would constitute a parallel to the mutual relation of Hatshepsut's eastern obelisks and her temple at Deir el-Bahari. Thus, it would support our hypothesis. The topographical relation of Hatshepsut's western obelisks to her palace at Karnak would also be in agreement with the northward route of the daily sun that might have been expressed by the obliquity of the heaven-signs on these monuments.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, it seems possible that both Karnak itself and Thebes as a whole had been envisaged as a cosmogram as early as in the reign of Hatshepsut.<sup>48</sup> One should consider the possibility that a change of the principal axis of this cosmogram, from one running from the south-east to the north-west during the reign of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III to another one from the north-east to the south-west in Amenhotep III's reign, was connected with the location of the Temple of Millions of Years of the latter king and his palace as well.

It seems, moreover, that the heaven-sign obliquities should not be considered as the only argument supporting the attribution of the pyramidion in Cairo to the northern obelisk. It is only on face 3 of this pyramidion that the erased name of Amon-Re has eventually been restored just in front of the god's face. On the other sides of the monument, his name has been inserted at the top of Amon-Re's crown and it is inscribed with smaller signs than those of the rest of the text there. It seems hardly possible to explain this circumstance only by the lack of sufficient space beside the crown on face 3, as on face 4 the sign *st* had been hammered out, the feather-sign *j*

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<sup>45</sup> However, the monument was not erected until the reign of Thutmose IV, as attested by a fragment of his inscription on the obelisk itself (see *Urk. IV*, p. 1550, ll. 3-8). Assuming 26 years at the minimum for the reign of Amenhotep II (see J. von Beckerath, *Chronologie des ägyptischen Neuen Reiches*, HÄB 39, Hildesheim 1994, pp. 94, 117), and the possibility that Thutmose IV erected the obelisk in his first regnal year, the monument could not have been executed before the last decade of the reign of Thutmose III.

<sup>46</sup> See Lipińska, *The Temple of Tuthmosis III. Architecture*, Deir el-Bahari II, Warszawa 1977, pp. 62-3.

<sup>47</sup> See above pp. 11-12 of this manuscript.

<sup>48</sup> David O'Connor has pertinently advocated this idea for the reign of Amenhotep III, see "The City and the World: Worldview and Built Forms in the Reign of Amenhotep III", *Amenhotep III: Perspectives on His Reign* (ed. by D. O'Connor and E.H. Cline), Ann Arbor 1998, pp. 154-71.

inserted in its place, and the remaining signs of the god's name executed in reduced size between *j* and the crown.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, it seems probable that there was an intention to emphasise the front side of the monument during the post-Amarna restoration of the obelisk.

The case of the fragmentarily preserved pyramidion originating from the other obelisk of this pair is somewhat different. Still, the effect is the same. Unlike the Cairo monument, all the inscriptions on the Karnak pyramidion had been erased. Consequently, there was ample free surface available to restore the name of Amon-Re anywhere. On all three, partly preserved sides of the pyramidion the name of the god is restored in front of his face. However, only on the face which, according to our new suggestion, would have been the front one, the name of Amon-Re is followed by the epithet *nb p.t.*, which distinguishes this legend from others inscribed on the two other sides, the lateral and back ones. Although there was enough space available, the restorers considered it more suitable to engrave the name of the god in front of his face, and not at the top of his crown. Thus, the location of the legend on face 3 of the Cairo pyramidion should not be thought of as accidental or resulting from lack of available space at the top of the crown.

There is still another, yet decidedly less important argument for the new attribution of the pyramidia belonging to the eastern obelisks of queen Hatshepsut. This is the width of the sides of the Cairo monument at their base. It is 1.805 m in the case of face 1, and respectively 1.83 m, 1.82 and 1.82 for faces 2, 3 and 4.<sup>50</sup> Given that the width of face 1 is the smallest and the most divergent from the average width of the base, this face seems to have been predestined to be the rear side of the pyramidion. Thus, face 3 would become the front side and, consequently, the pyramidion in Cairo would be a fragment of the northern obelisk in the pair.

It should be remarked that all who have until now discussed the problem of the eastern obelisks of Hatshepsut, including the present author, have assumed *a priori* that these monoliths had once stood in front of the entrance to some sacred area or temple eventually occupied by Akhmenu built in the reign of Thutmose III. Thus, the

<sup>49</sup> See Kuentz, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24 and Pls. VII-IX.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21 fig. 25.

obelisks would have been placed to the east of this unpreserved monument. Recently, however, Dimitri Laboury has suggested that the obelisks in question marked the western entrance to a monument of Hatshepsut, which was located to the east of the pair of her monoliths, and which would have later been dismantled by Thutmose III.<sup>51</sup> The accepting of Laboury's proposal, would require a reconsideration of the attribution of the discussed pyramidia to their bases. Assuming that face 3 of the pyramidion in Cairo, and not its face 2, as was commonly considered so far, should rather be the front one,<sup>52</sup> it would appear that this pyramidion once belonged to the southern obelisk,<sup>53</sup> i.e., in accordance with the commonly accepted opinion until now. In such a case, however, this face would be the western side of the pyramidion, and not the southern one, as was usually assumed so far, or the eastern one, as has been suggested above by the present author. The attribution resulting from Laboury's interpretation of the topographical context would also allow, however, to explain the obliquity of the heaven-sign on each particular side of these monuments, like in the explanation suggested above.<sup>54</sup> Given such an orientation of the obelisks, corner 1/2 of the monument in Cairo would be associated with the sunrise and its corner 3/4 with the sunset, i.e., contrary to the interpretation suggested by the present author. It should be noticed, however, that the axis from the south-east to the north-west would still be valid.

However, Laboury's interpretation of the architectural context of Hatshepsut's eastern obelisks is not convincing. He suggests that obelisks were standing at the western entrance of the alleged monument. His first argument in favour of such an interpretation would be the lack of a sufficiently large free space between the obelisks of Hatshepsut and the wall enclosing the temple of the Middle Kingdom on the east. This lack of space would result from the existence of a brick wall, remains of which were recently revealed during a sounding executed in the northern part of the

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<sup>51</sup> Laboury, *op. cit.*, pp. 552-56.

<sup>52</sup> This seems highly probable considering the place in which the names of Amon were restored on the subsequent sides of these pyramidia, as well as the width of particular sides of the monument in Cairo; see above pp. 14-15 of the manuscript.

<sup>53</sup> According to the orientation of the scenes decorating its faces.

<sup>54</sup> See pp. 7-10 of the manuscript.

hypostyle hall of Akhmenu.<sup>55</sup> It seems, however, that the very existence of such a wall does not exclude the construction of a temple in this area in a period preceding the erecting of Akhmenu. Simply, this earlier monument could have been of smaller dimensions than the temple subsequently built by Thutmose III. Moreover, nothing precludes the possibility of the brick wall being dismantled at the time that the earlier temple was constructed.

According to Laboury, the course of the eastern part of the thutmoside brick wall enclosing the precinct of Amon-Re, and more precisely its section on the main axis of the temple complex, would constitute another argument for the localisation of this mysterious monument to the east of the queen's obelisks. Laboury suggests reconstructing it "sur l'axe du temple du Moyen Empire, dans l'angle formé par le décrochement de l'enceinte dite 'de Thoutmosis III' ".<sup>56</sup> Assuming such a localisation of this temple, it seems strange to relate its dismantling to the construction of Akhmenu by Thutmose III for the space separating these monuments was considerable.

The corridor, which leads to Akhmenu from the southern part of the *wadjit*-hall between the fourth and fifth pylon of Amon-Re temple, and which had to exist already in the reign of Thutmose I, would indicate, according to Laboury, that access to the area situated to the east of the principal temple of Amon-Re would have been from the west, and not from the east, which was the case after Akhmenu was erected.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, it seems that the corridor in question would rather have given access to the predecessor of Akhmenu, which should probably be reconstructed in the area occupied later by the temple of Thutmose III, and not to the mysterious building situated much further east, as suggested by Laboury.

Other data for the alleged localisation of the monument in question, and concurrently for the orientation of the obelisks of Hatshepsut, have been deduced by Laboury from "bloc 503" and its decoration.<sup>58</sup> The fragmentarily preserved decoration

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<sup>55</sup> Laboury, *op. cit.*, p. 552 and n. 1591.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 553.

<sup>57</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>58</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 553-54.

on this “bloc”, originating from an angle of a granite monument, depicts Nekhbet in the form of a vulture on each of the two adjoining sides. Since the vultures are facing opposite directions, Laboury suggests that the granite fragment must have belonged to the south-eastern angle of an obelisk. Below the goddesses, there are fragmentarily preserved texts of Amon’s addresses to the king. These texts are of the same orientation as the representations of Nekhbet, thus attesting the orientation of the missing figures of Amon. Since on both sides the god had been shown with his back to the allegedly south-eastern angle, this inspired Laboury to recognise this fragment as a part of the northern obelisk in the pair erected by Hatshepsut. Thus, considering the rules of obelisk decoration, the entrance flanked by these monoliths would have had to be to the east of them. There are, however serious objections to the interpretation proposed by Laboury. Firstly, the decoration of the granite fragment in question is rather typical of pillars. Moreover, such a scene has not been attested so far on obelisks.<sup>59</sup> Even if one accepted the attribution of this fragment to one of Hatshepsut’s eastern obelisks, it would not be obvious to ascribe this granite fragment to the south-eastern angle of a monolith, for it is also possible that all the faces of the southern obelisk in the pair were decorated with representations of Nekhbet. In such a case the fragment would originate from either the north-eastern angle of the southern monolith, provided Laboury is right in his opinion that the temple related to the obelisks was situated to the east of them, or from the north-western angle of the same monolith, if one accepted the traditional point of view, shared by the present author, that the temple related to these obelisks was to the west of them. Therefore, it is evident that the granite fragment in question does not contribute to the localisation of the temple connected with the eastern obelisks of Hatshepsut.

Laboury suggests that an architrave of Thutmose II and probably a lintel of Thutmose III, both reused in the foundations of the socle on which Hatshepsut’s southern obelisk was once erected,<sup>60</sup> should originate from a monument connected

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<sup>59</sup> This remark, however, does not exclude the attribution of this fragment to the eastern obelisks of Hatshepsut, since the exact form of the latter’s decoration is still unknown.

<sup>60</sup> See Varille, *ASAE* 50 (1950), p. 140 and Pl. V; Laboury, *op. cit.*, p. 555 and n. 1602.

with these obelisks.<sup>61</sup> He also relates two foundation deposits of Thutmose III, recently discovered by Abd el-Hamid between the Eastern Temple of this king and the foundations of the single obelisk,<sup>62</sup> to this monument. In Laboury's opinion, these deposits would be the *in situ* remnants of either the temple or one of its gates, assumed by him to stand to the east of Hatshepsut's eastern obelisks. This, however, remains purely hypothetical, as these deposits of Thutmose III might equally well mark the location of the eastern entrance to the precinct of Amon-Re or another of this king's constructions. There is, moreover, nothing diagnostic about these deposits that would allow them to be ascribed to the period at the beginning of Thutmose III's reign in Hatshepsut's regency. Since the building they were related to might have been erected either in the period suggested by Laboury, i.e., during the regency of Hatshepsut, or in the sole reign of Thutmose III himself, already after Hatshepsut's death, the deposits should not be considered as an argument in the discussion on the location of a building related to the queen's eastern obelisks. Moreover, it is well known that these obelisks were erected at the very beginning of Hatshepsut's reign as a king, if not on the very occasion of her enthronement.<sup>63</sup> Since Laboury suggests that blocks reused in one of the foundations originated from the rebuilding of the monument allegedly erected more to the east, thus the erection of this monument or temple must have begun in the period of Hatshepsut's regency, if not already during the reign of Thutmose II, and its rebuilding could have taken place not later than Hatshepsut's enthronement. Though Laboury's dating of particular phases of the queen's activity in Eastern Karnak seems rather probable, still there is no argument for the localisation of Thutmose II's/Hatshepsut's temple as suggested by him.

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<sup>61</sup> Laboury, *op. cit.*, pp. 555-56.

<sup>62</sup> S. Abd el-Hamid, "Discovery of a New Foundation Deposit of Thutmosis III at the East of Karnak. A Preliminary Report (with an Annex about a Stela of Pareemheb)", *Cahiers de Karnak* VIII, Paris 1987, pp. 41-49.

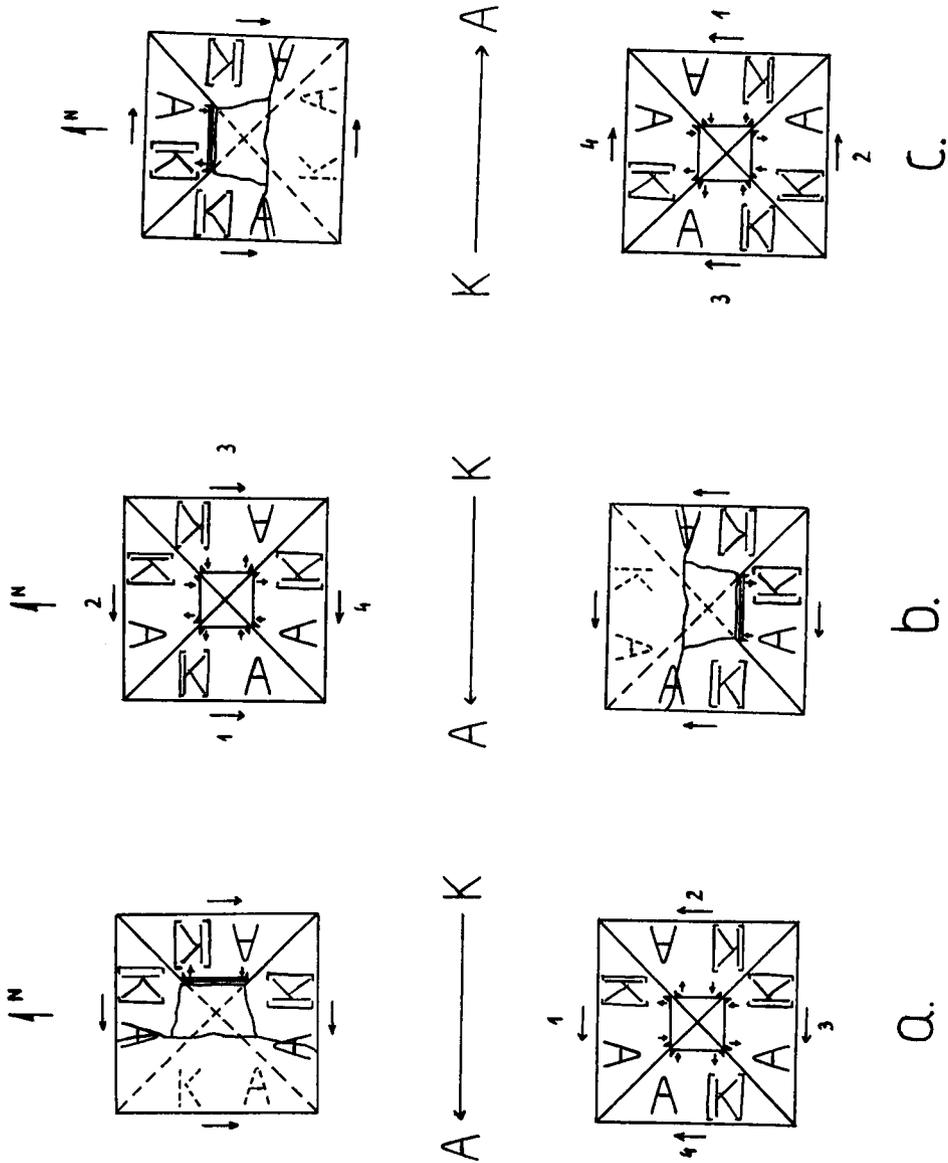
<sup>63</sup> See Laboury, *op. cit.*, pp. 554-55, 625; this was already suggested by Habachi, *JNES* 16 (1957), p. 96; see also a forthcoming paper of the present author "Some Remarks on the Graffito of Senenmut at Aswan", to be published in the *Proceedings of the First Central European Conference of Young Egyptologists, Warsaw, 7 - 9 June 1999*.

Thus, it seems there is no irrefutable evidence in support of Laboury's hypothesis regarding the mutual location of Hatshepsut's obelisks and the temple they were related to. What is more, the hypothesis submitted by Laboury would imply that the space between the monoliths of the queen and the eastern section of the wall erected by Thutmose I was probably not occupied by any larger structure. Moreover, if this mysterious temple, which Laboury assumes had once stood so far to the east, had actually been erected there, it would rather not have been dismantled by Thutmose III, for it was probably dedicated to, if not actually started, by his father Thutmose II. Therefore, it seems more plausible to localise this temple in the area later occupied by Akhmenu. The latter was in turn partially built of blocks originating from the dismantling of that temple, possibly named Netjerimenu.<sup>64</sup>

Considering the arguments discussed above, the pyramidion at the entrance to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo seems to be fragment of the northern obelisk in the pair erected by queen Hatshepsut in the eastern part of the temple of Amon-Re at Karnak, and not a fragment of the southern monolith in the pair, as believed so far. Perhaps the theoretical reconstruction of these obelisks, taking into account all the fragments of their shafts, now being prepared by Luc Gabolde, will allow the final solution to this problem to be found.

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<sup>64</sup> Regarding the identification of Netjerimenu, see Gabolde, "La «cour de fêtes» de Thoutmosis II à Karnak", *Cahiers de Karnak IX*, Paris 1993, p. 56 n. 185 and Laboury, *op. cit.*, pp. 556-58. Identification of the temple named Netjerimenu with the direct antecedent of Akhmenu has already been suggested by the present author in his unpublished M.A. thesis *Sektor wschodni Karnaku w czasach Totmesa III*, Warszawa 1989, pp. 11-15 and then presented in early 1991 at a session organized by the Research Centre for Mediterranean Archaeology of the Polish Academy of Sciences.



Alternative attributions and orientation of queen Hatshepsut's eastern obelisks pyramidia: a. traditional; b. by the present author; c. by D. Laboury.