

## **6. Industrial and Domestic Quarters: Areas 231–234**

### **6.1 Introduction to Areas 231–234: Economic Precinct of the 8th–2nd Century BC**

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#### **6.2.1 A Little Human-handed Sphinx of Merenptah**

## Introduction to Areas 231–234: Economic Precinct of the 8th–2nd Century BC

Klara Dietze

Between 2015 and 2021, an economic precinct from the 8th to the 2nd century BC was excavated on the south-eastern fringe of the main temenos in Area 232 (Fig. 1)<sup>1</sup>, and extending into neighbouring Areas 233 and 234 (ASHMAWY/CONNOR/RAUE 2022, 13–24). The topography of the precinct is characterised by a mud-brick enclosure wall from the 18th Dynasty, which according to recent research, might be identified with the flood protection structure (*sbtj n(.j) wmt.t*), built in the 47th regnal year of Thutmose III (DIETZE 2020). During the spring of 2015, we had the opportunity to conduct rescue excavations further north in Area 231, and managed to document the wall section of the embankment.<sup>2</sup>

Only individual material from the Ramesside and Third Intermediate Periods were observed in the archaeological features of Area 232. However, from the early Saïte Period onwards, several buildings as well as mud-brick silos make up the architectural features of this area. The open courtyard of the site was covered by massive ash layers, pottery associated with the baking industry, and a considerable amount of cattle bones with traces of the slaughtering process.

By the late Saïte or early Persian Period, a comprehensive expansion of the district is evident. This stratum contained a series of buildings associated with the industrial production of bread and beer. The district, clearly associated with the renaissance of the Heliopolitan temenos during the Late Period, was used for the production of perishable goods necessary for the daily sacrificial needs of the main temple, and thus may be identified as one of its *pr-šn<sup>c</sup>*-workshops. The extent to which the stratigraphical sequence can be attributed to political upheavals of this period remains the subject of ongoing research.

However, the remaining Late Period structures appear to have been revived in the period from the 30th Dynasty to the Mid-Ptolemaic Era in the middle of the 2nd century BC. This revival is indicated by the presence of large-scale kitchen and bakery areas containing ceramic ovens, as the focus of the site's use seems to be the continuation of baked-goods production. Since there is no evidence of royal building activities within the main temenos during the Ptolemaic Period, the Ptolemaic activities in the area can no longer be associated with a flourishing temple economy. Rather, activity

<sup>1</sup> The excavation and research project in Area 232 is part of the recently submitted dissertation by the author, and is funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation. For recent results of the work connected to the site, see DIETZE/UGLIANO 2022 and ASHMAWY/DIETZE 2020.

<sup>2</sup> For a preliminary report on the excavations in Area 231, see ASHMAWY/BEIERSDORF/RAUE 2015, 3–4.

should be understood - besides the equipment of still selectively performed sacrificial cults - in the context of Hellenistic residential culture, which can be traced in two other areas in the main temenos (Areas 200 and 221).

Excavations in Areas 232 and 234 not only provide unique insights into the work processes of the Late Period temple economy at the Heliopolitan temenos, they also provide important insights into historical events throughout the middle and late 1st millennium BC – all of

which sheds new light on developments within the cult district during this time. Furthermore, a number of features from Area 232 have yielded information on votive and depositional practices from the end of the New Kingdom to the early Persian Period. According to the current state of knowledge, this evidence primarily refers to the Thutmoside embankment, the inner side of which was successively built over from the 26th Dynasty at the latest, but was still most likely understood as a sacred liminal space.



**Fig. 1:** Economic precinct of the 8th–2nd centuries BC. Areal view, April 8, 2019 (Caligari Entertainment München / drone flight by I-FLY-EGYPT, Pilot: Mohamed Ali).

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## Temple Inventory

### 6.2.1 A Little Human-handed Sphinx of Merenptah

(Inv. No. U3082-4 & U3125-2)

Simon Connor

Two fragments of a little sphinx were found during the Spring Seasons 2017 (Inv. No. U3082-4) and 2018 (Inv. No. U3125-2) in the sector called “army camp”, Area 232 of the site of Matariya in layers dating to the Late Period and early Ptolemaic Era. This zone lays on the south-eastern limit of the mud-brick structure that Schiaparelli identified as a “struttura circolare” or “tempio del sole”, and Petrie as the “High Sand” or “Hyksos fortress”,<sup>1</sup> and which is today considered by the excavators of the site as a kind of embankment of the New Kingdom. In the Late Period, this part of the site was occupied by a workshop area and a stable.<sup>2</sup>

Both fragments of this little sphinx were unearthed in the upper levels of the stratigraphy, which correspond to the last phases of back-filling of that area in the 1st millennium BC. They were discovered in two distinct units of the area, distant almost 30 m from each other. In the current state of the excavations, these pieces cannot yet be associated to any known structure. In the surrounding areas, the New Kingdom levels are much deeper; it is not impossible, therefore, that the fragments of this little sphinx were formerly placed in pits or *favissae*, like probably the objects found appro-

ximately in the same area by Schiaparelli in 1903–1906.

The piece, made of greenish serpentinite, shows the front part of a human handed sphinx, holding an altar. The two fragments (Fig. 1–9) can be joined and the dimensions of the resulting object are the following: H. 7.3; W. 6.5; D. 10.9 cm. A reconstruction of the appearance of the whole piece, which can be produced thanks to comparison with complete similar pieces, allows estimating its original dimensions as follow: H. 13.5; W. 6.5; D. 22.5 cm. Two cartouches are still partially visible on the front face of the altar hold by the sphinx, as well as one cartouche on each of the shoulders (Fig. 10). Though all four are fragmentary and seemingly carelessly inscribed, the identity of the king can be recognized as Merenptah:

[B3-n-R<sup>c</sup>-mr.y-'lmm]-mr.y-ntr

Mr.y-n-[Pth]-h<sup>t</sup>p-hr-M3<sup>c</sup>.t

Although attested in the 6th Dynasty, in the beginning of the 18th Dynasty and in the 26th Dynasty, the type of human-arms sphinxes is mostly characteristic of the late 18th and 19th Dynasties, both in sculpture in the round (cf.

<sup>1</sup> PETRIE/MACKAY 1915, 3–4; QUIRKE 2001, 115–119; VERNER 2013, 55–59; SBRIGLIO/UGLIANO 2015, 278–293 (particularly 284–288).

<sup>2</sup> See contribution of Dietze, Chapter 6.1 and <https://www.dainst.org/forschung/projekte/heliopolis/5724>.

Tab. 1) and in two-dimensional art.<sup>3</sup> This type of sphinx, much less common than the traditional sphinx, adopts a variant of the classical recumbent shape, but with the front paws replaced by human arms, conferring to the king's ability to act, while keeping the wild strength of the solar animal. The human arm holding a vase is itself a hieroglyph expressing the offering action (*hnk*)<sup>4</sup>; we are thus in front of clear case where three-dimensional images and writing are one and the same thing. This shape is in fact a kind of mix between a sphinx and a kneeling statue, a mix which associates the functions of both statuary types, in order to fulfil the functions of guardians in the same time as representations of the king acting as a ritualist.

When dealing with statues of larger dimensions, one can expect them to have been installed in a more or less permanent architectural surrounding, although none of these human-handed sphinxes has been found in its original setting. Nevertheless, the sphinx of the post-Amarnian period in Karnak was apparently displayed, at least in the Late Period, in front of the colonnade of Taharqa, where it probably once flanked with another similar sphinx the procession way (Fig. 12). Similarly, G. Legrain interpreted the two elevated bases at the end of the slope of the embankment at Karnak, in front of the first Pylon, as supports for human-handed sphinxes; he therefore installed on the south base a human-handed sphinx that he found in the Cachette, and that still stands there today (Fig. 13a–b).

The dimensions fit indeed well, but it is difficult to ascertain that this was indeed its original position.

According to the list of Tab. 1, it seems that large dimensions human-handed sphinxes were intended to form pairs and to be placed in strategic positions on the pathways of the processions, at least at some point of their history (the two sphinxes of Amenhotep III, no. 4–5, in Montu Temple; no. 8 and apparently its missing twin before the colonnade of Taharqa in Amun Temple; no. 10 and probably 11 in the Amun Temple, as well as 18 and 19; perhaps no. 16 and its missing twin if its current location after the slope of the embankment of of the Amun Temple is accurate; perhaps no. 14 and 15 in Memphis).

In the case of the smaller pieces (nos. 1, 2, 3, 6, 11, 18, and the little Merenptah found in Matariya), most of them in more fragile or precious materials (steatite, calcite-alabaster, faïence, copper alloy, serpentinite), one can hardly suggest a display in such an architectural setting. Under the base of the Matariya piece, a 2.5 cm deep cylindrical hole has been drilled (Fig. 6), most probably as a mortise in order to fix the statuette to another object with a tenon. The faïence sphinx of Amenhotep III (Tab. 1, no. 3) has the same characteristic and its mortise still contains some remains of a calcite-alabaster tenon. We therefore probably deal with a ritual object, which was fixed to a base, a stick, or a sacred barque.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., the axe of Ahmose (Cairo CG 52645, Vernier 1927, pl. 43), today in Luxor Museum; or the reliefs which show Akhenaten as a sphinx presenting offerings to the sun disc (Paris Louvre E 15589 and Hannover, Kestner Museum Inv. 1964.3 and 1926.195, WARMENBOL 2006, 226–229, cat. 82–84).

<sup>4</sup> TEFNIN 1979a, 234–237; Id. 1979b, 75–77; LABOURY 1998, 431.



Ritual objects are usually quite rarely preserved and are mainly known from bas-reliefs in temples and tombs. We must keep in mind the difficulty to make the distinction in Egyptian iconography between the inclusion of elements which have to be considered as signs or symbols, and the depiction of actual objects, which were really part of the temple equipment. Nevertheless, it is tempting to associate these small sphinxes with the representations of the sacred barques, as we can see them in the hypostyle hall of Karnak (Fig. 15) or in the solar court of Sety I's temple in Qurna (Fig. 16–17). In these scenes, behind the front protome of the barque, several small-size figures stand, some of them facing the direction of the procession (two vertical goddesses figures, one sphinx standing on a standard), while the following ones are turned toward the shrine in the middle of the barque (a royal figure holding a fan, a royal figure kneeling,

and a human-handed sphinx presenting a vase).<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, one might expect perhaps more a metal figure as an adorning element of the sacred barque; if all the represented figures on the barque were in stone, the weight of the barque would have been considerable.<sup>6</sup> The same argument may be suggested for a mounting on a stick: the weight of the whole sphinx in stone, probably a few kilograms, might have been a bit too heavy for an ensign.

Another possibility would be the insertion of the sphinx into a base, perhaps for a piece like the base for a model of a temple forecourt, now in Brooklyn Museum.<sup>7</sup> Even if found in Tell el-Yahudiya, in the Delta, this famous object may have originally stood in Heliopolis, since its decorated sides show several figures of Sety I in the prostrating position, presenting offerings to the solar god of Heliopolis.

<sup>5</sup> Such a human-handed sphinx is attested on the sacred barque of Amun as early as the reign of Hatshepsut (Red Chapel, scene of the *Opet*-Festival, fifth station of the barque, cf. SCHWALLER DE LUBICZ 1982, 188, fig. 109; KARLSHAUSEN 2009, cat. 7a, pl. 3–4). It appears then almost systematically (numerous attestations, cf. KARLSHAUSEN 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Some of the metal or wooden sphinxes or statuettes of the king in an offering attitude, which are today in museum collections, may have been such adorning figures of the barque (e.g.: the standing sphinx of the British Museum EA 64556, bronze, H. 13 cm, cf. WARMENBOL 2006, 216–217, cat. 61; the kneeling statue of Thutmose III in the Metropolitan Museum of Art 1995.21, bronze, H. 13.1 cm, cf. HILL 2007, 2–3, 202, cat. 8, fig. 1, 87; the kneeling Tutankhamen, Penn. Museum E 14259, bronze, H. 20.6 cm, cf. HILL 2007, 25, 203, cat. 9, fig. 12).

<sup>7</sup> Brooklyn 49.183, quartzite, 24.1 × 111.8 × 86.4 cm (BADAWY 1972, 1–20; WARMENBOL 2006, 116–117, 187–188, cat. 15).

**Tab. 1:** List of sculptures in the round showing a sphinx with human arms.<sup>8</sup>

	<b>Current location and Inv. No.</b>	<b>Represented king</b>	<b>Dating criteria</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Provenance</b>	<b>Object(s) in hands</b>
1	Edinburgh NMS 1984.405	Merenra	Inscription	Steatite	3.2 × 1.8 × 5.7 cm	Heliopolis (according to the inscription)	nw-vases
2	Alexandria Nat. Mus. JE 36722-CG 42033	Amenhotep I	Style	Calcite-alabaster	22 × 25 × 43.5 cm	Karnak, Cachette	Vase
3	New York MMA 1972.125	Amenhotep III	Inscription	Faïence	13.7 × 7 × 25 cm	Unknown	<i>nw</i> -vases
4 5	Alexandria NM - 25792 + Karnak North 839	Amenhotep III (two sphinxes, with added name of Merenptah)	Inscription	Granodiorite	[Colossal]	Karnak-North	Offering table
6	Luxor Museum	Tutankhamen	Inscription	Calcite-alabaster	37 × 17.8 × 56.4 cm	Luxor Temple, Cachette	Altar
7	Luxor Museum J. 49 = Karnak OR 292	Tutankhamen	Style	Calcite-alabaster	53 × 38 × 95 cm	Karnak, Mut Temple, west side of the 1st courtyard	(missing)
8	Karnak, Amun Temple, courtyard between 1st and 2nd pylons	Tutankhamen - Horemhab	Style	Indurated limestone	[a bit smaller than "life-size"]	Karnak, Amun Temple	Cylindrical vase (Fig. 12)
9	Cairo JE 36811	Ramesses II	Inscription	Limestone	87 × 47 × 172 cm	Karnak, Cachette	Ram-headed vase
10	Cairo TR 2.11.24.2 (probably twin of JE 36811)	Ramesses II	Inscription	Limestone	88 × 50 × 100 cm	Probably Karnak, Cachette	Ram-headed vase
11	Cairo CG 42146	Ramesses II	Inscription	Limestone	19 × 10 × 37 cm	Karnak, Cachette	Ram-headed vase
12	Cairo SR G/328	Ramesses II	Inscription	Quartzite	[a bit smaller than "life-size"]	Tell el-Maskhuta	(missing)
13	Cairo, east of Bab el-Nasr, reused in a reconstructed postern	Ramesses II	Inscription	Quartzite	[a bit smaller than "life-size"]	Cairo, east of Bab el-Nasr, reused in a postern	Offering table (Fig. 14)
14	Cairo JE 27849 – CG 1211	Ramesses II	Inscription	Quartzite	60 × 54 × 154 cm	Mit Rahina, east temple	Vase

<sup>8</sup> This list is the result of a preliminary research conducted for the publication of the little human-handed sphinx from Matariya, and cannot be considered as a definite and exhaustive list.



Tab. 1 (continued)

15	Mit Rahina, Museum, Inv. No. 26	Ramesses II	Inscription	Quartzite	[a bit smaller than "life-size"]		(missing)
16	Alexandria 20307	Sety II	Inscription	Alabaster / calcite	40 × 17.5 × 48 cm	Unknown	Statue of the god Ptah
17	Alexandria 20308	Sety II	Inscription	Alabaster / calcite	36 × 14 × 52.5 cm	Unknown	Offering table
18	Karnak, Amun Temple, down the slope of the landing stage	New Kingdom (?)	Style	Sandstone	[a bit smaller than "life-size"]	Karnak, Amun Temple, down the slope of the landing stage	Vase
19	Split, palace of Diocletian	25th Dyn. (?)	Style	Granodiorite	100 × 65 × 246 cm	Split, palace of Diocletian	Vase
20	Berlin, ÄM 7972	Shepenupet II	Inscription	Granodiorite	46 × 25 × 82 cm	Karnak, sacred lake of Amun	Ram-headed vase
21	Cairo CG 42201	Shepenupet II	Inscription	Granodiorite	42.3 × 24.6 × 50.5 cm	Karnak, Cachette	Ram-headed vase
22	Paris, Louvre E 3914	Siamun	Inscription	Copper alloy	4.7 × 10.3 cm	Unknown (Tanis?)	Offering table
23	Paris, Louvre N 515	Apries	Inscription	Copper alloy	19.5 × 12.8 × 45 cm	Unknown	Probably vase

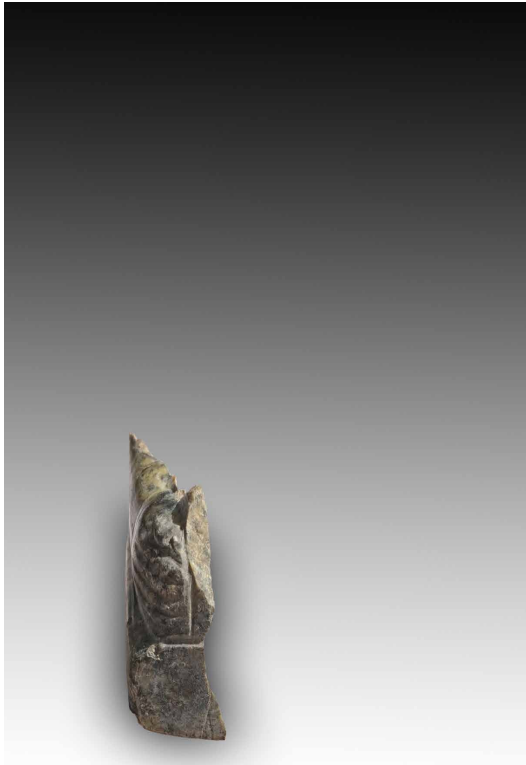


Fig. 1:  
Fragment  
of Merenptah's  
human-handed sphinx  
[Inv. No. U3082-4]  
(Front view, photo:  
S. Connor).



Fig. 2:  
Fragment  
of Merenptah's  
human-handed sphinx  
[Inv. No. U3082-4  
and U3125-2]  
(Front view, photo-  
montage: S. Connor).

6.2.1



**Fig. 3:**  
Fragment  
of Merenptah's  
human-handed sphinx  
[Inv. No. U3125-2]  
(Front view, photo:  
S. Connor).



**Fig. 4:**  
Fragment  
of Merenptah's  
human-handed sphinx  
[Inv. No. U3082-4]  
(3/4 view, photo:  
S. Connor).



**Fig. 5:**  
Fragment  
of Merenptah's  
human-handed sphinx  
[Inv. No. U3082-4  
and U3125-2]  
(right profile view,  
photomontage:  
S. Connor).



**Fig. 6:**  
Fragment  
of Merenptah's  
human-handed sphinx  
[Inv. No. U3082-4]  
(Right profile view,  
photo: S. Connor).



**Fig. 7:**  
Fragment  
of Merenptah's  
human-handed sphinx  
[Inv. No. U3125-2]  
(Right profile view,  
photo: S. Connor).

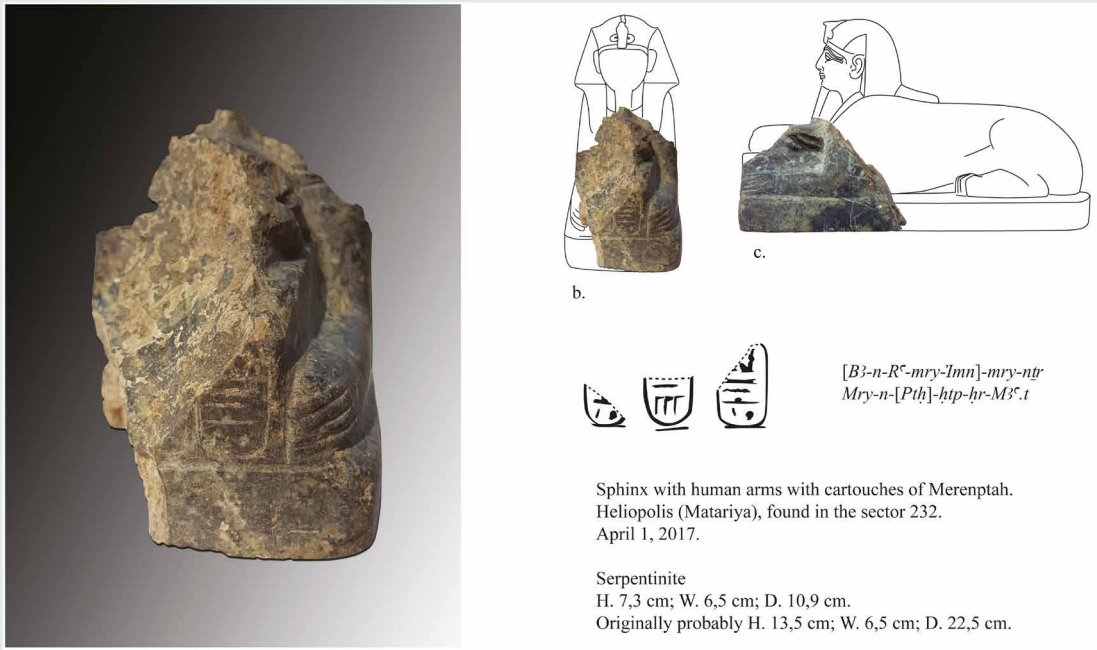


**Fig. 8:**  
Fragment  
of Merenptah's  
human-handed sphinx  
[Inv. No. U3082-4]  
(Left profile view,  
photo: S. Connor).



**Fig. 9:**  
Fragment  
of Merenptah's  
human-handed sphinx  
[Inv. No. U3082-4]  
(Bottom view,  
photo: S. Connor).





**Fig. 10:**  
Fragment  
of Merenptah's  
human-handed sphinx  
[Inv. No. U3082-4]  
(Photos and recon-  
struction: S. Connor).



**Fig. 11:**  
Human-handed sphinx of Ramesses  
II from Memphis, Cairo, Egyptian  
Museum CG 1211  
(Photo: S. Connor).



6.2.1



**Fig. 12:**  
Human-handed  
sphinx of Tutankhamun, Ay or Horemheb, Karnak (Photo: S. Connor).



**Fig. 13:**  
Human-handed  
sphinx of Sety II,  
Karnak (Photo: S. Connor).

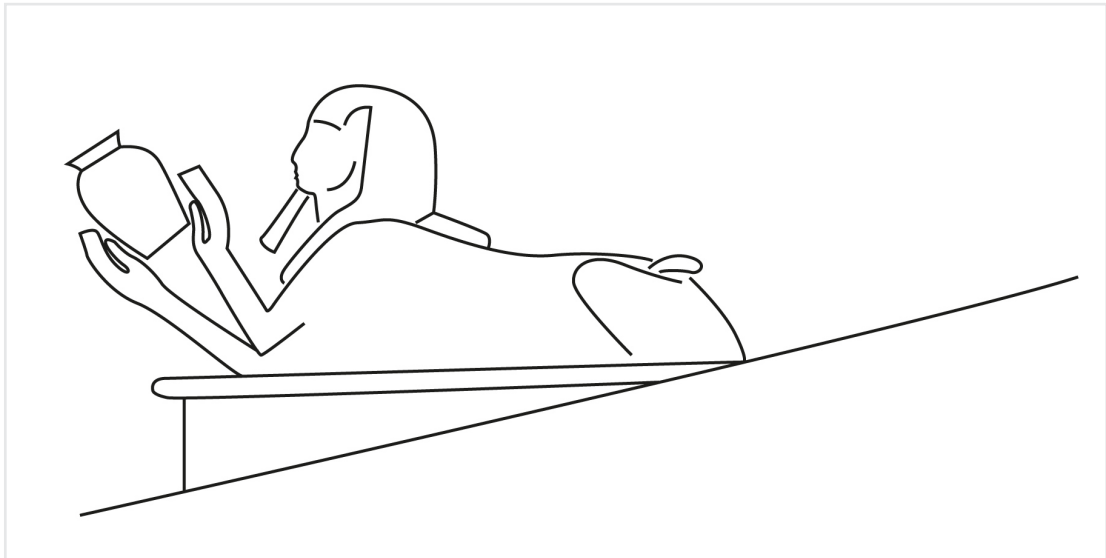


**Fig. 14:**  
Human-handed  
sphinx of Ramesses II,  
from Cairo, Bab el-Nasr, now: Matariya  
Open Air Museum  
(Photo: S. Connor).



**Fig. 15:**  
Karnak, hypostyle  
hall, north wall  
(Photo: S. Connor).

6.2.1



**Fig. 16:**  
Karnak, hypostyle  
hall, north wall  
(Detail; photo:  
S. Connor).



**Fig. 17:**  
Qurna, temple of  
Sety I, solar court,  
north wall (Photo:  
S. Connor).



**Fig. 18:**  
Qurna, temple of Sety  
I, solar court, north  
wall (Detail, photo:  
S. Connor).

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