

## Newly uncovered relief fragments of Queen Setibhor: A queenly decorative theme with unusual features

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### ABSTRACT

The work that has recently been carried out at Djedkare's royal cemetery at South Saqqara has brought to light new evidence from the pyramid complex of Queen Setibhor, the wife of King Djedkare. Located to the north-east of the king's pyramid, this monument is of particular interest for its unusual architectural features. The newly uncovered evidence makes it possible to bring the discussion on this extraordinary queen slightly further, focusing not only on the monument's architecture but also on the remains of its decorative programme. This article presents some of the newly uncovered relief fragments from the queen's pyramid complex. The reliefs, which very likely come from the portico, belonged to a decorative theme showing the queen, whose figure is not preserved, with her female attendants and female offering bearers. Other similar depictions are attested in smaller fragments from other parts of the queen's monument. Parallels to this depiction can be found in other monuments of Old Kingdom queens, indicating that such a decorative theme was one of the usual queenly decorative programmes. The relief fragments also provide new evidence on the titles and epithets of Queen Setibhor, above which a winged solar disc with two *uraei* was carved. This evidence further underlines the exceptional role played by Queen Setibhor in the late Fifth Dynasty.

### KEYWORDS

Saqqara - pyramid complex - Djedkare - Setibhor - relief - queen - titles - epithets - winged solar disc - female attendants - female offering bearers

### بقايا مناظر للملكة ست إيب حور تم الكشف عنها حديثاً: موضوع منظر لملكة ذات مميزات غير عادية

هانا فيماز الوفا

#### ملخص

كشفت الأعمال الأثرية التي تم إجراؤها مؤخراً بالجبانة الملكية الخاصة بالملك جدكارع في جنوب سقارة عن أدلة جديدة من المجموعة الهرمية للملكة ست إيب حور، زوجة الملك جدكارع. وتعتبر المجموعة الهرمية للملكة، والتي تقع إلى الشمال الشرقي من هرم الملك، ذات أهمية خاصة لما تتميز به من سمات معمارية غير مألوفة. حيث تتيح الأدلة التي تم الكشف عنها مؤخراً، إمكانية طرح النقاش حول هذه الملكة الاستثنائية بشكل متقدم ومفصل عما سبق طرحه، إلا أن التركيز هذه المرة لن ينصب حول المميزات المعمارية للمجموعة الهرمية، ولكن على بقايا برنامج مناظرها. تطرح هذه المقالة بعضاً من بقايا المناظر المكتشفة حديثاً من المجموعة الهرمية للملكة. وتنتمي المناظر، التي يُرجح أنها كانت يوماً ما جزءاً من رواق المدخل الخاص بالمعبد الجنائزي للملكة، إلى موضوع منظر يُظهر الملكة، والتي لم يتم العثور على هيبنتها، بمصاحبة خداماتها وحاملات القرابين. كما تم العثور على بقايا مناظر أخرى مماثلة، ولكنها أصغر حجماً، وذلك بأماكن أخرى في المجموعة الهرمية للملكة. ويمكن العثور على أوجه تشابه مع هذا المنظر، وذلك في المجموعات الهرمية لبعض ملكات الدولة القديمة، مما يشير إلى أن مثل هذا الموضوع الزخرفي كان أحد عناصر برامج النقوش المعتادة لملكات الدولة القديمة. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك تقدم بقايا المناظر التي عثر عليها أدلة جديدة حول ألقاب الملكة ست إيب حور، والتي صُوِّر فوقها تمثيل لقرص الشمس المجنح يضم صليين ملكيين. هذا وتؤكد تلك الأدلة على الدور الاستثنائي الذي لعبته الملكة ست إيب حور في أواخر الأسرة الخامسة.

## الكلمات الدالة

سفارة – مجموعة هرمية – جدكارع – ست إيب حور – نقش – ملكة – ألقاب – نعوت – قرص الشمس المجنح – خادمت – حاملات قرابين

## INTRODUCTION

The exploration of the pyramid complex of King Djedkare in South Saqqara and of the surrounding cemetery has brought to light new evidence on the late Fifth Dynasty. The documentation work that has recently been carried out in the king's funerary temple has revealed many interesting architectural details preserved in this monument (see above all Megahed – Jánosi 2017 and 2020; Megahed – Jánosi – Vymazalová 2017, 2018 and 2019). At the same time, a part of the neighbouring queen's funerary temple was uncovered during the exploration of the north side of the king's precinct (Megahed – Jánosi – Vymazalová 2019: 23–34), which included evidence on the name and title of its owner, the king's wife Setibhor (Megahed – Jánosi – Vymazalová 2019: 32–33; Megahed – Vymazalová 2020a). A tomb with one of the earliest decorated burial apartments has recently been uncovered in the cemetery near the queen's monument, providing indications on the development of architectural and artistic forms in this period (Megahed – Vymazalová 2019).

The monument of Queen Setibhor has attracted the attention of scholars since 1952, when Ahmed Fakhry uncovered the funerary temple on the east side of the pyramid. No evidence on the owner was then uncovered (for decades, she was referred to as an “anonymous queen”), but many architectural features in this monument pointed to a rather exceptional status of its owner (see the discussions in Moursi 1987; Jánosi 1989; Jánosi 1996: 36–37). After a short initial season of survey conducted in the queen's complex by the current mission prior to the “Lotus Revolution” (Megahed 2011), the work returned to the queen's monument in 2018, when a portico and several other rooms were uncovered along the south side of the queen's pyramid during the cleaning of the area at the north-east part of the king's funerary temple (Megahed – Jánosi – Vymazalová 2019: 23–34).

During the exploration of the queen's monument, a number of relief fragments and blocks with reliefs have been uncovered in the queen's pyramid complex – some in 1952 by Ahmed Fakhry and others in 2010 and 2018 by the current Egyptian mission. Only a few relief fragments have been published. They show various decorative themes, including those that are typical of Old Kingdom monuments, such as offerings, the slaughter of sacrificial animals, personifications of funerary estates, *etc.* (see Moursi 1987; Megahed 2011); some fragments seem to show parts of the queen's figure (Megahed – Vymazalová 2021). Some of the relief fragments from the queen's funerary temple, however, contain themes that do not seem to be so usual for a queen's monument (Megahed – Vymazalová 2020b).

## THE 2020 SONDAGE

In the spring of 2020, a sondage was undertaken between the north wall of the funerary temple of King Djedkare and the south part of the temple of Queen Setibhor, in the central part of the so-called T.g area (for the T.g area and its exploration, see Megahed – Jánosi – Vymazalová 2019:

19–33). The sondage was carried out immediately to the south of the queen's temple portico, to the south of its preserved pavement, where a cluster of stones was documented in 2018 (fig. 1). The work reached *ca.* 1.5 m below the level of the temple's pavement, and it extended several meters to the south of the portico. The debris of this area consisted of limestone pieces and chips with a small amount of yellow sand in the upper part, which gradually increased at lower levels and towards the south part of the sondage.



**Fig. 1** The central part of the T.g area showing the cluster of stones to the south of the queen's portico (photo H. Vymazalová)

During this work, several blocks of white limestone and red granite were uncovered in the sondage, together with a few smaller fragments, which seem to have belonged to the queen's monument. Considering their location, these blocks and fragments possibly came from the walls and roofing of the portico, but their original position within the queen's monument still needs to be confirmed in future after the conclusion of the work. Only a few blocks were revealed in 2020 before the mission had to stop its work due to the COVID-19 pandemic; several more blocks on the site are waiting for the next season to be uncovered.

## THE NEWLY UNCOVERED RELIEF FRAGMENTS

The newly uncovered blocks from the 2020 spring season are of white limestone and contain depictions and inscriptions carved in fine low relief. They may have come from the upper part of one of the walls of the portico.

One large block has been found split into three pieces, which can be matched together (DJ 451A–B and DJ 465). In addition, several fragments of smaller size may have belonged to the same depiction as well (DJ 442, DJ 453A–B, DJ 455, DJ 462).

The depiction is particularly interesting for two main reasons: i) it contains inscriptions including titles and epithets of Queen Setibhor, some of them previously unattested; ii) the decoration includes motifs with a clearly royal connotation.

DJ 451A–B AND DJ 465 (FIG. 2)

116 × 83 × 30 cm, 117 × 82 × 30 cm, 55 × 60 × 28 cm

Three parts of a large limestone block, which belonged to the theme of the queen overseeing the offering bringers.

This block features the top of the scene, showing a winged solar disc with two *uraei* above the queen's titles and epithets. Above this scene, there used to be the *hkrw*-frieze, which covered another layer of the blocks; some traces of re-carving are visible on the top of the block DJ 451A. The figure of the queen, of which only the top of her head is preserved on this block, was carved underneath the inscription, and female attendants and offering bearers are depicted on both sides of her.

The queen's titles and epithets are written in seven columns, reading from right to left:

<sup>1</sup>*m33 Hr Stḥ* <sup>2</sup>*wr[t ḥts wrt ḥzt]* <sup>3</sup>*smrt Hr* <sup>4</sup>*mrt Ḥwt-Ḥr r<sup>c</sup> nb* <sup>5</sup>*im3ḥwt* <sup>6</sup>*mrrt ntrw nbw* <sup>7</sup>*ḥmt nzwt St-ib-Ḥr* – “She who sees Horus and Seth, <sup>2</sup>Great [one of the *ḥts*-sceptre, Great of Praise], <sup>3</sup>Companion of Horus, <sup>4</sup>Beloved of Hathor every day, <sup>5</sup>Revered, <sup>6</sup>Beloved of all the gods, <sup>7</sup>King's wife, Setibhor”.

This inscription increases the number of this queen's attested titles and epithets (see also Megahed – Vymazalová 2020a: 1035). It offers a larger variety than the previously uncovered complete inscription on the queen's granite column, which reads: *m33 Hr Stḥ wrt ḥts wrt ḥzt ḥmt nzwt mrt.f* – “She who sees Horus and Seth, Great one of the *ḥts*-sceptre, Great of Praise, King's wife, Setibhor” (Megahed – Jánosi – Vymazalová 2019: 32).

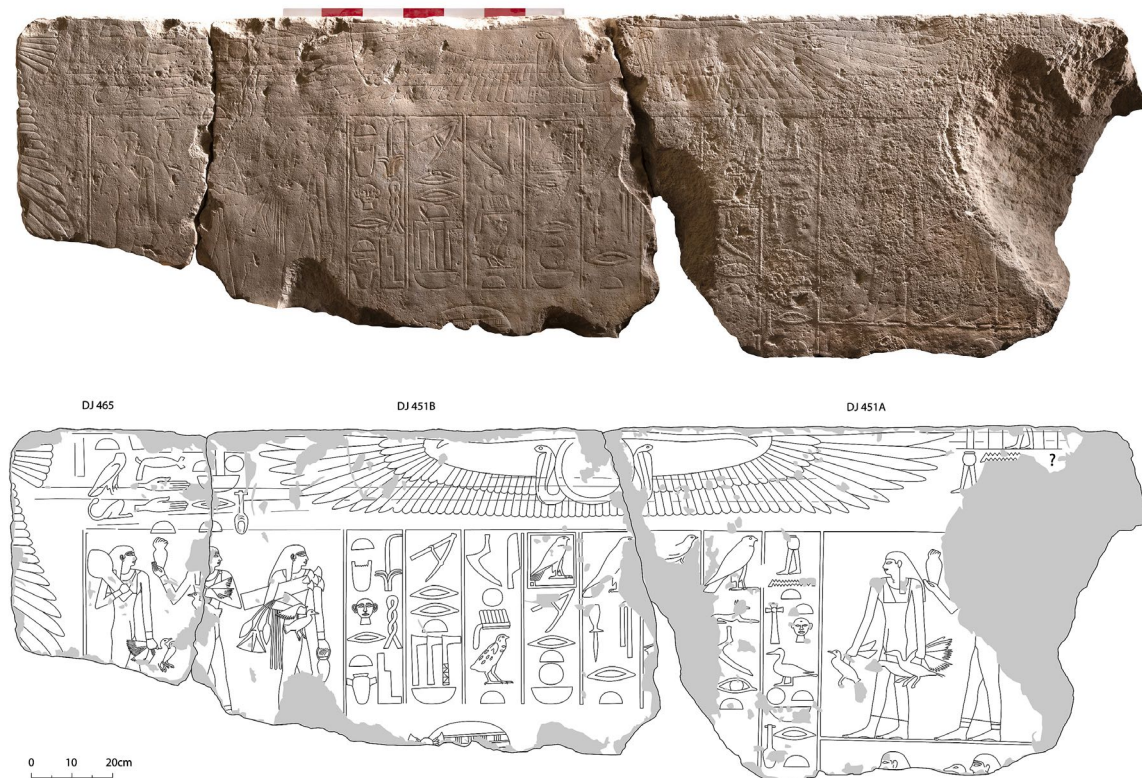
The newly attested parts of the queen's titulary in this relief are rather interesting. Unlike *smrt Hr* (Jones 2000: 897, no. 3293), which appears quite often with Old Kingdom queens, the epithet *mrt Ḥwt-Ḥr r<sup>c</sup> nb* in this particular form is so far unattested. We can, however, find similarly constructed epithets with the *r<sup>c</sup>-nb*-element with the slightly earlier Queen Khentkaus II<sup>1</sup> and Princess Khekeretneby<sup>2</sup> as well as with the somewhat later Queens Nebet<sup>3</sup> and Meretites II.<sup>4</sup> The former three cases refer to kings, not deities, while the last one shows the *r<sup>c</sup>-nb*-element in two different epithets, both of which refer to deities. The earliest attested epithet in the form *mrt* + deity + *r<sup>c</sup> nb*, referring to Hathor, is Queen Setibhor's. The Sixth Dynasty

1 For Khentkaus, the epithet has the form *mrt Nfr-ir-k3-R<sup>c</sup> r<sup>c</sup> nb* (Borchardt 1909: 68, fig. 73), which, however, refers to the king-husband, not a goddess like in Setibhor's case.

2 The epithet is only partly preserved: [...] *Izzi r<sup>c</sup> nb* (Verner – Callender 2002: 28, fig. B15), and it is again the king who is mentioned here.

3 A slightly different attestation, as the epithet does not stand by itself but is associated with the king's wife's title *ḥmt nzwt mrt.f r<sup>c</sup> nb* (Callender 2011: 200; Munro 1993: Taf. 30).

4 Two different attestations, including *mrt Dḥwty ntrw r<sup>c</sup> nb* and *ḥzt.s Ḥwt-Ḥr r<sup>c</sup> nb* (see Callender 2011: 291). The former is the closest parallel to Setibhor's title, whereas the latter has *ḥzt.s* instead of *mrt* but refers to Hathor.



**Fig. 2** Three matching fragments of a block, DJ 451A-B and DJ 465 (photo P. Košárek, drawing E. Majerus)

Meretites II held two similar epithets, *mrt* + deity + *r<sup>c</sup> nb* and *ḥzt.s* + deity + *r<sup>c</sup> nb*, the former with Thoth and the latter with Hathor. This seems to correspond to the high importance of Hathor in association with Old Kingdom queens, which is reflected in the decoration of their pyramid complexes (Jánosi 1996: 151–152; see also Jéquier 1933: 15, fig. 8).

Another epithet from Setibhor's inscription, the epithet *mrwt ntrw nbw* (Jones 2000: 446, no. 1670), is usually used for kings (Callender 2011: 264). Nevertheless, it is also attested later with Queen Ankhenespepy II (Gardiner – Peet – Černý 1955: pl. IX). Setibhor seems to be the earliest attested female holder of this epithet in the Old Kingdom.

It can be noticed that the attested titles and epithets of Queen Setibhor are not comparable to those of the queens-mothers, for instance Neferhetepes and Khentkaus II (for their titles, see Callender 2011: 161–163, 175–177; see also Roth 2001: *passim*), and no evidence suggesting that Setibhor was a king's mother has been found yet (Megahed – Vymazalová 2020a: 1034–1037). The shape of the tomb, i.e. the pyramid complex, cannot be an indication for a mother/wife status of its owner (Jánosi 1992: 56). On the other hand, Setibhor's attested titulary seems to be in good agreement with the titles of the wives of the kings of the Fifth Dynasty, for instance Nebet and Khenut, who lived slightly later than Setibhor (for these queen's titles, see Callender 2011: 192–193, 200, 205).

Besides the inscription, the relief also shows a particularly interesting decorative motif of a winged sun disc, which is depicted above the queen's inscription. A winged disc was first attested in the royal monuments from the time of Snofru (Ćwiek 2003: 83) and a winged sun disc with two *uraei* can first be found in evidence from the reign of Nyuserre (Schonkwiler 2014: 67, 89). The winged sun disc was closely associated with the concept of each ruler's incarnation of Horus and his deceased predecessors (Gardiner 1944: 46–52; Ćwiek 2003: 345), being a combination of the sun (Re), the falcon (Horus) and Nekhbet and Wadjet protecting the Two Lands (see Gardiner 1944: 48–49; Ćwiek 2003: 314–315 and footnote 1302; Schonkwiler 2014: 3, 91). In some attested examples, we can find a mention of Behdety on the sides of the depiction (Jéquier 1933: 42, fig. 22), which clearly indicates that the motif referred to this form of Horus (see also Schonkwiler 2014: *passim*; see also, for instance, Werbrouck 1941; Borrego Gallarde 2004).

Due to its kingship-associated symbolism, the motif of the winged sun disc is not very common in the monuments of queens in the Old Kingdom (for brief information on the decoration of the funerary temples of the queens, see János 1996: 123–180). This can be due to the bad state of preservation of these tombs. There are, however, some attested examples dating to the Sixth Dynasty. We can find the winged sun disc, for instance, on the granite lintel of the entrance to the monument of Iput II (Jéquier 1933: 42, fig. 22), where it is, however, carved above the inscription that refers to both the king and the queen. A similar example with references to the king is known from the pyramid complex of Nubunet (Labrousse 1999: 133). On the other hand, the winged sun disc in the monument of Queen Ankhnespepy II refers to queen as the mother of King Pepy II, so the king's authority is present here as well (Labrousse 1999: 153; Callender 2011: 259 fig. 99). Two attested examples from the monument of Queen Meretites II also shows this motif (Labrousse 1999: 147; Berger-El Naggar 2005: 29 fig. 20; the second block is yet unpublished) and the preserved parts of the following inscription clearly include the king's cartouche. Yet another example of a winged sun disc has been recorded above the figure of Queen Sebutet in the relief from the tomb of Reheryshefnakht from south Saqqara (Berger-El Naggar – Labrousse 2005: 16, fig. 2; Stünkel 2006: 152–153; Stünkel 2018: 351–353, 470–471). Very small fragments of the same motif come from the monuments of Queens Behenu (yet unpublished) and Inenek (Payraudeau 2015: 211, fig. 1).<sup>5</sup> These Sixth Dynasty examples thus seem to refer to the queens' connection to the king.

On the other hand, the motif of the winged sun disc with *uraei* on the block from the monument of Setibhor seems to be associated with the queen only, and no reference to any king is preserved on these relief fragments.<sup>6</sup> At the moment, we cannot entirely exclude that a reference to the king may have existed in the bottom part of the scene, which is not preserved. However, the winged sun disc with *uraei* constitutes yet another indication of Queen Setibhor's special position in the late Fifth Dynasty, as she is the earliest queen for whom this

5 I would like to thank Philippe Collombert and Marie-Noëlle Fraisse for kindly sharing with me the information on the unpublished blocks uncovered by the French archaeological mission at the site of Pepy I's pyramid complex at Saqqara.

6 It is worth mentioning that a winged sun disc without a reference to the king is attested in queenly monuments from the Middle Kingdom at Dahshur, for instance at the lintel above the entrance to the north chapel of Khnemetneferhedjet Weret I (Stünkel 2018: 470–471). See also the above-mentioned example of Sebutet.

decorative motif is attested. Even though no evidence available indicates that she would have held titles of a ruler or titles of a king's mother/regent, her monument and elements of her decorative programme emphasise her special status with kingly features (Moursi 1987; Jánosi 1989; Megahed 2011; Megahed – Vymazalová 2020a; Megahed – Vymazalová 2020b).

Underneath the queen's inscription, the scene follows with a small part of the top of the head of the queen's figure, depicted facing right. The preserved part of the figure shows that the queen wore a hairband decorated with stripes, tied at the back of her head with two papyrus-shaped endings. This type of headband is well attested for queens (as well as non-royal women) in the Old Kingdom (Cherpion 1989: 67–68, critère 44; Stehelin 1966: 146–154; see also Megahed – Vymazalová 2020b for other attestations of this feature from Setibhor's monument).

A group of female offering bearers is depicted on a smaller scale in several registers on the right part of the block in front of the queen. They are facing left towards the queen and are separated from her figure by means of a vertical hieroglyphic inscription reading: *int nḏt-ḥr ʒpd ḥt nbt nḥrt* [...] – “Bringing gifts of birds, all good things [...]”. Another inscription was carved above them, of which only *in[t]* has been preserved. Two figures were carved in the upper register, of which the first is shown carrying birds in both of her hands, while the second one is partly lost and her gifts are no longer visible. The following register also contained two figures, but only the tops of their heads are preserved on this block.

Behind the queen on the left side of the block, another group of female attendants is depicted on the same scale as the previous group. Only the first register with three female figures is preserved. The outline behind them indicates that this is the left end of the entire scene. The attendants are facing right and carrying various offerings in their hands. The inscription above them reads: <sup>1</sup>[...] *ḥt nbt* <sup>2</sup>[...] *nḥrt šddt* <sup>3</sup>[...] *m ph* – “[...] All good things <sup>2</sup>[...] taken <sup>3</sup>[...] from the border district”.

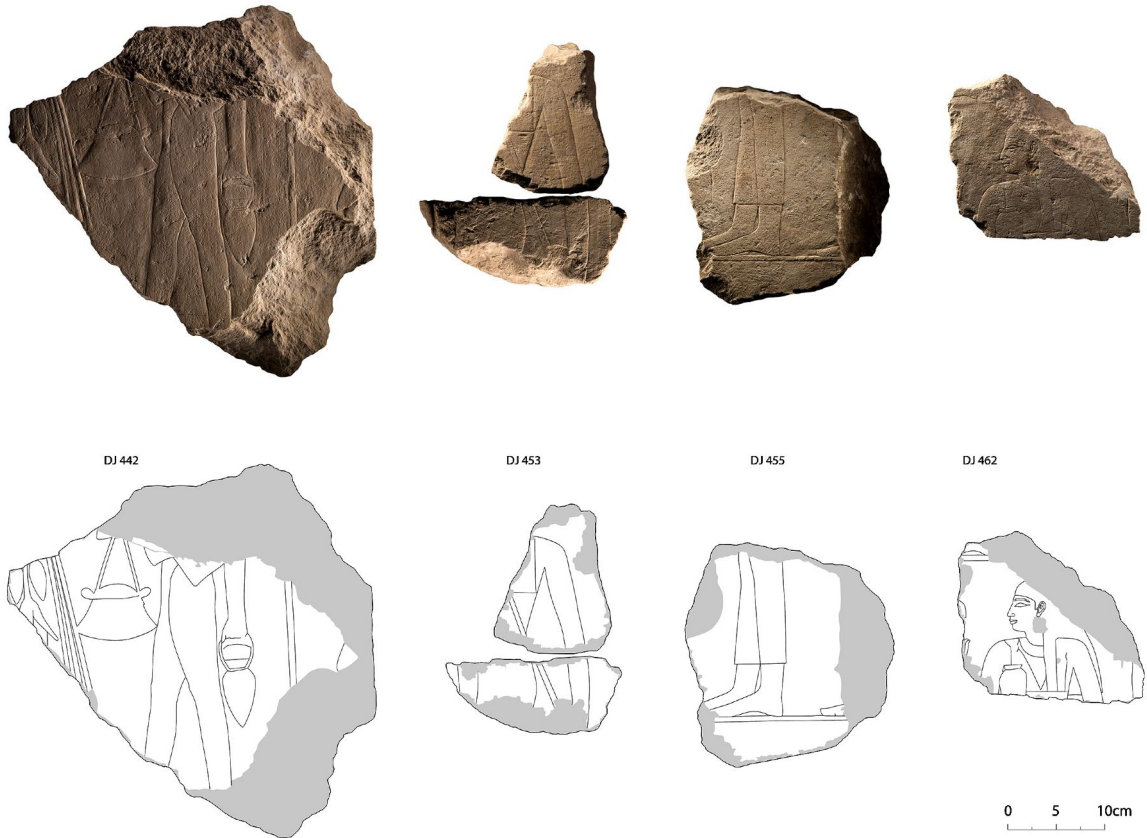
The left edge of the block, further to the left of the outline, contains a small part of another scene, which features a part of a wing and a tail of a hovering falcon, Behdety, facing left (for the protective falcon, see also Megahed – Vymazalová 2020b: 73–74; further Schonkwiler 2014: *passim*). Except for the falcon's feathers, nothing is preserved of this second scene, but it is possible that Behdety was depicted above the queen's figure (see also the discussion in Megahed – Vymazalová 2020b: 73–74). Such examples are known from the Sixth Dynasty, with the earliest attested so far being the depiction of Iput I, the mother of Pepy I (Firth – Gunn 1926 II: pl. 56, no. 2), and Wedjebten, the wife of Pepy II (Jéquier 1928: 15–16, fig. 9; see also Schonkwiler 2014: 34)

The following fragments have been found in the same area as the previously discussed larger pieces. Based on the scale of the figures and the general features of the reliefs, these fragments may have belonged to the right side of the previously discussed block, or to another similar scene showing female offering bearers.

DJ 442 (FIG. 3)

37 × 41 × 10 cm

This fragment features the remains of two figures of offering bearers facing left. The former figure is entirely lost, but we can see a part of a bundle of lotuses, which were most likely draped over her left arm. Concerning the other figure, her body and legs are preserved. The



**Fig. 3** Relief fragments DJ 442, DJ 453a+b, DJ 455 and DJ 462 (photo P. Košárek, drawing E. Majerus)

small traces of bird feet indicate that this female figure was holding a bird on her right forearm, on which a bag was also hanging, and she had a jar on a rope in her left hand. The vertical line behind this figure shows that this was the right end of the register.

DJ 453A-B (FIG. 3)

12 × 16 × 16.5 cm

A small part of a female figure has survived on these two small matching relief fragments. She was facing left, and only a part of her body, her left shoulder and left arm are preserved on the fragments. She was holding a long thin object in her hand(s), possibly a handle of a fan.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> For comparison, see the tomb of Nebet (for instance Munro 1993: Taf. 14 bottom register, three first female behind the queen).



DJ 455 (FIG. 3)

22.5 × 23 × 6.5 cm

A small relief fragment with the remains of two female figures facing left. Both calves and feet are preserved of the front figure, whereas only the top of one foot has survived of the other figure.

DJ 462 (FIG. 3)

19 × 18 × 7.5 cm

This small relief fragment shows a part of a female figure facing left. Her head and shoulders are preserved on the fragment. She was holding a vessel in her left hand in front of her chest.

In addition to these recently uncovered relief fragments from the 2020-sondage to the south of the queen's temple portico, it is possible to find some other examples that feature female attendants and offering bearers. These were discovered during earlier excavation seasons in the east as well as south parts of the queen's precinct.

### OTHER SIMILAR DEPICTIONS FROM THE EAST SIDE OF THE QUEEN'S MONUMENT

Among Queen Setibhor's reliefs, no fragments showing female attendants have been published by Mohamed Moursi, but several can be found among the finds from Fakhry's excavation in box no. 103, which is labelled as *el-ma'bad el-malekah* – “the queen's temple”. These fragments were found in 1952 in the funerary temple on the east side of the queen's pyramid. The precise place of discovery of these fragments is, however, unknown.<sup>8</sup>

1/2258 (FIG. 4)

38 × 34 cm

This fragment features parts of two female figures facing left, with parts of their bodies preserved. The females are dressed in long gowns. The front figure has her left arm along her body, while her right arm is not visible – it was probably bent across her chest. A small part of the hieroglyph *m* is preserved in front of this female. The second figure is almost entirely lost; only her belly and thighs have partly survived. In front of her, there is a vertical hieroglyphic inscription: *imy(t)-r3 hnr(wt) ḥs(wt)* – “(female) overseer of musical performers and singers”.<sup>9</sup>

8 The reliefs found by Ahmed Fakhry are labelled only with the numbers under which they were registered, whereas the “DJ” numbers come from the excavations of the current mission.

9 For a discussion on the *hnrwt*, see for instance Guegan (2020: 112–116). For the title, see also Jones (2000: 303, no. 1106); the arm determinative occurs in the *ḥswt* – “singers” (see Jones 2000: 302, no. 1105).



**Fig. 4** Relief fragments uncovered by Ahmed Fakhry in 1952 in the east part of the queen's precinct 1/2258, 2/2259, 4/2261 and 5/2263 (photo M. Megahed, drawing E. Majerus)

2/2259 (FIG. 4)

45 × 36 cm

A fragment with parts of two female figures facing left.

The head and the feet of the first figure are not preserved on the fragment. She has short hair and is wearing a long dress with shoulder straps and a collar. Her left arm is bent across her chest, and her left hand is holding her right shoulder. Her right arm is bent as well, with her right hand hidden under the left upper arm. In front of her, there used to be an inscription, of which the sign *ḥd*, possibly a part of a title comprising [*s*]ḥ*d*, has been preserved. The second figure is almost entirely lost except for the front part of her thighs and her right elbow, which is bent in the same manner as with the first figure. The inscription in front of her reads: *ḥtmṯt* – “(female) sealer”.

4/2261 (FIG. 4)

32 × 21 cm

This fragment features parts of two female figures facing left. In the case of the first figure, her body and parts of her arms are preserved. Her left arm is hanging along her body, the hand is not preserved; her right arm is bent across her chest, with the palm open. The second figure is almost lost, only the front of her thighs has survived on the right edge of the fragment. The vertical hieroglyphic inscription in front of her has identified her as *shd* [...] – “inspector [...]”.

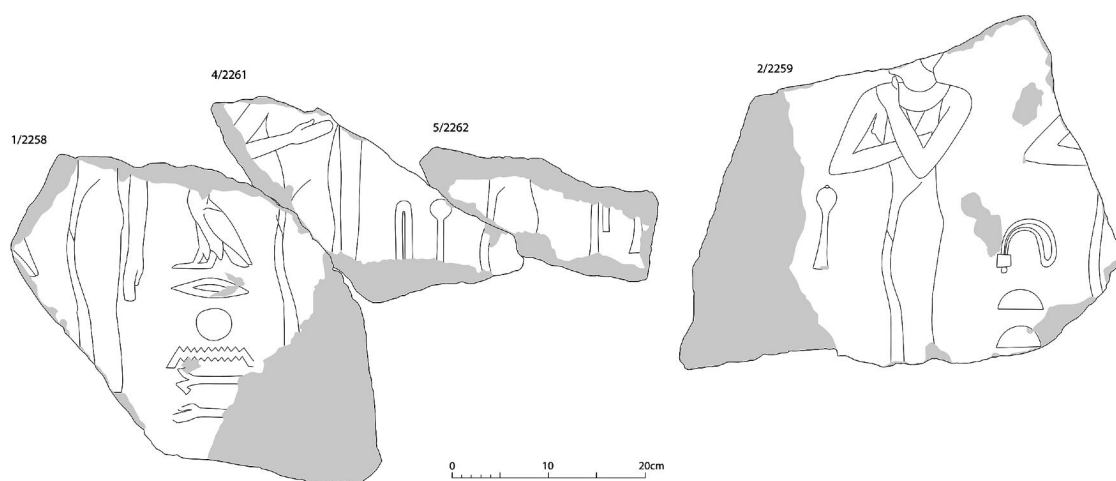
5/2262 (FIG. 4)

24.5 × 15 cm

A fragment with a small part of a female figure facing left, with only a part of her belly and left hip preserved.

Neither of her arms is shown on the fragment, which indicates that they were lifted. Behind the figure, there is a small part of an inscription reading *shd* - [...] “inspector [...]”; this partial title belongs to the next figure, which has not survived.

The four relief fragments may have belonged to the same depiction, and three of them even seem to match together (fig. 5). It needs to be mentioned, however, that the author could only join them in digital form, but the verification of the joints with the fragments themselves has not yet been possible.



**Fig. 5** Matching fragments from the east part of the queen's precinct (drawing E. Majerus)

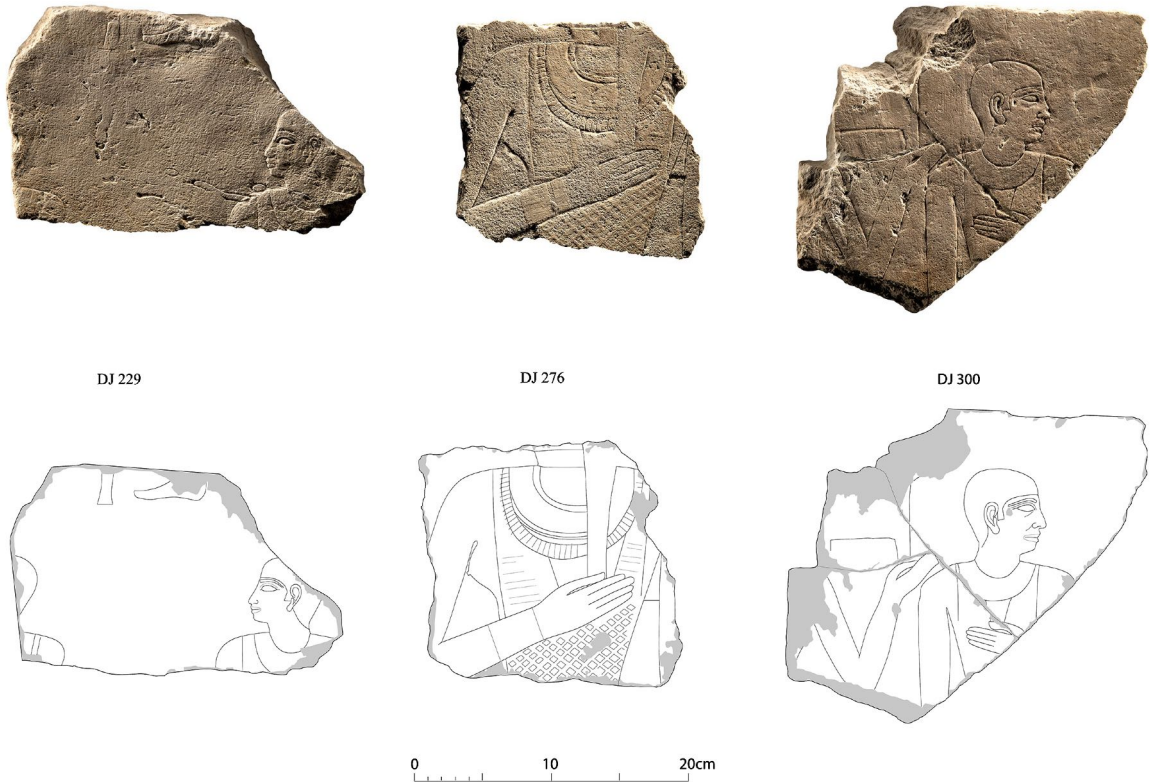
## OTHER SIMILAR DEPICTIONS FROM THE SOUTH PART OF THE QUEEN'S MONUMENT

Besides the above-described relief fragments from Fakhry's excavations, several examples of decorative themes with female attendants were found by the current mission in 2018 in the T.g area to the south of Setibhor's pyramid. Unlike the fragments from 2020, these pieces come from a higher level of debris, which covered the entire area (Megahed – Jánosi – Vymazalová 2019).

DJ 229 (FIG. 6)

24.5 × 15.5 cm

This small fragment features parts of two female figures, shown facing left, next to each other. Only the back of her head and her left shoulder are preserved of the front female. An edge of a collar and a shoulder strap are visible by her shoulder. The other female has her face and



**Fig. 6** Relief fragments found by the current mission in 2018 in the south part of the queen's precinct, DJ 229, DJ 276, DJ 300 (photo P. Košárek, drawing E. Majerus)

right shoulder preserved. She is also wearing a collar and dress with shoulder straps. Both females have short hair with no further decoration. A foot of another figure is shown on top of the fragment above the two females. In front of this foot, it is possible to see a bottom of an unclear object. No traces of colour are preserved on this fragment.

#### DJ 276 (FIG. 6)

19.5 × 18 cm

The female figure on this fragment is facing left, but she is only partly preserved. Her neck, chest and right shoulder and arm are preserved on this fragment. She has long hair/wig with one stripe over her chest and the bottom outline marked under her left armpit. She is wearing a choker, a collar of several rows of beads, and an armband, and she is dressed in a dress with shoulder straps. The straps are decorated with stripes, while the dress is covered with a grid, which may indicate a decorative pattern or a bead net. Her left arm is hanging along her body while her right arm is bent across her chest, with the palm open. This depiction substantially differs from the simple female figures of the attendants and offering bearers that are carved on the other fragments. In addition, her scale seems slightly larger in comparison with the figures of female attendants on the other discussed fragments. Therefore, we can presume that

this figure depicts a daughter of the queen, or another female court member. Examples with one female figure accompanying the queen in some of the scenes can be found, for instance, in the tomb of Nebet (Munro 1993: Taf. 18, 20).

DJ 300 (FIG. 6)

26.5 × 23 cm

A small fragment with parts of two female figures facing right. The figure on the right side has the bottom part of her body lost. She has a short haircut and is wearing a simple collar and a dress with shoulder straps. Her right arm is hanging along her body, while her left arm is bent across her chest with the palm open. The figure on the left is almost entirely lost, except for her left arm and breast. Her arm is bent and raised up to support the chest resting on her shoulder and her hand.

## DISCUSSION

The evidence presented above includes the reliefs from the queen's portico that were found in the spring of 2020 as well as the relief fragments that were found in 2018 in the south part of her precinct and earlier in 1952 in the east part of her precinct. These pieces show parts of the decorative programme of Queen Setibhor's funerary temple with female attendants, which can be considered as typical for queenly monuments, but also decorative motifs that are not so typical.

Monuments of Old Kingdom queens often contain depictions of female figures who accompany the female tomb owners. These themes include the queen-owner sitting on a chair or standing, overseeing offering bearers and the production of funerary furniture, or even performing the *zšš-w³d*, which symbolises the relationship of the queen to the king(-husband) (Munro 1993: 50).

Among the pyramid complexes and tombs of Old Kingdom queens, the best-preserved decoration can be found in the mastabas of Mersyankh III and Nebet. As the latter queen was the wife of Unas, her tomb is only slightly later than the monument of Queen Setibhor, and thus it seems particularly suitable for comparison (see also Megahed – Vymazalová 2020b: 70–71). The decoration in the tomb of Queen Nebet features the central figure of the queen on a large scale with her titles carved above her, the registers of smaller-scale female attendants behind the queen, and the registers of male offering bearers, craftsmen, boatmen, *etc.* in front of her, which usually opened with an explanatory text in a vertical inscription.

The female attendants behind the queen are shown with short hair, long dresses with shoulder straps, simple collars and sometimes anklets. Some of these figures are portrayed in a respectful passive position, standing with one arm across the chest, while others are depicted carrying objects, most often fans and chests but sometimes also vessels. In some of the scenes, these female attendants are not identified in any manner (for instance Munro 1993: Taf. 14, 23). In other instances, they are associated with captions identifying some of them as *imy(t)-r³ pr*, or *imy(t)-r³ prw* – “(female) overseer of the household”; these are usually the respectfully standing women just behind the queen's torso (Munro 1993: Taf. 11, 13, 17, possibly also 19). Other figures can be marked as *m³t* – “female mourners”, “weepers”, and these are often the fan bearers, less often the chest bearers and the passive standing figures (Munro 1993: Taf. 10,

11, 13, 17, 19; for the title, see Jones 2000: 424, no. 1569). It is worth mentioning that one of the depictions in Nebet's tomb includes a female dwarf (Munro 1993: Taf. 14).

In the themes where the female attendants are not included, the queen is either depicted sitting alone (Munro 1993: Taf. 12, 16), or standing accompanied by one female, who is shown behind her (Munro 1993: Taf. 18, 20). This may have been her daughter or another close relative of the queen. In the tomb of Nebet, this figure is shown with short hair, dressed in a simple long dress with shoulder straps, and wearing a collar and anklets. A slightly more elaborate example is known, for instance, from the tomb of Khenut, where a small female figure is shown smelling the lotus flower, wearing a headband and a collar of several rows of beads (Munro 1993: Taf. 39).

Besides the well-preserved tomb of Nebet, we can find similar types of depictions also in other monuments of Old Kingdom queens. An earlier example from the tomb of Meresankh III shows simpler forms of decoration, but the above-mentioned motifs are present here as well. Besides the female attendants shown behind the queen (Dunham – Simpson 1974: figs. 3a, 3b), we can also see female servants carrying furniture for the tomb (Dunham – Simpson 1974: fig. 8, the bottom two registers). Unfortunately, other tombs of Old Kingdom queens are either not well preserved or not fully published, and many of them have not yet been discovered (see Megahed– Vymazalová 2020b: 70–71).

The tomb of Khenut, the wife of Unas, is close in date to Nebet's tomb, and its walls feature reliefs that were more vivid than those in the tomb of Nebet (Munro 1993: 51), but they are not so well preserved. Some of the walls also show the central figure of the queen with female attendants behind and male offering bearers, workmen, craftsmen, boatmen, etc. in front of her. The female attendants are sometimes shown carrying more objects, for instance a chest on one shoulder supported with one hand, and a bag in the other hand (Munro 1993: Taf. 38 but not on Taf. 41). Similar attestation can be found in the much earlier tomb of Meresankh III, where only two female attendants are shown behind the queen on the door thicknesses, perhaps due to the limited space (Dunham – Simpson 1974: figs. 3a, 3b). An additional piece of evidence comes from the monument of Wedjebten, where the female attendants who accompanied the queen (whose figure is not preserved) are shown in passive positions with one arm across the chest and are identified with their names and sometimes also titles (Jéquier 1928: 16, figs. 9–12). Titles and names are also used in the case of the female attendants accompanying Queen Ankhnespepy II on a depiction from her funerary monument (Leclant – Minault-Gout 2000: Tab. XVII, fig. 8).

It is worth mentioning that in the tombs of Khenut or Meresankh III, we can find a male *imy-r3 pr* – “overseer of the house” shown in front of the queen (Munro 1993: Taf. 38; Dunham – Simpson 1974: fig. 12), while female overseers occur in the tomb of Nebet.

Like other Old Kingdom queenly monuments, the funerary temple of Queen Setibhor also contained the above-mentioned depictions of female attendants, and the available evidence reveals that such depictions were included in this queen's monument at several places. Fragments of the queen's female attendants have been discovered both in the east and south parts of her precinct. However, the latter comprise mostly small fragments with no indication concerning the overall character of the depicted scenes. We can notice, however, that the small fragments from the east part of the monument show the female attendants with their titles, thus perhaps representing particular individuals including inspectors, a seal bearer and an overseer of a *hnrt*.

Such type of personalisation with titles is attested in the scenes from other queenly monuments of the time, but the variety and character of the titles of these female attendants differ.

The relief fragments from the south part of the precinct provide a slightly better picture thanks to the scale of preservation of some of the pieces. In comparison with the reliefs from other queenly monuments, the block DJ 451A–B + DJ 465 shows some similar and some distinct features. The female attendants behind the queen are not just accompanying her – they are also carrying objects, including furniture, fans and vessels. Moreover, they are not identified by their names, and neither are they identified as members of her household or as weepers. Nevertheless, we may presume that they did represent the members of the same type of personnel. On the other hand, the female offering bearers facing the queen seem more interesting because in other preserved Old Kingdom queenly monuments, only men are depicted bringing offerings to the queens. This detail does not, however, provide a sufficient basis for the assessment of whether the female offering bearers can be associated with a specific type of scene/offering, with the queen's special status, or they were the result of a personal choice within the decorative themes of Setibhor's monument.

In addition to this, the slightly larger and more elaborately depicted female attendant on the fragment DJ 276 seems to point to yet another type of depiction, perhaps comparable to the depictions of queens with their daughters attested in other queenly monuments. The slightly larger size of this figure as well as the manner of its depiction with many details on the dress and jewellery make it distinct from the "ordinary" female attendants. It is thus tempting to suggest that this depiction may represent a daughter of Queen Setibhor. The fragment is, however, too small to confirm this hypothesis at the moment.

Besides the depictions of the female attendants that belong to the usual decorative themes of the queenly monuments in the Old Kingdom, the above-discussed evidence from the pyramid complex of Queen Setibhor provides some additional, rather unusual features, which can be understood as indications of her special status. Above all, the newly uncovered reliefs include the earliest attestations of certain epithets of the queen, which later occur more often with powerful queens of the Sixth Dynasty. This may indicate that Setibhor's special status "opened the door" for the later queens, who then referred to this earlier precedent in their own titularies.

Not only the queen's epithets but also the motif of a winged sun disc with *uraei* can first be found with Setibhor, and later again with Sixth Dynasty queens. This motif is a major difference in decoration in comparison with the other Old Kingdom queens. On the one hand, it must be kept in mind that very little is preserved from the Old Kingdom queenly tombs and that even the well-preserved mastaba of Nebet lacks the upper parts of the walls. At the same time, the evidence from the pyramid complexes and tombs of Old Kingdom queens is extremely limited, and some uncovered monuments still await their full publication (see also Megahed – Vymazalová 2020b: 70–71). Despite this limitation in evidence, the presence of the winged sun disc with two *uraei* and of Horus Behdety in Setibhor's monument seems to be a rather unusual and unexpected feature, the earliest attestation of its kind. Although we cannot entirely exclude the presence of the king or his names in the scene because a large part of it is not preserved, this feature may be another indication of Setibhor's special status.

The study and analysis of the relief fragments uncovered in the pyramid complex of Queen Setibhor will continue, and more blocks may be found in the same area between Djedkare's and

Setibhor's precincts in the coming seasons. We are hoping that each new piece of evidence will help us bring this preliminary/partial discussion on Queen Setibhor and her unusual monument further.

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