

THIRD INTERMEDIATE PERIOD OPENWORK FIGURES FROM THE CHAPEL OF HATSHEPSUT IN DEIR EL-BAHARI

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An analysis of archaeological material discovered during recent excavations in the Chapel of Hatshepsut (Szafrński 2005: 229-23; 2007a: 246) distinguished a set of wooden openwork figures with painted convex fronts and flat backs. Further study of these figures allowed them to be classified into a number of groups.

The most numerous of these groups was that consisting of figures representing

goddesses with emblems on their heads. All the pieces were found in very fragmentary condition. The emblem was all that was left of some figures, while others could be put together practically whole. The fragments were scattered in the debris filling the tomb shaft located in the western part of the Chapel of Hatshepsut (S.7A/82; S.7B/82; S.7C/82, cf. Szafrński 2007a: Fig. 5). Nevertheless, since most of them were found in shaft S.7A/82, it is likely that this funerary equipment was originally deposited there. Following a thorough examination, the collected fragments were divided into two groups by size.



Fig. 1. Pieces of wooden openwork figures before reassembly (Photo M. Jawornicki)

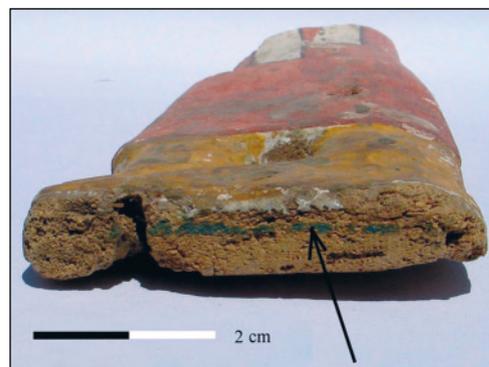


Fig. 2. Unpainted bottom of the Neith figure with traces of green paint (marked with an arrow) (Photo A. Stupko)

SMALL SCALE FIGURES

The remains of five figures [Fig. 1] were classified in the small-scale figures group:

Figures 1-2. Two figures of Seshat dressed in a leopard skin, facing right. The first figure is missing the emblem on the head and arms, the second preserves only part of the torso and outstretched arms. A small fragment of an emblem found

separately could be attributed to one of the figures [Fig. 3].

Figure 3. Almost complete figure of Neith with outstretched arms (fragments of the middle part of the torso and the face missing). The goddess facing left, her red dress tied with a white scarf (Szafranski 2007b: 126-127).

Figure 4. Unidentified goddess in red dress, facing left; lower part found.

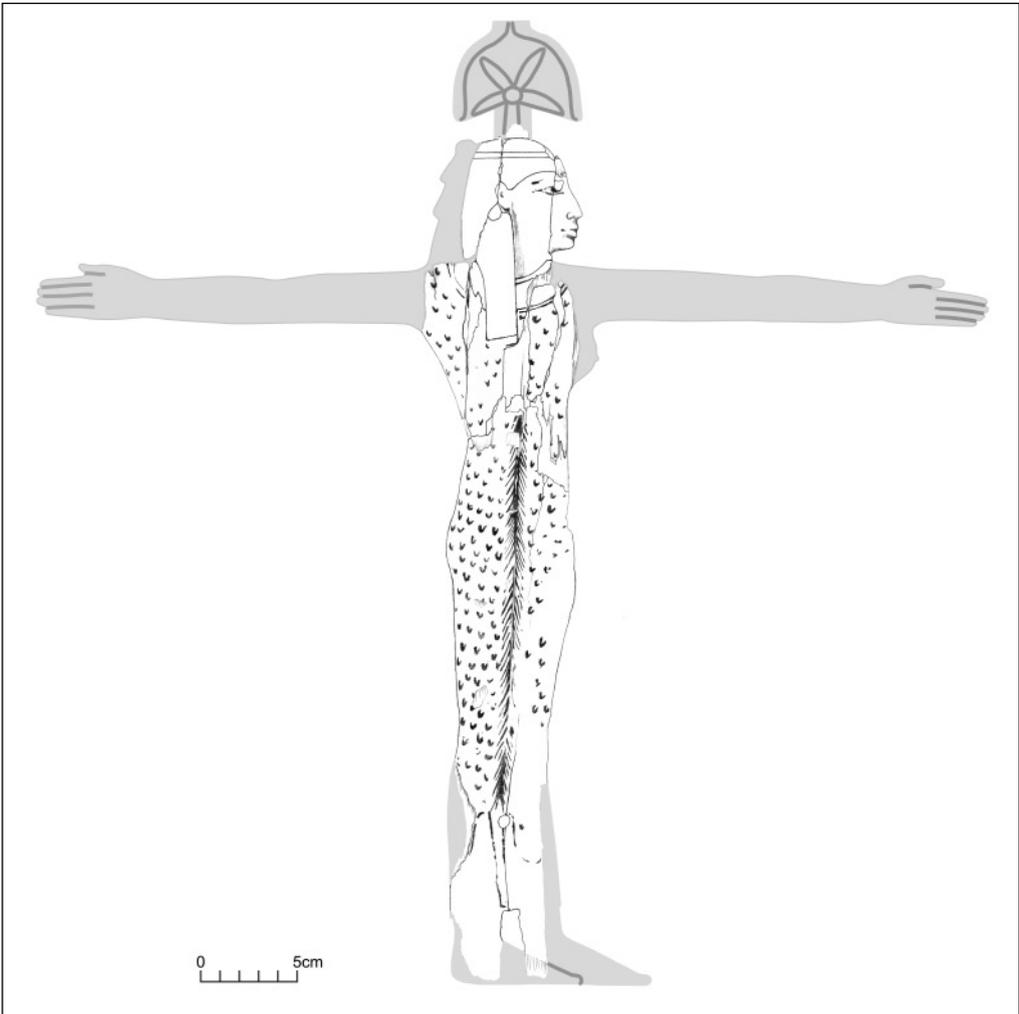


Fig. 3. Figure of Seshat. Example of a smaller scale figure (Drawing A. Stupko)

Figure 5. Emblem of goddess Selkit, facing right; rest of the figure is missing.

The figures appear to be of similar size. Based on better preserved examples, like Seshat 1, the height of these figures can be established as 44 cm (50 cm with the emblems), the arm span as approximately 48 cm. The thickness varies from 0.5 to 1.0 cm.

The color of the goddesses' skin varies from light green in the case of the Seshat figures, yellow for Neith and dark green for the unidentified goddess.

Regarding the technique, the body and head with emblem were made of a single piece of wood, while the arms were carved separately and joined by tenons, for which special rectangular mortises were cut in the torso. Round holes (dia. approx. 0.5 cm) for wooden pegs were drilled in the head, arms and legs of the figures. The back sides bore traces of an adhesive, as well as remains of a horizontal, reinforcing wooden strip to which the figures were fastened. This suggests that they were arranged in one or more rows. The top and bottom edges of the figures were left unpainted, indicating the presence of a frame encasing the figures. A thin line of green paint was observed on the bottom of the Neith figure [Fig. 2].

LARGE-SCALE FIGURES

This group includes four fragments of figures. Three are emblems of respectively Seshat, Isis and Nephtys (H. 7.5-8.0 cm, Th. 0.6-0.8 cm) and the fourth is a partly preserved female figure, facing right (H. $x+33+x$ cm, Th. 0.6-1.2 cm). Its height together with the emblem was calculated, based on the proportions of the smaller scale Seshat 1, as 64 cm. Although the arms are missing, the preserved fragment of the torso suggests that one arm was lowered along the body, while the other was raised in a gesture of adoration. Of the three

preserved emblems only that of Nephtys had the same orientation as the figure and could be matched with the dress of the goddess (on the same grounds the emblem of Seshat should be excluded) [Fig. 4].

OTHER OPENWORK FIGURES

Another openwork figure was found in one of the shafts in the western part of the

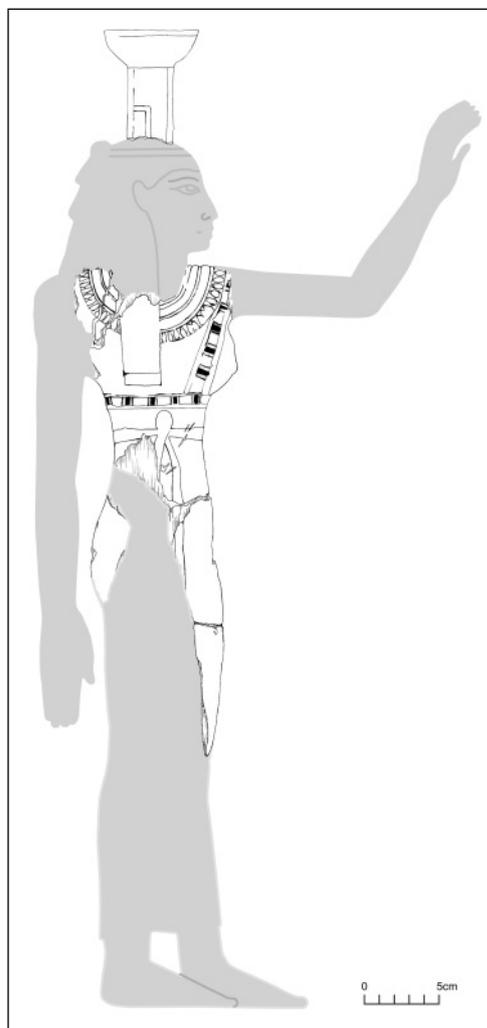


Fig. 4. Figure of Nephtys. Example of a large-scale figure (Drawing A. Stupko)

Chapel of Hatshepsut (S.7B/82). It was a fragment of a seated figure (legs and arm probably holding a *mꜣꜥt* feather (now lost), facing right, with a tenon at the bottom and no visible traces of painting (H. 5.6 cm, Th. 0.8 cm). It seems to belong to a group of objects discovered in shaft S.2/07¹ in the southeastern corner of the Chapel of Hatshepsut. This group consists of a very similar fragment of a seated deity (H. 6 cm, Th. 0.7 cm), another seated figure, that of a falcon-headed Horus painted black and green, wearing a tripartite wig and probably a sun disk (now missing) with a fragment of tenon preserved in the bottom (H. 9 cm,

Th. 0.8 cm), a *mꜣꜥt* feather painted green which was probably part of a Horus or similar figure (H. 7.4 cm, Th. 0.7 cm) and a serpent-shaped deity (Wadjet) painted blue with a sun disk on the head (H. 11.9 cm, Th. 0.7 cm). The figures may have been attached to a plank to form an openwork frieze (for a similar example, cf. Insley Greek 1987: 19, Fig. 29) [Fig. 5].

Due to the very fragmentary condition of the objects described above and the lack of the elements to which they had been attached, it is uncertain whether they decorated the same piece of funerary furnishings.² The two groups of standing goddesses are likely to have belonged to

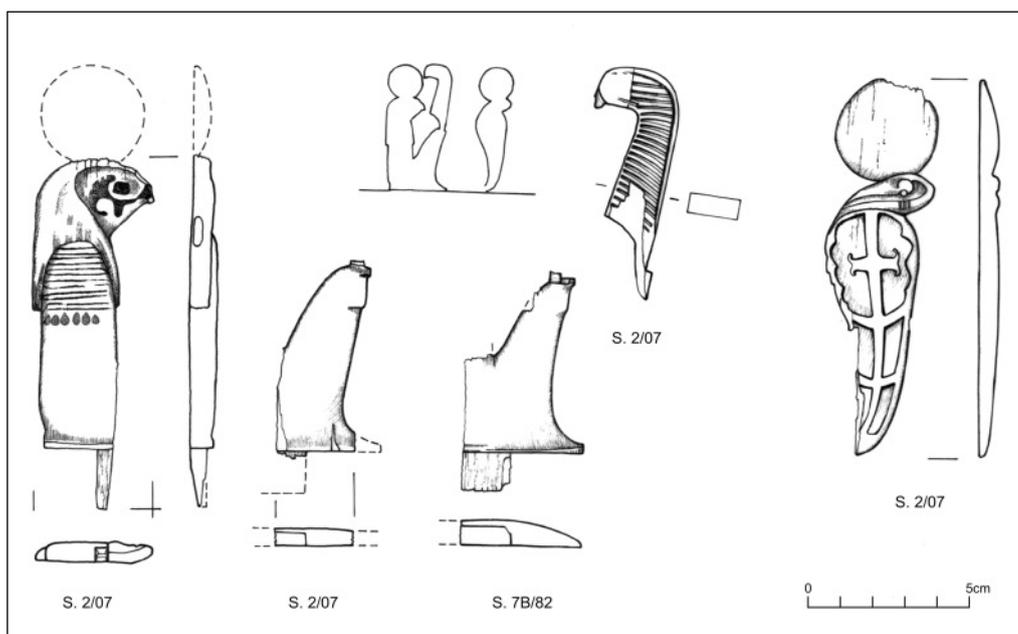


Fig. 5. *Fragments of an open work frieze (?)*
(Drawing A. Stupko, G. Zborowska)

- 1 This group was found in the 2007 fieldwork season at the Hatshepsut Temple, but as they form an integral part of this assemblage, it was decided to include them in this preliminary report.
- 2 Two fragments of red-painted wooden planks, found in S.7A/82, could be treated as structural elements of such funerary furnishings, but their fragmentary state of preservation precludes any further conclusions.

a single object, considering the workmanship and painting style, but the set seems incomplete. The repertoire of figures in question, as well as their iconography is currently being studied by the present author.

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2007b Figure of Neith [in:] *Seventy Years of Polish Archaeology in Egypt, Egyptian Museum in Cairo, 21 October-21 November 2007, Exhibition Catalogue*, A. Majewska (ed.), Warsaw, cat. no. 52, 126-127