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

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

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\(^1\) 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.
remarkably well-preserved and due to this fact it was possible to document painted decoration from two chests of the frieze of objects.

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 oils and antjw. Starting from the right, according to the relief’s orientation, these are: stj hb (first sacred oil), hknw (second sacred oil),

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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.
tpj.t n.t ʿntjw (first quality frankincense), nhnm (fourth sacred oil) and tw3wt (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: ssr tpj (first quality linen), dmj (variant of jdmj, red linen), ssr nswt (royal linen), ssr tpj w3dj (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

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7 The content of the frieze of objects, especially the replacement of the sft oil (third sacred oil) with ʿntjw will be discussed in a separate article.
9 Jéquier 1921: 248.
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. nfr nfr nb t3.wj M3º.t-k3-Rº dj(.w) ṣnh mj Rº 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. k3 nswt ṣnh 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. d[ dw dj(.j) n.t ṣnh wšs nb snb nb 3w.t-jb nb(.t) hk3.t Šmšw T3-mhw

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.

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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.
Decoration of the Two Chests from the Frieze of Objects...
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.  nb 3w.t-jb nb.f (sic!) (a) ḏḏ ṭ̄s Jmn-Rʿ nswt nṯr.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.  rḏjt kḥhw jrt (sic!) (a) ṡḥb.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-vase.18 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

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14 E.g.: Beaux 2012: Pls 12, 23, 27–28; Naville 1901: Pl. CII; 1906: Pl. CXXXIII.
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.
Hatshepsut is represented with the use of a different iconography than in the first scene. She wears a *khepresh*-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:

1.2.1. \[nTr nfr\] nb t3.wj M3\(^\circ\)t-k3-R\(^\circ\) dj(\(w\)) \(^\prime\)nh mj R\(^\circ\) d.t
1.2.1. [Good god, lord of]

Two Lands, Maat-ka-Re, given life like Re for eternity.

Text above the royal *ka*:

1.2.2. k3 nswt nb t3.wj
1.2.2. Ka of the king, lord of the Two Lands.

Text behind the king and the royal *ka*:

1.2.3. dd mdw dj.n(j) n.t \(^\prime\)nh w3s nb.f(sic!) snb nb 3w.t-jb nb(\(t\)) hk3.t Sm\(^\circ\)w T3-mhw
1.2.3. 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:

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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. XC VIII; 1906: Pl. CXLV.
DECORATION OF THE SECOND CHEST

The decoration on the second chest is not so well preserved, but some of the details can be reconstructed on the basis of the decoration of the first chest. Again, the decoration represents two offering scenes, where Hatshepsut is the celebrant and Amun-Re is the beneficiary of the offerings. The left part in this case is very similar to the left fragment of the first chest (Fig. 5).

THE FIRST (LEFT) SCENE

Hatshepsut wears a nemes and a royal kilt. The offered object, which she hands to Amun-Re, is not visible anymore, but some lines are preserved, suggesting that nu-vases were also represented there. Moreover, the inscription placed between the god and the king is the same as in the case of the first chest. The royal ka bears again the form of a standard and the serekh for royal name is empty. A protecting bird appears only above Hatshepsut, it is partly destroyed and thus it is impossible to identify it.

Text above the king:

II.1.1. [\ldots] nfr.t nfr(t) nb t\dot{\dot{w}j} M\dot{\ddot{s}}.t-k3-R\dot{t} \hat{t}nh.tj \dot{d}.t
II.1.1. [\ldots] good goddess, lord of Two Lands, Maat-ka-Re, may she live eternally.

Text above the royal ka:

II.1.2. [k3 nswt] \hat{t}nh nb [t\dot{\dot{w}j}]
II.1.2. Living [ka of the king.] lord [of Two Lands].

The figure of Amun-Re is partly damaged, but the two-feather crown and the was-scepter in his left hand can be identified. The accompanying inscription is placed not only above the god, but also in the column behind his figure:

\footnote{The blur in the text makes it difficult to read, but this is the most probable reconstruction, based on analogies, e.g.: Beaux 2012: Pl. 20; Naville 1895: Pl. XX; 1896: Pl. XLVI; 1901: Pl. CI; 1906: Pl. CXXXIII.}
Decoration of the second chest (Drawing: K. Kapiec).
Text above the god:

II.1.3.  [rdj.f  $^\text{3}\text{nh w}^\text{3}s$] $^{22}$ nb snb [nb 3w].t-jb nb.(t) Jmn[-R$^\text{c}$] nswt nfr.w
II.1.3.  [He gives all life and dominion], all health, all joy, Amun[-Re,] king of gods.

Text behind the god:

II.1.4.  Dd mdw dj.n(.j) n.t $^\text{5}nh w^\text{3}s nb snb nb 3w.t-jb nb.(t) hkJ[t. Šm$^\text{5}w$ T3-mhw]
II.1.4.  Word spoken: (I) have given you all life dominion, all health, all joy and ruler[ship over South and North].

As mentioned above, there is an offering formula between the figures of the god and the king:

II.1.5.  rdj[t.] kbhw jr.s $^\text{5}nh.tj$
II.1.5.  Perform[ing] the offering of the cold water, what she does being endowed with life.

THE SECOND (RIGHT) SCENE

The scene on the right side of the second chest is even less preserved than the left one. Still, one can notice that Hatshepsut is represented with the use of the same iconographic manner as on the first chest on the right side – with a khepresh-crown and a shendjyt-kilt. The offered goods are not visible at all, but the arrangement of hands is different – the left hand is placed horizontally not vertically as in the scene on the first chest on the right side. Behind the king, her ka in a form of a standard is depicted, with her Horus name in the serekh.

Text above the king:

II.2.1.  […][M$s^\text{3}t.-k$3-t]R$^\text{c}$[…][ntr nfr […]
II.2.1.  […] [Maat-ka-]Re […] good god […].

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$^{22}$ The text was reconstructed on the basis of numerous analogies, e.g.: Beaux 2012: Pl. 10; Naville 1896: Pls XXV, XXVIII–XXIX.
Text above the royal ka:

II.2.2. \[\text{\[...\]}\]
II.2.2. \(k3\ \text{[nswt]}\ \text{nb t\text{-}wj}\)
II.2.2. Ka [of the king], lord of Two Lands.

Text behind the king and the royal ka:

II.2.3. \[\text{\[...\]}\]
II.2.3. \([dd\] \text{mdw dj.n(j) n.t \text{-}nh 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. \[\text{\[...\]}\]
II.2.4. \([...\] \text{nswt [ntr.w nb]} \text{3w.t-[jb ... J]mn-Rc}\)
II.2.4. \([...\] King [of gods, lord] of the joy [... A]mun-Re.

Text behind the god:

II.2.5. \[\text{\[...\]}\]
II.2.5. \([dd\ \text{mdw dj.n(j) n.t \text{-}nh w3s nb snb]} \text{nb 3w(t)-jb nb(t)} \text{hk\text{-}t \text{Smw}]} \text{T3-mhw mj Rc}\)
II.2.5. \([\text{Words spoken: (I) have given you all life and dominion,]} \text{all [health, all]} \text{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. 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) or to store writing materials of scribes (e.g. tomb of Menna TT 69, tomb chapel of Nebamun). 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. 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. They were also found among the funerary equipment of the Tutankhamun’s tomb.

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). 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. 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. The decoration of chest no. 540 depicts different scenes with the royal couple and different animals, mainly hunting scenes.

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. 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.

24 Davies 1943: Pls XXX–XXXII, XXXIV, LV, XCII.
25 Hartwig 2013: 32.
26 Parkinson 2008: 98, 102, 104, 106.
28 Urk. IV, 636.21.
29 Four chest of this kind were found: Reeves 2005: 193.
30 Parkinson 2008: 102, 104, 106.
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. wḏḏ.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 Goebs 2011: 58.
was connected with freshness, brightness, arising sun – generally rebirth. 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. 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. 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 king and connected with the sunrise – once again the luminosity is emphasized. Actually, both headdresses have close connection to the solar and radiance properties. K. Goeb states that a khepresh-crown is closely related to the nemes, which appears to mark a deceased king when both headdresses are shown together. The presence of the royal ka 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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