

Decoration of the Two Chests from the Frieze of Objects in the Southern Room of Amun in the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari

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Abstract: During epigraphic works carried out in the Southern Room of Amun (Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari) in season of 2014/2015 painted decoration of two chests with sloping lid from the frieze of objects was recorded. On the side of each chest there are two offering scenes, painted with the use of red colour on the yellow background. In those scenes Hatshepsut is the celebrant and Amun-Re is the beneficiary of the offered goods. Names of the king and the god are originally preserved. The content of these chests, described with the use of labelling inscriptions next to each one of them, and the royal iconography in offering scenes are an expression of the renewal aspect, referring to the king. No analogies to this type of decoration on chests have been found so far.

Keywords: New Kingdom Egypt, Hatshepsut, Amun-Re, Southern Room of Amun, Deir el-Bahari temple, frieze of objects, chests with sloping lid

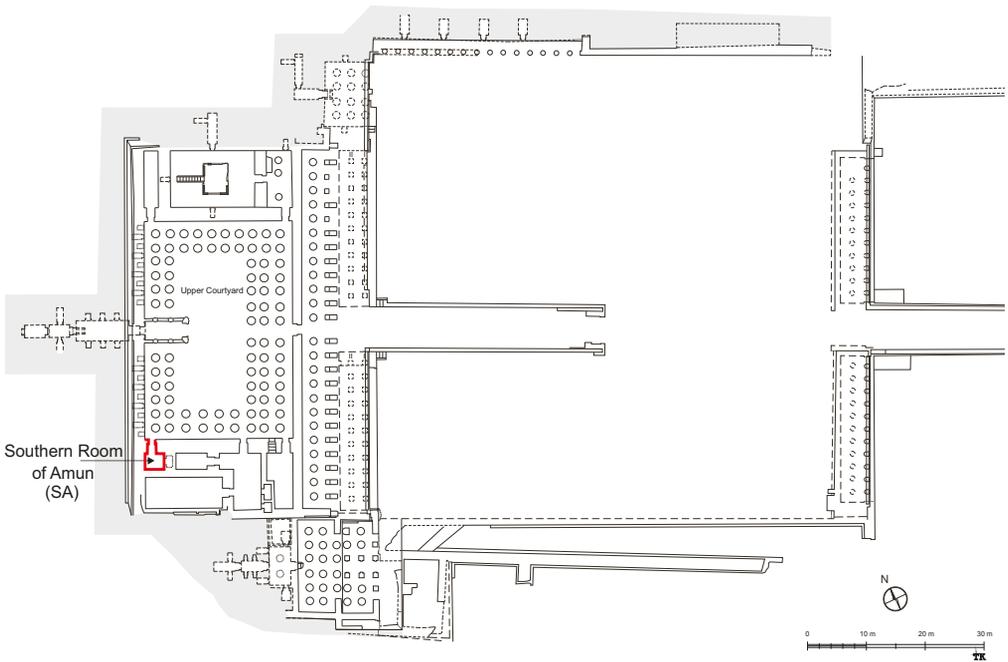
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Southern Room of Amun is located in the south-western corner of the Upper Courtyard of the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari (**Fig. 1**). Decoration of this room represents: offerings of oils performed by Hatshepsut towards Amun-Kamutef (western and eastern walls),¹ offerings of two different kinds of linen performed by Hatshepsut and Thutmose III towards Amun-Re (double scene on the southern wall)² and an embracing scene with Hatshepsut and Amunet on the right side of the northern inner wall.³ On the northern inner wall, just above the lintel over the entrance, there is a frieze of objects located, in which several vases for oils and chests for linen are depicted. The polychromy of the reliefs is

¹ Naville 1906: Pls CXXXI–CXXXII.

² Naville 1906: Pl. CXXXIII; Sankiewicz 2011: Fig. 8. Figure of Hatshepsut on the western wall was replaced by an offering table during Thutmose III's reign (see: Naville 1906: Pl. CXXXII). Concerning the removal of Hatshepsut's figures during the reign of Thutmose III, see: Roth 2005: 277–281.

³ Naville 1906: Pl. CXXX.



1. Plan of the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari with marked Southern Room of Amun (Drawing: T. Dziedzic; processing: K. Kapiec).

remarkably well-preserved⁴ and due to this fact it was possible to document painted decoration from two chests of the frieze of objects.⁵

THE FRIEZE OF OBJECTS

The frieze of objects is located on the northern inner wall of the Southern Room of Amun, just above its entrance lintel, occupying thus the western half of the wall span. The composition is arranged in two rows. In the upper row there are vases with oils represented, grouped in three. The second row consists of five chests containing different materials. An inscription defining content of these vases and chests is located next to each group of vases and next to each chest. The vases in the upper row contain four oils from the so-called seven sacred oils⁶ and *ʿntjw*. Starting from the right, according to the relief's orientation, these are: *stj hb* (first sacred oil), *hknw* (second sacred oil),

⁴ Polychromy was subjected to the conservation works of the Polish-Egyptian Archaeological and Conservation Mission during the season of 2006/2007 (see: Uchman-Laskowska 2010).

⁵ The epigraphic work over this scene was carried out during the season of 2014/2015 and was included in the study programme aiming at the publication of this room.

⁶ To find out more about seven sacred oils and other Egyptian oils, see: Koura 1999.



2. Fragment of the frieze of objects from the Southern Room of Amun (Phot. M. Jawornicki).

tpj.t n.t ʕntjw (first quality frankincense), *nhnm* (fourth sacred oil) and *tw3.wt* (fifth sacred oil).⁷

The five chests in the second row are mostly considered as ‘the ones with sloping lids’.⁸ Their resemblance to the *pr-wr* shrine is sometimes noticed.⁹ These chests contain different kinds of linen. Starting from the right, these are: *sšr tpj* (first quality linen), *dmj* (variant of *jdmj*, red linen), *sšr nswt* (royal linen), *sšr tpj w3d* (first quality green linen) and *jrtjw* (blue linen). Chests were painted yellow, probably in order to imitate gold¹⁰ and were decorated with scenes drawn with a thin red line. Only two first chests from the left have its decoration still preserved (Fig. 2). The right part of frieze of objects lacks polychromy due to a hole in the roof that existed previously, with rain water and sun having detrimental effect on the wall paintings.¹¹ This decoration was not recorded in the E. Naville’s publication.¹²

⁷ The content of the frieze of objects, especially the replacement of the *sft* oil (third sacred oil) with *ʕntjw* will be discussed in a separate article.

⁸ Jéquier 1921: 248; Lacau, Chevrier 1977: 33–34; Reeves 2005: 192–193.

⁹ Jéquier 1921: 248.

¹⁰ Wilkinson 1994: 108.

¹¹ The roof was repaired by the Polish-Egyptian Archaeological and Conservation Mission during the season of 2005/2006 (see: Szafrński 2008: 272–273).

¹² Naville 1906: Pl. CXXX.

DECORATION OF THE FIRST CHEST

The decoration of the first chest from the left is preserved well enough to notice that it had not been fully finished. It represents two offering scenes, in which Hatshepsut is the celebrant and Amun-Re is the recipient of the offerings (**Fig. 3**).

THE FIRST (LEFT) SCENE

Hatshepsut wears *nemes* and royal kilt and presents *nu*-vases.¹³ She is accompanied by her *ka* in form of a standard with her Horus name – *Wsr.t-k3.w*. A protecting bird in a shape of a falcon – as Behedety (no name preserved) appears above the king and her *ka*. The inscription accompanying this part of the scene goes as follows:

Text above Hatshepsut:

I.1.1.

I.1.1. *ntr nfr nb t3.wj M3^c.t-k3-R^c dj(.w) ʿnh mj Rc d.t*

I.1.1. *The good god, lord of Two Lands, Maat-ka-Re,^(a) given life like Re for eternity.*

Text above the royal *ka*:

I.1.2.

I.1.2. *k3 nswt ʿnh nb t3.wj*

I.1.2 *Living ka of the king, lord of Two Lands.*

Text behind the king and the royal *ka*:

I.1.3.

I.1.3. *dd mdw dj.n(j) n.t ʿnh w3s nb snb nb 3w.t-jb nb(.t) hk3.t Šmʿw T3-mḥw*

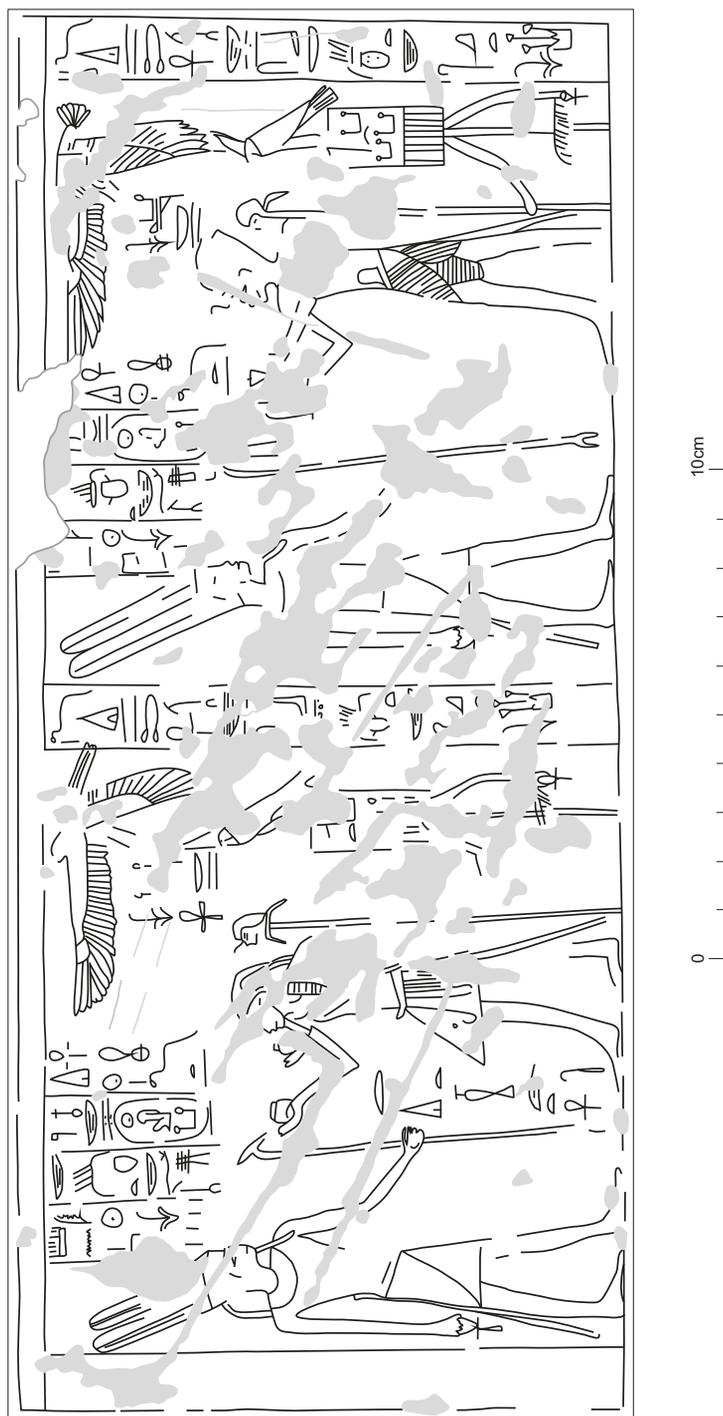
I.1.3. *Words spoken: (I) have given you^(b) all life and dominion, all health, all joy and rulership over South and North.^(c)*

^{a)} Hatshepsut's prenomen is originally preserved here and in other inscriptions from the chests (nos I.2.1, II.1.1, II.2.1).

^{b)} The feminine forms of the Hatshepsut's pronouns used in the dedicatory formula are originally preserved here and also in other inscriptions from the chests (nos I.2.3, II.1.4, II.1.5, II.2.3, II.2.5).

^{c)} The god speech is unusually located behind the king and the royal *ka* here and in the second scene on the first chests and on the second scene of the second chest.

¹³ *Nu*-vases seem to be used for water or wine, here the offering formula specifies that it is water; Beaux 2012: Pls 39, 40; Brunner 1977: Pl. 77; Naville 1896: Pl. XL; 1901: Pl. CV; 1906: Pl. CXLIII; Nelson, Murnane 1981: Pls 85, 95, 106, 122, 131, 189, 195, 209, 253; *Epigraphic Survey 2009*: 47–48, 50–51, 63, Pls 63a, 67b, 91; sometimes when there is no text or text does not specify it, scholars describe it in general term as 'a drink', see: Nelson, Murnane 1981: Pls 1, 193, 246, 256.



3. Decoration of the first chest (Drawing: K. Kapiec).

Amun-Re, the recipient of the offerings, is represented wearing a two-feather crown, with *was*-scepter in his left hand and *ankh*-sign in his right hand. The original inscription had never been completed – the whole column behind Amun-Re remains empty. The following wording appears above his figure:

I.1.4. 

I.1.4. *nb 3w.t-jb nb.f(sic!)*^(a) *dd w3s Jmn-R^c nswt ntr.w*

I.1.4. *Lord of the joy, lord of the eternity and dominion, Amun-Re,^(b) king [of god]s.*

^{a)} There is clearly a writing mistake – the sign *f* after word *nb*, which is an attribute and a possessive pronoun in masculine form, is redundant. Similar instance can be observed in the inscriptions nos I.2.3 and I.2.4.

^{b)} Amun-Re's name here and in all other inscriptions from the chests was not destroyed during the Amarna period (nos I.2.4, II.1.3 and II.2.4).

The inscription placed between the god and the king serves the purpose of labelling the scene and describes the offering in the following way:

I.1.5. 

I.1.5. *rdj.t kbhw jr.t (sic!)*^(a) *nh.tj*

I.1.5. *Performing the offering of the cold water, what she does being endowed with life.*

^{a)} There is another writing mistake – instead of the second singular feminine suffix pronoun there should be a third singular feminine suffix pronoun *-s*, as in no. II.1.5. and in other examples of this type of inscriptions.¹⁴

THE SECOND (RIGHT) SCENE

On this very chest, on its right side, figures a similarly arranged offering scene. It is difficult to identify the offered object, especially since the whole offering formula is not visible anymore. The precise spot where the offering formula should normally appear is now an empty background with minor signs of damage – it is possible that the labelling text has never been written there. Based on an analysis of the iconography, it is also hard to recognize the type of offering because the place has been destroyed. Visible lines might indicate several possibilities – *senetjer*-incense,¹⁵ milk,¹⁶ ointment,¹⁷ or *nemset*-vase¹⁸. The way of arranging arms and hands suggests that Hatshepsut was holding the offered object in her right hand and the left hand was raised vertically, in a gesture of adoration (**Fig. 4**).¹⁹

¹⁴ E.g.: Beaux 2012: Pls 12, 23, 27–28; Naville 1901: Pl. CII; 1906: Pl. CXXXIII.

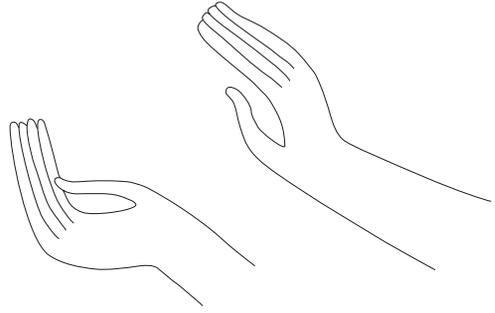
¹⁵ Brunner 1977: Pls 54, 88, 100, 181; Caminos 1998b: Pls 67, 71; Naville 1895: Pl. XXII; 1896: Pl. XXVIII; Nelson, Murnane 1981: Pls 2, 12, 40, 57, 65, 94, 113, 173; *Epigraphic Survey 2009*: 24–25, 37–38, 46–47, Pls 23, 49a, 61b.

¹⁶ Beaux 2012: 39, 40; Brunner 1977: Pls 76, 110; Caminos 1998a: Pl. 20; Naville 1901: Pl. CV; 1906: Pl. CXLIII; Nelson, Murnane 1981: Pls 55, 59, 132, 155; *Epigraphic Survey 2009*: 36–37, 50, Pls 47, 67a.

¹⁷ Brunner 1977: Pls 51, 175; Nelson, Murnane 1981: Pls 30, 32, 164, 176, 196, 221, 224, 249.

¹⁸ Caminos 1998b: Pl. 63; Nelson, Murnane 1981: Pls 56, 94, 140, 208; *Epigraphic Survey 2009*: 48, Pl. 63b.

¹⁹ For more gestures of this kind, see: Brunner 1977: Pls 51, 54, 88, 100, 144, 175, 177, 181; Caminos 1974: Pl. 49; Naville 1895: Pl. XX; 1896: Pl. XXIX; Nelson, Murnane 1981: Pls 2, 3, 6, 57, 84, 94, 175, 205, 217, 236.



4. Hypothetical reconstruction of the gesture of Hatshepsut in the second scene on the first chest (Drawing: K. Kapiec).

Hatshepsut is represented with the use of a different iconography than in the first scene. She wears a *khepre*-crown and a *shendjyt*-kilt. Royal *ka* is represented behind the king in a form of a standard, again with king's Horus name in *serekh*. Nekhbet or Wadjet (details of the bird's head are lost, there is no name preserved) is above Hatshepsut and her *ka*.

Text above the king:



I.2.1. [*ntr nfr*] *nb t3.wj M3^c.t-k3-R^c dj(.w) ʕnh mj R^c d.t*

I.2.1. [*Good god, lord of*]²⁰ *Two Lands, Maat-ka-Re, given life like Re for eternity.*

Text above the royal *ka*:



I.2.2. *k3 nswt nb t3.wj*

I.2.2. *Ka of the king, lord of the Two Lands.*

Text behind the king and the royal *ka*:

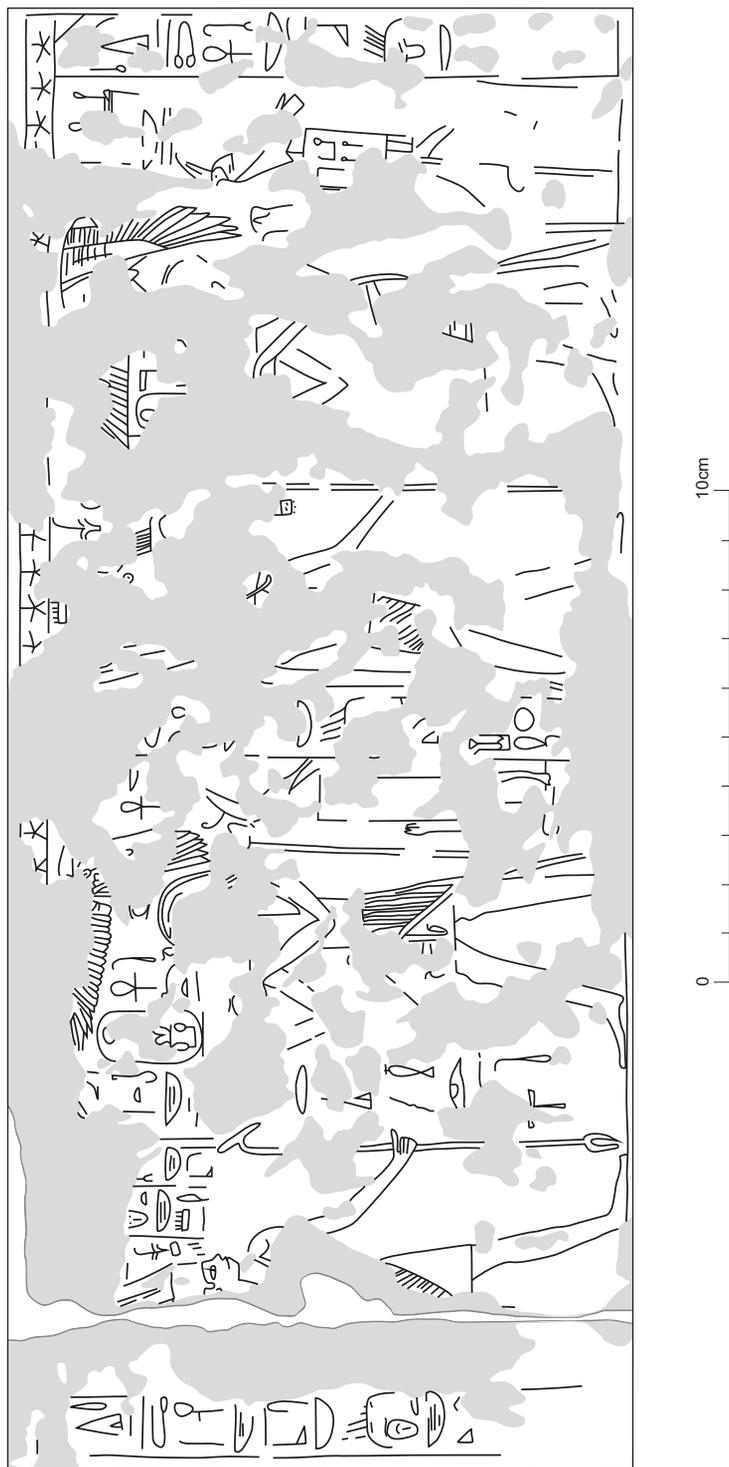


I.2.3. *dd mdw dj.n(.j) n.t ʕnh w3s nb.f(sic!) snb nb 3w.t-jb nb(.t) hk3.t Šm^cw T3-mḥw*

I.2.3. *Word spoken: (I) have given you all life and dominion, all health, all joy and rulership over South and North.*

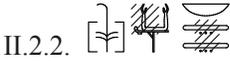
Amun-Re is represented with the use of the same iconography as on the scene from the left side – with a two-feather crown, a *was*-sceptre and an *ankh*-sign. The inscription is only placed above the god, there is no place for a column behind his figure as it was the case with the left scene. The text reads as follows:

²⁰ The damage on this spot makes it difficult to read, but this is the most probable reconstruction based on the numerous analogies, e.g.: Beaux 2012: Pls 8, 14–16, 28, 39, 42, 43; Karkowski 2003: 142, 233, 240, 242–243, 248, 252; Naville 1895: Pls IV, VII, XIV, XVIII, XX; 1896: Pls XXVIII, XXXIV, XL, XLV; 1898: Pls LXIII, LXV–LXVI; 1901: Pl. XCVIII; 1906: Pl. CXLV.



5. Decoration of the second chest (Drawing: K. Kapiec).

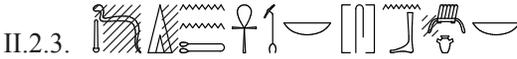
Text above the royal *ka*:



II.2.2. *k3* [*nswt*] *nb t3.wj*

II.2.2. *Ka* [*of the king*], *lord of Two Lands*.

Text behind the king and the royal *ka*:



II.2.3. [*dd*] *mdw dj.n(j) n.t ʿnh w3s nb [s]nb 3w(.t)-jb nb(.t)*

II.2.3. *Words [spoken]: (I) have given you life, all dominion, all [he]alth and joy.*

The depiction of the god is also greatly damaged, but we can recognize it as a representation of Amun-Re, mainly thanks to a two-feather crown and a *mn*-sign appearing in the inscription above the god. Many fragments of the text accompanying the scene are damaged, but based on the parts that are preserved, it can be assumed that it consists of similar epithets to describe the god as the ones used in other three scenes:

Text above the god:



II.2.4. [...] *nswt* [*ntr.w nb*] *3w.t-[jb ... J]mn-Rʿ*

II.2.4. [...] *King* [*of gods, lord*] *of the joy* [...] *A]mun-Re*.

Text behind the god:



II.2.5. [*dd mdw dj.n(j) n.t ʿnh w3s nb snb*] *nb 3w[.t-jb nb(.t) hḳ3.t Šmʿw] T3-mḥw mj Rʿ*

II.2.5. [*Words spoken: (I) have given you all life and dominion,*] *all [health, all] joy [and rulership over South] and North like Re.*

The offering formula, which was placed between Hatshepsut and Amun-Re, is almost entirely damaged – only the *s*-sign is still visible.

It is worth to noticed that the decoration was done apparently by someone, who knew general layouts of offering scenes and basic texts, but probably was working either without any helpful template or did not pay attention to it. Hence, there are so many mistakes in distribution of the texts and using the pronouns.

CHESTS WITH SLOPING LIDS

Chests which showcase such an exceptional decoration in the Southern Room of Amun constituted popular pieces of Egyptian furniture. They used to be displayed in different contexts, both within the royal and private sphere. During the times of the Middle Kingdom, they were placed in private tombs and painted friezes of objects.²³ During the New Kingdom period, they were often appearing in the decoration of the private tomb walls as containers for funerary equipment and goods to be used in a temple, carpenter's tools boxes (e.g. tomb of Rekhmire TT 100)²⁴ or to store writing materials of scribes (e.g. tomb of Menna TT 69,²⁵ tomb chapel of Nebamun²⁶). Their presence in temples is less common. From the times of Hatshepsut, they are known from the Punt Portico in the Temple at Deir el-Bahari and *Chapelle Rouge* where they are represented as containers for fine gold.²⁷ Such chests appear in a similar context – i.e. as gold containers – in a scene from Karnak, where Thutmose III is depicted offering treasures to Amun-Re.²⁸ They were also found among the funerary equipment of the Tutankhamun's tomb.²⁹

Chests with sloping lids were usually found without decoration or, in the most elaborated cases, with patterns such as checkerboard or imitation of the wood (Nebamun's tomb chapel).³⁰ The two examples with the most sophisticated decoration, made of gold foil, lapis lazuli (no. 044), ebony wood, glass and ivory (no. 540 with lid no. 551) come from KV 62, where they were found among the funerary equipment, as mentioned above.³¹ The no. 044 is decorated with Tutankhamun's nomen, prenomen and the Horus name. The chest contained linen, jewellery, an alabaster vase, a bowl and sceptre, although its content was not original and had been replaced at some point before its discovery.³² The decoration of chest no. 540 depicts different scenes with the royal couple and different animals, mainly hunting scenes.³³

As it could be observed, this type of chests served mainly as containers in a very broad sense, they did not have a ritual meaning themselves and they cannot be associated with any specific ritual like, for example, *meret*-chests.³⁴ No other chest among so many different examples of this type can serve as an analogy for the decorated chests from the Southern Room of Amun.

²³ Willems 1988: 224.

²⁴ Davies 1943: Pls XXX–XXXII, XXXIV, LV, XCII.

²⁵ Hartwig 2013: 32.

²⁶ Parkinson 2008: 98, 102, 104, 106.

²⁷ Punt Portico: Naville 1898: Pl. LXXX; *Chapelle Rouge*: Burgos, Larché 2006: 76, 128; Lacau, Chevrier 1977: 33–34, 230–231.

²⁸ *Urk.* IV, 636.21.

²⁹ Four chest of this kind were found: Reeves 2005: 193.

³⁰ Parkinson 2008: 102, 104, 106.

³¹ *Griffith Institute*: nos 044, 054ddd, 267-269, 271, 540, 551; Reeves 2005: 192–193.

³² *Griffith Institute*: no. 044.

³³ *Griffith Institute*: no. 540.

³⁴ Egberts 1995: 7–204.

INTERPRETING THE DECORATION

In spite of the significant degree of damage to the decoration, especially in the case of the second chest, we can say with great likelihood that both objects were depicting the same or similar scenes. The decoration on both items consists of two scenes, both representing Hatshepsut's offering to Amun-Re. Her royal iconography is the same, the only doubtful element being the type of object she is handling in the right scene of the second chest. Inscriptions, even when not completely preserved or originally painted, are similarly composed for both cases and while some parts of them are missing in one place and present in the other, almost the whole text can be reconstructed.

Since the two of five chests in frieze of objects are decorated as described, there is a strong possibility that originally all of them used to expose similar decoration – on the left side, there was an offering of water represented, and on the right side – some other kind of offering. As not even one offering can be fully recognized in both right scenes, it is impossible to state what kind of scenes sequence was applied.

A significant feature of these representations is the originality of Hatshepsut's and Amun-Re's names. They are partly damaged here and there but this seems to be natural. Lack of intentional damages is a result of the fact that decoration of the chests' was invisible from the ground level due to the high localisation (on upper part of the wall) and since it was drawn only with a red thin line on the yellow background. Thus, the decoration on the chests remained untouched by human hands even though someone had climb a ladder or scaffolding in order to change Hatshepsut's name into Thutmose II's name in the embracing scene next to the frieze of objects.³⁵

It must be emphasized that this kind of painted decoration on the chests representation has no analogy in the material studied by the present author so far. The painted decoration was particularly vulnerable to be washed away, making these two examples exceptional cases. The described decorations although miniature ones reproduce usual rules of the iconographical composition observed on the wall reliefs of the temples and, in particular, obviously refers to the decorative repertory of the Southern Room of Amun – for instance the offering scenes where Hatshepsut is the celebrant and Amun is the beneficiary, the presence of a royal *ka* or some elements of the royal iconography (the royal kilt).³⁶

The content of these chests, described with the use of labelling inscriptions next to each one of them, is linked both with the temple and funeral sphere. The particular role played by the *jdmj*-linen because of its transformative power,³⁷ was linked also with Sed Festival and coronation.³⁸ Some of these linen (e.g. *w3d.t*, *jrtjw* and *jdmj*) were used in the Daily Cult Ritual,³⁹ where their colour and luminosity properties are emphasized. Luminosity

³⁵ Naville 1906: Pl. CXXX.

³⁶ Naville 1906: Pls CXXX–CXXXIII; Sankiewicz 2011: 140, Fig. 8.

³⁷ Goebis 2011: 58.

³⁸ Rummel 2006: 381–407.

³⁹ Goebis 2011: 64, 66–72.

was connected with freshness, brightness, arising sun – generally rebirth.⁴⁰ In this ritual the shining aspect was enhanced with ointments, which were applied just after the dressing. Colours such as red or green are associated with freshness and life.⁴¹ The content of the frieze of objects in the Southern Room of Amun – oils and linen – underlines the importance of the conception of transformation, transfiguration, rejuvenation and rebirth in this part of the temple. Oils and linen are also known from funerary texts as those for securing the body of the deceased, guaranteeing the eternal survival thanks to the possibility of constant regeneration.⁴² This aspect of renewal, referring to the king, might be also well visible when examining the details of the chests' decorations – the selection of the royal crowns. A *khepresh*-crown was interpreted as a headdress for the living king, while a *nemes* was proven to be connected with the rebirth of the king⁴³ and connected with the sunrise⁴⁴ – once again the luminosity is emphasized. Actually, both headdresses have close connection to the solar and radiance properties.⁴⁵ K. Goebis states that a *khepresh*-crown is closely related to the *nemes*, which appears to mark a deceased king when both headdresses are shown together.⁴⁶ The presence of the royal *ka*⁴⁷ completes the regeneration meaning of the scenes. These complex issues of transformation, regeneration, rejuvenation and rebirth have to be taken into consideration when identifying all functions of the Southern Room of Amun in the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari.

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⁴⁰ Goebis 2011: 78–80.

⁴¹ Goebis 2011: 67; Pinch 2001: 183.

⁴² Allen 2005: 22.

⁴³ Collier 1996: 124; Egberts: 177–186; Goebis 1995: 179; Goebis 2001: 324; Hardwick 2003: 119–120.

⁴⁴ Goebis 1995: 166–167.

⁴⁵ Goebis 1995: 158, 166–168, 178–181; Goebis 2011: 85–86.

⁴⁶ Goebis 2001: 324.

⁴⁷ About the *ka* and its regenerative connotations see, e.g.: Bell 1985: 251–294; Borioni 2005: 51–106; Schweizer 1956: 68–90.

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