

Ancient Egypt



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Egyptian stone vessels in the Field Museum collection: A) limestone vase with separately made rim, Archaic period, #173261; B) lapis lazuli vase, Naqada II, #30704; C) serpentine vase with gold handles, Archaic period, #30702; D) flint lunate scraper of the type used to hollow out stone vases, Fayum neolithic period, #216417; E) diorite unfinished stone vessel, dynastic, #31557; F) malachite vase, Naqada III, #30712; G) serpentine miniature lentoid flask, #30748; H) red breccia vase, Naqada III, #31750; I) imperial porphyry jar, Naqada III, #30677; J) diorite jar, Archaic period, #30686; K) red breccia jar, Naqada II, #105154; L) basalt vase with trumpet foot, Naqada I, #31742; M) limestone cylindrical vase, Archaic period, #173287; N) quartz-diorite bowl, Archaic period, #30671. (For explanation of historic periods, see time line, page 4, and discussion in "Predynastic Egypt," pp. 7-12, by Peter Lacovara.) Photo by Ron Testa.

In the Shadow of the Pyramid

An Introduction to the Exhibit

by DONALD WHITCOMB

FOR MANY VISITORS to the Field Museum, those who were brought by their parents and now bring their own children, the display of Egyptian antiquities in the Field Museum has taken on a permanence and unchangeability which is very appropriate for ancient Egypt. Indeed, most of the Egyptian Hall, Hall J, has not changed in content or style of display since the 1930s.

However, the science of Egyptology has progressed enormously in the last fifty years; likewise, there have been major developments in both the style and aims of exhibition techniques. The modern museum has become a much more educational facility than its antecedent of several generations ago. When Field Museum's Egyptian Hall was first organized, it was assumed that the public would

come and "appreciate" the objects, enjoying their esthetic qualities and the opportunity of seeing rare historic artifacts. Today this is not enough; we seek to form an understanding of what we look at, and try to comprehend the life of these ancient peoples as reflected in the objects and monuments which they left.

Thus, when E. Leland Webber (then Field Museum president) approached me almost one year ago with a longstanding dream of opening Field Museum's two Old Kingdom tomb chapels from Saqqara, near Djoser's step pyramid, I greeted the project with enthusiasm. Such a reinstallation would give us the opportunity to modernize at last the archaic displays of predynastic through Old Kingdom materials in Field Museum's Egyptian Collection.

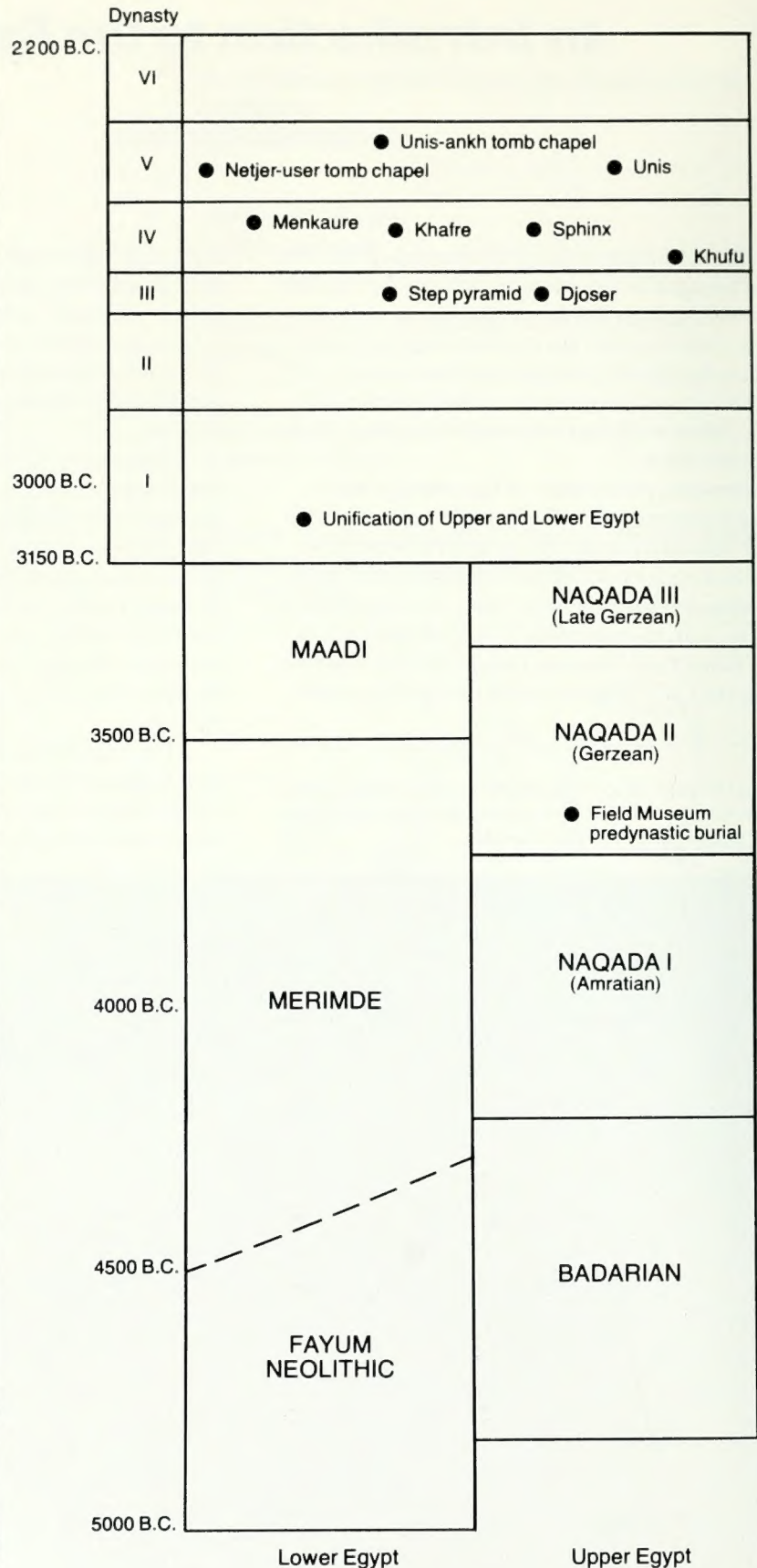
This reinstallation consists of two parts. First, glass is placed directly in front of the reliefs on the chapel walls so that wherever possible the rooms can be opened to the public. By actually entering

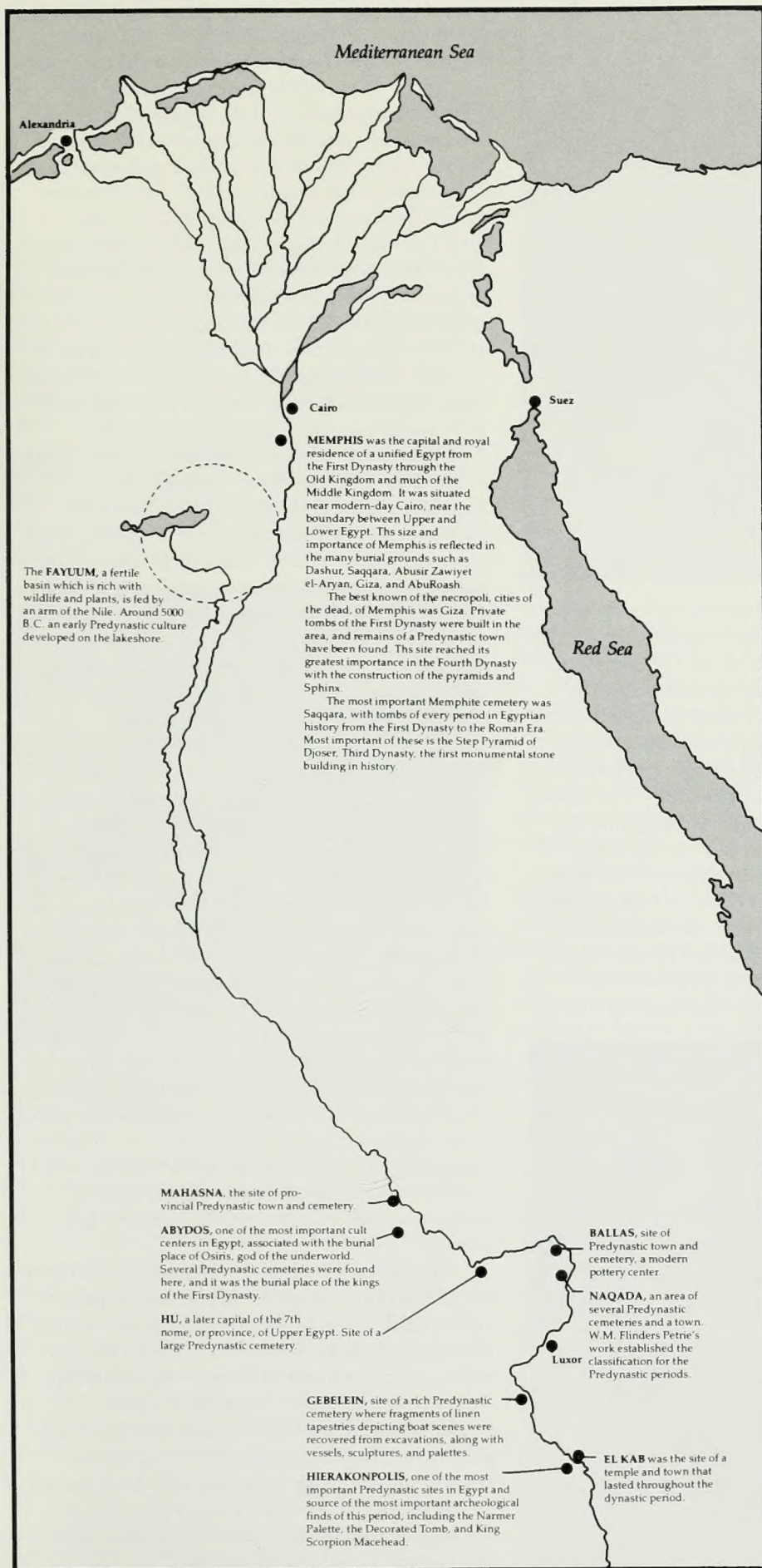
Donald Whitcomb is a research fellow at the Smithsonian Institution and was formerly assistant curator of Middle Eastern archeology at Field Museum.



The step pyramid of Djoser, at Saqqara, Egypt, built during Dynasty III. Arrow to lower right shows location of tomb of Unis-ankh. Upper left arrow indicates location of tomb of Netjer-user. Portions of both tombs were acquired by Field Museum in 1909 and now, for the first time, are being opened to public view in Hall J. Photo by James H. Breasted, Jr., 1933-34. Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. 3

Ancient Egypt 5000-2200 B.C.

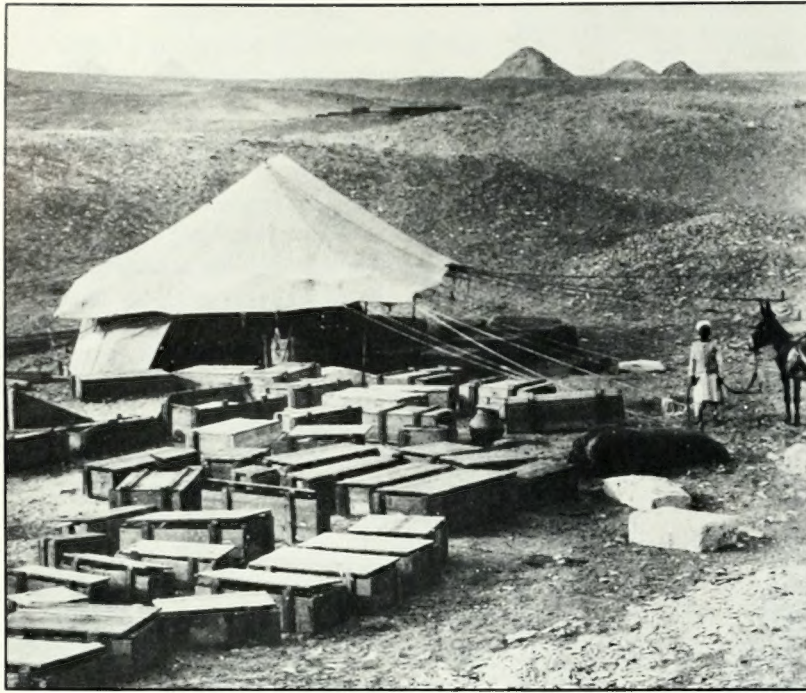




the rooms of the tomb chapels, the Museum visitor will gain a much better understanding of the tomb as architectural space.

The second part of the reinstallation focuses on the objects in the collection. The artifacts from Ancient Egypt in the Egyptian Hall have long been arranged in a sort of typology with, for instance, all the alabaster vases in one case, all the usheb-ties (servant figurines placed in the tombs) in another, canopic jars in another, and so forth. This style of presentation is useful for the archeologist who uses stylistic trends for chronological and regional differentiations, but such an arrangement also removes the objects from their original, natural association with one another. The Oriental Institute Museum of the University of Chicago has a very handsome typological display from which the student of Egyptian archeology may learn much. The purpose of the Field Museum Egyptian Hall, however, is not to teach archeology but to explore and explain for the viewer the environmental and cultural history of this part of the ancient world. The two approaches are complementary, and ideally the Field Museum, with its great collections of fauna and flora as well as artifacts, is ideally suited to study the broad interconnections of land and people. This goal can be simply realized by providing a large map of Egypt and a time line chart to orient the visitor geographically and chronologically. Likewise, in the reinstalled exhibit, a photo of the Step Pyramid of Djoser with two arrows indicating the two Field Museum tomb sites dramatically demonstrates the relationship of this pyramid with the tombs, which were located almost literally in the pyramid's shadow.

The exhibition begins with the prehistoric period, before the unification of all of Egypt under one ruler, when groups settled in villages along the Nile, adding irrigation agriculture to hunting and fishing economies. During this predynastic period, the characteristic Egyptian culture would coalesce and political unity under the pharaoh began to develop. In the predynastic alcove one sees a naturally mummified burial. Natural mummification led, indirectly, to the art of mummification. The alcove's pottery and stone vessels reflect the high standards of craftsmanship and art which led to elaborate Old Kingdom tombs, just as the ideas and hieroglyphic symbols of this early period anticipate



Above: Tomb segments, dismantled, ready for shipment to the United States. About 1909.

the Old Kingdom concepts of kingship and divine order. The predynastic alcove is a necessary prelude to understanding the tombs of the Old Kingdom.

The two Field Museum tombs are offering chapels, not actual burial chambers. The reliefs are mainly of offering processions, with the good things of this life piled in abundance for the eternal happiness of the deceased. To facilitate the visitor's understanding of this ritual, the hieroglyphic inscriptions, both prayers and captions above the figures, are translated into English wherever possible. In addition, objects dating to the Old Kingdom—many actually identical with ones depicted on the walls of the tombs—have been placed in the tomb chapels of Netjer-user and Unis-ankh.

Such tomb chapels, as an expression of the

development of the state in Old Kingdom Egypt, are an official art resulting from a highly complex, stratified society. While these chapels and the royal pyramids are symbolic of the height of power, they also serve as a qualitative contrast to the basic culture of Egypt. This basic culture is embodied in the rural agricultural village culture, which has continued from ancient times almost to the present day. This agricultural setting, tied with the annual flood of the Nile, is the focus of one of the newly organized cases adjoining the Old Kingdom tomb chapels. Aspects of this life along the Nile are depicted in many tombs. Touchable plaster casts of two such reliefs from the tomb of Ptah-hotep (also from Saqqara and approximately contemporary with Netjer-user) have been included in the reinstallation to alleviate the frustration of visitors to the glass-protected tomb chapels. The first Ptah-hotep relief depicts activities which took place on the river edge: papyrus boatmaking, rope-making, and fish drying. The second relief shows a mock combat as frivolous boatmen try to knock each other into the water; meanwhile, the sculptor of the tomb enjoys the tableau and takes some refreshment after his labors. The scenes are a celebration of the well-ordered life of work and bounty which the Nile has provided for millennia.

The purpose of the reinstallation of the predynastic and Old Kingdom artifacts and the opening of the tombs is twofold: First, to bring about an understanding of this remote and mysterious culture, which has intrigued and excited the imagination since the arrival of the first ancient Greek tourists in Egypt. Secondly, we hope to enhance the appreciation of ancient Egyptian craftsmanship and artistry—we come to praise the ancient Egyptians. The tomb chapels now can be visited and, thereby, as Unis-ankh and Netjer-user had intended, their memory is preserved. In a way, their lives and accomplishments are celebrated by a posterity whom they could scarcely have imagined. The dignity and rhythm of their lives on the banks of the Nile have, in a mysterious way, an effect on the quality of our own lives; there is a deepening and broadening of our experience through the continuing existence of these monuments and artifacts.

The exhibition, then, is a reorganization of the Field Museum artifacts of the predynastic period and the Old Kingdom, centered around the tombs. It is our hope that this will eventually be followed by the reorganization of the entire Egyptian hall, with a progression of chronological sections and predominant cultural themes such as religion and politics. It is hoped that the vision of E. Leland Webber and the many specialists who have worked on this project might find its fruit in a new understanding of ancient Egypt on the part of members and visitors to the Field Museum. □

Below: Portion of the Egyptian Hall, in the Museum's original building, in Jackson Park. About 1900. Since that time, museum exhibits have been designed to instruct, rather than simply entertain, please the museum-goer's eye, and satisfy his curiosity.



Predynastic Egypt

by PETER LACOVARA

EGYPT, FOR MOST PEOPLE, brings to mind Cleopatra, Tutankhamun, or the Sphinx and Pyramids; however, the most significant period in the development of Egyptian civilization, greatly antedating these, was probably the two thousand years that preceded the unification of Egypt into a single state, which occurred about 3150 B.C.

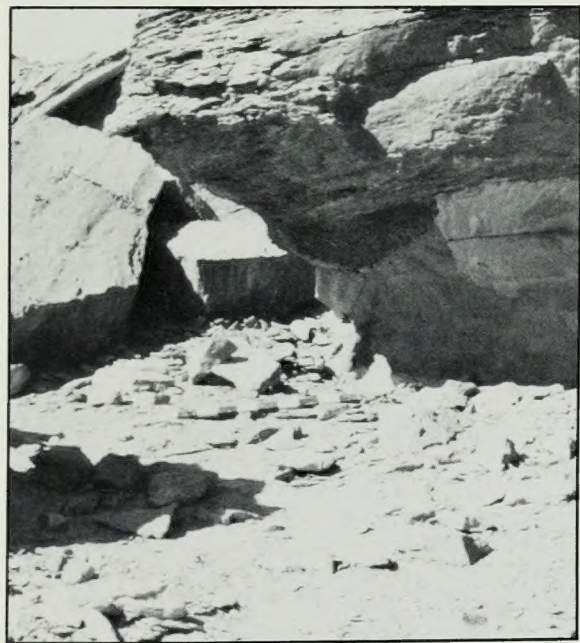
Though the Nile Valley was home to a number of Paleolithic and Epipaleolithic peoples, some of them quite advanced, the connection between these groups and the Neolithic cultures of the predynastic period remains a mystery. It has been

end of the last century Petrie excavated the site of Naqada, near modern Luxor, and eventually realized that the objects he had uncovered predated any period that was previously recognized in Egypt. By organizing the pottery from individual burials on the basis of style and technological development he was able to place the grave groups in chronological order and successfully date them long before the development of modern methods of absolute dating such as Carbon 14.

The predynastic period in Upper Egypt has been divided into four main stages. Stage I is known as the Badarian (*ca.* 4800-4200 B.C.) and is characterized by black-topped bowls with a carefully polished surface and household pottery which shows Nubian influence.

Stage II, the Naqada I, or Amratian Period (*ca.* 4200-3700 B.C.), continued Badarian traditions; these included pottery with a polished red surface and black band around the mouth in a new variety of shapes and forms (fig. 3) as well as plain red pottery, which was occasionally decorated with white pigment.

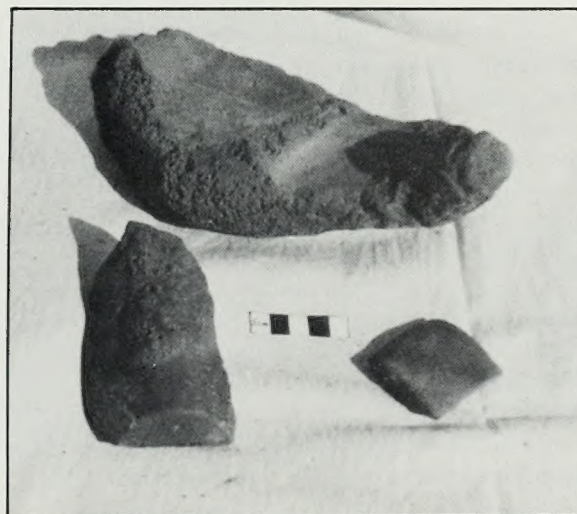
The black top on the pottery resulted from firing in a simple "bonfire kiln": Sun-dried pots were stacked upside down in a sheltered area with a strong draft (fig. 1) and covered with a pile of animal dung that served both as the kiln superstructure and the fuel itself. Since the mouth of the pot rested in the ashes, it was not oxidized during firing but remained black, while the carbon was burnt out of the exposed surface, which turned red. This technique was no doubt accidental at



suggested that severe floods may have decimated the indigenous population, leaving the valley open to migrants from the west or elsewhere.

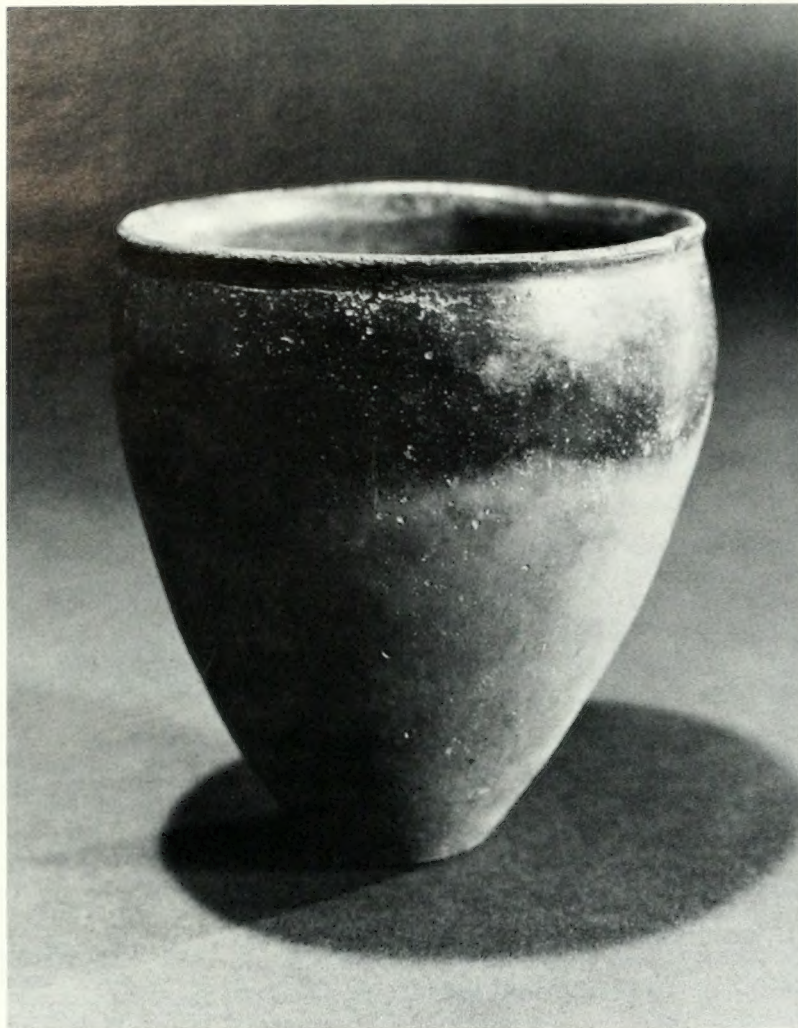
Whatever the case, between 5000 and 4500 B.C., several settled agricultural communities appeared in the areas of the Delta, Fayum, and Upper (southern) Egypt. Much more is known about the area of Upper Egypt because of the concentration of archeological work in that area.

Our picture of the predynastic period is based principally on the work of Sir Flinders Petrie and another English archeologist, Guy Brunton. At the



1. (Above) Sun-dried pots were stacked upside-down in a sheltered area with a strong draft and covered with a pile of animal dung that served both as the kiln superstructure and as the fuel itself.

2. (Below) Temperature regulation in the primitive kilns was difficult, so that overfiring occurred, producing partially melted pots, or "wasters."



3. (Above) Black-topped vase with indented rim from Naqada. Gift of Sir Flinders Petrie. Early Naqada. Height 16 cm. #31467.

4. (Right) Cylindrical black-topped vase from Abydos, Naqada II. Height 25.5 cm. #175999.

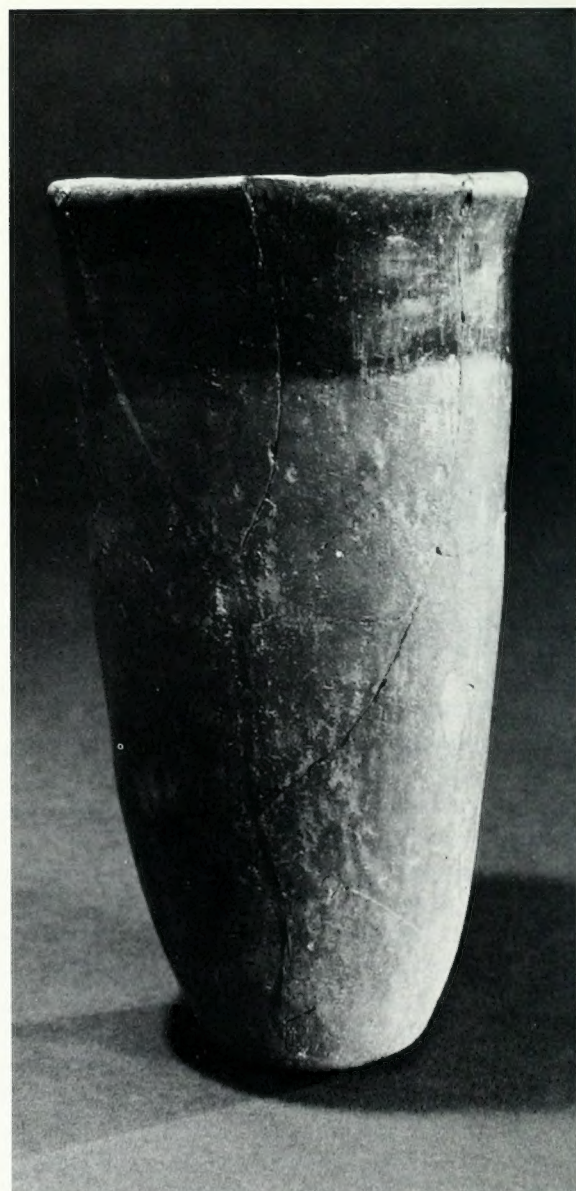
first, but became intentional because of the pleasing color combination that resulted. Temperature regulation was difficult in these kilns, so that overfiring occurred, producing partially melted pots, or "wasters" (fig. 2).

Ceramic production became more sophisticated in stage III, the Naqada II, or Gerzean Period (ca. 3700-3300 B.C.). Black-topped pottery continued to be produced but in more complex forms with constricted mouths and rolled rims (fig. 4). In addition to Nile mud a new type of clay, derived from desert marls, came into use. This clay, when fired, produced a tan or buff surface that was sometimes decorated with representational and abstract designs in red paint (fig. 5). More sophisticated kilns were developed, and in Naqada III (stage IV) we see beginnings of mass production in rough straw-tempered wares (fig. 6). Pots sometimes were marked with signs which may have indicated ownership, intended use, or place of production. The rims of some were occasionally turned on a mat or rotating base, then joined to the hand-made body of the pot. Wheel-made pottery does not appear in quantity until the Old Kingdom, with the finely made vessels of the so-called "Meydum Ware" (fig. 7).

Pottery was eventually overtaken by the producers of stone vessels. Although they occur in earlier periods, stone vessels were never as common as in the Gerzean (stage I) nor were they found in as many different shapes or materials (see front cover).

Even though stone vessels were made from extremely hard stones such as basalt, porphyry, and granite, metal tools were not generally used to work the stones. The desired shape was roughed out with a pick and the surface smoothed down and polished with a quartz sand abrasive. The interior was hollowed out with a lunate-shaped flint attached to a drill with weights; these provided added pressure and increased momentum as the drill was turned (fig. 10). After drilling the interior was sometimes trimmed down further by scraping and, in the case of plates and bowls, polished smooth.

The refinement of the stone-carving craft is



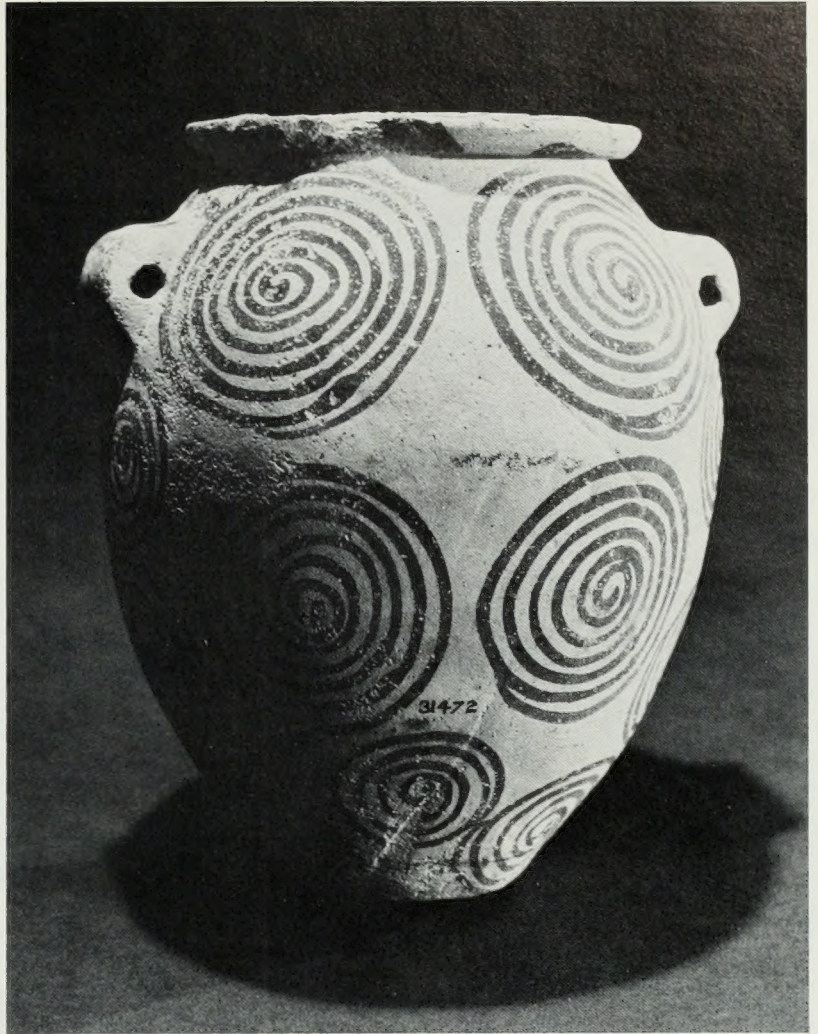
illustrated by the numerous thin-walled plates and bowls produced in the late predynastic and archaic periods. Vessels were occasionally produced with rims or bases cut from a separate piece of stone and fitted exactly to the body of the vessel.

While they are occasionally found in settlements, the majority of these vessels appear to have been made entirely for funerary purposes; as many as 40,000 were found in a single storeroom of the step pyramid at Saqqara.

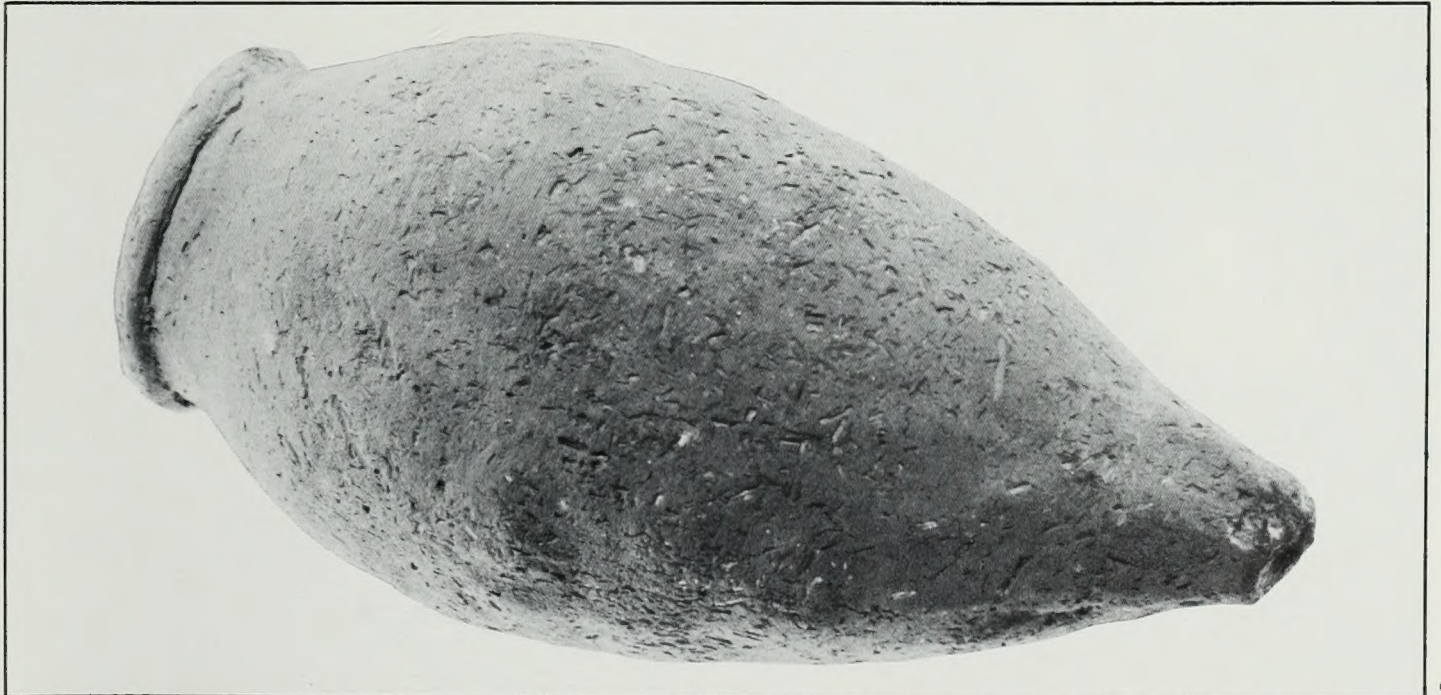
Not only were stone vases made specifically as grave goods, so were certain kinds of pottery and flint tools. The elaborate ritual surrounding burial in the predynastic period foreshadows the funerary customs of dynastic Egypt.

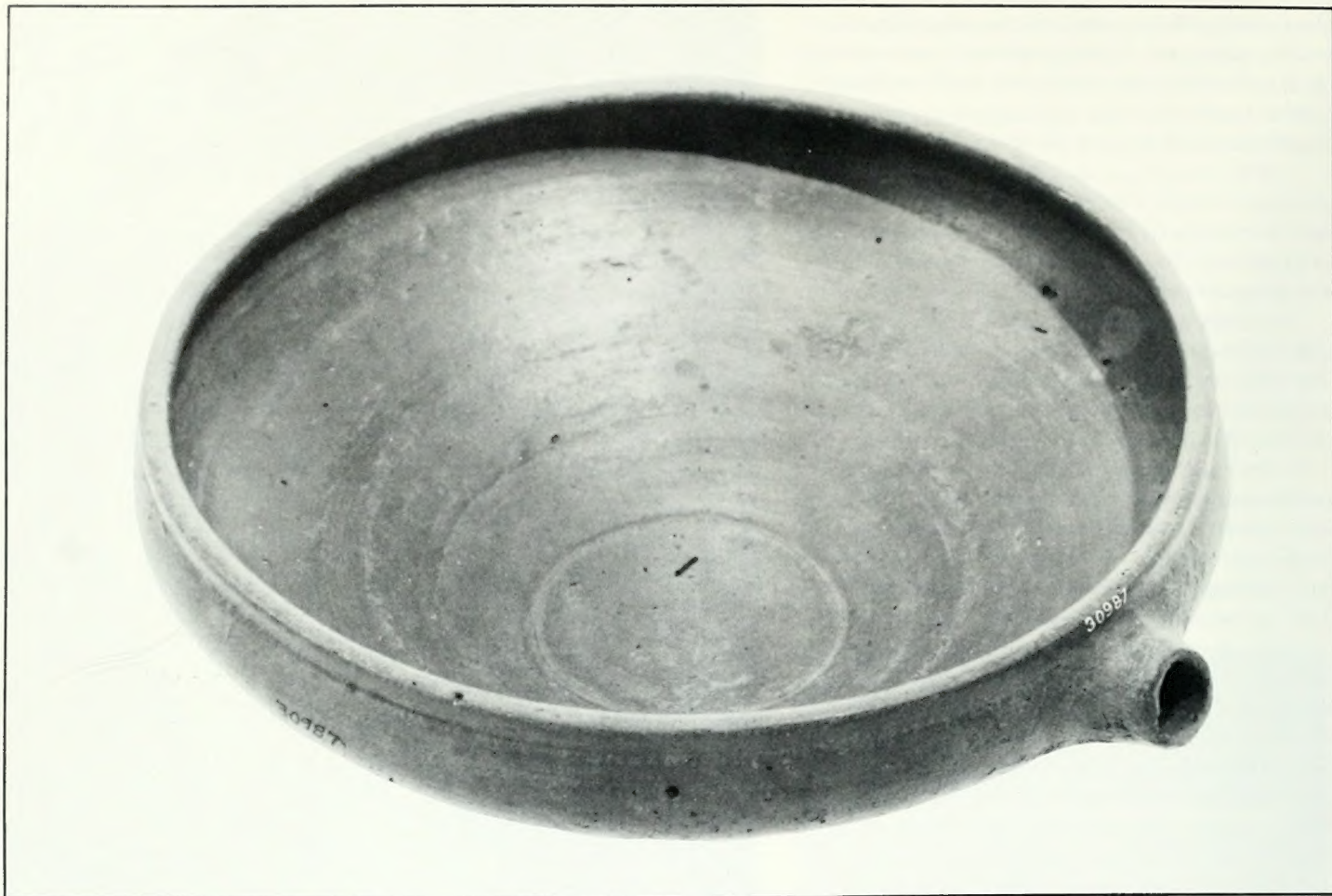
Jewelry, weapons, cosmetic palettes, animal and human figurines, and foodstuffs, as well as stone vessels and pottery, were often included in predynastic graves. The corpse was interred in a fetal position, most often on the left side and facing west; occasionally it was wrapped in a straw mat or a linen sheet and placed in an oval grave, which was then covered with a simple mound of earth and stones. Village cemeteries, as today, were usually located on the desert edge of the valley (fig. 12). Though remarkably well preserved, the bodies so interred were not mummified, and their condition is due entirely to the dryness of the climate and the dessicating sands of the desert.

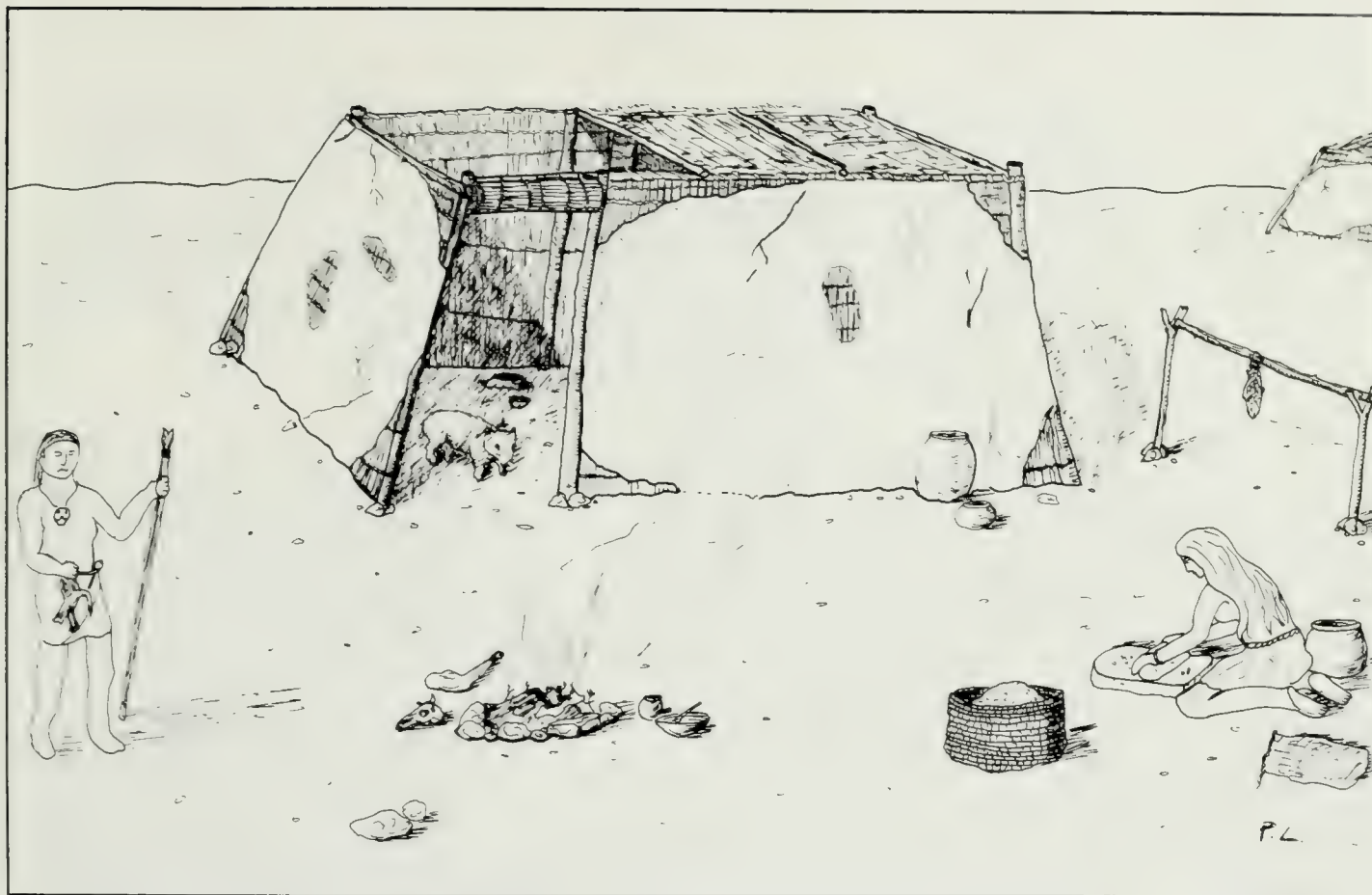
Even after well over a century of excavation, we still know far less about how the ancient Egyptians lived than how they were buried. A few small villages of various periods have been discovered, but they are far from representative of what a flood-plain town must have been like. Houses were built on a framework of posts against which mud plas-



5. (Above) Buff ware jar with spiral design in red pigment. Naqada II. Height 16.5 cm. #31472. 6. (Below) rough straw-tempered ware vase with pointed base. Naqada III. Height 16.5 cm. #31470.





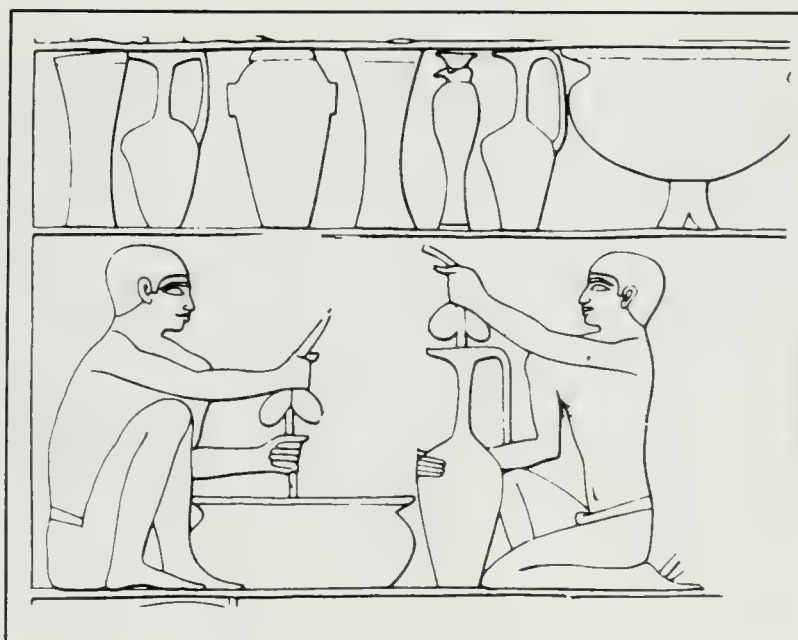


tered reed mats were set. These houses most often consisted of a single room with an open courtyard in front (fig. 9). Cooking and most domestic activities were conducted outside, with the interior of the hut reserved for sleeping and possibly animal keeping. More substantial structures of brick and timber have recently been uncovered at Hierakonpolis, the site of the largest surviving town of the predynastic period.

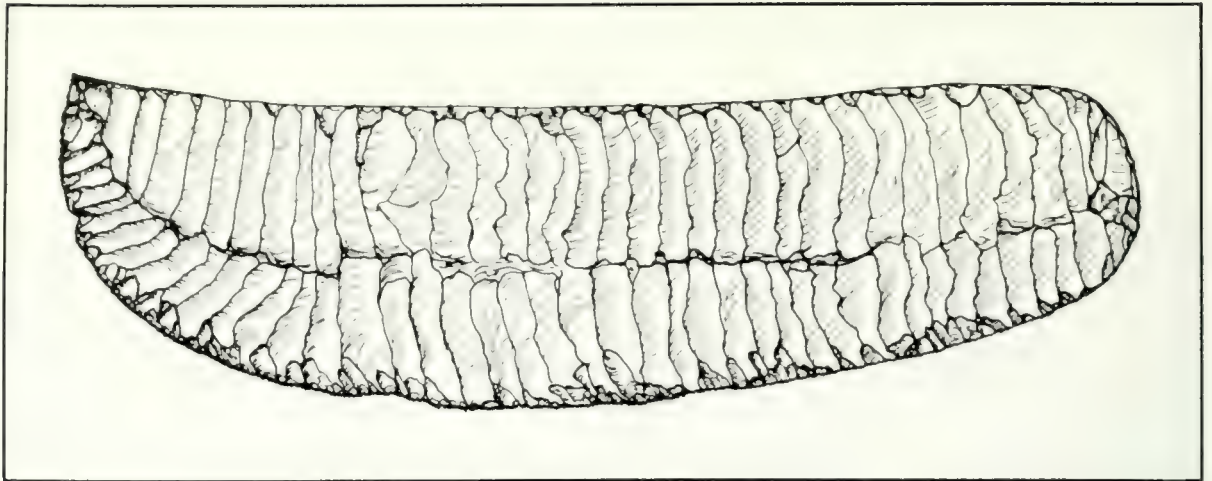
Most of these villages were agricultural, wheat and barley being the principal crops. Farming depended on the annual flooding of the Nile, which occurred from July to December. When the river retreated, the water left in low-lying areas provided for continued irrigation. Crops were harvested in the spring and seed grain was stored until the next winter planting. The soil was tilled with wooden hoes set with flint blades, and grain was harvested with wooden sickles set with serrated flint blades (fig. 8). Additional objects of flint included arrowheads of various types, adzes, knives, and even representations of birds and animals. The most impressive productions of the flint knapper's art were the beautifully ripple-flaked knives of the late predynastic period. These knives were chipped to roughly the desired shape and then ground smooth and serially pressure flaked along one side to form the rippled surface (fig. 11). That these knives were often set with gold or ivory handles indicates the high value placed upon them. Eventually the

7. (Left, above) wheel-made redware spouted bowl. Old Kingdom. Height 10 cm. #30987. 8. (Left, below) l. to r.: redware bowl, Naqada III, #288349; pottery jar with plant motif, #31473; flint sickle blade set in reconstructed haft, Fayum neolithic, #200423; buff-ware storage jar, Naqada III, #31483; flint hoe blade, Fayum neolithic, #219280.

9. (Above) Reconstruction of Predynastic wattle and daub house. 10. (Below) Stone vase-making scene from the mastaba of Mereruka, Saqqara.



11. Ripple flake flint knife, 3300-3150 B.C.
#30783.



growing importance of metal tools eclipsed the chipped-stone industry, but flint tools continued to be made throughout much of dynastic Egypt.

Cereals, used in bread and beer, were the mainstay of the Egyptian diet and supplemented with fruits and vegetables, both cultivated and wild. Cattle, pigs, sheep, and goats were domesticated, and fish and game were hunted in the marshes and in the desert. Analysis of the contents of the stomach of a predynastic Egyptian body has disclosed a last meal which included cereals, a rodent, and insects.

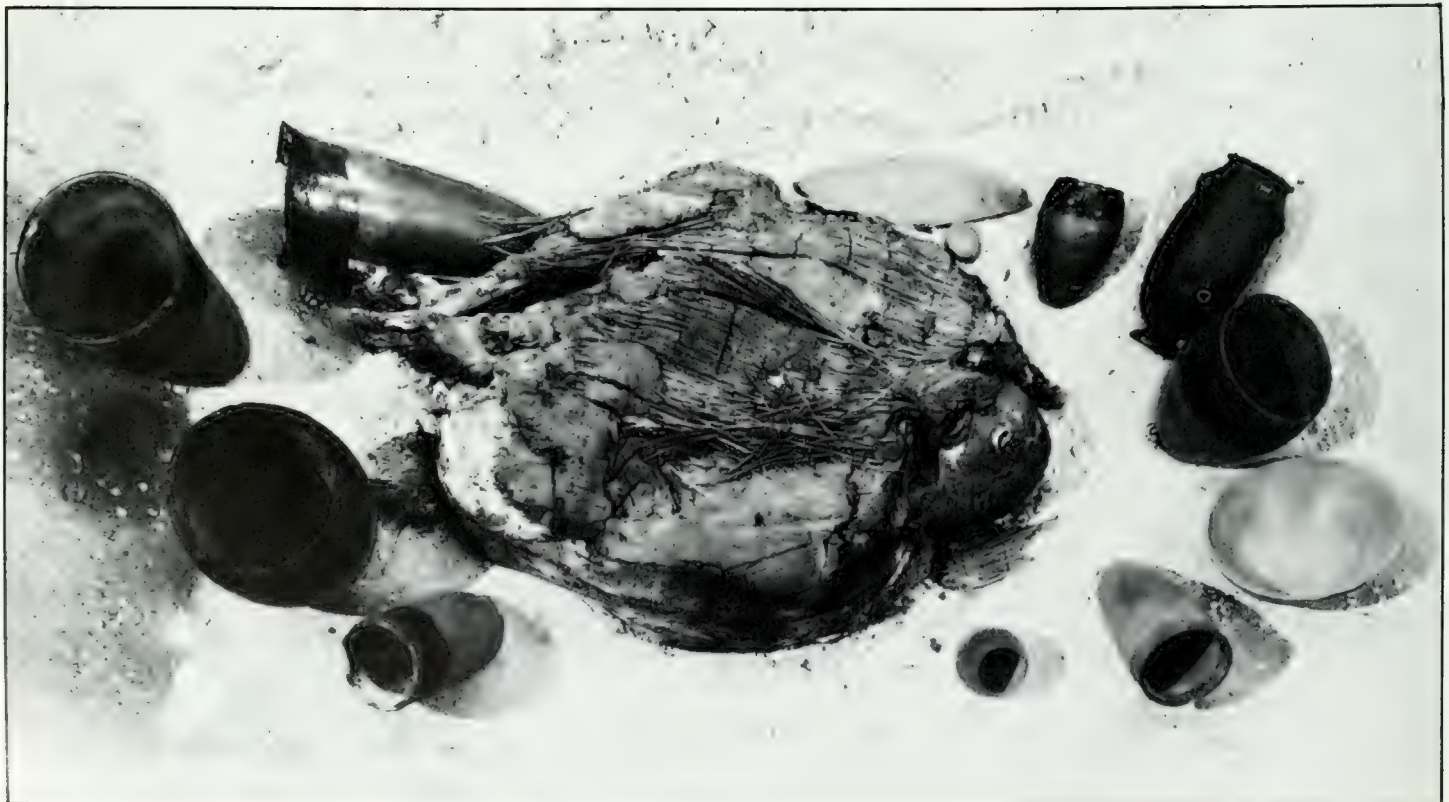
Besides farming, some predynastic towns engaged in trade and others became ceremonial centers. Larger settlements such as Abydos, Naqada, and Hierakonpolis must have exercised considerable influence, and indeed remained

important religious centers throughout much of later Egyptian history.

Community leaders and elites were buried in increasingly larger and more richly furnished tombs, indicating growing social stratification. Associated with some of these individuals were symbols later connected with the kingship in pharaonic Egypt, as for example the falcon, the red crown of lower Egypt, found at Naqada; and the white crown of Upper Egypt, found at Hierakonpolis.

Eventually these groups were unified into a single state, probably by the pharaoh Narmer, who chose the area around modern Cairo for his new capital, Memphis. The founding of Memphis marks the end of the predynastic period, the beginning of written history in Egypt, and the creation of the dynastic state.

12. Predynastic burial scene, reconstructed. This naturally dessicated "mummy" was purchased in Egypt by Edward E. Ayer and is here grouped with objects bought by Ayer and pottery excavated at Naqada by W.M.F. Petrie. The objects date to the beginning of the Naqada II period (ca. 3700 B.C.) and represent what a moderately wealthy grave group would contain.



PAINTINGS FROM THE TOMB OF NAKHT AT THEBES

By WILLIAM J. MURNANE

"Beautify your house in the cemetery, enrich your place in the West." The ancient Egyptians' belief in the continuity of life after death is the basis for this advice; for even though they knew that "no one can return from there," they also believed that the next world could be enjoyed on terms similar to those of the good life of the deceased on earth. Decent burial after "a good old age" was the fitting capstone of a successful career. This meant that a great deal of attention went into the proper outfitting of a tomb—for after all, "the house of death is for life."

The earliest Egyptian burials had been simple pits in the desert, into which the corpse was placed along with a few personal possessions and a token offering of food. The ideas of personal survival that underlay these primitive measures were refined in the religious thought developed during the oldest historic periods. On the most basic level, the Egyptians believed in the resurrection of the body: mummification prevented the corpse's dissolution once it had been removed from the drying sands of the desert, and "reserve heads"—sculptured replicas—were kept in the tomb in case the deceased should lose his own.

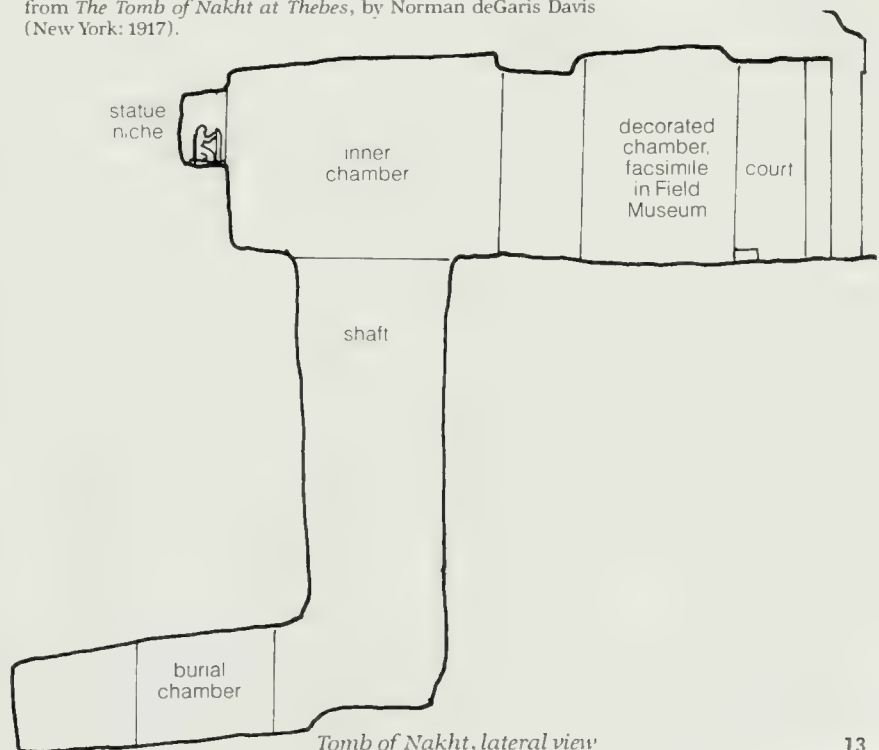
The Egyptians had no exact equivalent to our belief in the duality of body and soul, but they believed in forces such as the *Ka*, a cosmic double, who came into existence at a person's birth and preserved the personality after death; and also in the *Ba*, a dynamic intermediary between the worlds of the dead and the living. Egyptians also came to believe that the dead became identified with Osiris, king of the Netherworld, and could thus share his power over the forces in the realm beyond death.

To ensure the well-being of these elements after death, the Egyptians also developed increas-

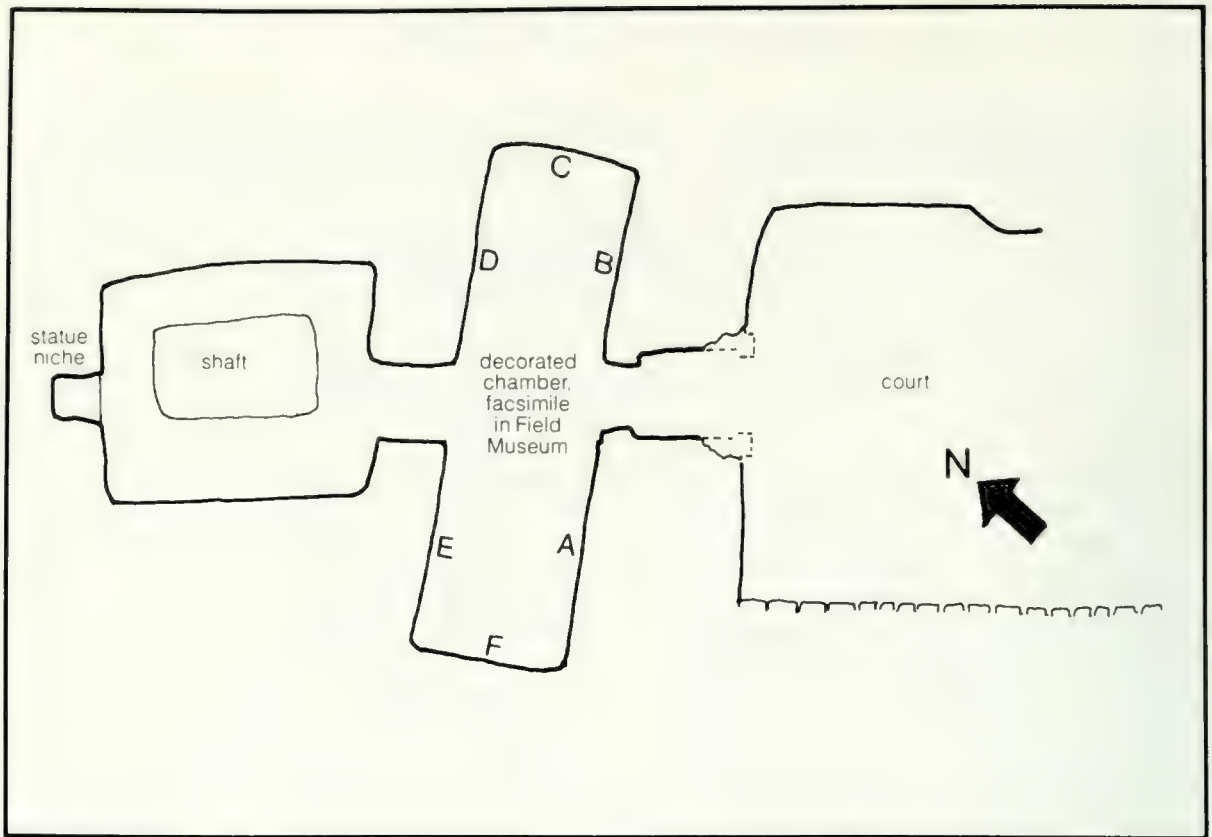
ingly elaborate burial arrangements. Virtually any settlement in the Nile Valley would have its cemetery nearby, usually on the western side of the Nile: to the Egyptians, "the West" was synonymous with the land of the dead. High government officials, however, preferred to be buried near one of the centers of power—at Memphis, the capital, and later in Thebes, in Upper (southern) Egypt. During the Egyptian New Kingdom (c. 1570-1070 B.C.), burial in the Theban Necropolis brought with it the prestige, not only of being in the "estate" of Amun, who at this time was waxing into the most influential of Egypt's many gods, but also of being on the fringes of the Valley of the kings, where all the rulers of this period had their tombs.

The tomb of Nakht is a good example of one type of rock-cut tomb built at Thebes during the New Kingdom. Such tombs characteristically had three parts: an outer courtyard, where the last rites

Reproductions of Nakht tomb paintings shown in this article are from *The Tomb of Nakht at Thebes*, by Norman deGaris Davis (New York: 1917).



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Tomb of Nakht, vertical view. Letters in decorated chamber correspond to wall designations in text and illustrations of this article.

were held; a chapel cut into the mountainside, consisting of a broad hall followed by a long corridor, with a statue of the tomb owner placed in a niche or in another small room at the far end; and, deep underground, a burial chamber, reached by a shaft dug into the floor of the court or branching off from somewhere inside the chapel. Scenes, inscriptions, and patterned decorations could be carved directly onto the walls; but (as in the tomb of Nakht) the decorators often preferred to coat the walls with plaster and complete the decoration in paint.

The paintings that survive in the tomb of Nakht all come from the broad hall of his chapel; the other parts of his tomb were left unfinished. Themes such as the offering bearers who wait on the deceased, and his stela at the right end of the tomb (wall *F*) lay predictable stress on his mortuary cult. Many other scenes, however, portray Nakht in the full vigor of life, watching the workers on his estate at the grain harvest (wall *A*), fishing and fowling in the marshes (wall *D*), and attending a banquet (wall *E*).

To interpret these scenes merely as reflecting the outlook of a leisured class would be misleading. They would be more accurately viewed as the tomb owner's "life support systems" which, by evoking these ideas, would magically ensure that the deceased had enough to "live on" in his next life, that

he would triumph over adverse forces found there, and continue to be remembered on earth. Such "scenes of daily life" are often as picturesque to us as they are informative; but they were as vital to the tomb owner's survival as the religious and funerary subjects usually found in the inner corridor of similar tombs.

Nakht himself was not one of the great luminaries of his age. His sole claim to fame lies in the exquisite decoration of his tomb; and it is on the basis of these paintings' style that he is believed to have lived during the reigns of Amenhotep II (c. 1453-1419 B.C.) or Thutmose IV (c. 1419-1386 B.C.), during the Eighteenth Dynasty. His occupation, on the other hand, sets him apart from the other priests and government functionaries buried in the Theban Necropolis, for he was an astronomer—or, to translate his title more precisely, an "hour man," someone trained to observe the movements of the sun, moon, and stars and to schedule from this data the divine festivals the occurrence of which depended on these heavenly bodies.

The other title he employs in his tomb, that of "scribe," could be claimed by anyone who was literate; but his full service title, "astronomer of Amun," suggests that he was on the staff of the great temple of Amun at Karnak, across the river, as was his wife Tawy who, along with many other officials' wives of her class, was a "chantress of

Amun.” Tawy’s marriage to Nakht may have been at least her second, for one of the offering bearers in the banquet scene (wall E) is described as “her son, Amenōpe.” For the rest, we know nothing about these people: they live as they wished to be immortalized, through the paintings in their tomb.

The tomb of Nakht (number 52 in the non-royal necropolis at Thebes) is located on an outcropping of the Theban hills known as Sheikh Abd-el-Qurna. Even though more than thirty-three centuries have passed since completion of the paintings, they are in remarkably fine condition. Some damage was done to them near the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty (c. 1346-1334 B.C.), when agents of the heretic pharaoh Akhenaten entered the tomb and erased the names of Amun, sometimes destroying those of Nakht and his wife as well. Other areas of painted plaster have flaked off since then, most seriously in the banquet scene (wall E). Otherwise, the scenes remain intact, with the colors seemingly as fresh as when they were first painted.

The tomb was discovered in or shortly before 1889; and it was copied for publication in 1915 by Norman DeGaris Davies and his wife, Nina, who later made the facsimile model for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which is now on exhibit at Field Museum. Today, the tomb of Nakht, in Egypt, is one of the most frequently visited of all the Theban tombs. Visitors to the Field Museum who have not been to Egypt may now view this full-size copy with the assurance that it faithfully reproduces the designs and brilliant coloring of the original monument.

In the descriptions that follow, directions (left, right) and references to the various walls (A-F) are made in terms of the diagram on page 14. In the translations given here, lost or damaged words are restored in brackets.

Wall A

This wall, divided into two registers of unequal height, falls also into two separate scenes—that of the deceased, with his wife, offering to the sun god (not reproduced here); and the agricultural vignettes, shown on the following page.

In the *offering scene*, Nakht stands before a pile of offerings, onto which he pours the contents of a jar of oil. Four more jars rest on a mat on the upper left, with a bouquet draped gracefully over each one. Varieties of food are stacked below—vegetables (onions, baskets of fruit and flowers) predominate on top; cuts of meat and dressed fowl in the middle; and several types of bread on the bottom. A pair of butchers are still working on the carcass of a bull at the bottom right, while a third man offers a cup with two cones of fat to the deceased. Behind Nakht stands Tawy, his wife, her



Wall D (detail)

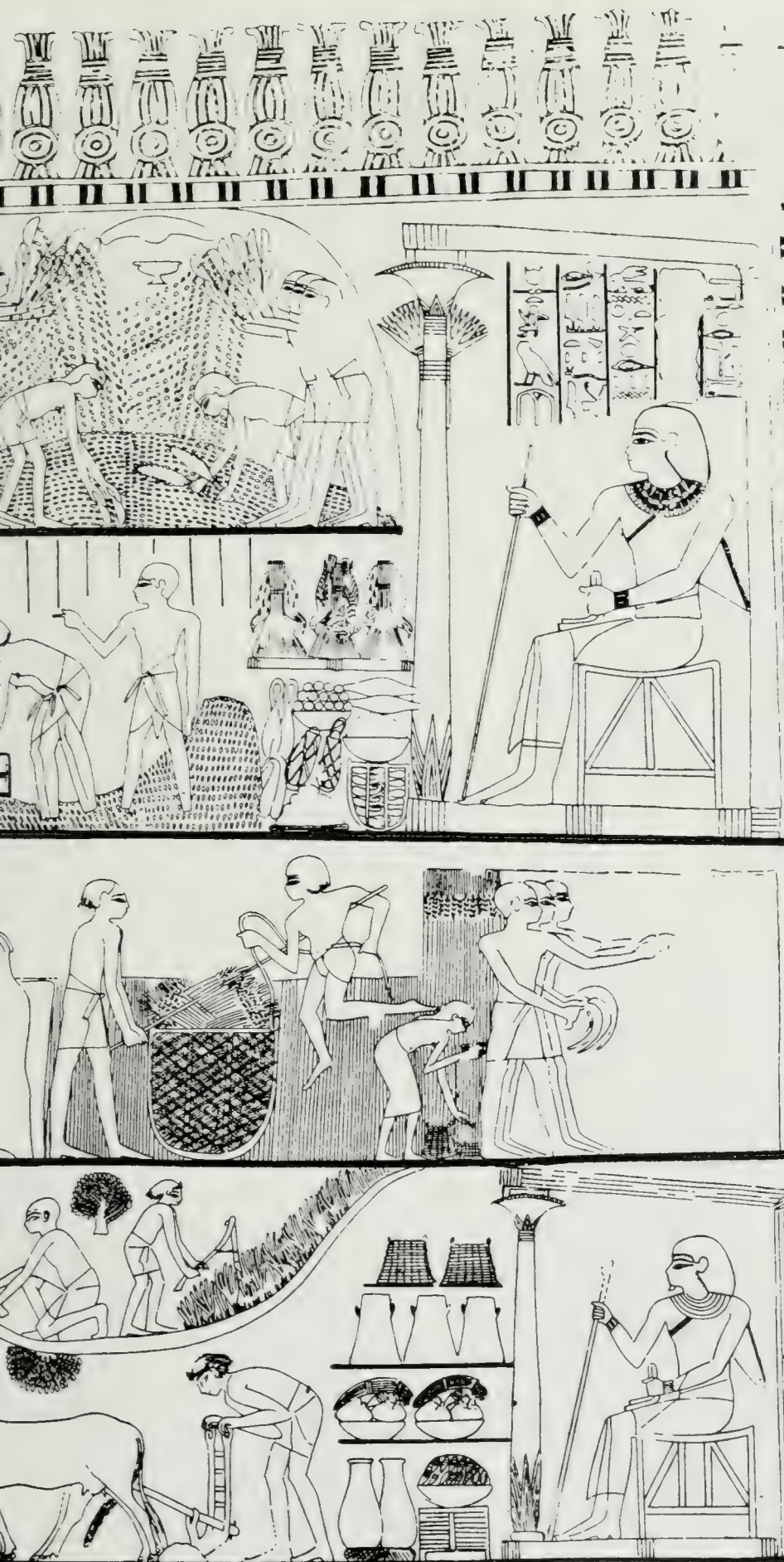
hair bound with a chaplet of flowers. In her right hand, held against her chest, she holds a necklace with its oblong counterweight; in her left hand, hanging at her side, is a rattle: both objects, besides being sacred to the “mistress of the Western Mountain,” Hathor, were employed in the course of Tawy’s service at the temple. The eleven columns of hieroglyphs above the figures’ heads describe the occasion as an “offering of every sort of good and pure thing—bread, beer, oxen, fowl, long- and short-horned cattle—thrown (?) upon the brazier to [Amun-Rē . . . ; to] Rē-Horus the Horizon-dweller; to Osiris the Great God; to Hathor, chieftainess of the desert; (and) to Anubis on his mountain, by the astronomer of [Amun, the scribe of Nakht, the triumph]ant; * (and by) his sister, ** his favorite beloved, the chantress of [Amun, Tawy], the triumphant.”

Notice that, both here and in the corresponding spot on wall B, Nakht and his wife face the doorway. This is a regular feature in the Theban tombs and expresses the hope of the deceased that they might rise every day after death to bask in the life-giving rays of the sun. Note also the patterned decoration that runs along the top of the wall: these ornaments, called *khekeru*, represent wisps of straw projecting from the top of the mud-daubed frame of a primitive house and bound together for decorative effect. Found in domestic architecture from earliest times, this feature was retained as an ornamental motif in stone buildings down to the end of ancient Egyptian civilization.

*An expression that regularly follows the deceased’s name, indicating that he or she has been cleared of any wrongdoing by the divine tribunal in the Underworld.

**An affectionate euphemism, here meaning “wife.”





The Agricultural Scenes: These vignettes, shown here, placed in the tomb to secure for the deceased a steady source of food in the next world, illustrate the most basic activities of a farmer's life in ancient Egypt. The sequence begins on the bottom register, where we see men clearing new fields (*upper right*) and breaking up the hardened earth with mallets once the annual Nile flood has receded (*left*). Other laborers are hacking at the prepared fields with hoes (*top left*) or ploughing them with the help of oxen (*middle*), while still others scatter seeds into the furrows. Reserve bags of seed are placed at the sides of the fields (*left and right*) along with the worker's lunch—baskets of food and tall jars of water: the latter, like water jars still used in Egypt today, are mounted on stands and, being made of a porous clay, allow some evaporation of the contents through the sides of the jar, leaving the remainder cool. Much the same effect is produced by the skin water bag hanging from a tree, from which we see a man drinking at the far left.

The sequence next moves up through the three subregisters on the upper right side. In the lowest of these, two young women move through fields of green flax (*left*), pulling up the stalks for bundling. The heavier work of harvesting grain is done by men with sickles (*right*), followed by a woman who bends down to glean the broken stalks they have thrown aside.

In the middle of this row the grain is packed into a large basket: the man on the right holds the end of a staff which his partner on the right uses to cram down the sheaves, jumping up and bearing down on it with his full weight while at the same time pulling on a drawrope. The artist's gift for fine detail is seen in his treatment of the standing fields of grain; and his distaste for this boring work is evident from the unfinished state of the grain and flax on the right and left ends of this row.

The next stage, separating the ears from the stalks, is not shown here, but we do see the winnowing that followed in the upper row. Here, young women toss the ears into the air with wooden scoops, allowing the breeze to carry away the chaff and leaving the grain itself behind. One girl, on the left, is bending down to refill her scoops, while a companion keeps the pile together with two small hand-brooms.

The hot, dusty work is wonderfully evoked by the clouds of grain and the attitudes of the young women, each of whom has bound her hair with a kerchief against the chaff in the air. The muddy brown background is the threshing floor on which this activity takes place; and the two objects seen at the upper middle—a bowl, and what may be a straw doll, daubed with mud—are interpreted as offerings to Ernutet, the serpent goddess who protected the harvest by eating rodents and other potential hazards to the grain crop.

The final episode is in the middle row: two men measure out the grain with wooden buckets, supervised by a scribe whose comments were never painted into the columns prepared for them. The fruits of the harvest 17



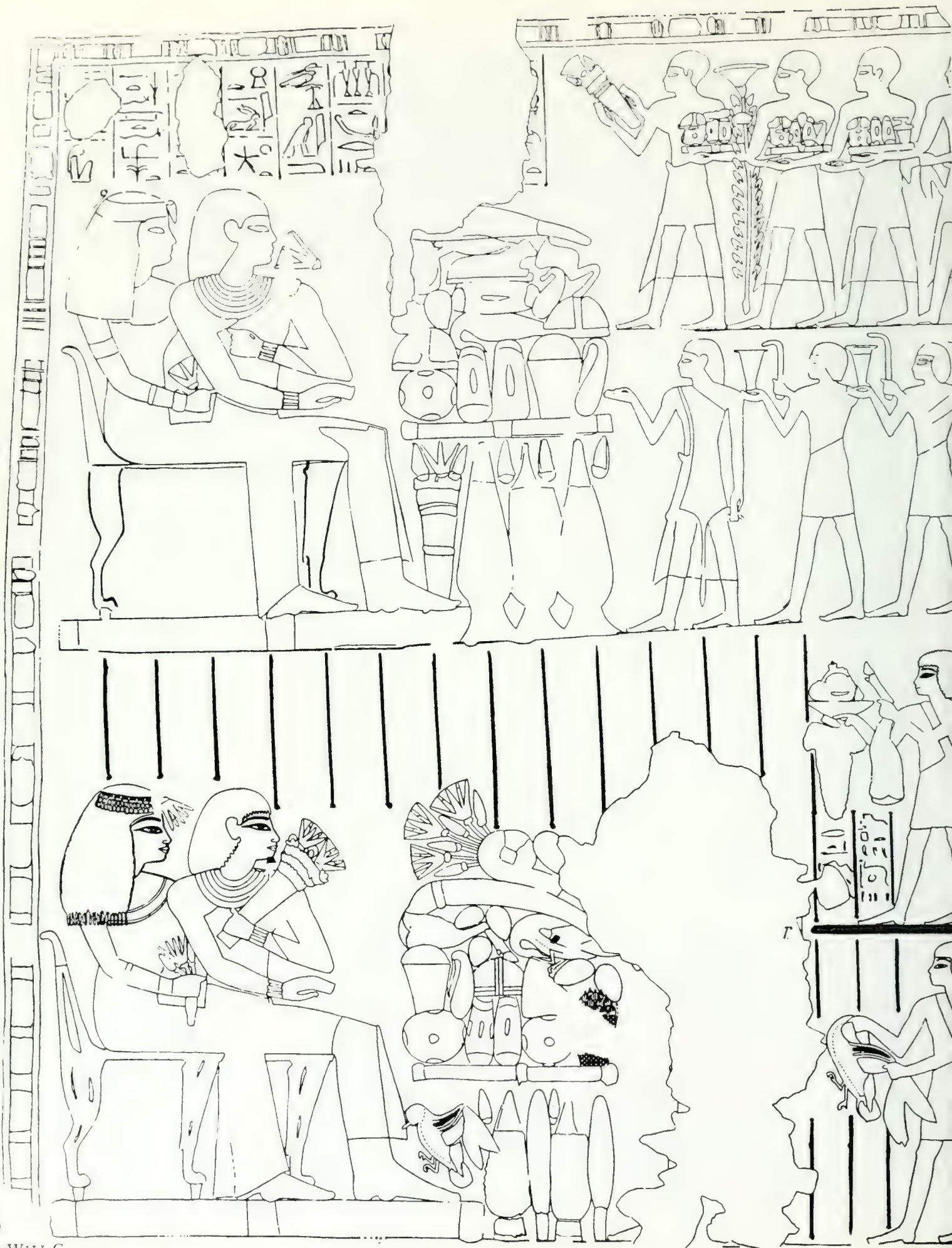


are then piled before the tomb owner, who appears here, as in the lower register, "seated in a kiosk, watching his fields."

Wall B

Here, at left, as on wall A, Nakht and Tawy face the outer world and offer sacrifice to the gods. The texts above their heads speak of "giving myrrh and incense on the flame" to the same divinities named on the opposite side, but this is belied by the profusion of offerings shown on the right. Many of the items of bread, meat, and vegetables will be familiar from wall A, but the menu here is more varied: note in particular the dressed crane and the head of romaine lettuce in the middle row.

What appears, at first glance, to be an elaborately colored fish just beneath the lettuce is in fact a painted bull's head. Additional offerings are brought in by the three rows of bearers behind Nakht and Tawy, entering from the left. One more notable feature in this scene is the preservation of the grid, drawn on the wall in red paint before the figures were first drawn in rough draft and still surviving after the final painting of the entire scene.



Wall C

The two registers shown here depict variations of the same theme: the deceased and his wife, seated within the tomb, receive offerings from the living to ensure their continued well-being. In contrast with the previous two walls, the paintings here were never finished. This is mostly true for the texts which, when they are present at all, were drawn only in outline and not filled in.

Most of the figures were finished in paint, but fine details on the offerings and much of the couple on the upper left side were never completely done. In the upper register, two rows of men bring in food and bouquets (*top*) and jars of oil with wicks (*bottom*). This lower group is led by the *Sem*-priest, wearing a leopard-skin, who regularly presided at Egyptian funerals and is seen here stretching out his right hand and uttering a spell. Nakht and Tawy are described as “rec[eiv]ing gi[fts] of . . . with which [Amun], pre-eminent among the holy ones, is well supplied during the course of every day.”

In the lower register, the more conspicuous figure of the *Sem*-priest was destroyed by agents of

Akhenaten, perhaps because this king claimed for himself the right to act as sole intermediary between mortal men and the gods. Behind him, the upper row of offering bearers are “giving forelegs and choice cuts of meat. Words spoken four times—‘Be pure, be pure!’—on behalf of the Osiris, the Astronomer of Amun, Nakht.” The men in the lower row are seen carrying in slaughtered birds and drink offerings, but the texts here were not even fully drawn, and they are completely missing from the rest of this register.

The tomb owner and his wife are seated at the left end of each register. On top, Nakht sniffs a flower (incompletely drawn by the artist), while below he holds a bouquet, perhaps a punning reference to the similarity in the words for “bouquet” and “life” (both written ‘*ankh*’). It is possible that these offering processions represent the annual Feast of the Valley, during which the deceased’s relatives visited the tomb and presented the tomb owner’s statue with the bouquet of Amun. A similar practice, adapted to the Muslim religion, survives in Egypt to this day.







Wall D

The scenes depicted in the two registers shown on this wall had been represented in Egyptian tombs since almost the very beginning. During the earliest historic periods, when tombs of high officials clustered around the kings' pyramids near Memphis, the Egyptian Delta lay nearby. Mostly undeveloped for agriculture at that time, it was a hunter's paradise, the haunt of fish, fowl, hippopotami, and crocodiles.

The climate of the Delta was also well suited to the cultivation of the vine, and wine produced by Delta estates was virtually the exclusive preserve of the upper classes. Life beyond the tomb was inconceivable without these trappings of the good life on earth. At the same time, the Egyptians' admiration for unbounded nature was checked by a deep respect for orderliness. Egypt, as a farming nation, owed its prosperity to the social organization that permitted full exploitation of the annual Nile flood.

The Delta, with its untamed, wide open spaces, was also a threatening place where the powers of chaos held sway. The subjugation of nature thus represented a victory over the adverse forces the deceased might meet in the next world. Moreover, the channelling of potentially destructive elements into constructive paths was an expression of *Ma'at*, the cosmic harmony that was seen as the ideal condition of the universe.

Fishing and fowling in the marshes is shown in the upper register. In two representations that are mirror-images of one another, Nakht stands in a reed skiff. Members of his family hold him upright by grasping his legs and midsection, as he spears fish (right) and wields, along with his son, a boomerang against the startled birds who rise in a cloud from the dense thickets of reeds and papyrus stalks (left). The artist who painted this scene neglected to draw in the harpoon on the right, but two fish are nonetheless seen being lifted from the water between the two boats, while the text on the upper right speaks of Nakht's "penetrating the pools and traversing the marshes, amusing himself (and) spearing fishes."

Above the scene on the left, the deceased is "amusing himself, watching pleasant things (and) practicing field sports, consisting of the work of the Marsh Goddess, by the companion of the Lady of the Fish- and Fowl-catch, the Astronomer of [Amun...], the scribe Nakht, the triumphant, and his sister, the chantress of [Amun], the lady of the house, Tawy. She says: 'Amuse yourself with the work of the Marsh Goddess! (As for) the marsh bird, his moment is appointed for him.'"

The day's catch is gathered up by the servants on the right—note one of them, with his sandals strapped to his arm—and brought before the two tomb owners who appear seated at the left end of the register, "amusing themselves (and) watching pleasant things consisting of the products of the marshes of Lower Egypt." A keen observation of nature went into the composition of scenes like this, which portray many kinds of birds and insects: note especially the nests of eggs and the butterflies, the marsh fowl struck in midflight by boomerangs, and the dragonflies. Besides removing the name of Amun, Akhenaten's agents also hacked out the tomb owner's pet goose from the front deck of each boat, presumably because the bird was sacred to Amun.

A cat, who had crawled up the stem and had its mouth around the neck of one of the fledgling birds in a nest above the prow of the boat on the left, was also erased; it may have been the animal's identification with Mut, the consort of Amun, that drew the 23

the crocodiles' wrath onto it as well.

Trapping birds in the swamp can be seen at the bottom right side of the lower register: a man, who had hidden nearby, signals his partners to draw shut a net placed in one of the birds' favorite pools. The Egyptians preferred to domesticate birds that survived capture in this way, but the less fortunate victims are seen being plucked and gutted on the left. Above this we see two

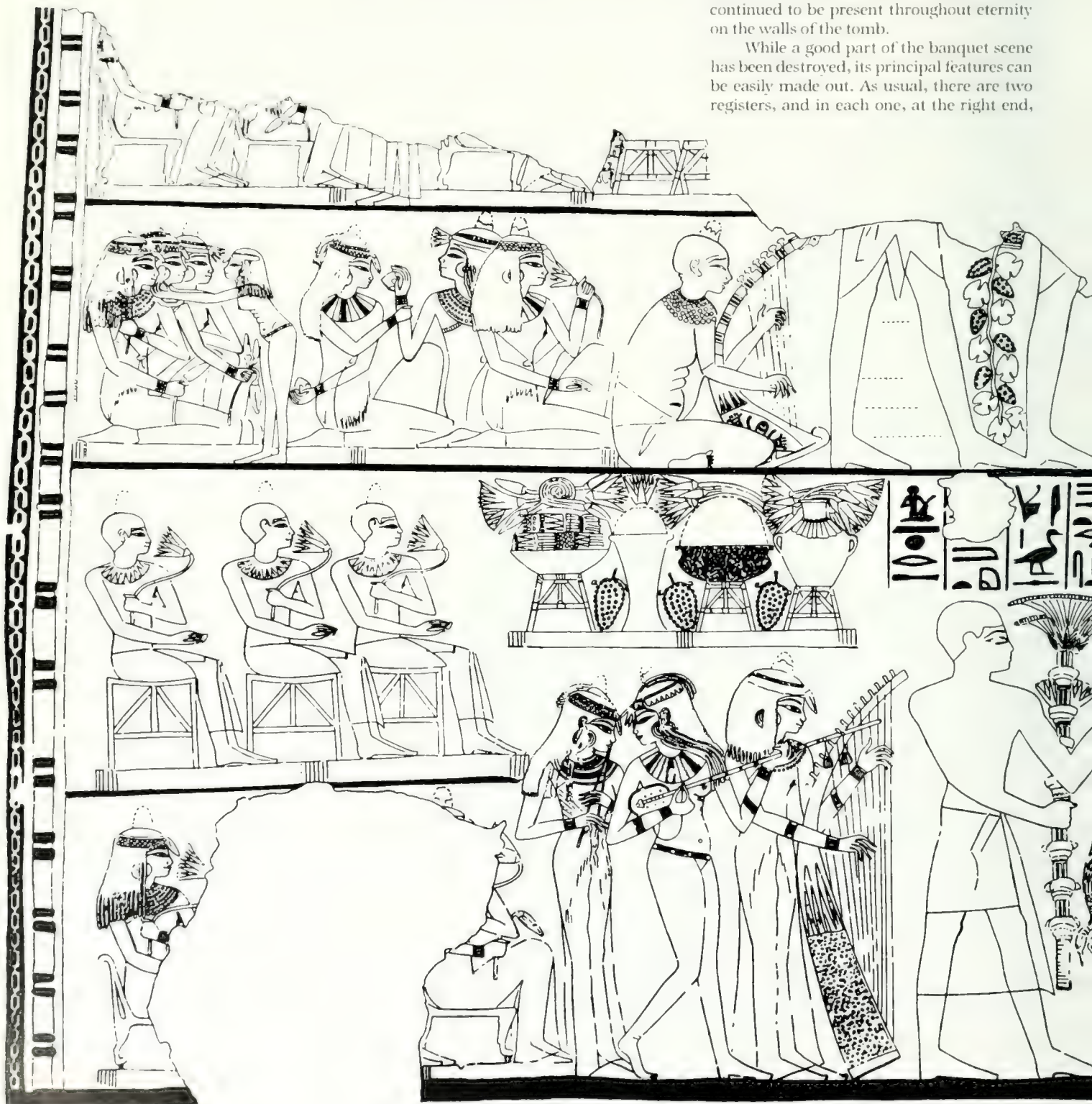
episodes of viticulture: an elderly vintner, accompanied by his younger assistant, selects the best bunches of grapes for wine-making and then supervises the treading of the grapes on the left.

The final outcome of the process is suggested by the four jugs of wine, already with their sealed clay stoppers, above the master vintner's head. At the opposite end, as in the register above, we see Nakht and his lady "seated in a kiosk in order to watch the pleasant things of Lower Egypt."

Wall E

One of the final rituals at the tomb was the funeral banquet. To the Egyptians, the continuing close ties between the living and the dead was not only healthy but necessary; only thus would the family keep a sense of its historic identity, reinforced by the yearly visits to the tombs during the Feast of the Valley and by the upkeep of the family mortuary cults. It was for this purpose that the deceased "shared" a final meal with their families, and this was also why the family continued to be present throughout eternity on the walls of the tomb.

While a good part of the banquet scene has been destroyed, its principal features can be easily made out. As usual, there are two registers, and in each one, at the right end,



are Nakht and his wife. The deceased are shown as being already in their tomb: it is no accident that here, as well as on *walls c and d*, they are placed as close as possible to the door leading into the inner corridor.

In the upper register they were served by two men, probably carrying trays of food, from which vine streamers hung. On the bottom, an offering of food and “a bouquet, after doing what is praised” is made by a man who is described as “her son, Amenemope, the triumphant”—perhaps, as we have suggested already, Tawy’s son by a previous marriage. An intimate detail is supplied by the tomb owners’ pet cat, who occupies its customary place under their chairs and is seen devouring, with the ferocious single-mindedness of its kind, a fish.

The other guests—friends and members of the family—are seated on the left, facing the tomb owners. The more important guests are seated on chairs, with the others (*second row*) squatting comfortably on mats. Women seem to outnumber men in this family gathering: only three of the deceased’s male relatives can be detected with any certainty (*third row*). The guests are waited on by servants, such as the practically nude young woman who adjusts one of the ladies’ earrings (*second row*). The women wear long braided wigs, and both sexes are outfitted with collars. Nearly all the guests hold flowers, and everyone at the party wears on his or her head a cone of scented fat that was supposed to annoint the wearer as it melted.

Supplies for the guests’ enjoyment are seen in the large jugs of liquid refreshment, ornamented with vine leaves (*top row*); and in the additional fillets for the guests’ hair and further supplies of ointment (*third row*).

The picturesqueness of the scene is heightened by the musicians, who quite appropriately occupy the center of attention:

the blind harpist (*second row*), a frequent participant in similar scenes from other tombs, squats with his feet tucked under his legs and sings for the guests. He is accompanied by three other performers, lithe young women, who play on a tall standing harp, a lute, and a double-reed pipe: note the sense of movement given to the almost nude lutist, as she turns (practically facing the viewer, in defiance of the customary practice in Egyptian art) to whisper something to her companion. It is a pity that the whole scene is not better preserved. Even so, it stands as one of the masterpieces of ancient Egyptian art.

Wall F

The bottom register, not shown here, dominated by a pile of offerings, is presided over by the Tree Goddess, a female figure who symbolized the Egyptian’s hope for nourishment in the arid cemetery area at the desert’s edge. Behind her are two human offering bearers, while above them are other figures who kneel as they present bread, water, and ointment, or beer, milk, and linen—the necessities of life—and utter spells: “You are pure as Horus is pure! You are pure as Seth is pure!” The object of their devotion is a tablet, painted a mottled purplish-grey to simulate granite. This is the tomb owner’s stela, his “false door” to and from the next world. It was from here that the *Ba* came on his errands to the land of the living, and it was here that the family served the tomb owner’s mortuary cult. The door’s “lintel,” in the middle of the tablet, is covered with magical emblems—“the Wedjat”-eye for wholeness (particularly important for the mummy); the circle, symbolizing the eternal passage of the sun; and the cup of water, vital for the deceased’s survival in the cemetery.

Nakht and Tawy are shown seated be-

fore an offering table in the space above the lintel, while all the other surfaces are covered with spells for the deceased’s well-being. The form of these prayers is very ancient, going back to the time when burial in the royal cemetery was granted to a favored few by the king, who also guaranteed the offerings that would secure the protection of the gods. “A royal offering,” they say,

to Osiris-Wenneferu, the Great God, Lord of Abydos, that he may allow coming and going in the cemetery, without the Ba’s being hindered from what it desires;
to Anubis, preeminent in the divine kiosk, that he may grant splendor before Re in heaven, power before Geb on earth and vindication before Wenneferu in the desert;
to Amun, preeminent among the holy ones, the Great God, chief of Thebes, that he may allow crossing (of the river) to land at Karnak, in order to eat food every day; (and) to Re-Horus the Horizon-dweller, that he may allow his beauty to be seen every day, and goes forth on earth to behold the sun’s disk in the manner of one who is on earth—on behalf of the Ka of the Astronomer [of Amun, Na]kht the triumphant.

Life on earth was sweet to the Egyptians. They could imagine nothing better, even after death.

The Ceiling

The idea of the tomb as an early Egyptian house is carried over onto the ceiling where, stretched between the roof beams, we see gaily colored hangings, all in paint. The designs are less elaborate than in other tombs, but the effect is lively and pleasing—value judgements that might well be applied to all the paintings in the tomb of Nakht. □



The Tomb Chapels of Netjer-user and Unis-ankh

by BRUCE WILLIAMS

The reinstallation of the Egyptian tomb chapels has been made possible by grants from the A. Montgomery Ward Foundation and an anonymous donor.

The tomb chapel of Netjer-user, north wall: Most of the decoration shows offering bearers and the slaughtering of animals for meat offerings. Here, a man labelled "sharpening the knife" is shown in the center and again on the right of the lower register; a bearer just right of center in the same register says to the butcher: "Give me the heart."



THE OLD KINGDOM (often called the Pyramid Age: Dynasties IV, V, and VI, 2613-2181 B.C.), was the time of Egypt's most impressive and enduring achievements. An age that experienced neither doubt nor failure turned naturally to the direct and commanding as modes of expression, particularly the tomb, which for many is the ultimate futility.

The Egyptians built pyramid tombs for their

pharaohs, who were to be united with the sun, as expressions of that union. Eminent, but mortal, men were entombed in other monuments, which provided not only protection for the body and grave goods, but also provided the means by which essential worldly goods could again be made accessible in the next world. This reaccess was achieved by providing the facilities for ceremonies and for representations, on the tomb walls, of these ceremonies and offerings.

The central feature of the reinstallation of the Egyptian Hall is the opening of the tomb chapels of

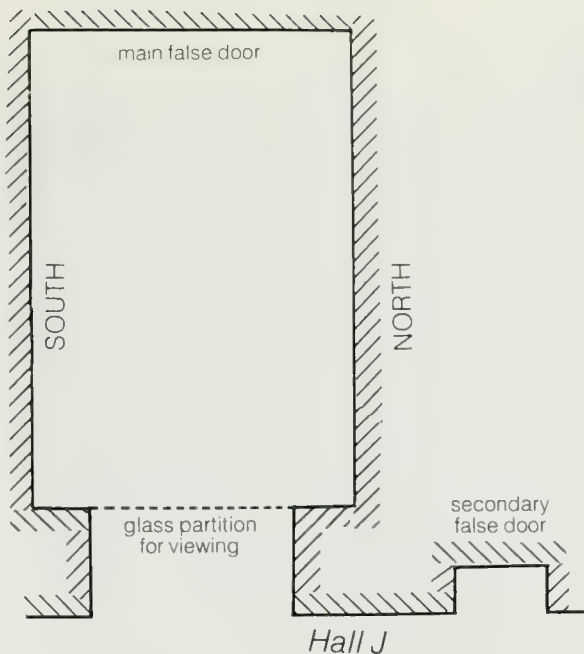
Bruce Williams is research associate (assistant professor) at the Oriental Institute, the University of Chicago.

Netjer-user and Unis-ankh so that the reliefs they contain can be viewed at close hand by the visitor. The new viewing is much like that experienced by an ancient priest or relative of the deceased making offerings there. The reliefs covering the walls do not represent the entire lives of the deceased, nor even a major part of the mortuary arrangements for them; they are only the most elaborate surviving part of a large complex that was intended to transfer into the next world the deceased's achievements, wealth, and sometimes servants and relatives.

The fitted limestone blocks comprising the walls are the lining of the tomb chapel in which the needs of the dead were served by Ka-servants, or soul priests. In exchange for the proceeds from a perpetual endowment made by the deceased, these servants presented certain material goods, particularly food, on offering tables at false doors in the tombs so that the counterparts of these goods in the other world might be made available to the deceased.

There were also special offerings made on feast days. In the event that the Ka-servant or the endowment failed, representations of these offerings, often with other desirable life activities, were put on the walls, with the appropriate persons officiating. These were accompanied by elaborate lists of offerings and shorter invocation offerings recited by the visitor in order to make quantities of foodstuffs available to the deceased ("a thousand loaves of bread, a thousand jugs of beer, a thousand cakes, etc.").

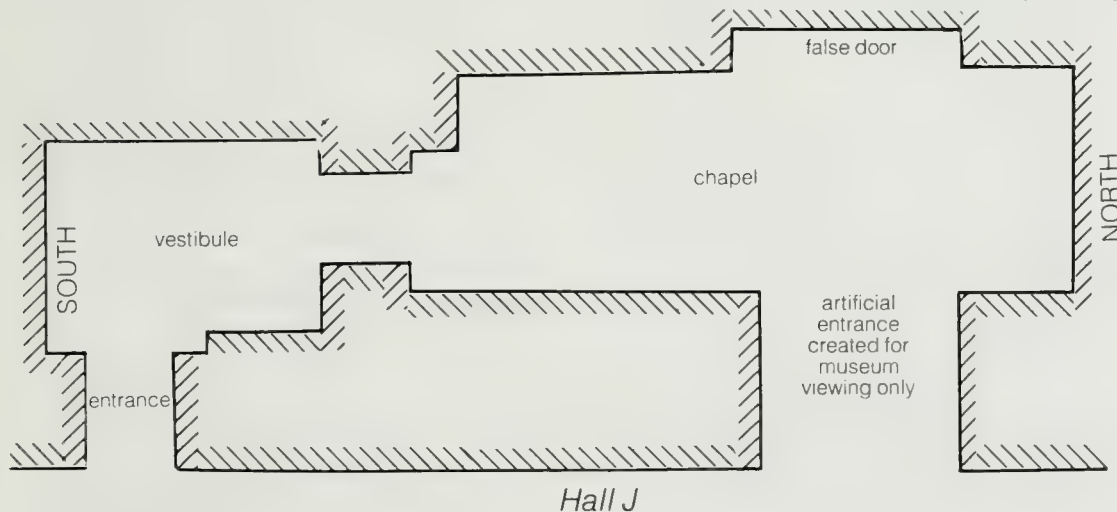
Chapels of this sort were attached to, or in the case of Netjer-user and Unis-ankh, built into rectangular stone structures usually now called *mastabas*, the Arabic term for the modern Egyptian brick bench which they resemble. Apart from their chapels and usually solid interior, the mastaba complex contained the actual burial. Usually this was situated at the bottom of a deep vertical shaft cut from the top of the mastaba into the



Tomb chapel of Netjer-user

bedrock below, and placed in a plain rock-cut chamber so oriented that it was below and to the west of the chapel's southern, or main, false door. This arrangement gave the deceased's spirit direct access to the offerings. Also generally present were one or more *serdabs*—chambers with statues of the deceased that were intended as substitutes for the body as a home for the Ka-soul; these chambers were often arranged so the statue could look through narrow apertures into the chapel (No such chambers were found in the Netjer-user or Unis-ankh mastabas.)

Mastabas had a long, complex history in Egypt and were important in Egyptian burial customs, especially in the Archaic and Old Kingdom periods (3150-2181 B.C.). They existed during the early First Dynasty, when they were the major burial structure for pharaohs as well as for the common people. Even then, royal mortuary arrangements were complex, and around the royal tombs were small bench-tombs of courtiers and artisans who would follow their master in death. Already, during this



Tomb chapel of Unis-ankh



The false door of Unis-ankh. The complex panelled false door was the main focus of the Egyptian private tomb chapel in the Old Kingdom. Offerings and libation were made before it to provide the deceased with food, drink, and clothing. Here, the frame and panels give a funerary formula, with the name and titles of Unis-ankh, as well as his figure, shown six times at the bottom. Above the doorway, Unis-ankh extends his hand to a table of offerings.

period, some of these tiny mastabas had the two small niches in the east side; similar, nonroyal tombs, set apart from the royal ones, had tiny chapels at the southern niche, some with offerings. Also in the First Dynasty, wealthy private citizens were already building large mastaba-tombs..

Between the First Dynasty and the time of Netjer-user and Unis-ankh, many changes occurred in the mastaba. Very early, stela (stones or slabs used as monuments or commemorative tablets) showing the deceased seated at a table of offerings became part of the central focus of the funerary cult. By the late Third Dynasty, the stela was marked with representations of the old offerings niches, making the false door. Walls in the chapels

came to be decorated, primarily showing offering presentations, but also showing other special, daily-life events which the owners wished to be perpetuated.

The chapel itself underwent major changes. Early in the Fourth Dynasty, under Khufu (2606-2583 B.C.), builder of the Great Pyramid, the Pharaoh erected numerous large stone mastabas in neat rows near his own pyramid, giving them to his favorite courtiers and officials. However, chapels had to be added outside these mastabas, and a simple, L-shaped, brick structure was erected to house the stela and the offerings. Over a period of time, the owners and their families elaborated these chapels, modifying the deeply niched false doors of earlier times into shallower niches so they could be cut in the outer wall or in finer stone linings added to the chapel. (This shallower type may be seen in the two Field Museum chapels.)

Soon the chapel itself was erected in stone. Still later, chapels were sometimes cut into the body of the mastaba and more chambers were added to the complex. By the Fifth Dynasty, many false doors (as in the chapel of Netjer-user) were deeply recessed, making, in effect, a longitudinal chamber approaching the main false door.

Others continued using either the simple L-axis, or an elaborate version, such as that of Unis-ankh. In both, the walls by the false door were decorated with representations of the funerary repast, offerings, offering lists, and preparations necessary for the offerings. Walls farther away showed scenes of life activities which so entrance the modern visitor, but which were probably added according to the life span, resources, and plans of the owner. Such decorations were sometimes abandoned, even with figures unfinished. The tombs of Netjer-user and Unis-ankh were decorated to the extent of the offerings and the preparation of offerings, but they had not yet received other decoration, if, indeed, planned.

The useful function of many mastabas did not cease with the burial of the main owner and the establishment of his cult. After this complex with chapel, shaft, and serdabs was built, relatives, even in later generations, often sought burial there, adding shafts of their own, with new false doors in the same chapel complexes, or even new chapels and serdabs; sometimes they made additions to the basic structure itself. In extreme cases, the entire mastaba was hollowed out, creating a series of rooms and courts.

The tomb-chapels of Netjer-user and Unis-ankh were acquired in 1908 by the Field Museum, one of them through purchase from the Egyptian government, the other as the result of a gift from Trustee Martin A. Ryerson. A vast number of lesser chapels were found during that period at Saqqara, and a number of these were acquired in this way

by major museums of the world. What is on exhibition is not the entire chapel complex, but only major decorated surfaces.

Netjer-user was a powerful courtier and official in the mid-Fifth Dynasty (*ca.* 2400 B.C.). Among his most important titles were “royal chamberlain,” “controller of scribes,” “overseer of royal works,” “supervisor of masters of the king’s largess,” and “master of largess in the mansion of life.” The last two indicate that he was responsible for the redistribution of offerings from the major royal temples to other temples and private tombs, a position of considerable power and influence apart from his court position indicated by the titles “royal chamberlain” and “controller of scribes.” Like any active courtier of his time, Netjer-user collected a long string of titles, some representing actual functions, others purely honorific, that marked his progress in royal favor through his career.

After Netjer-user, his family did not exactly suffer eclipse, and we know a fair number of his descendants, as assembled by Klaus Baer, of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. In fact, it would appear that a grandson, Per-Neb, was the owner of the mastaba now in the Metropolitan Museum, in New York.

The main chambers of Netjer-user’s mastaba included a rectangular outer court with ante-chamber and a two-part chapel, an outer chapel of the standard indirect axis, containing the second, or northern, false door, and a deep, long-axis chamber that extends to the west from the southern end of the west wall. Such chambers were developed when the deepening of the southern, or major, false door’s niche became so great that a new chamber was created.

The decoration of Netjer-user’s chapel had proceeded only as far as the completion of the inner, longitudinal room and the second false door. On this door are identified both Netjer-user and his wife Khenut. Her figure has been added in front of Netjer-user’s on either side of the niche, following completion of the original carving. Khenut may have been an intended beneficiary of the offerings left at this outer door. This false door was also inscribed with Netjer-user’s name and titles; the figure of Netjer-user, again with his name and titles, is on the wall of the inset on either side (as though this were a small chamber). His wife is described as “the eternal companion, his beloved wife, the royal lady-in-waiting, honored before Pharaoh, Khenut.”

The doorway leading to the inner chapel was decorated with offering bearers. Within the inner chapel, the major feature is the great false door occupying the west wall. The quality of the relief in the hieroglyphs and the figures nearest the west wall has been recognized as among the best from



the period. The false door is inscribed with Netjer-user’s name and titles and begins with the invocation across the top “May the king give an offering, and may Anubis, foremost of the divine booth, who is in the mummy wrappings, give an offering so that he may be buried in the necropolis at a good old age.”

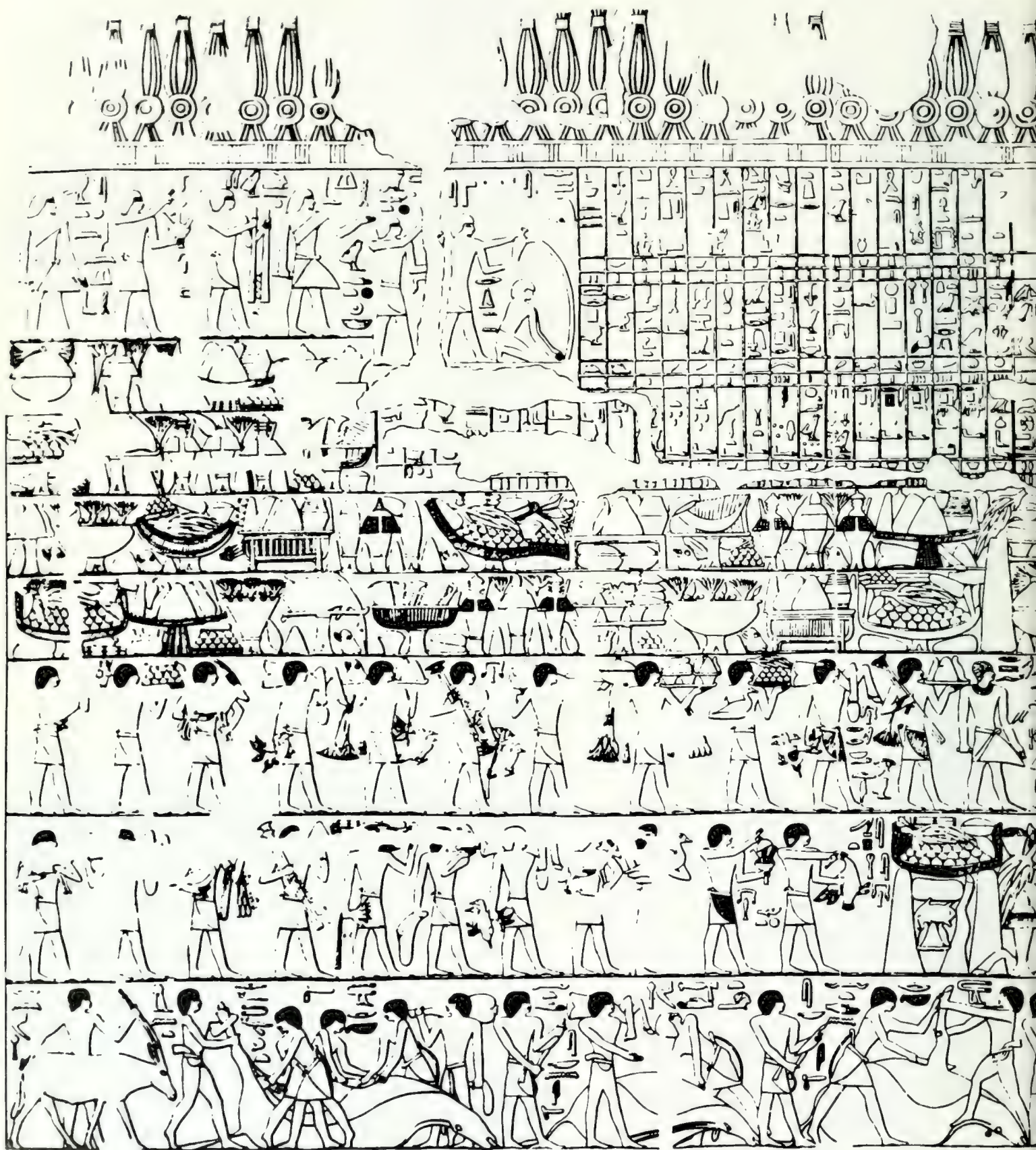
On either side, on the north and south walls*, is the figure of Netjer-user, with his name and titles, seated in a chair with animal legs and wearing the leopard skin of a priest. He is three times larger than other human figures shown in the registers, or design panels. (See illustration, p. 30.) In the lowest registers are butchering scenes, with a bovine on one side and an oryx on the other (this exotic animal was actually herded by the Egyptians at this time), ending with the inspector of Ka-servants “bringing choice cuts.”

Portion of the north wall of Netjer-user’s inner chapel. Stands hold offering baskets. At right, a man offers flaming incense.

**The tomb-chapels of Netjer-user and Unis-ankh are installed at Field Museum with the same compass orientation as in their original sites.*

Dismantling Unis-ankh’s tomb; about 1908.





TOMB CHAPEL OF NETJER-USER, SOUTH WALL



Directly opposite Netjer-user are registers showing offering bearers with provisions of all types, which are deposited—in piles, baskets, jars, even on tables and on curious double stands before Netjer-user. In addition to heaps of food-offerings (labeled “choice things”), there are bowls of flowers, burning incense, and natron (used in mummification and in purification rites). The processions are led by two sons, the first an “inspector of lay priests and scribe of decrees in the presence of the king . . . Rashepses,” the second, the “senior scribe” Netjer-user (Junior). This second Netjer-user’s name is not in the high-quality raised relief of the other signs but is simply cut into the wall, and, it would appear, added later. This same kind of intrusive insertion occurs in the register below, where the Ka-servant Nakht is named. It seems that the sons’ names and Nakht’s were added later as a kind of intrusion, not intended by the owner.

Above and in front of Netjer-user is an offerings list, a very important and standardized part of tomb inscriptions. Behind the list is a register showing the daily ritual intended for the tomb. The offering presentations continue, though much more poorly carved, on the east wall. Beside the door are panels showing animals being brought. One bovine has a deliberately deformed horn, an effect achieved by hanging a weight on it for an extended period.

A detail of special interest is the border around the top of the wall. Called *khekeru* by the ancient Egyptians, this border represents wisps of straw tied in an ornamental fashion. In later times, a row of these was conventionally used to line the top of a decorated wall, but this is one of the earliest such examples in a private tomb. The tomb of Netjer-user also contained relief of especially fine quality, the best being in figures and inscriptions by the main false door.

The chapel of Unis-ankh, on the other hand, was decorated with less care in planning and execution. Unis-ankh, who owned the second tomb-chapel now in the Field Museum, lived about two or three generations after Netjer-user, in the reign of Unis, last pharaoh of the Fifth Dynasty (2430-2400 B.C.), who was his father. Unis-ankh’s most important titles were “king’s son,” “overseer of Upper Egypt,” and “royal chamberlain.” His mastaba was placed in the second row between the mortuary temple of Unis and the great enclosure of Djoser, builder of the first stepped pyramid, already several centuries old in the time of Unis. The mastabas near Unis’s pyramid were not built in the regular blocks seen earlier at Giza. They are arranged instead, in loose straggling rows and clusters, without any obvious organizing principle apart from the desire of the owner to be near the causeway and temple of the pharaoh; some relative ranking within the court may also have been an organizing principle.

A papyrus boat brings meat and fowl to the tomb of Unis-ankh. The boatman, shown almost off balance, is in the act of forcing his forked pole into the mud to push the boat forward.

Traditionally, the mastaba-tomb was longer in the north-south axis, with the entry to the chapel complex on the east side. In the vast crowd of mastabas at Saqqara this plan often had to be modified. In the restricted space next to the Unis complex, many courtiers built their mastabas on an east-west axis, parallel to the causeway; but some, such as Unis-ankh's, were jammed into tight spaces like modern townhouses and retained the north-south axis, but with the entry on the south, facing the temple of the king. Inside, the mastaba contained a complex of six chambers arranged along the south and west sides of the building and a large courtyard in the south-center, from which offerings could be taken to the chapels. The portions now in the Field Museum include the exterior entryway, the vestibule of the chapel, and the main chapel with its false door.

The east, west, and south walls of the antechamber depict the progress of a funerary offering procession to the tomb, carrying produce from Unis-ankh's estates in Upper and Lower Egypt. On the south wall are offering bearers, including men leading cattle. Part of the wall was left blank, because the door, when open, would conceal it; at the rear of the procession, an awkward space was left by the sculptor, but later filled with a painted figure.

On the east and west walls, this procession is partly transferred to small, papyrus-stalk boats which ferry the goods across the river (the registers are shorter on the east wall because of the doorway). As on the south wall, the composition was not fully planned, for we can see that one of the bearers in the third register was not given enough room; his arm is folded awkwardly in front of his chest and the man in front seems to step on his foot. The boats and their cargo make the most interesting part of the decoration, and one of the boatmen on the west wall in the lowest register is poised on one foot at the moment of poling the skiff forward. This type of figure was much admired in ancient times and there are several other examples of men similarly posed.

The processions with presentations end before Unis-ankh on both walls, and there is a shorter procession before him above the door on the north wall which leads to the main chapel itself.

Despite the fact that the chapel of Unis-ankh was oriented north-south and that of Netjer-user east-west, the decorations are arranged in much the same way in both tombs. The subjects are much the same: butchering and processions of men carrying offerings to be heaped before Unis-ankh, who is shown twice, seated to the north and to the south of his false door facing outward. As in the tomb of Netjer-user, Unis-ankh is seated before the requisite offering table, above which, again, is a list of offerings, identical in almost every detail in



the two tombs. Also as in the tomb of Netjer-user, there are inscriptions below the table: "A thousand loaves of bread, a thousand jugs of beer, a thousand cattle, ..." invocation offerings to be spoken by any visitor to the tomb.

The registers of figures are organized so that the bearers on the east and north walls approach the figure of Unis-ankh north of the false door, and those on the south wall approach the figure to the south.

This major false door occupies the center of the west wall and it is the focus of all of the decoration in the tomb complex. Here it is red, a color closely associated with the solar cult and inscribed with the invocation of royal offering above and on the outer frame-panels. On the other vertical panels are the name and titles of Unis-ankh. A striding figure of him on the bottom of each acts as both a representation and as a determinative (a standardized representation that characterizes a word in Egyptian writing).

Apart from their intrinsic interest as artifacts of ancient Egyptian life and civilization, these tomb chapels represent, less directly, aspects of social relations in the Old Kingdom. One of the most interesting aspects is the recitation of long strings of titles, which mark the standard career for the higher orders of society in which wealth and power was approached in royal service and measured by the accumulation of the titles and the offices they represented.

A second aspect is the presentation of offerings, derived by reversion from temples, or from endowments by owners, as specified in the anteroom of Unis-ankh. These endowments were a major source of support for those priests known as Ka-servants. Scholars have inferred from the progressive removal of land from the estates of the pharaoh to his officials and the accumulated alienation of land to their endowments that these endowments helped break down the concentration of royal power. The endowments thus played a role in the dismantling of royal control, which ended the greatest flowering of Egypt. □

Edward E. Ayer and W. M. Flinders Petrie: 'Founding Fathers' of the Egyptian Collection

By Judith Cottle

FIELD MUSEUM'S COLLECTION OF EGYPTIAN ARTIFACTS came into being as the result of the interest and generosity of Edward E. Ayer (1841-1927), a Chicago businessman, and W. M. Flinders Petrie (1853-1923), an English archeologist.

Edward E. Ayer

Born in Southport (Kenosha), Wisconsin, in 1841, Edward Ayer left home to make his way to California in 1860; he returned to the Middle West, however, finally settling down in Chicago. He became a leader in the city's cultural growth, and vigorously advocated the establishment of a natural history museum in Chicago, successfully persuading Marshall Field I to donate one million dollars for the project.

The Columbian Museum, as it was first known, was incorporated in 1893. The following year its name was changed to the Field Columbian Museum, in recognition of Marshall Field's sponsorship, and in 1905 it became Field Museum of Natural History. (During the period December, 1943, to March, 1966, the institution's name was Chicago Natural History Museum, after which it reverted to Field Museum of Natural History.) Ayer was the first president of the Museum, from 1894 to 1899, and served actively on its board until his death in 1927.

In the autumn of 1894, while on a Mediterranean cruise, he visited Egypt for the first time, planning to remain only five days. But Ayer was so impressed with the many historic artifacts for sale in open-air markets that he decided to stay over and make a collection for his museum.

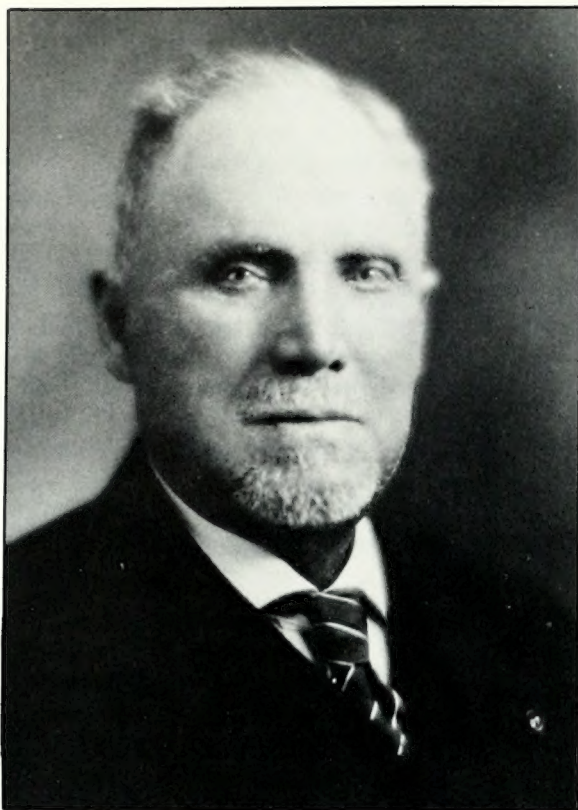
Almost a quarter-century later, in his privately published *Reminiscences* (1918), he describes meet-

ing Emil Brugsch-Bey, Gizeh Museum director, to obtain assistance in putting together a collection:

"Now, Mr. Brugsch-Bey [Ayer quotes himself], there is nothing in the world you can do for me individually; but I do not know anything I would not expect you to do here in Egypt to help in building up this new museum in the United States. I do not suppose that any grown man ever came to Egypt so ignorant of everything that is Egyptian as I am. I have collected a good deal in America and to some extent in Europe, but I am completely at sea here...help me understand the situation here so I may make as few mistakes as possible in securing articles here in Egypt for our collection."

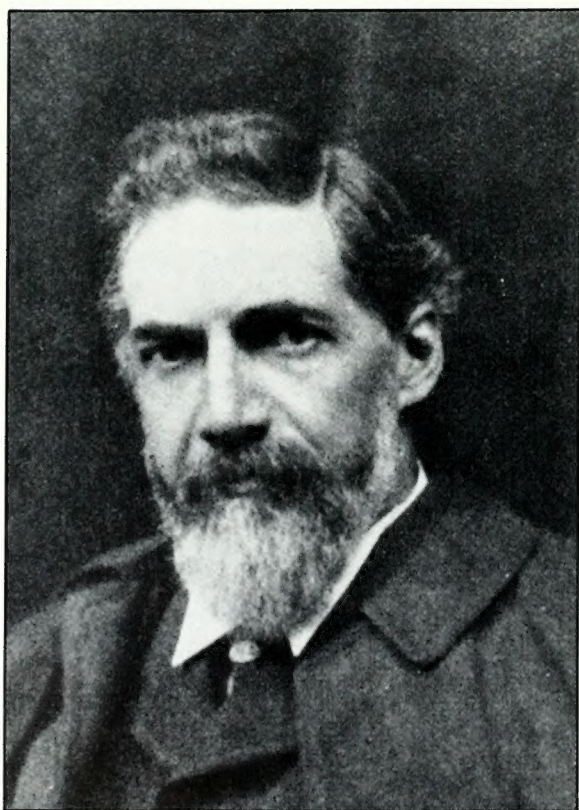
First, I want you to go through your own great museum with me and I want you to answer my questions so that I may gain an idea of what all these things mean and the relative value of the various articles. I want to know what all these things mean, what they are here for, and how I can begin to make a suitable collection. Then I want you to go up town with me...while we look into the shops of these dealers in antiquities and I want you to tell me what these things are and what would be a fair price for them. After that I want you to show me the frauds so I may guard myself against them as much as possible. Next, I want you to let me buy anything in Egypt whatsoever that I care to purchase, subject to your approval. And, finally, when we get all through, I want to bring everything that I have bought to this museum and spread it on tables and I want you to come and look everything over and give me your opinion about it all."

I started right in and collected things all over town. Then I went up the Nile, got acquainted with the dealers up there and brought back a lot of stuff. Mr. Brugsch-Bey looked over and checked everything and was



Edward E. Ayer

good enough to say to me that I had made a very good selection and that he was astonished to find nothing that did not appear genuine. I spent about twenty thousand dollars there in Egypt on this first trip and the stuff that I got would cost ten times that amount now.



W. M. Flinders Petrie

Ayer made more trips to Egypt, each time acquiring additional material for the Museum. Friends also donated artifacts and contributed funds for Ayer's purchases. Most of the additions to the collection through Ayer, whether gifts or purchases, were made almost every year up through 1914. (He also made gifts of a great many ethnological materials representing other cultures throughout his 33-year association with the Museum.) The Museum's *Annual Report* for 1909 describes the acquisition of the tombs of Netjer-user and Unis-ankh: "The two large Mastaba tombs, excavated under the direction of Mr. Edward E. Ayer at the necropolis of Sakara (sic), one of them being the gift of Mr. Martin A. Ryerson, . . . were received at the Museum* the past year and given storage in a special brick room constructed at the east unused entrance of the Museum, as it was not considered advisable to erect the tombs in the present building. The tombs filled 206 large cases, some of them ten feet in length, the total shipment weighing 96 tons. . . ."

Ayer took a proprietary interest in the Egyptian collection as well, concerning himself with how the materials were actually presented on exhibit as well as their acquisition. A harried Museum administrator wrote in desperation to James Breasted, the University of Chicago's famed Egyptologist: "I wish you would help get Mr. Ayer off my neck. He has been camped there for a long time, all because we have as yet no labels for the big stone sarcophagus and 3 or 4 mummies. I know you are very busy but if you can help us out on this we will be tremendously obliged."

Ayer fully appreciated his good fortune in being able to follow his interests and create opportunities for the enlightenment of those who were not so privileged. He made his selection of artifacts always with the idea in mind that they were for the public. "I was determined, if my prosperity continued," Ayer remarked, "to do something that would give the boy coming after me a better chance for an education than I had been able to get. That has been the prime moving thought in my work in the Newberry Library, the Field Museum of Natural History, Mr. Thomas' orchestra. . . ." He found his greatest pleasure as a collector, he said, when the artifact was placed where the public had access to it.

It must have been particularly gratifying to Ayer when he received on his seventieth birthday this note from Breasted: "I took a class of 36 students through the Field Egyptian collection last Saturday and it was a pleasure to tell them who it was to whom we owe it."

*The museum referred to here was the Jackson Park building (now occupied by the Museum of Science and Industry), which the Field Museum moved from in 1921.

W. M. Flinders Petrie

SIR WILLIAM MATTHEW FLINDERS PETRIE, born in England in 1853 and knighted in 1923, was an important figure in the development of archeology. The bulk of his work was done in Egypt, but he spent his last years excavating in Palestine, where he died in 1942, at the age of 89.

Petrie first went to Egypt in the early 1880s to survey sites. Appalled at the looting and destruction there and convinced that the study of smaller objects such as pottery was as important as that of much larger ones, he turned to excavation. Unlike his predecessors, he tried to carefully examine sites and all their contents and accurately record all available information.

His work habits were unlike those of earlier archeologists in Egypt: he was always present on the site, putting in a full day with his workers. Working at the pyramid at Hawara in 1888, he found the passages clogged with mud, so he stripped off his clothing and slid through. The artifacts being waist deep in salty water, he dug them out with his feet.

He described his cramped living quarters in a tent in the Fayyum as a "space 6½ feet long and almost as wide as the length.... Besides the bed I have 9 boxes in it, stores of all kinds, basin, cooking stove and crockery, tripod, stand... and some antiques; and in this I have to live, to sleep, to wash and to receive visitors." Petrie prided himself on his and his staff's ability to rough it, and he ridiculed colleagues who required luxuries.

It was customary for him to work the winter in Egypt and spend the spring and summer in England, writing up his results for prompt publication. The objects found during the winter excavations were sent to be exhibited in Egypt Hall in Picadilly. These exhibits were exceedingly well attended and caused public concern for the destruction of the Egyptian monuments. Amelia Edwards used his journals to write articles on his fieldwork for the *London Times*. Upon her death in 1892, she endowed the first professorship of Egyptology at the University of London, and Petrie was its first appointee.

The accurate dating of objects was of critical importance to Petrie. At Naukratis, in 1885, he employed the innovative technique of dating temples and other structures by means of coins and inscribed objects found in the buildings' foundation levels. Petrie also used imported objects of a known age to date the archeological strata in which they were found.

Petrie considered sequence dating—a method of differentiating earlier from later artifacts—one of his major contributions. He first used this method at Naqada, a large cemetery with burials filled with pottery and other grave goods found in 1894. Using material from this site, Petrie studied the gradual

changes in shape and decoration of vessels. He traced various types of flints, pots, and stoneware, their period of use and gradual disuse. In this way he set up a scale of sequence dates of 1 to 100. One to 30 was a period of unknown beginnings, 80 to 100 was a transition to dynastic styles. Each type corresponded to a number in this rough chronology.

Petrie has been called the founder of systematic Near Eastern archeology, for he introduced reputable excavation methods and greatly improved the standards of field archeology. He was the first archeologist in Egypt to insist on carefully recording all finds no matter how insignificant they seemed and to stress the importance of a scientific method of dating. In addition, he established the British School of Archaeology in Egypt and trained a generation of Egyptologists, many of whom refined his techniques. Among his more distinguished students were Howard Carter (discoverer of Tutankhamun's tomb), Ernest Gardner, Sir Alan Gardiner, Guy Brunton, and Gertrude Caton Thompson.

He had a deep love for fieldwork. It was among the ruins, he remarked, that "the real tranquility and room for quiet thought in this sort of life is refreshing. I live here and do not have to scramble to fit myself to the requirements of others."

Petrie's work was supported by museums throughout the world. In gratitude for its contributions, he presented a large number of artifacts to the Field Museum in 1897. Some of these pieces are currently on view in Hall J. □

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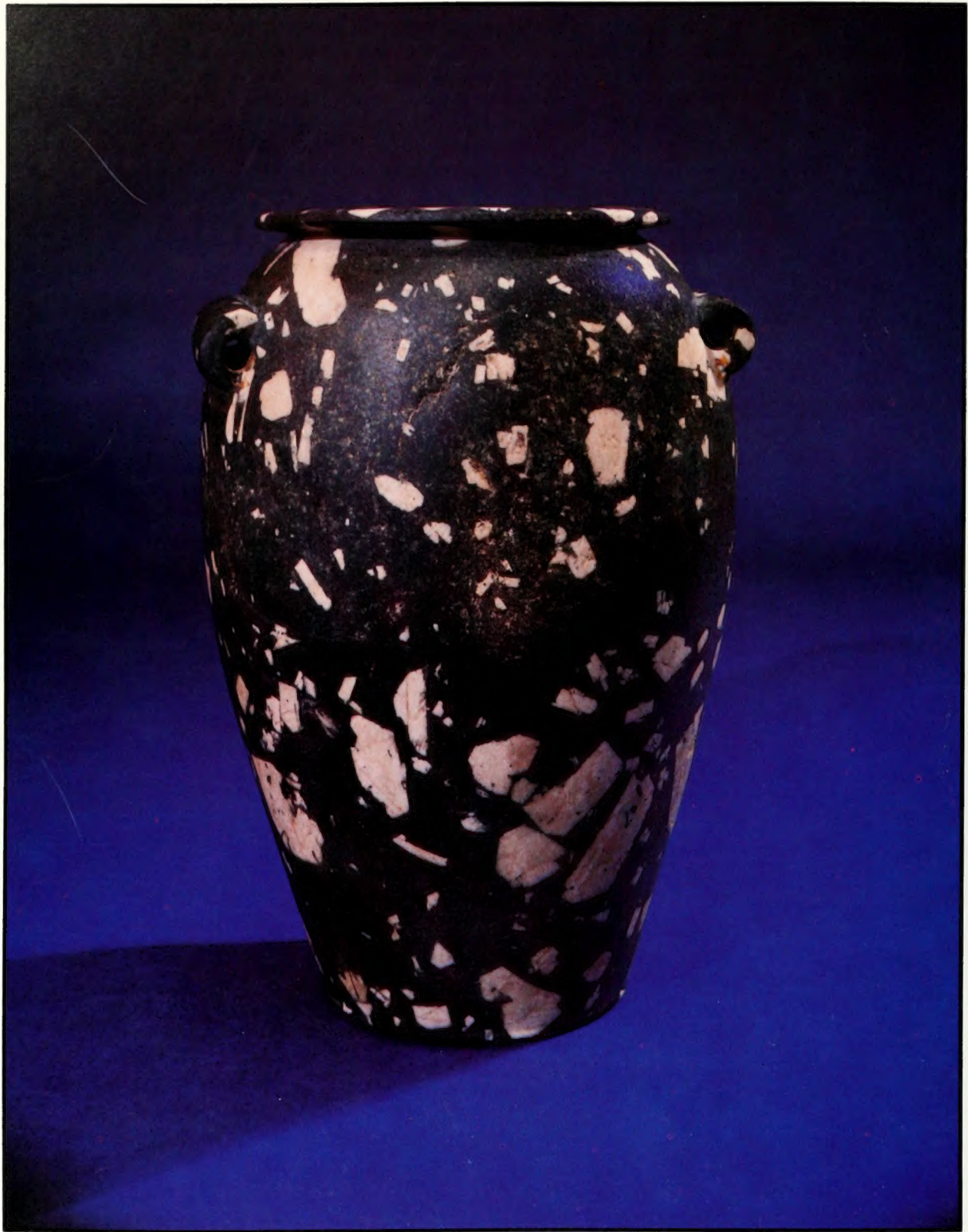
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Egyptian Predynastic vase of diorite porphyry in the Field Museum collection. Diam. 17.5 cm, height 26 cm. Cat. 30677. Photo by Ron Testa.