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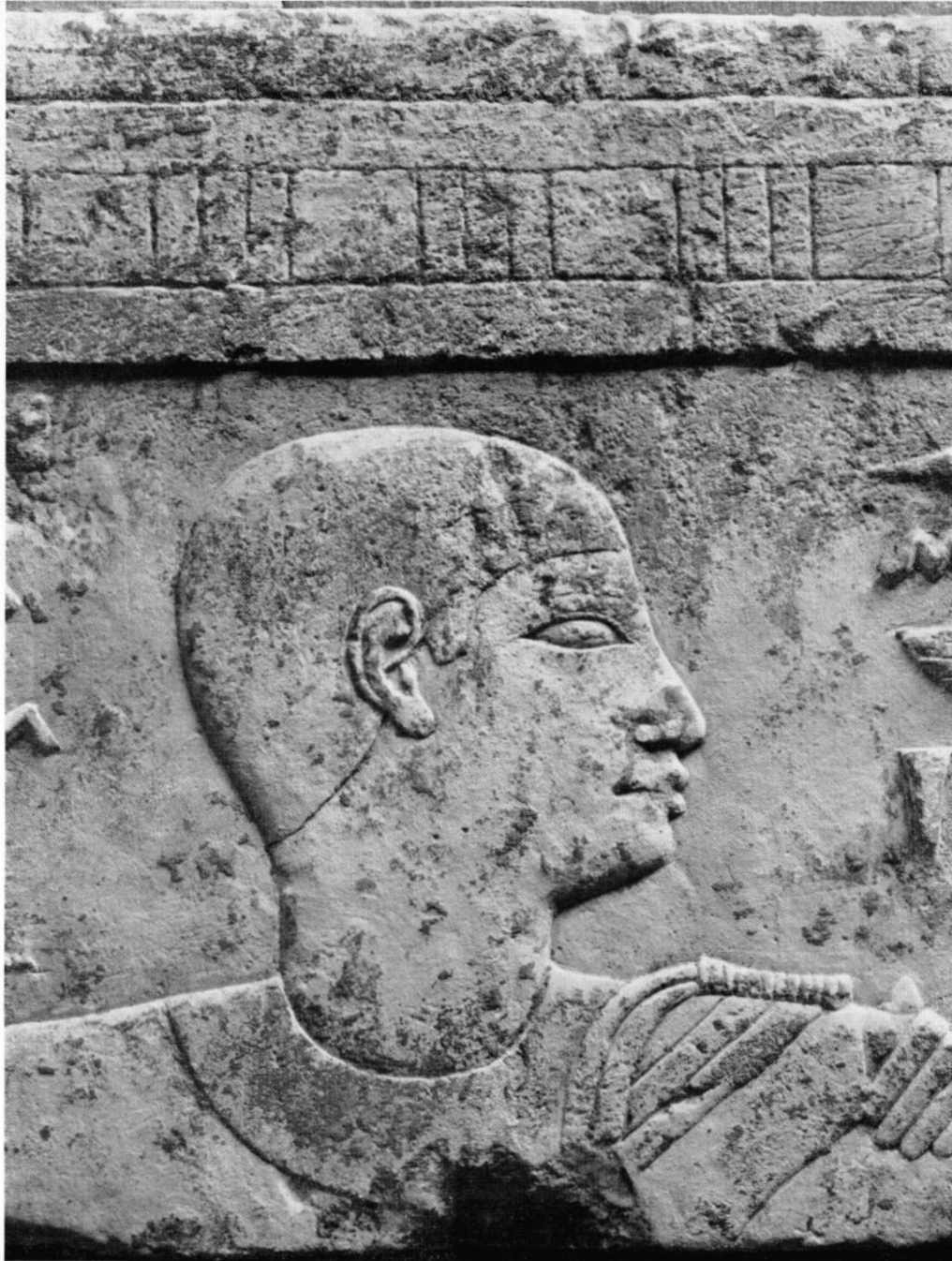


Fig. 1. Detail of Dynasty XXV Relief

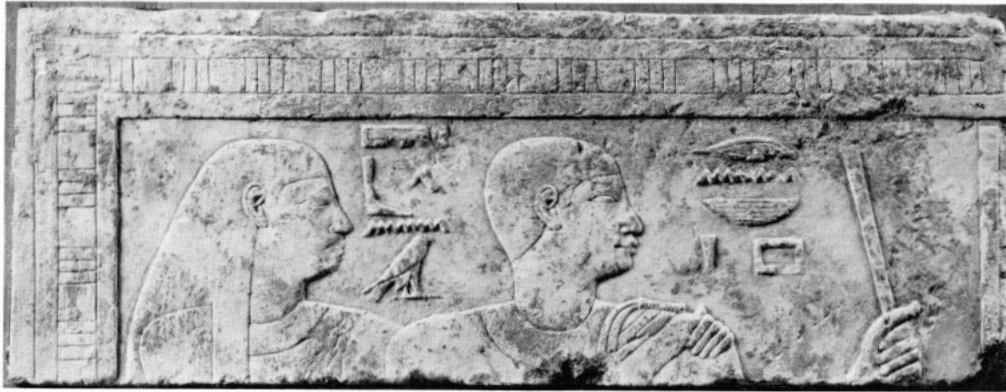


Fig. 2. Relief. Dynasty XXV

John Wheelock Elliot Fund (54.47)

A LATE REFLECTION OF AN OLD KINGDOM RELIEF

IN the second half of the Eighth Century B.C. there was a renewal of Egyptian art which was apparently stimulated by the uniting of the country under the rule of the Kushite kings from the Sudan which constituted Dynasty XXV. This continued into the Saite Period (Dynasty XXVI). A time of particularly significant artistic activity seems to have occurred in the middle of the Seventh Century just before and after the Assyrian invasion. People turned back to the models of earlier times both in literature and art. In spite of these archaistic and eclectic tendencies, there is a new strength and vigor, a freshness of approach, which justifies the term of renaissance which has been applied to this period.

The recently acquired limestone relief illustrated here¹ is a fine example of the adaptation of an Old Kingdom model nearly two

thousand years earlier than the present version of the subject. The position of the man and his mother, the fashion of wearing the hair and the details of the knots which fasten the woman's dress and the shoulder tie of the man's garment are all copied from a tomb relief of the Pyramid Age. Although the superficial resemblance is striking, there is a considerable difference in spirit. The earthy, peasant quality of the faces differs from the youthful look and fine-drawn, aristocratic profiles of the Dynasty IV heads. These people belong to a type that was prevalent at the end of the Kushite regime, as does the form of the mother's name, "The Mistress of the House Sheben-hor." The excellent cutting of the relief in the soft limestone conveys a sense of life which is often lost in the brilliant dexterity with which the sculptors of late times handled the harder stones.

WILLIAM STEVENSON SMITH

¹Acc. No. 54.47. John Wheelock Elliot Fund. Height 14.7 cm.; width 39.4 cm.