ICONOGRAPHY AS BIOGRAPHY

A STUDY OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM EGYPTIAN TOMBS AT BENI HASAN, EL-BERSHA AND MEIR (c.2040-1840 B.C.)

by

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any university for a degree.

07-02-96.

Date

ABSTRACT

The intention of this dissertation is to substantiate the hypothesis that biography in iconographic form occurred in certain Middle Kingdom tombs of provincial governors of the 14th, 15th and 16th Upper Egyptian nomes.

Assumed initially to have been an individual idiosyncrasy of particular tomb owners, it is now proposed that it was in fact the manifestation of a general trend which had been developing over a given period.

It is also proposed that while the trend can be traced from its gradual development in the latter part of the Old Kingdom in a number of tombs, it can be seen exemplified to its best advantage in its developing and developed form in certain tombs at Beni Hasan.

In addition to identifying certain iconography as biographical, the intention is to justify this conclusion by examining the religious, social and historical conditions which brought this about and which eventually led to its discontinuation.

In order to do this the following aspects are discussed:-

1. The nature of iconography, the nature and rules of narrative, which must be present in biographical matter, and the ability of iconography to comply with such rules.

2. The geographical and historical background to the existence of the tombs under discussion.

3. The development of Egyptian tomb art as bearing on the decorative content of certain tombs and the canonical religious symbolism inherent in the murals both iconographic and hieroglyphic, in order to differentiate between this symbolism and the iconographic biography which it introduced.

4. The religious concepts applicable to funerary observances and tomb preparation at that time are investigated to endeavour to ascertain the extent of conformity with these concepts relative to the construction of the tombs under review.

5. The social conditions extant at the period in which the proposed biographical trend developed are examined with a view to their possible influence relative to that trend.

6. In the main the views and conclusions expressed in this dissertation have been reached by adhering to hermeneutic principles of interpretation and comprehension.

SAMEVATTING

Die doel van hierdie verhandeling is om die hipotese te toets dat biografie in die vorm van ikonografie voorgekom het in sekere Middel Koninkryk-grafte van provinsiale regeerders van die 14de, 15de en 16de Bo-Egiptiese distrikte ("nomes").

Waar die aanvanklik aanvaar is as 'n individuele eienaardigheid van bepaalde grafeienaars, word nou voorgestel dat dié in werklikheid die manifestasie was van 'n algemene neiging wat oor 'n gegewe tydperk aan die ontwikkel was.

Daar word ook voorgestel dat terwyl die neiging nagespoor kan word vanaf sy geleidelike ontwikkeling in 'n aantal grafte uit die laaste deel van die Ou Koninkryk, dit die beste in sekere grafte by Beni Hasan as voorbeeld van die neiging in sy ontwikkelende en ontwikkelde vorm, tot uitdrukking kom.

Benewens die identifikasie van sekere tipes ikonografie as biografies van aard, is die doel ook om hierdie gevolgtrekking te regverdig deur 'n ondersoek na die godsdienstige, maatskaplike en geskiedkundige toestande wat dit teweeg gebring het en wat uiteindelik daartoe gelei het dat die neiging nie voortgeduur het nie.

Om dit doen, word die volgende aspekte bespreek:

1. Die aard van ikonografie, die aard en reëls van narratief wat in biografiese materiaal aanwesig moet wees; en die vermoë van ikonografie om aan sulke reëls te voldoen.

2. Die geografiese en historiese agtergrond van die grafte onder bespreking.

3. Die ontwikkeling van Egiptiese grafkuns soos dit verband hou met die dekoratiewe inhoud van sekere grafte en die kanonieke godsdienstige simboliek - beide wat ikonografie en hiërogliewe betref - eie aan die muurskilderye, om sodoende te onderskei tussen hierdie simboliek en die ikonografiese biografie wat dit ingelei het.

4. Die godsdienstige konsepte van toepassing op begrafnisgebruike en grafvoorbereiding van daardie tyd word ondersoek om te poog om te bepaal tot watter mate daar ooreenkomste tussen hierdie konsepte en die konstruksie van die grafte onder bespreking was.

5. Die maatskaplike toestande aanwesig in die tydperk toe die voorgestelde biografiese neiging ontwikkel het, word ondersoek met die oog op hul moontlike invloed met betrekking tot daardie neiging.

6. In hoofsaak is die menings en gevolgtrekkinge wat in hierdie verhandeling weergegee word, bereik met inagneming van hermeneutiese beginsels van vertolking en begrip.

John Anderson, my jo, John,
We clamb the hill thegither,
And mony a canty day, John,
We've had wi' ane anither.

Robert Burns

For my husband,
with whom I have shared many a
merry day and climbed countless
hills, none better than that of
Beni Hasan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Primarily my thanks are due to the University of Stellenbosch for making this project possible by generously granting me two bursaries covering the entire period of its duration.

Secondly I must express my thanks to the members of the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Studies, headed by Professor Deist, without whose support and encouragement this dissertation would probably never have been undertaken.

To Dr Sakkie Cornelius, upon whom fell the task of guiding and keeping me afloat in some very deep waters, thanks are inadequate. A working relationship between two people such as ourselves, of vastly different generations and backgrounds could have been disastrous. That it achieved the level of understanding, and compatibility that it did is largely due to Dr Cornelius, to whom I am grateful.

On reading this dissertation it will become obvious that there were technical aspects, outside the scope of scholarship, for which assistance was needed if it was to be completed within a reasonable time. One of these aspects was the draughtsmanship necessary in the copying of the tomb plans and the adjustment of the dimensions. This my husband undertook, together with technical assistance in the production of the illustrations, and my gratitude to him for this work and his continued and sustained support is beyond adequate expression.

The tomb plans as they appear were reproduced for printing by means of a computer. Ken Hewson of Johannesburg, engineer, and a computer expert in the matter of such drawings kindly obliged, and the excellence of his work can be seen in the plans themselves. My thanks to him are more than sincere, particularly since he produced the drawings so promptly.

Thanks are due to my son Norman, an ever present adviser in the matter of computers, who on occasion, from almost fifteen hundred kilometres away, patiently "talked me through" my problems when my computer and I were on non-speaking terms. He also came to the rescue with a Laser printer and supervised the printing from my originals. Thank you, Norman, the final appearance of this dissertation owes a great deal to you.

From the technical to the scholarly, I would like to extend my thanks to Dr Moshe Natas in Johannesburg and Dr Hilton Taylor in Fish Hoek in the Cape, for their generosity in allowing me to raid their libraries to good effect. For your support and encouragement my thanks to you both.

Through the good offices of various people I was able to obtain the original records of the expeditions to Beni Hasan, Meir and el-Bersha.

For the four volumes on Beni Hasan I must thank the Department of Near Eastern Studies at Stellenbosch, whose library contained the complete set.

My thanks are also due to Dr Vermaak of the University of South Africa who located in that University library the six volumes of the Meir expeditions and arranged for them to be made available to me.

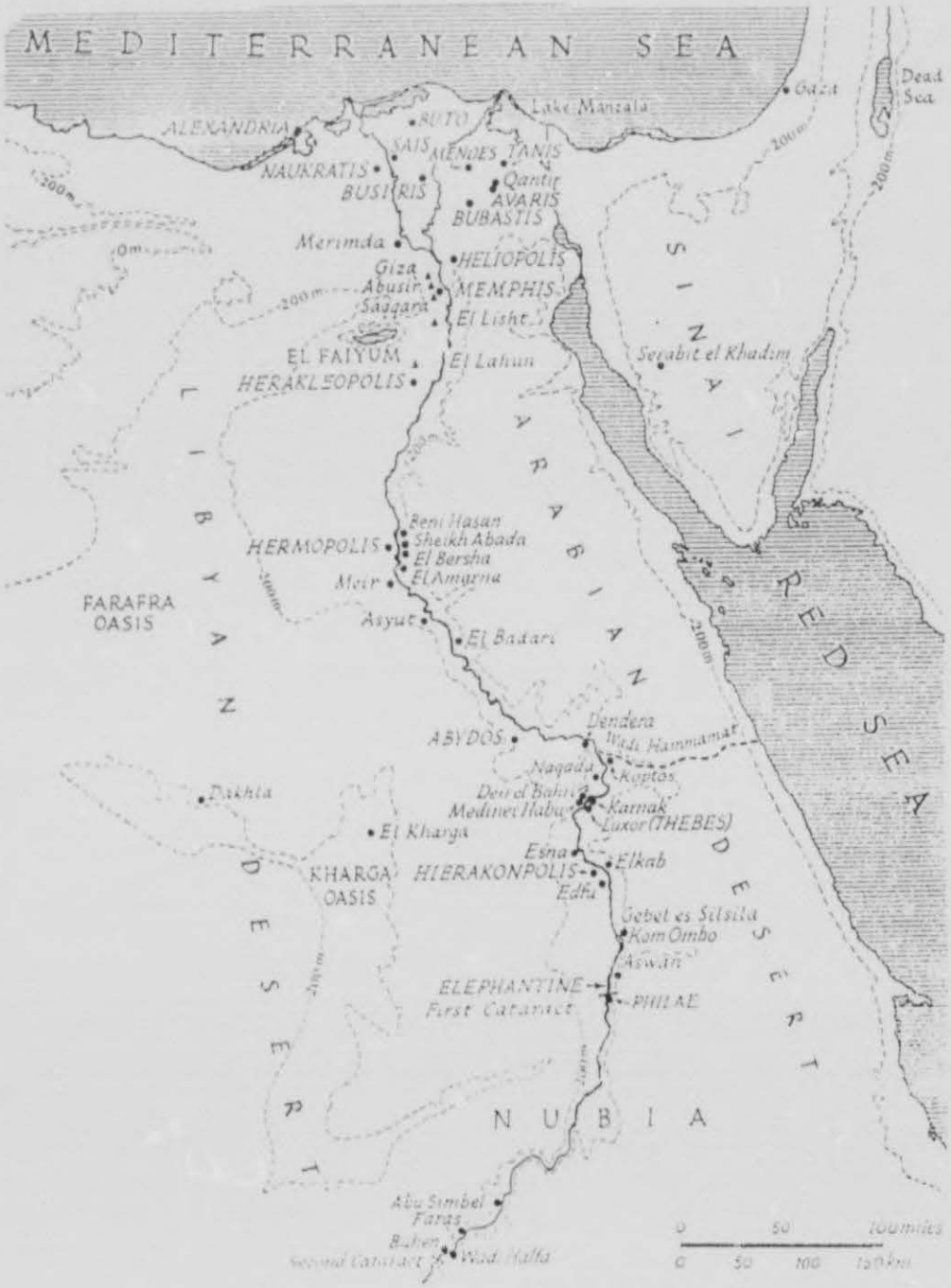
My membership of the Egypt Exploration Society was responsible for my being able to obtain from their stores the two volumes of the el-Bersha expedition.

Without this assistance there could have been no dissertation.

On a personal plane I would extend my thanks for the support and encouragement of my daughter in Cape Town and my many friends in Johannesburg, not forgetting the Campbells who have a quick eye for graffiti.

CONTENTS

APPENDIX



Map of Egypt and Nubia to Second Cataract, showing main sites.

Frontispiece. *Aldred (1987:26 Fig 7).*

PREFACE

The original reports issued by the Egyptian Exploration Fund (later Egypt Exploration Society) at the end of the 19th century, on the expeditions of Newberry and others to Beni Hasan and el-Bersha (BH I-IV and EB I-II), together with the records of the work undertaken at Meir by Blackman between 1914 and 1924, with two subsequent volumes issued during 1953 (MEIR I-VI), provide what will probably be the only comprehensive records of these tombs, at the time of their exploration, likely to be produced. Damaged prior to their examination by the above expeditions, the tombs have since that time suffered even further depredations, particularly those at Meir.

The murals at Beni Hasan, although the least exposed to the elements, were at the mercy of a colony of bats, and in addition developed a grey and disfiguring surface film. Recent efforts, however, have been made to clean and restore some of these murals which have well repaid the attention and have confirmed amazingly virile and colourful work.

The el-Bersha necropolis received early damage due to quarrying and to what must have been a fairly devastating earthquake in ancient times which cracked tombs apart and brought down roofs.

Meir, sadly, not only suffered from quarrying but also from the depredations of those seeking material for other buildings, and treasure and antiquities hunters who forcibly removed whole pieces of the interiors. Blackman speaking of the difficulties under which the work was undertaken records vandalism from one season to the next and the damage to the murals due to exposure and a prevailing desert wind, which served to sand-blast them. Extensive cleaning was necessary before copying which was carried out in extremely difficult conditions, the paint frequently being blown off the walls as the copyists worked.

From those murals reproduced in this dissertation which have been taken from the respective reports, it will be seen that those from Beni Hasan are in the main vastly clearer and more complete than those from Meir. The latter were produced in a somewhat larger and more abstract fashion and required much adjustment and reduction in order to reproduce them. Every effort has been made to illustrate the text adequately, although in some instances the reproductions are less clear than would have been desired. It is hoped that cognisance will be taken of the difficulties under which the originals were produced.

With the exception of the plan of tombs A1 and A2 Meir, which has been reproduced directly from the original report, all the tomb plans have been redrawn, essential details included and metric dimensions indicated. Originally these tombs were recorded in feet and inches. In order to show the variations in mummy pit design, where possible these have also been included.

Apart from the above reports there is little comprehensive material to be obtained. In the main, articles reflecting certain facets of the murals are all that are available. The period itself is covered in a wide variety of Middle Kingdom histories.

Although this dissertation is not primarily concerned with an assessment of the text and its translation, modern transliteration and spelling is often at variance with the original records. The reports themselves are not always consistent, particularly in Blackman's work where the names of deceased tomb owners, although apparently the same are rendered in a variety of ways. In the above records,  for example, is presented as hetep, hotep, hotpe and hotp. Consideration was given to this problem but it seemed presumptuous to override the original works and bring these variations in line, particularly in view of the fact that they are still used. Even at the present time a great many variations in transliteration and translation still occur. In the main every effort has been made to abide by the original text. In place names and the names of the kings, however, Baines and Malek (1980) have been preferred. A case in point is the original title of el-Bersheh, as given in the Newberry and Griffith reports and the more familiar el-Bersha as in Baines and Malek. In the interests of consistency, dating is also as Baines and Malek (1980). All dates in the text, with the exception of modern authors, are considered to be BC unless otherwise indicated.

A difficulty also occurs with the titles Nome and Nomarch for which there is no specific equivalent in the texts. Originally of Greek nomenclature, English 19th century scholars found no difficulty in recoursing to the Greek since western classical scholarship was prominently based thereon. Blackman, however, uses both Baron and Count in interpreting titles of Meir nobles, and while the former Greek titles have been used in this work, the Blackman interpretations have been discarded since they are essentially of western European usage, and there is little justification in applying them to Egyptian provincial overlords. Insofar as possible the titles erpa-prince and ha-prince, have been retained. The former is understood to be hereditary and the latter an appointed title.

In the Beni Hasan and el-Bersha reports transliteration and translation is given in some detail along with the original hieroglyphic texts. Blackman, however, tends to give merely the translation and it is often necessary to refer to the murals themselves for the original text. It is submitted that while there are occasional queries regarding the various translations, nothing was found that could have influenced this dissertation.

PART 1: CHAPTERS 1 - 2

INTRODUCTION, ICONOGRAPHY

PART 2: CHAPTERS 3 - 6

THE PEOPLE AND THEIR LAND

PART 3: CHAPTERS 7 - 15

THE PEOPLE AND THEIR TOMBS

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ROYAL DYNASTIES FROM 2575-1204 B.C.

OLD KINGDOM 2575–2134

4th Dynasty 2575–2465
Snofru 2575–2551
Khufu (Cheops) 2551–2528
Ra'djedef 2528–2520
Khephren (Ra'kha'ef) 2520–2494
Menkaure' 2490–2472
(Mycerinus)
Shepseskaf 2472–2467

5th Dynasty 2465–2323
Userkaf 2465–2458
Sahure' 2458–2446
Neferirkare' Kakai 2446–2426
Shepseskare' Ini 2426–2419
Ra'neferef 2419–2416
Neuserre' Izi 2416–2392
Menkauhor 2396–2388
Djedkare' Izezi 2388–2356
Wenis 2356–2323

6th Dynasty 2323–2150
Teti 2323–2291
Pepy I (*Meryre'*) 2289–2255
Merenre' Nemtyemzaf 2255–2246
Pepy II (*Neferkare'*) 2246–2152

7th/8th Dynasty 2150–2134
Numerous ephemeral kings, including Neferkare'

1st INTERMEDIATE PERIOD 2134–2040

9th/10th Dynasty 2134–2040
(Herakleopolitan)
Several kings called Khety; Merykare'; Ity

11th Dynasty (Theban)
2134–2040
Inyotef I (Sehertawy) 2134–2118
Inyotef II (Wah'ankh) 2118–2069
Inyotef III 2069–2061
(Nakhtnebtepnufer)
Nebhepetre' 2061–2010
Mentuhotpe

MIDDLE KINGDOM 2040–1640

11th Dynasty 2040–1991
(all Egypt)
Nebhepetre' 2061–2010
Mentuhotpe
S'ankhkare' 2010–1998
Mentuhotpe
Nebtawyre' 1998–1991
Mentuhotpe

12th Dynasty *1991–1783
Amenemhet I *1991–1962
(*Sehetepibre'*)
Senwosret I *1971–1926
(*Kheperkare'*)
Amenemhet II *1929–1892
(*Nubkaure'*)
Senwosret II *1897–1878
(*Kha'kheperre'*)
Senwosret III *1878–1841?
(*Kha'kaure'*)
Amenemhet III 1844–1797
(*Nima'atre'*)
Amenemhet IV 1799–1787
(*Ma'akherure'*)

13th Dynasty 1783–after 1640
About 70 kings. Better-known ones are listed; the numbers are their positions in the complete list
Wegaf (*Khutawyre'*) 1 1783–1779
Amenemhet V (*Sekhemkare'*) 4
Harnedjheriotef (*Hetepibre'*) 9
Amenyqemau 11b
Sebekhotpe I c.1750
(*Kha'ankhre'*) 12
Hor (*Awibre'*) 14; Amenemhet VII (*Sedjefakare'*) 15; Sebekhotpe II (*Sekhemre'-khutawy*) 16;
Khendjer (*Userkare'*) 17
Sebekhotpe III c.1745
(*Sekhemre'-swadjtawy*) 21
Neferhotep I c.1741–1730
(*Kha'sekhemre'*) 22
Sebekhotpe IV c.1730–1720
(*Kha'neferre'*) 24
Sebekhotpe V c.1720–1715
(*Kha'hotepre'*) 25
Aya c.1704–1690
(*Merneferre'*) 27
Mentuemzaf (*Djed'ankhre'*) 32c;
Dedumose II (*Djedneferre'*) 37;
Neferhotep III (*Sekhemre'-s'ankhtawy*) 41a

14th Dynasty
A group of minor kings who were probably all contemporary with the 13th or 15th Dynasty

2nd INTERMEDIATE PERIOD 1640–1532

15th Dynasty (Hyksos)
Salitis; Sheshi;
Khian (*Swoserenre'*)
Apophis c.1585–1542
(*'Awoserre'* and others)
Khamudi c.1542–1532

16th Dynasty
Minor Hyksos rulers, contemporary with the 15th Dynasty

17th Dynasty 1640–1550
Numerous Theban kings; numbers give positions in the complete list
Inyotef V c.1640–1635
(*Nubkheperre'*) 1
Sebekemzaf I (*Sekhemre'-wadjkha'u*) 3; Nebireyeraw (*Swadjenre'*) 6; Sebekamzaf II (*Sekhemre'-shedtawy*) 10; Ta'o (or Djehuti'o) I (*Senakhtenre'*) 13; Ta'o (or Djehuti'o) II (*Seqenenre'*) 14
Kamose c.1555–1550
(*Wadjkheperre'*) 15

NEW KINGDOM 1550–1070

18th Dynasty 1550–1307
'Ahmose (*Nebpehtire'*) 1550–1525
Amenophis I 1525–1504
(*Djeserkare'*)
Tuthmosis I 1504–1492
(*'Akheperkare'*)
Tuthmosis II 1492–1479
(*'Akheperenre'*)
Tuthmosis III 1479–1425
(*Menkheperre'*)
Hatshepsut 1473–1458
(*Ma'atkare'*) Q
Amenophis II 1427–1401
(*'Akheprure'*)
Tuthmosis IV 1401–1391
(*Menkheprure'*)
Amenophis III 1391–1353
(*Nebma'atre'*)
Amenophis IV/Akhenaten
(*Neferkheprure' wa'enre'*)
1353–1335
Smenkhkare' 1335–1333
(***'Ankhkheprure'***) (= Nefertiti Q?)
Tut'ankhamun 1333–1323
(***Nebkheprure'***)
Aya 1323–1319
(*Kheperkheprure'*)
Haremhab 1319–1307
(*Djeserkheprure'*)

19th Dynasty 1307–1196
Ramesses I 1307–1306
(*Menpehtire'*)
Sethos I 1306–1290
(*Menma'atre'*)
Ramesses II 1290–1224
(*Userma'atre' setepenre'*)
Merneptah 1224–1214
(*Baenre' hotephirma'at*)
Sethos II 1214–1204

The tombs discussed fall into the period 2575-1804 BC.

Baines and Malek (1980:36).

EXCURSUS II: GROUPING THE TOMBS

In dealing with the three groups of tombs the question of family relationships inevitably arose since in each case it could be assumed that they were primarily the resting places of hierarchal families. The genealogical trees, where available, and included in the Appendix, show the relationships insofar as the original archaeologists were able to determine them.

However, this dissertation is concerned with the development of biographical material as it appeared over a given period, and for reasons not necessarily concerned with family relationships. Certainly Ukh-hotp in tomb B4 at Meir took pains to exhibit the line of Nomarchs from whom he had come, but this has more relevance insofar as his *personal status* is concerned than a family history in itself. In any case, the object of the comparison of these tombs was to ascertain a trend *between the tomb owners of the various districts* rather than family trends. Harpur (1987), who has detailed hundreds of Old Kingdom tombs tried to discern family trends within tomb murals, even trends in the placement of murals in the tombs, but failed to do more than confirm the repeated use of canonical subjects, with gradual trends towards the expansion of these. Family relationships, she found, were too tenuous or not sufficiently well documented to justify any general trends attributable to them.

In seeking biography, family relationships are important so far as their depiction in composite scenes, i.e. the South Wall of Tomb 3 at Beni Hasan, where Khnemhotep's two wives and his various children are clearly detailed. Such motifs occurring in scenes in tombs of the same necropolis, however, can do little but confirm the relationships themselves, and this aspect has never been at issue.

So far as comparison was concerned, therefore, the tombs were grouped for discussion, not in respect of families, which would have been irrelevant, but in relation to contemporary subjects for comparison within the sphere of biographical iconography. This was essential since it is suggested that the trend was wider-spread than would have been found had one confined oneself to individual families. This is well demonstrated by the inclusion of Hathor ceremonies in several of the Meir tombs, which could be compared with each other, but which make no appearance at all in the tombs at Beni Hasan nor the tomb at el Bersha. Nevertheless they are comparable with the latter groups as examples of individualism, *presented in the cause of status*. What has been sought is a general trend towards individualism outside the canonical field, such individualism exhibited in biographical iconography. This would not justify the grouping of family tombs, since a trend within them would not necessarily indicate a general movement. It does, however, justify the grouping of the selected tombs in respect of their periods of construction, and it was from this aspect that the family relationships proved to be useful.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

If you prick us, do we not bleed?
If you tickle us, do we not laugh?
If you poison us, do we not die?...
Merchant of Venice
Act III, Scene I.

1.1 THE OBJECTIVE

The intention of this dissertation is to examine and compare the murals in a series of Egyptian Middle Kingdom tombs at Beni Hasan, Meir and el-Bersha. Beni Hasan is the site of the ancient necropolis of the 16th (Oryx) nome of Upper Egypt, on the east bank of the Nile, some 23 km south of El-Minya. Together with those of the adjoining 15th (Hare) nome at el-Bersha, and 14th Meir nomes, these non-royal tombs are the last resting places of the Great Chiefs, or Nomarchs of middle Egypt, who rose to power during the period of reconstruction after the anarchic period, at the end of the Old Kingdom (c 2134). They faded into obscurity, once the new royal family had consolidated its supremacy and decreased the nobles' power. They are some of the most important provincial tomb sites of the early Middle Kingdom (c 2040-1840).

The main object of this work is not primarily to re-evaluate the murals from a point of view of quality of art form, religious ritual or architectural standards, although these are discussed, but to endeavour *to recognise a social trend towards biography in iconographic form*, and present in these tombs. Since these tombs can be dated with some accuracy, and the events of the period in which they came into being are almost unique in the annals of Egyptian history, biographical content, if it exists, can be of importance both historically and socially. (See Excursus I: CHOICE OF TOMBS)

1.2 THE BASIC PROBLEM

Immediately one embarks upon the investigation of ancient biographical or autobiographical material, one is faced with the problem of communication, involving a complex variety of approaches. Not the least of these is that we are dealing primarily with *homo sapiens* rather than historical remembrance, or interpretation, the latter being linked to our own bias assimilated through western concepts and values. Physical, environmental, and cultural differences exist all

over the world. The time-span between ourselves and ancient civilisations, merely adds to these differences which run deep and are conditioned by situations and events largely beyond our control. While recognising this, we have to accept that it is from these situations and events that our perspectives are drawn. Perspective, as indicating viewpoint, however, is not necessarily confined to principles or concepts, but can just as easily be a visual problem. The interpreter of iconography must, of necessity, be cognisant of *the eye of the beholder*, whether it be the eye of its creator or the viewer, as the figures illustrated by Kraft (1979:25 Fig 2.1 = *Fig 1*)[1] demonstrate.

Fig 1 Patterns that change when the observer shifts perspective

Whether the artist intended these 2-way figures, or whether it was merely coincidental, is not apparent, but one has to be appreciative of the possibility of divergence between creator and viewer when interpreting any iconographic work.

This problem is not necessarily a matter of intelligence. So far as the Egyptians were concerned, Kemp (1989:2) points out, that the difficulty we encounter is mainly historical. Just as the Egyptians were influenced in their thinking by their own historical circumstances, so are we, in our sphere, as influenced by, and largely incapable of changing, the norms by which we understand our world and our reaction to that world (Kraft 1979:27 Fig 2.2 = *Fig 2*).

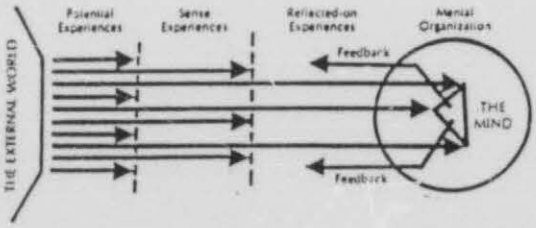


Fig 2 The modern mind and its response to reality

Misunderstanding, lack of meaningful communication, is frequently the problem. The ability to speak or write the language of another does not necessarily give us entry into the consciousness of that individual. We are, in fact, battling against the barrier of cultural patterning and performance, which in its turn is intricately linked to our particular world view.

Kraft's diagram, below, is given in a modern context but it can easily be seen that the social, linguistic, religious and technical *structures* which he enumerates, while they may exhibit entirely different forms today, are equally applicable to the ancient world. The problem is to determine the norms of the Egyptian world view (Kraft 1979:54 Fig 3.1 = *Fig 3*).

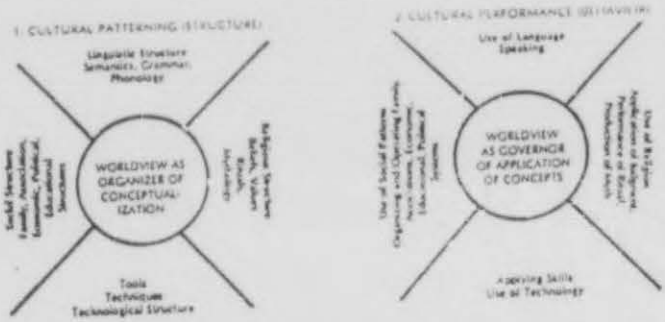


Fig 3 Cultural patterning and performance in relation to the individual's view of the world

Anyone who has studied ancient texts will have wrestled with *hermeneutics*. Primarily used as a method to interpret Biblical texts, it is, in fact, relevant to all study as relating to communication between peoples. Even, in modern times, when a variety of media transmission is available world-wide, lack of understanding between peoples has probably never been at a higher level, whether it be manifest in a local situation or a national confrontation. *Hermeneutics*, is basically a matter of interpretation of intent, that is interpretation of the message, rather than language, which is in itself a separate discipline. Interpretation of the message, is, among other things, a means of explaining or understanding. The stumbling block, insofar as the ancient world is concerned, is *how we understand*. A salutary and somewhat chastening curb to our enthusiasm is the well known piece of graffiti which once appeared on the walls of an American university,

> "Who do you say that I am?" They replied,
> "You are the eschatological manifestation of the ground of our being, the kerygma of which we find the ultimate meaning in our interpersonal relationships."
> And Jesus said, "What?"
>
> Nigel Rees

The use of modern language and idiom, suffers from the disadvantage of involving the ancient peoples in our world, rather than allowing us to step back into theirs. The use of words such as those above, while endeavouring to express a relationship, does so in our terms, and immediately enlarges the gap between us.

One might say, therefore, that to seek to understand the minds behind the murals in an ancient tomb is doomed to failure before it begins. That the years between are too many and too complicated. This may well be so. Certainly the only way in which we are able to relate to people who lived almost four thousand years ago, can only be achieved by endeavouring to meet them through those human qualities which we both share and which remain unchanged through all the exigencies of time and place.

Emotion, as engendered by the social conditions which generate it, is one of these. No matter who becomes the human subject of study, the responses of love, hate, fear, greed, pride, can be shared, and understood by anyone at any time. The forms these emotions take and in which they present themselves may be determined by the circumstances in which man finds himself, but the basic emotions and reactions are readily recognisable.

If, as it is proposed, these particular tombs at Beni Hasan,

(a) contain biographical material

(b) contain this material not only in the recognised textual form but also in iconographic form then it follows that:-

(i) (a) and (b) must be determined and recognised and

(ii) the reason for this form of tomb biography having been developed must be defined.

The fact that ancient Egyptian iconography was the mother of hieroglyphs, and never severed that umbilical cord, makes the assumption that such iconography can be linked to and read as textual material, a viable proposition. However, it is necessary that iconography both as itself and in the guise of narration must initially, be determined.

In accordance with hermeneutic principles, therefore, it is intended to determine whatever known factors can be assumed to have influenced the owners of the Beni Hasan tombs, and which could show a response in biographical material manifest in them. In order to do this it is proposed to present this dissertation as follows:-

1.3 APPROACH

1.3.1 THE DETERMINATION OF ICONOGRAPHY AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION BY:-

(a) Investigating and identifying its nature, in respect of its primary subject matter, its *factual* content and/or its *artistic* or *canonical* form.

(b) Identifying the presence of secondary subject matter in respect of conventional images, in relation to preconceived motifs, religious and cultic myths, allied to possible aspects of a contemporary historical nature.

(c) Determining the intrinsic meaning in relation to its *symbolical* values.

1.3.2 THE INTERPRETATION OF THE ICONOLOGY (USING THE MODEL OF PANOFSKY 1983) BY:-

(a) *Description* and where possible, analysis, of the material from a pre-iconographic point of view.

(b) *Analysis* of the material from an iconographic viewpoint.

(c) *Interpretation* from an iconological viewpoint.

1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

1.4.1 INTERPRETATION OF ICONOGRAPHIC MATERIAL USING THE FOLLOWING APPARATUS:-

(a) A definition of iconography as a medium of communication.

(b) A definition of narration, and definition of iconography as narration.

(c) Familiarity with the contemporary sphere in which the iconography came into being in relation to the historical, cultural, religious and social framework of the period.

(d) An understanding of the historical development of tomb iconography during the Old Kingdom and Intermediate period, together with burial practices and the effect of *democratic* changes during and after the anarchic period at the end of the Old Kingdom.

(e) A knowledge of the artistic and canonical norms of ancient Egyptian art in general and tomb art in particular.

(f) Familiarity with the religious norms of Egyptian tomb iconography, cultic requirements, and customs applicable to the particular period in which the iconography was created.

(g) Knowledge of and familiarity with the literary sources of the period, together with their possible social implications in respect of the iconography.

(h) In furtherance of (d), it is proposed to investigate and compare certain Old Kingdom tombs in addition to tombs from the Beni Hasan necropolis, i.e., those of the 14th Upper Egyptian nome at Meir, and the necropolis of the 15th Egyptian Nome at Deir el-Bersha. The tombs from the latter two sites have been chosen for comparison being contemporary with those at Beni Hasan.

(i) Investigation of the human condition and psychological factors inherent in the social conditions of the period, this with particular application to the Beni Hasan community.

1.4.2 PRESENTATION

In view of the nature of the foregoing material and the possible overlapping, contingent within the various subjects and frames of reference, it is proposed to present the material in three parts.

PART 1: CHAPTERS 1 -2 INTRODUCTION, ICONOGRAPHY

PART 2: CHAPTERS 3 - 6 THE PEOPLE AND THEIR LAND

PART 3: CHAPTERS 7 - 15 THE PEOPLE AND THEIR TOMBS

PART 1 INTRODUCTION, ICONOGRAPHY

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE OBJECTIVE

1.2 THE BASIC PROBLEM

1.3 APPROACH

1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

1.5 THE PRESENTATION OF ICONOGRAPHY

CHAPTER 2 ICONOGRAPHY ITS DEFINITION AND APPLICATION

2.1 THE DETERMINATION OF ICONOGRAPHY

2.2 ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ICONOGRAPHIC ART

1.5 THE PRESENTATION OF ICONOGRAPHY

This dissertation, arguing the nature of certain iconography in selected tombs, has necessitated the inclusion of illustrations. These will be found adjacent to the relevant text so far as is possible. They are projected not as adjunctive to the text but as an integral part of the argument contained in the dissertation. In the case of the tomb murals, the close association of picture, hieroglyph, and Egyptian texts, accentuates this relationship.

The hermeneutic principles to which this dissertation has endeavoured to conform, will, it is proposed, justify the collation of a wide range of material, not always immediately seen to be relevant, but which substantiates the proposal that, in certain instances, in the tombs under review, personal influences and considerations have replaced conventional norms and that these in turn introduced biographic material in iconographic form.

FootNotes

[1] Goblet/silhouettes of heads facing each other and young woman/old woman.

[2] Kraft (1979:23-42) Mirrored Reality.

CHAPTER 2

ICONOGRAPHY ITS DEFINITION AND APPLICATION

The whole of the story is not written here, but it is suggested. And the attribute of all true art, the highest and the lowest, is this - that it says more than it says, and takes you away from itself. It is a little door that opens into an infinite hall... Schreiner

2.1 THE DETERMINATION OF ICONOGRAPHY

The Shorter Oxford Dictionary on Historical Principles (1990:1014) determines Iconography as:

(a) a pictorial representation, a drawing or a plan.

(b) The description of any subject by means of drawings or figures... the branch of knowledge which deals with representative art in general.

Writing in the Anchor Bible Dictionary, Keel (1992:358) says that "Iconography describes".

Panofsky (1983:51) considers it to be a branch of the history of art which is concerned with the subject matter or meaning of works of art as opposed to their form. The field of subject matter or meaning he understands as commencing when one identifies configuration of colour, lines or pattern as either an object or an event.

In modern usage icon and iconography are words frequently associated with religious pictures, since from early times its historical deployment as representative of various aspects of religion is well known.[1] While it is true that the greater part of Egyptian iconography is relative to religious concepts and/or cultic observance, this in no way determines the definition of iconography as such and neither of the observations by Keel and Panofsky confine the concepts of iconography to the religious field. Keel (1992:358), although writing on iconography from the point of view of Biblical scholarship, speaks in general of the purpose of studying pictorial representations which complement texts. He comments upon the reasons for so doing being the desire to both "hear and see". He elaborates upon the possibilities of a picture in contrast to words but then turns to the second important characteristic of visual information which is, he says, that the figurative picture always maintains a certain affinity to the object represented in that it has a natural relationship to it. He points out that a horse or a cow in ancient Egyptian or Chinese

painting is recognisable to every human being (familiar with horses and cows), despite the stylistic variations. It is, however, impossible to recognise the Chinese or Egyptian words for horse or cow without the proper knowledge of the languages and their scripts, since language is wholly artificial. This takes us back to Panofsky's contention that "identification" of an object or event is a prerequisite.

Panofsky, however, is concerned to differentiate between iconography, the suffix *graphy* being derived from the Greek word *graphein*, to write, and iconology, which he calls 'a good old word' the suffix *logy* being derived from the Greek *logos* meaning 'thought' or 'reason'.

Iconography, he says implies a purely descriptive method of procedure while iconology, is to be preferred "wherever iconography is taken out of its isolation and integrated with whichever other method, historical, psychological or critical, we may attempt to use" (1983:57).

While this dissertation is concerned with biographical iconographic matter, inevitably it will be necessary to equate to Panofsky's *iconology* in respect of the methods which will be used to determine the nature of the iconography itself.

However, Panofsky contends that iconographical analysis when dealing with images, stories and allegories instead of with motifs, must presuppose a familiarity with specific themes or concepts as "transmitted through literary sources". This could prove difficult to substantiate in respect of Egyptian iconography since in many cases such references do not exist. Panofsky, however, does concede that such literary sources may be acquired by oral tradition (1983:61), and this does, in some respects, expand the perimeters of acceptable sources of reference. However, Keel's example of recognition of a horse (above) need not depend upon either oral or textual transmission, since vision alone may be the definitive factor.

In determining the nature of the iconographic material in the Beni Hasan and other tombs, these factors will be taken into consideration.

2.1.1 THE DEVELOPMENT OF ICONOGRAPHIC SCRIPT

Accustomed as we are to the teaching of reading and writing by means of simple sounds allied to written words, with pictures added to clarify the meanings of those words, it is difficult to accustom oneself to the Egyptian viewpoint towards writing. Beginning with the sound of the entire word and the picture, they developed the written word therefrom, elevating the retention of the picture over the sound sign or *phonogram*. Since the history of the development of hieroglyphics is lost to us, we have no guidelines as to its development. It is doubtful that the process was ever recorded, but it must have taken place over a considerable period since even the earliest known texts are highly developed.

Davies dates the first hieroglyphs to the late pre-dynastic period within the range of 3100-3000 (1987:10). Even after the laborious picture writing became simplified into a cursive and flowing

form, the mural texts remained in the original full pictorial style, called by the Egyptians *mdw ntr* "the god's words", becoming an art form in themselves.[2] There were, Davies maintains, two fundamental points of importance about the script, (a) it was closely related to representational art and (b) like the art, it was endowed with religious or magico-religious significance (1987:14). Early in the Old Kingdom, a cursive form of hieroglyphs developed for every-day use, and this, in turn, became adapted to various forms, but the basic *picture writing* was always the *hierarchal* text and remained so throughout the ancient Egyptian period.

If evidence were needed of the continued close relationship of this writing to the art of ancient Egypt, one only has to cite examples such as the ***khefa*** sign for the clenched "fist" (Gardiner 1957 D49) also used for "grasp" and *amem*: "seize" (Wilkinson 1992:55). This can also be found on the Bull palette from the predynastic period, in the 10th and 11th hours of the Book of the Gates from the 20th dynasty, and the clenched hand amulet from the late period (Wilkinson 1992:55. D49 = *Fig 4*, 54 Figs 1-4 = *Figs 5-8*)[3].

Fig 4
Hieroglyph
KHEFA D49

Fig 6 20th dynasty Hand with cord
10th hour, Book of Gates

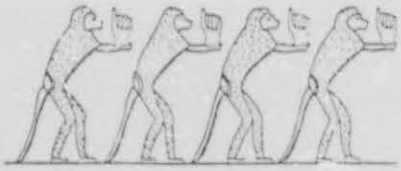


Fig 7 20th dynasty Baboons
holding fists. 11th hour
Book of Gates

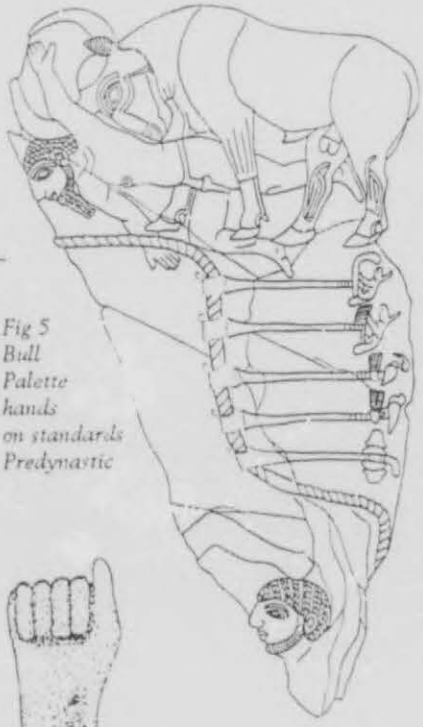


Fig 5
Bull
Palette
hands
on standards
Predynastic

Fig 8 Amulet
Late period

2.1.2 THE ROLE OF EGYPTIAN ICONOGRAPHIC ART

Gaballa's contention that "The Egyptian artist did not know what is called art for art's sake" (1970:1) and that from the Egyptian point of view art was required to serve a certain purpose, can be linked to Keel's observations that it "described". In turn, this carries the commitment that it be understood. If this is accepted, whatever the artistic principles applicable to Egyptian art in general, it would appear fairly conclusive that the intention behind ancient Egyptian iconography was to record and communicate, exhibit, elucidate, or complement either texts, concepts or ideas. However, in itself this relationship became extremely complicated.

The origins of text illustration are uncertain although Brunner (1988), commenting on Bible illustrations, says the illustration of texts is a very old custom going back to the ancient Egyptians. This may well be, yet in view of the non-existence or paucity of texts in the predynastic and Old Kingdom periods, it is difficult to attribute the development of Egyptian iconography to the illustration of textual material. The first texts of any quantity, made their appearance in the Middle Kingdom literature, which has largely come to us by reason of its use in scribal schools of the New Kingdom. These textual works are not illustrated, however, nor are the contents of the writings reflected in iconography, such as are the battles of the Ramesside kings inscribed on the walls of their temples.[4]

Iconography which *may* have been intended as illustrations of textual material appears with the Coffin Texts and later on the papyrus copies of the Book of the Dead, which formed a regular part of the funerary furnishings from the time of the New Kingdom.

Such iconography, however, was not dependent upon text and in many instances could stand alone. Indications are that in time these illustrations could, and did, exist apart from text. Although in many instances the vignettes do represent all or part of the particular spell to which they are attached, there are instances when the iconography and text bear no relation to each other (Faulkner 1985:14). This leads to the conclusion that, however they may have been conceived, with time, the vignettes were acquired by whomsoever prepared the texts, and added as considered suitable. Sometimes the system failed.

Andrews, in her Introduction to Faulkner's "Book of the Dead", comments that many funerary papyri consisted of almost nothing but illustrations and that Chapters 16 and 143 were always in vignette form. By the 3rd Intermediate period, many funerary papyri consisted of almost nothing but illustrations (Faulkner 1985:12). This tends to re-define the concept of these illustrations to *substitutes*, much in the vein of murals with magic properties, incorporated in tombs as an idealised concept applicable to the after-life. Such illustrations represent primarily a concept or desire of the deceased, rather than a simple illustration depicting a text, although the two may coincide.

To endeavour to equate ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic iconography with the norms pertaining to western illustrative art is, therefore, not equitable since the co-joining of iconographically-based text and the artistic medium, has never occurred in the Western world where alphabetically-based languages make no pretensions to art other than within their own execution. Alphabetical signs, incorporated in illuminated manuscripts, artistically beautiful as they may be, are always limited to being illustrated or decorated alphabetical letters (Kidson 1967:44 Fig 24 = *Fig 9*, 84 Fig 51 = *Fig 10*).

Fig 9 Illuminated B

Fig 10 Illuminated H

In these examples the letter B is purely decorative, the H which is the initial letter to the Book of Exodus, incorporates the smiting of the Hebrew by the Egyptian and the slaying of the Egyptian by Moses, but the themes are merely decorative, the text and illustrations being separated and the garments in the illustrations themselves conforming to contemporary patterns. These cannot be compared with hieroglyphs where the picture is primary with the glyph itself incorporated in and subservient to the illustration.

One must conclude therefore, that ancient Egyptian iconographic art performs a function unique to the situations in which it is found and has to be determined in the light of those situations, always bearing in mind that its primary function is communication.

2.2 ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ICONOGRAPHIC ART

> *"Whosoever should portray truly the life and death of a little flower would have shaped a symbol of existence. The love of beauty must be born in a man; the skill to reproduce it he must make"*
>
> Schreiner

2.2.1 THE CREATIVE BACKGROUND

Kischkewitz (1972:23), discussing the idea that deeply rooted in our minds is the concept of craftsmanship being the origin of art, suggests that the Egyptians probably regarded artistic creativity as a particular aspect of the skill of the craftsman. This, she feels is borne out by the fact that there was no special word for "art, artist, craft or craftsman" in ancient Egypt. The terms in use were identical for wood, stone, or metal-processing. She cites the 6th Dynasty tomb of Ni-ankh-Pepi in which she says the exhortations to "look at the work of sculptors and painters" and "look at the work of craftsmen" are the same, and concludes that "the distinction between craftsmen and artists was probably not important" (1972:24).[5]

Wilkinson (1992:9) commenting upon the rich quality of the works of art passed down to us by the Egyptians, with which they filled their homes, temples and tombs, points out that the works themselves, even amulets and jewellery cannot be understood merely from the artistic point of view or a desire for ornamentation, since the role of the art was so closely connected to the religious beliefs of the people. To appreciate one, he believes, it is essential to understand the other and maintains that the single unifying theme found in Egyptian art is its *symbolic message*. It is through symbols, Wilkinson says, that the Egyptians sought to represent many of their religious beliefs and ideas about the nature of the cosmos, such symbolic pictures and symbols used in this way, making the transcendental and unseen both immediate and understandable (1992:9). Nevertheless, while one can agree with this assessment, it should also be pointed out that the symbols and pictures themselves need to be understood *within their own sphere*, as part of a cultural system, if one is to comprehend the intended ultimate communication between the symbol and the interpreter.

Since communication is not confined to the immediate static observation of an object, but involves comprehension, within the context of the sphere in which it is found, this brings us to the *iconology* of Panofsky. We then enter the realm of understanding, or "*being told something*" which verges on narration. This endeavour to define, both the *nature* and *intent* of the iconographic object is one of the great difficulties of the interpretation of ancient Egyptian writing/art. It is proposed to deal with this complex problem in the section on narration under 2.3.1.

2.2.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION

Born of the necessity to communicate by a means other than sound, and the desire to produce a visual record, the majority of ancient languages appear to have developed from the simple expedient of drawing a recognisable figure. The first step would doubtless have occurred within the context of every-day life and it is no coincidence that the letter "A" which can be found in a

number of variations in the written languages of the ancient Near East, primarily developed from the head of an ox.

There is no shortage of charts which show the development of language signs of the ancient Near East. Kramer follows the development of the cuneiform system of writing in a chart (1961:21) and Pritchard does the same for the Semitic alphabets (1958 Pl 81). The former in particular clearly shows the development from figures to outlines which eventually lost their origin[illegible] would be impossible, however, to make such a chart for hieroglyphics since it began as a [illegible] of picture writing and remained so over the length of its known period, something over [illegible] years. Both the hieratic and demotic which were cursive and to a large extent lost their original picture-formation, were developed for every-day use but the basic hieroglyphs which form the textual matter, and to a large extent became component parts of pictorial rituals, in both tombs and temples, remained unchanged.[6]

2.2.3 CONTROL OF THE ICONOGRAPHIC MEDIUM

Bonded to the service of a variety of religious concepts from an early age, control over the hieroglyphic forms became inevitable. Egypt never evolved a single dogmatic religion, supporting instead a multiplicity of gods, of both major and minor importance and influence. From a plethora of gods and goddesses, however, several major deities became national or royal gods. Intimately concerned with the royal cult and ritual, there was clearly a necessity for the priesthood to support these in a visible as well as a mystical form. The monarchy, priesthood and religious concepts being closely linked, and the *outward visible sign*[7] being from an early time destined to appear in both tomb and temple, the iconographic-communication medium became rigidly controlled within the bounds and needs of the religion. This can clearly be seen in the tombs of the Old Kingdom, particularly at Saqqara, in the mastabas of the royal and noble families (Harpur 1987).

During this period, high standards and skills were developed and maintained. However, the lowering of these standards became apparent when, with the disintegration of monarchial power after the 6th Dynasty, and what has been called the "democratisation" of tomb construction, enabled all those in a position to provide their own tombs to do so without restriction. The consequence of this lack of control, produced work on provincial tombs which varied in quality from very good to extremely poor indeed.

This situation itself has social implications. The quality of the work in the tombs demonstrates not only the availability of craftsmen during a difficult and anarchic period, but the use of untrained, or uncontrolled labour. The status of the employer, and his ability to hire well-trained craftsmen was inevitably reflected in the standard of the work in the tomb. Beni Hasan would appear to exemplify this condition.

2.2.4 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ICONOGRAPHIC CANON

> *"There is no abstract art. You must always start with something. Afterwards you can remove all traces of reality ...because the idea of the object will have left an indelible mark".*
>
> Picasso

Both Schaefer (1974:10) and Davis (1989:1) recognise the controlling order in Egyptian art, believing it to have developed around the beginning of the 3rd Dynasty. Davis calls this "canonical representation" images regarded as well formed according to *particular standards of correctness*. These standards, harnessed to the need to be understood, were concerned in the main with every detail represented in its entirety rather than how it would appear to the eye on our terms. Iversen (s.a:7) says that parts omitted or not seen were considered missing and any deviation from the factual appearance of things was regarded as a natural deficiency, and bound to mar the eternal image of the objects they represented.

The ancient Egyptian developed an art form which made no attempt to use perspective. Based on concepts vastly different from our own, the figures which seem strange to us were to them, the norm. The restriction to two dimensions coupled with the need to include maximum information resulted in a form of art peculiarly associated with ancient Egypt. Schaefer, quoting Erman, says that in general the body is seen in profile, as shown by the head, arms, legs and feet, with a face-on [*en-face*] eye placed in the profile head. The torso emerges confused and the shoulders are seen from in front while the thighs are in profile with the chest and abdomen having to provide a transition between them (1974:283,299 Fig 308). Contrary to any perception that Egyptian art represented a primitive form, Schaefer refutes any suggestion of lack of ability on the part of the artist and, quoting von Bissing continues "...it can be seen that this [this entire mode of representation] is the creation of an artist carefully considered down to the last detail..."(1974:284).

On these terms, once canonical restrictions had been observed, the art, as an iconographic medium, was at the disposal of the artist and it is not difficult to see how the apparently restricted artist, coped within his own parameters. Arms are adapted to perform whatever action the artist wishes to convey but with little regard for correct anatomy, the latter always being subservient to the needs and interpretation of the work itself.[8]

In standing figures the arches of the feet appear to have been developed from a view the artist had of his own feet from the inside.

Hands exhibit unusual characteristics i.e., the bent-back fingers, hands of couples clasped, the individual open or closed hand or the hands engaged on various every-day tasks e.g. (BH I: Pl XIX = *Figs 11,12*).

Schaefer says this representation is not arbitrary but appears to be determined by a custom that varied with the spirit of the age. Speaking of the solid construction of figures, Schaefer discusses the tendency to use geometric forms and finds a love of clarity and simplicity in individual figures and in the composition of a picture (1974:299).

Fig 11 Tomb 3 Beni Hasan, West Wall, Top register R. girl spinning

Fig 12 Girl Spinning Detail

Inanimate objects tended to be drawn from two viewpoints, i.e., from the side in the matter of a table or altar, showing the legs and height, with the line of the top reversed to give a view from above. Objects or food placed on the top are arranged in such a way as to make them appear in our eyes to be one on top of another but this serves the intention of the artist well, as the maximum amount of exposure is given with faithful representation of the details and all component parts are able to be included e.g.(BH I: Pl XXXV = *Fig 13*).

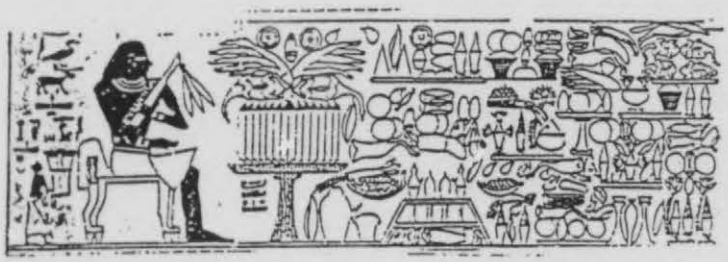


Fig 13 Tomb 3 Khnumhotep Beni Hasan. S Wall Offering tables, canonical representation

In hunting, fishing and agricultural scenes, attention is given in considerable detail to plants, birds, etc., but while wavy lines are used to convey a desert area there is little or no attempt to produce distant background or scenery against which to set the figures (Aldred 1980: 89 Fig 48 = *Fig 14*)

Fig 14 Tomb of Ptah-hotep c.2450 Hunt in the desert (excerpt). Minimal background, desert indicated by wavy lines

Required to work on a large area such as a wall, the Egyptian artist, endeavoured to include the maximum amount of material, and resorted to the use of registers which remained constant throughout all the periods. Frequently in order to introduce the deceased in the role of master, the registers would be broken to incorporate a large figure toward whom the various figures and activities were orientated.

When the work was controlled within the royal system and the workmanship was of superior quality a basic grid was used from which the artist worked. This determined the size and shape of the persons or objects being reproduced and unfinished murals confirm corrections made by the master craftsman for the benefit of the artisans.[9]

Grids were in use in the Old Kingdom for designs, representation of water, and offering lists, but Robins (1994:70) says that squared grids on which figures were drawn first appeared in the 12th dynasty. It is possible that grids were used for figures in the Old Kingdom but if so, the traces have disappeared. Certain tombs at Beni Hasan, and Meir show signs of grids having been used for drawing human figures (1994:71 Fig 4.6 = *Fig 15*, 82 Fig 4.16 = *Fig 16*).

Iversen (s.a:7) comments that individual and personal traits were generally avoided, to say nothing of bodily defects which would mar the figures in the hereafter although he does concede that there are well-known, if isolated, exceptions to this rule.[10]

2.2.5 PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND NORMS

Before leaving the question of the nature of ancient Egyptian mural iconography one should perhaps look behind the completed work to the practical situation in which the iconography was produced. Irrespective of the intent, the final presentation of the iconography was dependent upon the material on which the artist or craftsman had to work and the means at his disposal.

Fig 15 Basic grid system of the Middle Kingdom

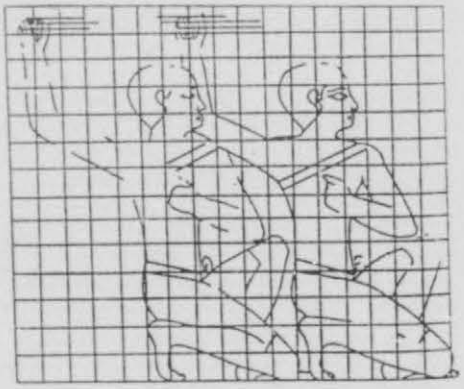


Fig 16 Kneeling figures on original grid. 12th dynasty Meir

In tombs where the work had to be *in situ* characteristic basic methods evolved naturally. Where rock was poor, a covering of straw, mud and plaster served to provide a surface for direct painting. In areas of good rock (limestone was much favoured) relief carving was the norm, *bas relief*, the background being lowered leaving raised figures and/or inscriptions, or *relief en creux*, outlines deeply incised into the background, with the subject and inscriptions modelled within the contours. Soft stone reliefs were painted in brilliant colours, often on a thin gesso covering. All the work was subject to design (*Figs 15, 16*), a basic grid and an outline drawing, before being handed over to stone-cutters, or in the case of paint applied direct to plaster, to the painters who, according to Aldred, "applied colour in broad masses...the draughtsmen restored the outlines...A scribal draughtsman drew the inscriptions" (1986:28). This ordered approach which seems to have been in general use confirms the premise that a fairly rigid method prevailed.

As pointed out above, grids began as simple guidelines had progressed by the 12th dynasty to include the figures themselves. In the Beni Hasan tombs where fairly elaborate geometric designs appear on ceilings, although the original guidelines are not visible, the accuracy of the designs would seem to indicate some measure of preparatory control over the pattern. Since it is known that a grid was used for this type of design in the Old Kingdom it is reasonable to suppose that grids were used for the same purpose in at least some of the Beni Hasan tombs.

2.2.6 THE ICONOGRAPHIC USE OF COLOUR

Egyptian iconography was essentially colourful. Kischkewitz (1977:18) believes that the choice of colours was determined by the priests to serve religious symbolism and as such was, she suggests, secret knowledge passed on to apprentices through the schools. However if this is so,

the depth of such symbolism is difficult to comprehend since as she says (1972:20) the same object can be seen within the same text, but depicted in different colours. According to Kischkewitz, the green associated with *Osiris* is representative of freshness and prosperity and in the Osiride context represents resurrection.[11] However, her statement that the "same object may be reproduced in the hieroglyphic script in different colours" (1972:20) is only pertinent insofar as it closely links Egyptian iconography with pictorial text[12]. Egyptian colours which were produced with pigments obtained from natural minerals, were in the main basic, being black, white, red, yellow, green and blue. Each of these appears to have had a particular function but since they were not confined to the one use it is difficult to assess the strength of their symbolism.

Generally the association of colour with concepts or objects is fairly obvious. Black with fruitful earth, night and death, white with festivity, and persons of pure character. Red was associated with rage, and anything unrestrained or dangerous and in this connection is associated with paintings of desert areas. Blue as symbolic of the heavens, was frequently used to denote the colour of the skin of the universal gods,[13] as well as beards or wigs of members of the divine families, while yellow signified immortality and was associated with gold.

Wilkinson (1994:104) devotes a chapter to the symbolism of colour, pointing out that in a land of harsh sunlight colour assumed an importance of its own. He finds Egyptian art frequently makes a symbolic statement through its use of colour. He comments on the skill of the artists who, using colours made from mineral compounds were restricted to six basic colours, although occasionally the use of other substances did produce a gray, pink, brown or orange. He comments on the vibrancy of the colours which even after so long still retain their essential characteristics (1994:105-106).

It would appear that with the trend towards individualism after the end of the Old Kingdom, and personal maturity as demonstrated in Middle Kingdom literature, a number of new words entered the vocabulary of the Egyptians and are to be found in texts of that period. "Among them is the concept of colour, which encompasses the meaning both of external nature and of character" (Kischkewitz 1972:19).[14] In this context, a rule appears to have developed which became valid for the human figure, with men in general depicted with a reddish-brown skin and women with skin of yellow-ochre. Apart from the male/female colouring, however, these concepts are very similar to the general trend towards the association of certain colours with a variety of idiom in our modern society (i.e. a blue mood etc.). Nevertheless, while the colours used by the ancient Egyptians cannot arbitrarily be assigned a secret or magical property, in view of the Egyptians' strong inclination towards symbolism, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that colour did play such a part in their iconography.

2.3 ICONOGRAPHY DEFINED AS NARRATION

2.3.1 THE DEFINITION OF NARRATION IN ICONOGRAPHIC FORM

In order to define narration in respect of its employment in an iconographic form, initially one needs to look at the word itself. Gaballa quotes the Oxford Dictionary, saying that it defines narration as, "tale, story, recital of facts" (1970:5). In respect of narrative in Egyptian art, he speaks of looking for representations which tell a story, at the same time posing the question "what is a story?"

Scholes (1968:1) says that a made-up story is fiction but goes on to link both fact and fiction, quoting the Latin *facere* - to make or do and *fingere* from which "fiction" is derived to make or shape. He maintains that it is in history that the two clearly come together (1968:2). He finds the Greek word from which "history" comes to have acquired two meanings (1) things that have happened and (2) a recorded version of things that have happened. "Story" itself is part of "history". Fiction he maintains is a complement of fact. Fact in order to survive must become fiction which "gives more lasting shape to the vanishing deeds of men" (1968:3). His arguments are based on the concept that a thing has no real existence once it is done or has occurred, whereas a thing made, exists until it decays or is destroyed. An act of narrative, if delivered orally is, on Scholes' premise, lost immediately it leaves the speaker. All that can remain is the record of the event which has to be made in one form or another to survive.

This *making the record of the event* is the field in which both text and iconography are to be found and if we are to consider iconography linked to narration, then it is in the latter capacity that it must be viewed. Iconography as a made record of a thing or occasion, in taking on the role of story-teller, becomes itself a form of narration.

2.3.2 ICONOGRAPHIC NARRATION: TIME AND EMOTION

In oral or textual narration, there is little that cannot be accounted for. Description of almost anything can be achieved and the time factor can be accommodated to suit the story being narrated. A story rendered in pictorial fashion can describe people and places, together with events, and in modern art the addition of a specific item, even a timepiece, could detail one instant of the depicted event. However, while we can imply a continued action, i.e., in a battle scene containing numerous interlocking figures without a specific subject/object, we cannot explicitly extend time in a single static picture, as, for example, showing that a battle was fought over three days. Even when centred on particular individuals, the reality of moving time, as opposed to movement itself, is difficult to convey and at best can only be suggested. In other words art as such does not have a continuous tense.

Gaballa deals with the problem of time in pictorial narrative by allowing for the introduction of an inscription or the interaction of other elements. Without at least one of these he maintains,

narrative will fall away. He quotes Groenewegen-Frankfort in relation to the typical aspects of murals depicting Egyptian everyday life in Egyptian tombs as being "purely conceptual not narrative" (1970:5). It is undeniable that in the majority of tomb murals this is certainly the case. However, Gaballa does concede that "one finds events of specific nature depicted in the Old and Middle Kingdoms" (1970:6).

It may be argued that the addition of a caption or brief written description such as is prevalent in tomb murals would negate the possibility of the iconography present in any such murals being narrative in character. However the addition of a caption, while assisting in interpretation of the iconographically depicted subject, does not necessarily negate the nature of the picture itself. A good example is the "Bayeux Tapestry". A product of the Middle Ages in Europe, this famous exposition of the conquest of Britain by William the Conqueror in 1066 AD has fairly detailed captions embroidered into the fabric of the work itself yet conveys in its iconography a graphic story, and history, far beyond the range of the captions (Bernstein 1986). Gaballa (1970:6) quotes Ann Perkins in respect of one method of depicting narrative in Egyptian pictorial art. She calls it a "culminating scene", and finds that it represents the most important and most significant moment to convey an entire story. This was a method largely adopted in the prehistoric period. The Battlefield, Bull, Libya and Narmer palettes, are clear examples (Aldred 1987:79-83). In the historic periods, while this method was still occasionally utilised, selected successive episodes of the story were more popular. This has been called "multiple-scene narration" (Moscati 1963:75-76).

We are familiar with this method, since animated cartoons are themselves progressive static drawings impelled into movement by the speed of their presentation.

Confining oneself to ancient Egyptian art, one must concede that a time factor is inherent in many of the murals themselves, without their having any apparent form of motivation. We can take as an example the traditional tomb offering scene, deceased sitting before the table heaped with food, various compatible activities being enacted around him. While we know that the whole composition is symbolic and incorporates a magic concept of the idealised art becoming reality, we do know that the whole operation is concerned with *a time when the owner of the tomb has died*.

A wall which incorporates the activities of persons on the tomb owner's estates, including, as does the West wall of tomb 3 at Beni Hasan, a depiction of the journey of the corpse by boat to Abydos, implies, even if it is not specifically indicated, *a time when these things were done*. It is *not* just an idealised picture of all that it is hoped will accrue to the deceased in his afterlife, since certain aspects, the making of a shrine and the particular journey by boat for the corpse are not likely to be repeated in the hereafter. The after-life boat journey through the underworld only became popular in the New Kingdom and bears no relation to the journey to Abydos. Again the

underworld journey is clearly time-orientated, as *the time after the deceased has passed beyond this world* and itself is confined to the hours of the night.

It is at the stage, when the murals incorporate present and past material that their interpretation becomes extremely difficult. Although they are produced as *timeless* pieces of work, their very existence is linked to the time factor through the nature of the subject matter they portray.

A further aspect of narration in iconographic form is that of emotion. Probably the first indications appear in the statues of the 12th dynasty when careworn or troubled faces such as the life-sized grey granite statue head of Senwosret III from Medamud c 1850 which Aldred describes as carved with consistently brooding features (Aldred 1987:136 Fig 94). This was the king who suppressed the power of the feudal nobility including the nobles of Beni Hasan.

In the New Kingdom burial processions with professional mourning women such as those in the tomb of Ramose (Garbini 1966:151 Fig 91, Wilkinson 1992:34 Fig 2 = *Fig 17)* are familiar in tombs of the period. Probably the deathbed scenes of the Princess Meketaten on the walls of the Royal tomb at Tell el-Amarna, are the most personal of all the depictions of mourning (Gaballa 1970:Fig 4c = *Fig 18*) but it must be noted that in both the case of the mourning women and the mourning Akhenaten family, the depiction of grief is stereotyped and has been achieved by the adaptation of the hieroglyph B8 which is the written determinative used in the word *iakbyt*, "*mourning woman*" in addition to many other words for mourning and mourners (Wilkinson 1992:35 = *Fig 19*). This use of the hieroglyph can be seen on the papyrus of Ani of the 19th dynasty (1992:34 Fig 3 = *Fig 20)* and that of Nesitanebtashru 21st dynasty (1992:34 Fig 1 = *Fig 21)*.

Cupchik writes of the problem of non-verbal communication in paintings, which Gombrich defines in three different ways, ancient, traditional and 20th Century (Cupchik 1987:227). He says that Gombrich assumes that the goal of the aesthetic encounter between viewer and painting is communication and understanding (1987:232). He quotes Layton who says that ancient usage stressed the potential of art for evoking emotions through symbolism. This is qualified by the fact that it generally refers to art in non-literate societies (1987:227).

Fig 17 Mourners. Tomb of Ramose 18th dynasty (detail)

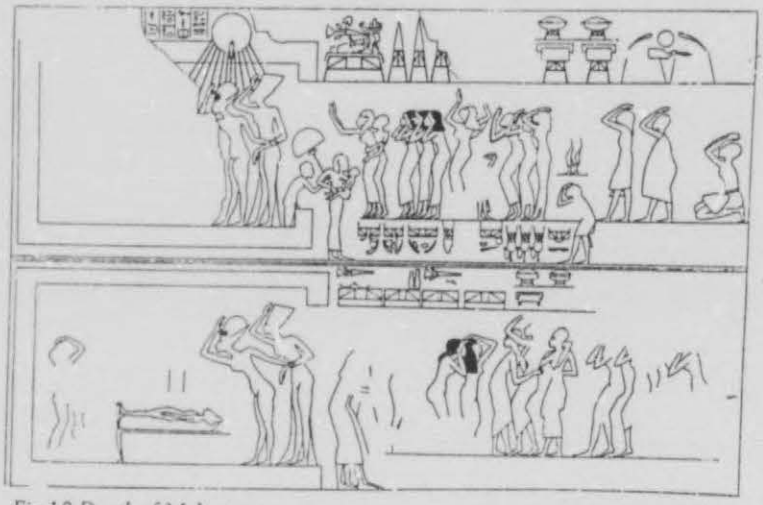


Fig 18 Death of Meketaten Royal Tomb Tell el-Amarna

Fig 19 Hieroglyph LAKBYT B8 mourning woman

Fig 20 Mourners Papyrus of Ani 19th dynasty

Fig 21 Funerary vignette Papyrus of Nesitanebtashru 21st dynasty

Gombrich also contrasts two diametrically opposed approaches to the depiction of a story in art, the primitive or conceptual style and the naturalist style. The former he finds evident in the pictographic idioms of ancient Egypt and early Christian art, in both of which he finds maximal legibility and movement, a compromise which emphasized clarity. The use of conventional symbolic language he describes as facilitating communication of a story, functioning as a "*script for the illiterate*" (1987:233).

Naturalism in art, which is attributed to the Greeks, developed techniques to dramatise mythological stories, and compensated for lack of movement, with images of maximal instability, that is flowing garments or taut muscles.

These were exemplified in the many sculptures produced by Greek artists, it being assumed that emotions were revealed in facial expressions and bodily movements.

Perhaps one of the best examples of an emotionally-orientated ancient Greek statue is that of the Charioteer of Polyzalos at Delphi. Cast in bronze, 1,8m high, and created as a votive offering by the prince Polyzalos, whose team won the chariot races in the Pythian games in 478 or 474 BC, it is all that remains of a large group of four-in-hand chariots and their drivers, which probably dominated a triumphal arch.

I have already included several quotations from a soliloquy on art from Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm*. In a part of this soliloquy the character has this to say:-

"*If we pick up the finger and nail of a real man, we can decipher the whole story - could almost reconstruct the creature again from head to foot. But half the body of a Mumbo-Jumbo idol leaves us utterly in the dark as to what the rest was like*".[15]

The group of chariots of Polyzalos was overturned and buried by the earthquake of 373 BC. The charioteer is the one remaining piece, incomplete, the proverbial "finger and nail" but so strong is the imagery that with no difficulty it is possible to see him in his entirety.

He stands immobile, feet firmly planted, arm outstretched with the reins held in a casual grip. The torso, clearly out of proportion, was adapted to be visible above the chariot at the elevated position. There is no difficulty in comprehending this figure. One can sense the moment of triumph in the stance, in the smile held in check as he parades before the judges and the crowd. The garments he wears and his headband are correct in all details although the accent is not upon them. The feet, tell their own story. Not to be seen, they are in themselves evocative of the integrity of the artist who designed and made them. No particular charioteer is intended. The figure represents the experienced athlete, competing in order to do honour to the god. The hand holding the reins has been described as an artistic whole and full of vigour. To see this figure is to experience the intense emotion accruing to it. Only three feet and a tail remain of the horses, but with nothing but the figure itself, and the broken reins, the artist has captured in

the stance and head, a total picture of the victor, holding his jubilation in check. It is iconographic art at its most emotionally effective (Meletzis & Papadakis 1982:50 = *Fig 22*, 51 = *Fig 23*)

Fig 22
The Charioteer of Delphi

Fig 23 Head of the Charioteer

The well-known sculpture of Apollo and Daphne in the Borghese Museum in Rome (Bernini 1598-1680 A.D), exemplifies the naturalistic style as defined by Gombrich (Radice: 1973 Fig 52 = *Fig 24*)

It is Renaissance art, in the classical tradition, and neglects no detail involved in the transformation of nymph to laurel tree. It is full of movement from the figures themselves to the leaves sprouting from the fingers of Daphne. It is totally dependent upon text or oral transmission for interpretation, however, since without the Apollo/Daphne myth it would be unintelligible. Apollo is expressionless, while the nymph, ostensibly distressed, conveys little real emotion. The work itself is a magnificent piece of sculpture, but in its rigid classicism it fails to create an emotional response in the viewer. Although an outstanding work of art, its value lies in demonstrating the skill of the artist.

Fig 24
Apollo and Daphne
by Bernini

It was the laurel wreath, made by Apollo from the tree into which Daphne was transformed that was awarded to the victors in the Pythian games in which the charioteer had competed.

These two pieces of art provide an excellent example of the paucity of emotion in the myth and, in the case of the charioteer, the deeply emotive reaction to reality.

If this diversion appears to be irrelevant, it is submitted that this is not so since one must bear this type of assessment and response in mind when considering ancient Egyptian art. That we do not readily recognise emotion as opposed to movement in ancient Egyptian iconography, does not mean that it was not present in one form or another.

The problem is to adapt our perception to that of the ancient Egyptians in order to determine whether it was present, and if so, the form that it took.

In this respect the view of the artist/designer of the work must play a part. We can discount the copyist/artisan who produced the work under instruction, but must be aware of the ability of the designer to convey the intentions of the patron for whom he worked. Gombrich, in comparing primitive illustration mentions the early Christian church. Here we have the most

definitive examples of the designer illustrating material, often textual when it was scripture-based, in a variety of ways, each incompatible with reality (Lassus 1966:109 Fig 71 = *Fig 25*, 112 Fig 77 = *Fig 26*).

Fig 26 St Matthew 750 A.D. Anglo Saxon: Canterbury.

Fig 25 St Matthew 7th century A.D. Trinity College Dublin.

These two illustrations, appear in religious MSS from the 7th and 8th centuries A D. They both depict St. Matthew, but while the second figure can be interpreted from its symbolic content, the first figure has no symbolic or other value than as a decorative pattern. Even the symbolic picture is concerned with a "risen" saint, and neither gives any idea as to the original Matthew figure.

These would be considered *illustrations* in relation to a MS but one would have to determine their nature in order to define them correctly. Certainly they are not communicative, and even the symbolic one would need someone familiar with the dogma of the church to interpret it. This approach, however, is intentional, and where the use of contemporary clothing occurs it is possibly due merely to lack of knowledge, or the prevailing custom.

A final example, this time of artistic *error*, is the following illustration showing a 5th century AD Christian mosaic of Jesus and his disciples, from Ravenna.

The garments of the disciples bear the *gamma* pattern on a typically Jewish garment. The artist would appear not to have been aware, however, that this 'notched' pattern was used exclusively by women (Yadin 1971-79 = *Fig 27*).

We tend to think that the ancient artist was always correct and that we are at fault in our interpretation. While we must not assume mistakes on the part of the artist when we cannot interpret his work, we must not close the door entirely on the possibility of work being erroneous.

Fig 27 Mosaic 5th century A.D. Misuse of gamma pattern on male garments.

2.4 SUMMARY

2.4.1 ICONOGRAPHY APPLIED AS NARRATION

Applied as narration, iconography can, therefore, be summarised as an art-form practised for the projection of information and concerning an event. Such event, being presented in a pictorial medium, reaches beyond the nature of static symbols and involves within itself the ability to present not only the images but their interaction with one another. In order to assume the role of narration, the iconography must present this event as recognisable, either

(a) from the personalities involved within it and/or (b) the location and time in which it took place.

True movement within time not being possible, this may be conveyed by augmentation of the iconographic narration either by caption or by successive images. However, the use of either of these adjuncts will not detract from the narration if either (a), (b) or both are clearly present.

The fact of the existence of the iconography itself, and the time and place of its presentation and intention must also be taken into account when assessing its value as a positive piece of communication or narration, always recognising that, due to its intrinsic nature, it must be assessed on its own merits and within its own cultural sphere.

2.4.2 ICONOGRAPHIC NARRATION AS BIOGRAPHY IN MIDDLE KINGDOM TOMBS

The possibility of iconographic narration being present in the form of autobiography or biography in Middle Kingdom tombs can only be determined on the premise that it is a valid concept from historical, social, and personal aspects. This reintroduces the need to apply hermeneutic principles to the problem. Over and above any other consideration it would have to be seen to be a logical extension of the secular genre into a religious framework. It is not sufficient to express an opinion that it is there, it must be seen *logically* to be there.

On entering the field of biography or autobiography, one confronts the sociological background to which the biographer ascribes and the environment in which he produced the material. When the biographer is interpreted by the artist, in whatever medium, paint or sculpture, the biographer is largely in the hands of that artist, being reliant upon him to interpret the biography correctly and lucidly. Finally he is in the hands of the viewer whose responsibility it is to interpret the intention of the biographer through the work of the artist.

If biographical material is incorporated in the iconography in certain of the Middle Kingdom tombs, including those at Beni Hasan, then all these various factors will have to be taken into consideration before a conclusion can be reached.

Footnotes

[1] Keel (1992); Kippenberg (1987); Mysliwiec (1987).

[2] Religious/autobiographic stelae erected both in tombs and centres such as Abydos (Lichtheim 1988) used the *mdw ntr* form.

[3] Not isolated incidents, Wilkinson cites and illustrates many examples of hieroglyphs in artistic designs and drawings.

[4] Battle of Kadesh on the Ramesseum of Ramesses II, Battle of the Sea Peoples, at Medinet Habu, temple of Ramesses III.

[5] Gardiner, A G (1957:518) - U24 stone-worker's drill weighted at the top with stones together with a [illegible] K Both *are given as "hmt* 'craft' 'art' and the related words". Vocabulary shows "hmww (U 24) craftsman, *hmt* craft; *hmwt* body of craftsmen; *hmw-ib* clever, skilful." There is no word for 'artist' and skilful is possibly the nearest equivalent.

[6] Baines Communication and display (1989)

[7] Excerpt from a reply in the catechism of the Anglican church (Book of Common Prayer).

[8] Clearly to be seen in the circumcision mural in the 6th dynasty tomb of the doctor, Ank-Ma-Hor at Sakkar where the arms of two of the participants are extended to suit the pose.

[9] A recent re-examination of length measuring instruments has shown the existence of standardized tools and apparently unstandardized ones. The latter are inscribed with different scales of the canon of proportion which were intended to draw preparatory grids for decorated walls (Simon 1993).

[10] The Egyptians had no reticence in presenting deformities in figures other than the tomb owner and his family Montet (1964:30 Fig 15 Crippled shepherds, 123: Fig 38 The Queen of Punt).

[11] Shabti box of King Tutankhamen depicts green-faced gods (Putnam 1990:56).

[12] Reproduction of multi-coloured hieroglyphic signs on coffin Wilkinson (1994:119).

[13] Gilded wooden figure of Ptah with blue head. Tomb of King Tutankhamen (Putnam 1990:52).

[14] Gardiner (1959) does not give a word for 'colour' in the English/Egyptian vocabulary.

[15] Soliloquy of Waldo's stranger. Schreiner.

CHAPTER 3

THE LAND

Winds carve this land and velvet whorls of sand
Annul footprint and grave of lover, fool and knave.
John Pudney.

3.1 GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING: THE BOUNDARIES

Traditionally, ancient Egypt, a land stretching narrowly along either side of the river Nile had its southern boundary just south of Aswan in the region of the first cataract and its northern in the Delta seacoast.[1] In the the south, control over the territory was flexible, at times extending well into Nubia. Egyptian influence over the Nubians varied with the power of the monarchy, but military expeditions were launched against Nubia from time to time, and permanent occupancy extended to the building of a number of forts and temples.[2]

At the time of the military might of Egypt in the 18th and 19th dynasties, land as far as the Euphrates fell under the heel of the conquerors. However this land, while controlled by trade and tax commitments, never became a part of Egypt as a whole. The barriers of Egypt itself were never extended to cover other territory in the way the Roman Empire was extended to integrate adjacent lands.

3.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE LAND

For the most part, the developed areas of Egypt, with the exception of the Delta, lay alongside the riverbed of the Nile, between escarpments which formed a barrier between the river settlements and the desert areas to the east and west. The large barren areas on either side of the river, backing the fertile fringe, were traversed mostly by traders, miners, and a few wandering tribes. The southern or upper part of Egypt was therefore able to remain fairly isolated, since the Nubians in the south, while exploited as trading partners were strictly controlled as far as entry into Egypt was concerned.

In the predynastic period small communities formed settlements at various sites along the river, but the origins of the towns which we find established prior to or in the Old Kingdom, are largely lost to us. Kemp speaks of towns coming into existence during the Old Kingdom and sometimes before that, but comments on a lack of conformity, particularly in enclosure walls and says that we see here local initiatives rather than the result of royal decrees (Kemp

1989:138). We do find various deities associated with the early towns, i.e. *Nekhebet* the vulture goddess of el Kab in middle Egypt, who became one of the royal goddesses, and *Thoth*, moon god and patron of the art of writing, from the ancient town of Khmun, later Hermopolis, (Hornung 1983:284, Baines and Malek 1980:126). The early history of these deities is conjectural, however, and the establishment of the towns undatable.

To the west several fertile oases, governed by Egypt under the monarchial system, produced, among other things, crops of dates and grapes. These oases provided good fertile regions, but offered an incentive to encroachment by marauding tribes against whom, at times, Egypt had to defend itself. For most of Egyptian history the oases of the western desert served, in addition to being productive agricultural areas, as outposts against the Libyans. There appear to have been no definitive boundary lines on either the West or East, and in antiquity the entire area to the west of the Nile valley was known as Libya (Baines and Malek 1980:19).

James, logically, links a thriving agricultural economy with a thriving general economy and suggests that the ease and success of Egyptian agriculture became the envy of other races, providing the prime reasons for invasion and infiltration (1984:100).

While national threats as such were fended off, we do know from frontier records (19th dynasty c 1224-1214) that in the New Kingdom at least, bedouin were allowed to cross Egyptian boundaries in order to obtain water for their flocks (James 1984:101).

It must be assumed that in the early days the development of the land took place on or around those sites best suited for agriculture, and which were occupied by the earliest tribes or clans. Inevitably, adaptation to the inundation of the Nile must have played a large part in stabilising the local communities and committing them to a system of organised agriculture and village development. The former would have had to be carried out within reach of the waters and the latter would have had to be constructed well above the destructive elements of the floods.[3]

Since the earliest structures have now disappeared it is difficult to determine when the Egyptians first developed a system for measuring the inundation. Today ancient Nilometers can still be seen, such as the one at Elephantine but these possibly only came into use after the general utilisation of stone.

Evidence suggests, however, that the Nile dwellers learned to manipulate and direct the floodwaters long before the dynastic period. This is confirmed by a macehead of the predynastic king Scorpion where the monarch is shown opening a breach in a dyke to allow floodwater to flow into an irrigation basin. That these basins were fairly large is apparent from the fact that the prow of the state barge which was to carry the king into the new basin, appears in the picture (Aldred 1987:71 Fig 37 = *Fig 28*; Staub 1985:163 Fig 15 = *Fig 28* Detail).

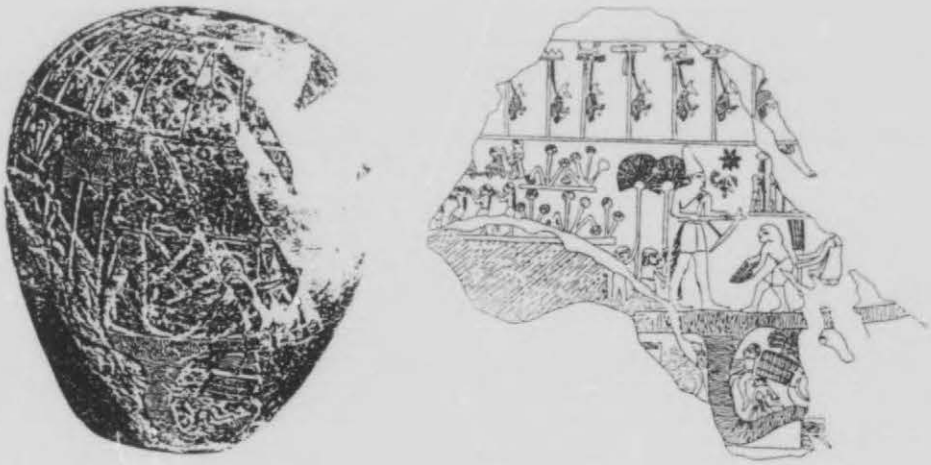


Fig 28 King Scorpion opening a breach in a dyke, Predynastic. Detail from macehead.

The scene on the macehead may possibly represent part of a religious ceremony, suggesting that the making of basins and controlling the floodwaters was well established in the predynastic period.

In predynastic times, many areas now barren, were covered with vegetation adequate to support large game. The latter gradually disappeared, possibly drifting away due to climatic changes and diminishing water resources. However, as we know, a wide variety of wild animals still existed in the Egyptian desert areas in dynastic times and while the larger game were no longer in evidence, hunting and desert scenes in the tombs confirm the continued existence of a variety of wild life.

The cultivated land produced emmer for bread, barley for beer, and a variety of vegetables such as lettuces, onions, and garlic as well as lentils and chick peas. Wine-making was undertaken from grapes, and honey appears to have been been the chief means of sweetening. In addition to edible crops, papyrus and flax provided clothing, sails, ropes and possibly linseed oil.

While a variety of animals both domestic and wild, are reproduced in tomb murals, the Egyptians' pride in their cattle is paramount. Cattle appear in scenes both as religious offerings, or as herds, shepherded across the river or brought before the estate owner to be counted for tax purposes. Even their butchery is well detailed.

Farmyard scenes show a variety of farmyard animals including ducks and geese. Forcefeeding of wild animals is often depicted, i.e., the feeding of the oryx in Tomb 3 at Beni Hasan, but whether this was for domestic or religious purposes is unknown.

The attraction of Egypt for its less affluent neighbours can well be understood. Certainly when the river poured its water and silt on the agricultural lands in its regulated period, Egypt enjoyed an abundance of food seldom seen by its neighbours. When the river failed, the decline was only a matter of time and the effects were wide-spread.

3.3 DEVELOPMENT OF THE ADMINISTRATION

In the early dynastic period the land was divided into a series of administrative districts (Gk nomes). The 22 nomes of Upper Egypt appear on the kiosk of Senwosret I at Karnak. These seem to have been fixed by the 5th dynasty (Baines and Malek 1980:15). The definitive number of nomes of Lower Egypt, 20, was not established until the Greco-Roman period, but as Baines and Malek point out the number 42 had a symbolic value there being 42 judges of the dead and, according to Clement of Alexandria (2nd century AD) the Egyptians had 42 sacred books. This is no way alters the fact that the system of feudal districts was established at an early age and stretched from the north to the south of the country. One of the earliest centres appears to have been el-Kab, *(Nekheb)* on the east bank of the Nile, which together with *Nehken* on the west bank, was an important settlement during the pre-dynastic and early dynastic periods. However when upper and lower Egypt were united under one monarch, Memphis, lying at the apex of the Delta, became the centre of royal power.

As early as the 1st dynasty a well-established bureaucracy appears to have been established. Small texts, found in royal and noble burials of the time contain somewhat inexplicit texts with reference to titles which were subsequently, found to be attached to officials of the Old Kingdom and later (James 1984:51). The size and shape of Egypt, having length but little breadth south of the Delta, made centralized control difficult. Inevitably strong leaders arose in the provinces, and although nominally these provincial governors were controlled by the monarch, they did represent a threat to the central authority.

Possibly because the greatest area of activity was in or near the Delta, the capital was firstly at Memphis and then Itjawy, close to Memphis, to which the Theban monarchy moved the capital at the beginning of the 12th dynasty.

While Heliopolis in the Delta was the great centre of *Re* worship with Memphis the centre for *Ptah* the rise of *Amun* as a royal god under the Theban kings, served to elevate Thebes as a great religious centre, and this continued throughout the greater part of the history of ancient Egypt.

A glance at the map will suffice to show that administration could not have been easy. Communication, although difficult by land, was fairly simple by water. On the other hand

communal equitability among the various provinces would have been necessary to ensure unrestricted passage whether it be for trade or administrative purposes. That disputes arose with regard to the water rights appears likely since in reassigning and designating territory at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom, the dividing line for the territories on each side of the river was set midway between, in the Nile itself.[4]

While a strong king usually meant good administration, a weak king meant instability, when much more of the administration fell into the hands of the provincial governors or nomarchs. In periods of weak administration Egypt tended to fall apart, at the mercy of antagonistic provinces whose chiefs vied for control over their own affairs (James 1984:51).

This was particularly true of the period at the end of the Old Kingdom, and still pertained at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom when the new monarchs were content or compelled to leave a great deal of power in the hands of the nobles until such time as the establishment of a strong monarchy was assured, when this power could be reduced.

So far as administration was concerned, the most important official under the king seems to have been the vizier. In two Middle Kingdom MSS from the mid-12th dynasty is preserved "*The Teaching of Ptahhotep*", which Parkinson calls "The life of a perfect official". He describes the teaching as thirty-seven maxims largely of a practical nature. The writing, supposedly by a vizier under King Isesi of the 5th dynasty (2388-2356), is believed it to have emanated from the early Middle Kingdom (Parkinson 1991:65/66). It does, however, confirm the Egyptian assumption that the office of vizier can be traced back to the Old Kingdom.

Discussing the Middle Kingdom town of Kahun[5] Kemp says that it is possible to identify a number of important officials, through the "office of the vizier". He says this official was "peripatetic", based in the capital and his office would usually have been filled by a senior official, the vizier only paying an occasional visit (Kemp 1989:156). Nevertheless it does confirm the continued existence or reinstatement of such an official after the anarchic and first intermediate period.

Amenemhet (1991-1962) the first king of the 12th dynasty was a vizier under Mentuhotpe (1998-1991) and all indications are that he usurped the throne.

A great deal of information about the duties accruing to the appointment of a vizier is known from the New Kingdom tomb-chapel of Rekhmire, vizier of the South and chief justice under Thutmosis III (1479-1425). Scenes show the installation of the vizier with the king's instructions regarding the strict administration of justice, and the emphasis on seeing that things conformed to the law. The law which he is to uphold clearly existed in some detail but does not seem to have been based on a set of statutes and appears to have been developed from experience rather than a confirmed ordinance.

Rekhmire came of a line of high officials and his appointment would seem to have been hereditary.

During the 18th dynasty, when the prosperity and administrative affairs of Egypt reached new heights, two viziers were appointed, one for the north and one for the south.

3.4 EXPLOITATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The desert areas to the east of the Nile produced minerals rather than agriculture (Baines & Malek 1980:21 Mineral Map = *Fig 29)*. Turquoise was mined at Sinai from as early as the 3rd dynasty until the end of the New Kingdom. There were semi-permanent settlements at other main sites in western Sinai, in particular at Wadi Maghara and Serabit el-Khadim.

Sinai was also a source of copper although there is no direct evidence of the Egyptians themselves having mined there. They certainly obtained copper, and if they did not mine it themselves, they presumably bought it. However, it is suggested that if the Egyptians did mine copper, it was not considered prestigious enough to record the fact (Baines and Malek 1980:19).

Semi-precious stones were also to be found in the Eastern desert, together with quarries yielding quartzite, alabaster and a hard blackish stone, graywacke. Wadis provided access to the Red Sea and Egypt controlled three main routes, through the Wadi Gasus, the Wadi Hammamat and Wadi 'Abbad. We have confirmation of the use of the Wadi Gasus during the 12th dynasty, as a temple from that period has been found at the termination of the Wadi.

In the vicinity of Beni Hasan and to the south, the mining activities were largely confined to limestone and calcite (Baines and Malek 1980:21 (excerpt) = *Fig 29)*.

The Wadi Hammamat provided the graywacke but both this and gold which was to be found south of Koptos, required large scale expeditions for recovery.

Stone quarrying developed extensively from the 3rd dynasty (2649-2575) when Imhotep constructed the step pyramid for Djoser (2630-2611) (Edwards 1952:47 Fig 3 = *Fig 30)*.

By the 4th dynasty (2575-2465) pyramid building had reached its greatest heights from which time the use of stone for tombs, temples and statues, remained paramount. The rocky escarpment on either side of the Nile provided large supplies of granite, sandstone and fine white limestone from quarries at, among others, Aswan, Silsileh, Tura and Gizeh.[6]

The massive building campaigns undertaken by the 4th dynasty pharaohs encouraged the work of artisans whose craftsmanship in stonework, metalwork, sculpture and painting eventually reached unprecedented heights.

Fig 29 Map showing ancient sites of workings of named minerals (excerpt)

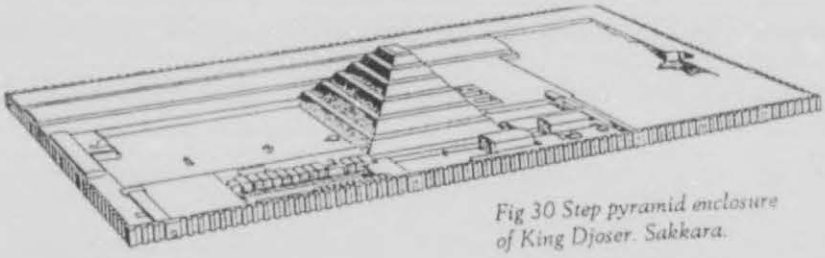


Fig 30 Step pyramid enclosure of King Djoser. Sakkara.

In the main Egypt lacked fine woods. The climate was too dry to encourage tree growth and from early times Egypt imported its timber from the coasts of Palestine and beyond.

Although in the Middle Kingdom Egypt had not yet embarked upon the expansion of her empire, as she was to do under the monarchs of the 18th dynasty, she was concerned to maintain access to the gold mines of Nubia. Egyptian influence there having been lost during the anarchic and first intermediate period, Kemp points out that with the re-establishment of the monarchy, the reconquest of Lower Nubia was rapidly undertaken. The first expedition took place in the reign of Mentuhotpe (2061-2010). This 11th dynasty Theban king who began his reign as king over only upper Egypt, consolidated both upper and lower Egypt into one state in 2040, and lost no time in mounting a campaign into Nubia. Amenemhet I (1991-1962) first king of the 12th dynasty followed his example and he is recorded in graffito within the heartland of Lower Nubia. A well advanced building policy by the time of Senwosret I (1971-1926) leads to the conclusion that Lower Nubia had, by that time, been subdued (Kemp 1989:168). Built as defensive points for garrisons, the forts in Nubia were formidable structures around which permanent settlements were formed. Constructed at strategic sites in relation to the cataracts, the second cataract in particular being difficult to negotiate, they consolidated Egyptian control and offered protection at treacherous and vulnerable points on the general trade and gold routes.

3.5 THE LAND IN THE ANARCHIC PERIOD

The period with which this dissertation is concerned is that which followed the political collapse towards the end of the Old Kingdom (c 2134) and the subsequent Interim period (c 2134-2040).

The end of the Old Kingdom came not as a sudden uprising or civil war, but by what appears to have been a gradual decline, with the administration of the land sinking into total disruption and anarchy. The situation arose at the end of a period when the normal rainfall in the south which should have replenished the Nile had failed over a considerable period, and the desert had become progressively more arid.

Early assessment attributed the cause of the collapse to political and/or social conditions due to some extent to the the over-long reign of Pepi II (2246-2152) and the possible death of his heirs which preceded the death of the monarch. This may still be valid up to a point, but studies concerned with the climatic conditions at that time suggest that the collapse of the monarchy (c 2150) may have had its foundations in the failure of the monsoon rains over Abyssinia, and the consequent low inundations, followed by crop failures and famine. Added to this were the people's unrealistic expectations that the Pharaoh could control the Nile.

A series of "ephemeral kings" (Baines and Malek 1980:36) comprised the 7th and 8th dynasties (2150-2134). The short reigns of these monarchs may have been due to failure to function as a god by producing an abundance of water or by influencing *Hapi* the Nile god to do so. Their misfortune was having been called upon to reign at a time when the failure of the inundation was, apparently, a symptom of a dry phase over the whole of northern Africa at that time (Baines and Malek 1980:14).

Clearly Egypt was not alone in her sufferings. A mural on the causeway of the last king of the 5th dynasty, Wenis (2356-2323) depicts men, women and children, presumably Egypt's neighbours, in the last stages of emaciation due to famine (Keel 1978 Fig 88 = *Fig 31)*. While Aldred describes this as "an early portent of the evils to come" (1987:121, Hornung (1992:161) believes this refers to an historical event.

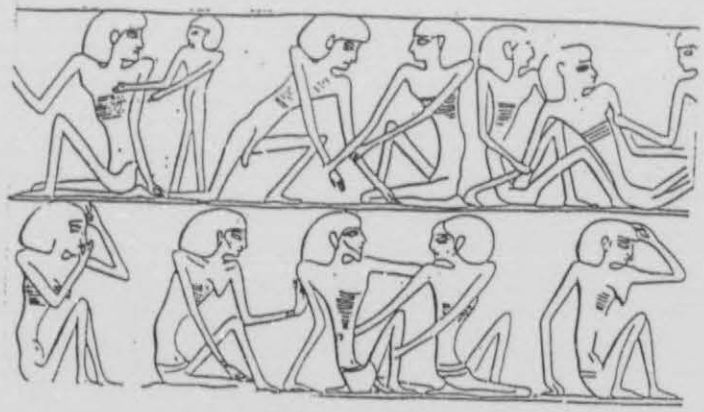


Fig 31 Famine Victims. Causeway of Wenis.

Egypt was to survive a 6th dynasty of nearly 200 years (2323-2150) before reaching a stage where, as Aldred says "the Nile was empty and men crossed over it on foot" (1987:120). From the scanty records available to us we can evolve a picture of a divided land, in the hands of as number of petty rulers or chieftains, each concerned with his own survival rather than Egypt as a whole. Some of the rulers were good, some bad. A funerary relief at Dendera, in the style of

the Old Kingdom shows a local administrator and his wife receiving offerings from their sons and daughters. Following upon a prayer to *Osiris* is recorded the fact that by his own might the deceased, (the name is uncertain, possibly *Mery*) had "made men, oxen, goats, asses, wheat and barley to flourish, and planted sycamore figs on the river bank and trees in the fields" (Aldred 1989:122 Fig 82 = *Fig 32*).

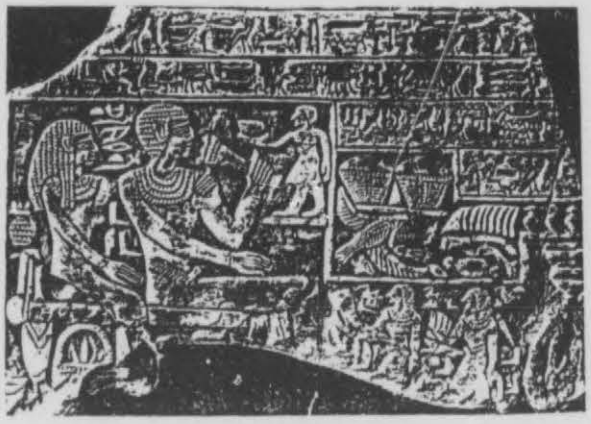


Fig 32 Relief of Mery and wife Baba at Dendera. He lists the things he has done to promote his own welfare and that of others.

However, as with Egypt as a whole, a flourishing and stable area invited encroachment by those less fortunate. Internecine strife within Egypt, destroyed otherwise arable land, making agriculture difficult and serving to impoverish those who would otherwise have survived.

Breakdown in administration invited incursions from Lybians and the bedouin of the Sinai and Negeb. Where previously they had enjoyed hospitality they now took advantage to usurp and pillage in the Delta area.

The struggle to restore the monarchy was the main concern of the first intermediate period (2134-2040).

Footnotes

[1] The boundaries varied from time to time. Modern measurement, 879 km. Cairo to Aswan.

[2] The largest Nubian temple, built by Amenophis II was dedicated to the Nubian god *Mandulis* and stood at Kalabsha just south of Aswan. Isis was venerated there, paying an annual visit from her temple at Philae. The present Kalabsha temple is Roman.

[3] A detailed model landscape of Upper Egypt in the late predynastic period is given by Kemp (1989:32 Fig 7) where a series of drawings show the probable development from small egalitarian communities to incipient city-states.

[4] This forms part of the textual material in the Beni Hasan tombs and will be discussed fully when dealing with these.

[5] The name 'Kahun' was given by Flinders Petrie in 1889. It lies close to the modern town of el-Lahun, on the edge of the desert close to the entrance to the Fayum depression, and was built to house those concerned with the building and maintenance of the Pyramid and Valley Temple of Senwosret II (1897-1878).

[6] On quarrying sites and methods Edwards (1952:211-215).

CHAPTER 4

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND UP TO THE PERIOD OF THE BENI HASAN TOMBS

...line upon line, line upon line;
here a little, there a little:..
Isaiah 28:10. (KJV)

4.1 HISTORICAL SOURCES

That the history of a country depends on its geography needs no reiteration, but while we can trace the geographical origins of the Nile, history only commences for us at the moment when the two parts, lower and southern Egypt are joined under Menes (c 2920 BC).

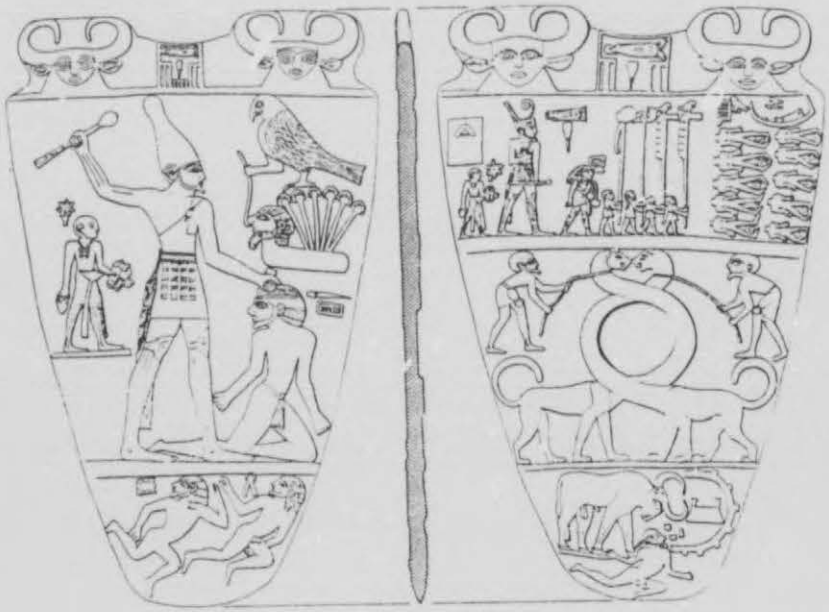


Fig 33 Narmer Palette.

We do not know the circumstances in which this unity occurred, but a votive palette of an earlier predynastic king Narmer (c 3000), suggests that fighting did take place during the predynastic period, force being used to subjugate certain groups of people.[1] The palette shows

on the reverse side the king about to smite a kneeling captive. Aldred interprets this as a sacrifice before a symbol of *Horus* triumphant over the Delta (1987:82 Fig 45). Kemp, however interprets this as the smiting of the captive with the *Horus* figure a "supplementary message" that the *Horus* king has won a victory over an enemy based in the Delta. On the obverse, the king and his retinue inspecting a battlefield with rows of fallen victims at the top and the king as a bull breaking down a fortified town and trampling an enemy at the bottom of the palette, are balanced by the central design which Kemp says expresses harmony (Kemp 1989:42 Fig 12 = *Fig 33*).

Since the image of *Horus* is depicted on the palette in association with the Delta, and the victims appear to be Asiatics, one may logically conclude that the battle in this instance had been fought in that region.

A portion of an early palette, known as the "Battlefield Palette" (Aldred 1987:79 Fig 42) shows standards of a district in the Eastern Delta, and pinioned captives, and it has been suggested that this represents a victory over Libyans. Without further data, however, this cannot be confirmed.

Another palette, of which there is only a fragment, shows a bull (presumably representing a king) goring a foeman, and a series of nome standards terminating in hands holding a rope presumably binding captives. This fragment is known as the Bull Palette (Wilkinson 1992:54 Fig 1 = *Fig 5 Ch 2*). and suggests a series of allies under a powerful king, fighting a common enemy. From all of these one may assume a certain amount of turmoil and conquest prior to the unity achieved under Menes.

For the remainder of its 3000 years ancient Egypt was always cognisant of the two united lands, with the red crown of Lower Egypt and the white crown of Upper Egypt, joined and worn as a single crown both by the monarchs and, on occasion, *Horus* himself (Spencer 1982:20 = *Fig 34*).

Fig 34 The crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt and the double crown

This suggests that there was possibly a very positive division of the land in the early predynastic period, of which the memory and tradition remained throughout Egypt's history. However

there is a hypothesis that the existence of two predynastic kingdoms may not be a true historical situation but a projection of the pervasive dualism of Egyptian ideology (Baines and Malek 1980:31). If this is so, one is tempted to ask the origin of such dualism, if not the result of an earlier historical/geographic division?

4.2 A PROBLEM OF INTERACTION

Inherent in any study of ancient Egypt is the problem of isolating a particular aspect of historical development from the interaction of religious concerns. To think of ancient Egyptian history without its religion would be impossible. Inevitably the result is frequently an over-emphasis of this aspect of ancient Egyptian life, attributable to the fact that most of our information has come to us through the medium of temples and tombs. Since the control and enactment of the religion was largely confined to the priests, the royal family and nobles, there is, in all our assumptions, a bias towards a privileged class. This in turn creates an imbalance in historical data, which although recognised, is difficult to overcome.

Secular history, for which the Egyptian language has no specific word, has no canon of record as an independent medium as, through its tombs and temples, has ancient Egyptian religion. We acquire the historical details "here a little, there a little".

Modern knowledge of ancient Egypt is, in the main, the reconstruction by scholars (Kemp 1989:13). Its two major sources are archaeology, by which one endeavours to read the visible signs left behind, also the reading of,

(a) the works of classical writers, and

(b) the texts and iconographic material left by the people themselves.

Neither of these sources could be said to be reliable history.

One work, which was purported to be a framework of Egyptian history and chronology was a History of Egypt, written in Greek, by an Egyptian priest, Manetho in the third century BC. Unfortunately the original work is lost and we now have to rely upon certain parts which have survived due to their having been copied in antiquity.

With access to temple archives, as Manetho presumably had, one must accept that much of his work is reasonably accurate. Certainly he provided the foundations for the grouping of the kings of Egypt into dynasties. This system which we still continue to use, with some adjustments, remains the most reliable of such records.

Ancient textual material exists both as murals and papyrus MSS. The iconographic information we have is prolific, if repetitive, and requires to be understood within the context of its creation to be recognised and appreciated.

However, with the exception of Manetho, none of the MSS or texts set out to be an authentic history of Egypt. In the main the works serve a religious or secular purpose which, even if historically orientated, have as their object something quite other than the making of recorded history. It is this fact that makes interpretation and definition of the various sources difficult, since they are only incidentally historical, yet they embrace a wide range of information which is, however minor, of historical importance. They frequently invade each other's territory, and become of historical interest without necessarily intending to do so.

4.3 THE SECULAR SOURCES

Herodotus, who may have travelled as far as Elephantine some time after 460 BC was one of the first of the ancient writers to record specific information about ancient Egypt but valuable as is his work, it is not necessarily accurate and is far from being a comprehensive history. In spite of having produced a variety of reports, it is the opinion of some authorities that he may not have visited more than an area around the Greek trading centre at Naukratis and that he relied on the reports of earlier travellers such as Hecataeus of Miletus (Aldred 1987:7).

Archaeological finds have produced evidence such as the lists on the fragmentary Palermo Stone[2] (Kemp 1989.23 Fig 5 = *Fig 35*).

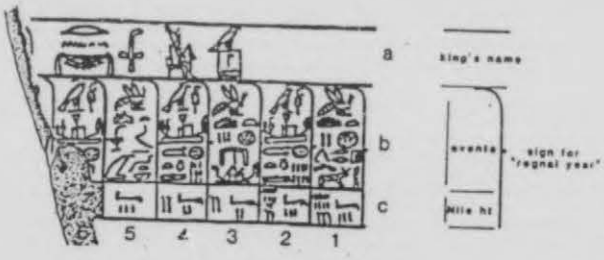


Fig 35 Section of the Palermo Stone recording 6 years of King Ninetjer of the 2nd. dynasty - name written on line "a".

The most comprehensive King list is that of Sethos I at Abydos. It shows Sethos I and his son Ramesses presenting offerings to the names of kings which are incorporated into a single continuous sequence connecting Sethos I to Menes, the earliest king of whom the ancient Egyptians had a firm record (Kemp 1989:22 Fig 4 = *Fig 36*)[3].

Kemp comments that it shows periods of legitimate rule as interpreted by the Abydos priests, its intention being to legitimize the present by revering an edited version of the past. While the Abydos list, appears to have historicity as its main concern, however, it is actually within the genre of a semi-religious idealised text and a typical example of the interaction of historical text subservient to a religious or political purpose.

Fig 36 King list of Sethos I. List of kings in continuous sequence connecting Sethos I to Menes.

A New Kingdom papyrus now in the Turin Museum[4] originally listed about 300 names of kings, the aim of the compiler, according to Kemp, being "completeness". So intent was the originator in achieving this, that in what Kemp calls "a remarkable concession", even the alien Hyksos kings are included (1989:23-24). This could possibly be considered "historical" had not the author sought to project the record beyond the early kings when gods were thought to have ruled. However it does provide material which is historically viable.

Numbers of records, on papyrus, stone monuments and ostraca, augment our historical information[5] but again these are strictly utilitarian, concerned with their own purposes and not produced for the edification of historians.

In the Middle Kingdom literary material covering as wide a variety of subjects such as personal, religious as well as political and/or royal propaganda made its appearance. However, this literary impetus or movement, which seems to have been a response to the difficult times of the anarchic and intermediate periods, failed to survive the second intermediate period and the Hyksos invasion.

The originals of the MSS have been lost. In the 18th dynasty, however, such material, considered to be of merit, was greatly valued. The scribal schools used these works as pieces suitable for copying and it is this copied material to which we have access. Whether there was more and how much, is unknown.

The classical world tended to refer to and quote other writers. The literary genre in ancient Egypt was never really expanded, however, so we lack information from reference. The references to and quotations from Manetho are largely dependent upon the writers of the ancient Roman Empire such as Josephus.

4.4 THE RELIGIOUS SOURCES

The Old Kingdom, with the expansion of mastaba tombs for those persons close to the king and entitled to be buried within the vicinity of his tomb, has provided us with murals which at first glance appear to record very generous accounts of everyday life[6]. They would seem to be the ideal pictorial record able to project a truly historical picture of life in ancient Egypt. In fact, they have two drawbacks,

(a) they are applicable to a particular class of privileged person and

(b) they are religious in intent, idealised to exhibit the perfect life anticipated by the tomb owner in the hereafter.

Bearing these two points in mind, however, they do give us an informative view of certain religious concepts added to information on everyday life on the great estates. They include both the owners, their families and their work-force. They show in some detail the production of food, animal husbandry, hunting, fishing, and artisan skills. They also give us some idea as to the methods of burial and the rites accompanying them.

Textual biographies, introduced into the tombs during the Old Kingdom, invariably include royal appointments and/or official titles held by the deceased, which throw some light on administrative matters.

Such records were augmented to a certain extent towards the end of the Old Kingdom, by personal stelae which had originally been introduced into tombs as small votive slabs, and gradually enlarged to contain complicated designs including a false door. These stelae, in time were liberated from the confines of the tomb, and the elaborate design with the false door was replaced with flat rectangular forms and simple decoration. They were erected in holy places such as Abydos and while their representations were often crude and the writing poor, the specific features embodied in them allow the stelae to be ascribed to specific areas. Similar to the tomb records, they contain personal titles and appointments[7] and to a certain extent throw some light on the period in which they were erected and the place from which they emanated (Baines and Malek 1980:62 = *Figs 37-39*).

However, although the religion, did acquire new trends over the years, it still maintained its initial basic concepts, and the greater proportion of both textual and iconographic tomb material, appears to be repetitive rather than innovative. This is, of course, in a large part, due to the rigid canonical laws governing the iconography itself.

Baines sees this as an integral part of an ideologically important system which he calls "decorum", which is found on the earliest royal monuments, and appears to be inseparable from the first development of writing (Baines 1981:576).

Fig 37 Tomb stela with False door Old Kingdom

Fig 38 Provincial Stela Intermediate period.

Fig 39 Stela of the Middle Kingdom

Aldred separates historical evidence into literary and archaeological, the latter taking into consideration temple records, tomb autobiographies, lists of rulers and a variety of reports. He says, however, that an added difficulty in acquiring a balanced account from the latter group is the tendency towards propaganda in official reports, and an unwillingness to show any event other than in a favourable light. He doubts whether the Egyptians had any idea of history as modern westerners understand it (1987:7), and certainly, for the greater part of ancient Egyptian civilization, contemporary, secular historians did not exist.

4.5 THE FIRST TEXTUAL RECORDS

In the pyramid of Wenis, the last king of the 5th dynasty (2356-2323), Maspero in 1881 AD discovered columns of finely executed blue hieroglyphs (Aldred 1987:110-111 Fig 47). These inscriptions proved to be not only the earliest, but also the best preserved, of a corpus of prayers and magic spells which were to appear in the burial chambers of subsequent kings and queens and their high officials. Known as the Pyramid Texts, they were the forerunners of the Coffin

Texts, later to make their appearance in the papyrus rolls which form the familiar *Book of the Dead*.

While throwing light on the religious beliefs of the time, and appearing as a constant complement to ancient Egyptian tombs, these texts cannot be considered "historical" other than in the sense of the history of the religion or the fact, in the case of the Wenis texts, of being the first of their kind to have been discovered.

4.6 TOMB AND TEMPLE ICONOGRAPHY

The Old Kingdom was the period when the influence of Heliopolis and the sun cult rose to great heights, and the Pharaohs embarked on the massive task of pyramid building which reached its most affluent peak during the 4th dynasty. At the same time, the Pharaohs paid homage to the power of the cult by building a series of sun temples. During the 5th dynasty, these were sited at Abusir. Little remains of these sun temples, but from such fragments as we have, Aldred believes these to have been "architectural gems" (1987:108). The 5th dynasty king Neuserre (2416-2392 BC) built a sun temple at Abu Gurab near Abusir in which, in one chamber, *Room of the Seasons*, are portrayed all the activities of an Egyptian agricultural year. While this was not intended as an historical record, since it is portrayed as a visual hymn of praise to the sun god for all his beneficence it does, albeit unwittingly, provide historical information in respect of annual agricultural activities.

Building projects during the Old Kingdom also included the construction of ancillary buildings such as mortuary temples and causeways. It is from the causeway, of king Wenis, whose pyramid produced the first pyramid texts, that the first suggestion of an historical record is to be found in iconographic form. This is the mural showing starving men, women and children, (Ch 3 *Fig 31)* clearly the victims of famine.

There is no indication as to why this is part of the decorative and/or religious theme, since it was not, at that time, the custom to incorporate historical scenes in such buildings. Nevertheless it would appear to be dependent upon a genuine, and presumably, contemporary situation. Speculation, therefore, attributes it to a religious concept of perfection in the life of the deceased, and suggests it demonstrates to the god the benevolence of Wenis.

While canonically, there would appear to have been no purely historical material included in iconographic form in the Old Kingdom tombs, with the decline in monarchial power from the end of the 6th dynasty, there are indications that material was included in the tombs of dignitaries which could possibly be considered historical and where the religious purpose is highly speculative.

Certainly by the 18th dynasty, which falls outside the scope of this dissertation, personal material was included in the tombs at Amarna, and both temples to the gods and mortuary

temples carried scenes of royal warfare, which, arguably not intended to be historical, do nevertheless carry such detail within themselves.

4.7 THE END OF THE OLD KINGDOM AND INTERMEDIATE PERIOD

4.7.1 THE OLD KINGDOM (2575-2134)

This came to an end during the 6th dynasty with the death of Pepi II (2246-2152). Monarchial instability, manifested itself in a general decline in the power of the Pharaoh as a sole authority. Massive expenditure of both human and material resources in the preparation of the pyramids and the large mastaba cemeteries have been blamed for the beginning of the fall after the 4th dynasty, when hereditary feudal potentates sought independence from central control (Aldred 1987:120). The recording of starving people as early as the 5th dynasty suggests an on-going and deteriorating food situation. The long reign of Pepi II (2246-2152 BC) at the end of the 6th dynasty, has also been presented as a reasonable cause. Pepi II came to the throne as a very young child and, if the dating above is accurate, reigned for over ninety years. His natural heirs possibly pre-deceased their monarch, leaving something of a vacuum, and such an old king would have had very little real power. At a time when, as we now know, climatic changes were bringing difficult conditions, not only to Egypt but to neighbouring countries, a weak monarchy would have in itself been disastrous. However, the monarchy notwithstanding, it is now also believed that combined with a period of famine (Ch 3.5), the reasons for the decline may have been more complex than it at first appeared.

4.7.2 THE INTERMEDIATE PERIOD (2134-2040)

The period has been described as representing "a loss of equilibrium between a powerful court and provincial aspirations" (Trigger 1983:115).

One wonders, in view of the overall conditions whether there was a "powerful court", or whether the monarchy was represented by a hierarchal group of nobles centred at the court.

Although Aldred speaks of the "abrupt nature of the collapse" (1987:120), there seems to be some question as to how abrupt and complete it really was. That it was a complete collapse seems certain, but the combination of possibilities discussed above would suggest that the weakening took place over quite a period, the total collapse appearing to be sudden but in fact an inevitable conclusion to an ongoing decline.

4.8 THE ROLE OF THE FEUDAL NOBLES

During the period of anarchy and that which followed it, the various local governors looked to their own affairs rather than those of the monarch. Each took steps to protect his own district and its inhabitants, driving out strangers, and defending his territory from famine-stricken

invaders. Local rulers boasted, on their crude tomb stelae, that only due to their efforts had their people and herds survived (*Fig 32*)

Since at this time Egypt was in the grip of a feudal system, adrift from royal control, this undoubtedly must have been the case. Inevitably the efforts of the strongest to restore a monarchy led to confrontation.

A family living at Herakleopolis near the Fayum, considered themselves to be the royal heirs and for a short period appear to have united the country. These Herakleopolitan kings formed the 9th and 10th dynasties (c 2134-2040).

Their tombs have not been found and we know little about them. Quirke speculates that the 9th dynasty *may* have ruled all Egypt, although the 10th dynasty was confined to the north by the Theban princes who controlled Upper Egypt. Only one of the full titularies of the northern group has survived, that of *Meryibre Khety*, and it includes the earliest known use of the phrase *'son of Ra'* as a title set before the cartouche. His successor is named as *Merykara*. However dating and accession is difficult to determine since several of these Herakleopolitan kings bore the same name. The scanty information we have is from a text of the early Middle Kingdom (Quirke 1990:50 = *Figs 40-41*)

Fig 40
Cartouche of Meryibra

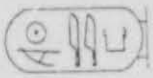


Fig 41
Cartouche of Merykara

The Theban princes who controlled the five southernmost districts of Upper Egypt, also considered themselves to have a claim to the throne. They formed the 11th dynasty (2134-2040) and had their names enclosed in cartouches, in which they too included the title *'son of Ra'* (1990:50/51 = *Figs 42,43,44*).

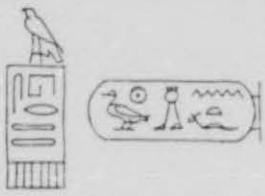


Fig 42
Cartouche of Sehertauy Intef

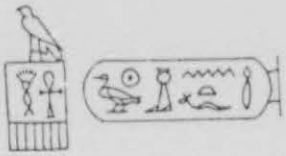


Fig 43
Cartouche of Wahankh Intef

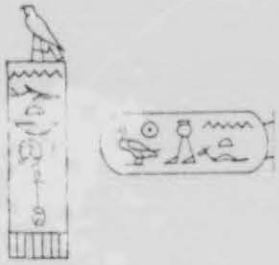


Fig 44 Cartouche of Nakhtnebtepnefer Intef

Quirke suggests that the full titulary of Meryibra Khety indicates the survival and development of kingship traditions. Such traditions would involve legitimacy, and the use of the titulary and the '*son of Ra*' title would doubtless have confirmed and supported claims to the throne.

In sporadic fighting between the two ruling groups, Abydos, principal seat of *Osiris* worship, changed hands several times.

The Thebans finally and with some difficulty overcame the Herakleopolitans. Mentuhotpe II (2061-2010) came to power in Thebes but it was only after several years of hard fighting that he became what Aldred calls "the first effective pharaoh" of the united Egypt since Pepi II (1987:127).

His reign of fifty-one years shows his own development from provincial king to Lord of the Two Lands, although his activities were largely centred in the South of the country and he chose to live at Thebes rather than Memphis (Quirke 1990:51 = *Fig 45*, Aldred 1987:133 Fig 91 = *Fig 46*).

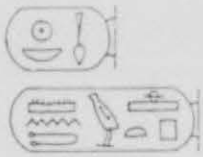


Fig 45 Cartouche of Nebhepetra(T) Mentuhotpe

Fig 46 Mentuhotpe II Sandstone tomb statue Deir el-Bahri

His long reign made the dynastic succession uncertain, much in the way that the over-long reign of Pepi II had done. When his son *S'ankhkare* Mentuhotpe III came to the throne, however, he inherited a state and generation to whom civil war was well in the past. He ruled only from

2010 until 1998, a matter of twelve years, during which time he was concerned with peaceful development, initiating, among other things, a large trading expedition to Punt. The long reign of Mentuhotpe still seems to have cast a cloud over the succession for after Mentuhotpe III's death the country again lapsed into anarchy.

The fourth Mentuhotpe had an even shorter reign, 1998-1991 and the strong figure that emerges from this period is the Vizier and Governor of the South, Amenemhet. We know he led an expedition to the Wadi Hammamat for stone for the king's sarcophagus, but history is vague after this. It is assumed, and largely accepted, that it is he who re-appears as the monarch Amenemhet I, founder of the 12th dynasty and ruler of the two lands from 1991-1962.

The governors and nomarchs of the feudal districts had, in the Old Kingdom, been appointed by the Pharaoh. We do not know in any detail, the history of the troubled times which intervened but it is more than likely that large usurpation of provincial power had taken place.

The 11th dynasty kings must have recognised that these powerful overlords could be a potential threat and a destabilising factor, but they probably had little choice but to recognise them in the interests of peace and stability. Amenemhet, first king of the 12th dynasty also had little option than to accept their existence with as good grace as possible. If the texts from Beni Hasan are to be believed, he set out on a journey through Egypt, stopping along the way to re-establish the provincial governors in their nomes, re-instating and demarcating the boundaries, and confirming the offices and titles of the feudal lords.

Aldred suggests that Amenemhet may have had to come to terms with them to obtain the throne and that in fact he was little more than the first among a number of jealous equals(1987:128).

That the nomarchs held considerable power is attested by the fact that those of Hermopolis dated events to their own years of rule, as did the king, maintained their own armed forces and fleets of ships and quarried stone for their own monuments. Needing troops to defend the country, and to recover the Nubian trade routes which had largely been lost, Amenemhet was forced to call upon these lords for military assistance. It was a situation fraught with political danger.

Amenemhet, could possibly see the fallacy of trying to govern from the southern city of Thebes. He chose to develop another centre making his capital a short way south of Memphis and close to the modern el-Lischt, calling it It-tawi (Seizing the Two Lands). In this vicinity Amenemhet revived the Old Kingdom form of a pyramid for his tomb his son Senwosret I also erecting a pyramid at this site.

He was an active builder and administrator. He set about subjugating Nubia by building a string of fortified settlements as far as Semna and making trading posts beyond and as far as the third

cataract. Senwosret III (1878-1841) eventually completed this work of his grandfather, rebuilding most of the forts and becoming so intimately connected with Nubia that in later years he was worshipped there as a god.

An innovation was Amenemhet's co-option of his eldest son Senwosret to act as co-regent in his twentieth regnal year. Two subsequent kings of this dynasty also followed this practice. However, Manetho recorded that Amenemhet was murdered by his own chamberlains in his jubilee year (Aldred 1987:128). Two pieces of Middle Kingdom literature, *The Teaching of King Amenemhet*, and *The Tale of Sinuhe* corroborate the murder. According to the latter writing, Senwosret I heard of his father's death while on a military campaign in the Western desert.

Why Amenemhet should have been murdered is not clear. He does not seem to have been a particularly weak king. Parkinson comments upon rhetorical questions in the '*Teaching*' as referring to the *harim* and says the attack probably originated there (1991: 49-52).

> "Had any woman previously raised troops?
> Is tumult raised in the Residence?
> Is water which destroys the earth let forth?
> Are commoners deceived by what they have done?..."

If so, it was possibly a question of succession, which he had sought to overcome by co-opting Senwosret. The latter king retained the throne, although the precautions taken by Amenemhet had not prevented his murder.

In time, and as the 12th dynasty reached the height of its power, that of the provincial nobles was reduced. Their feudal provincial states became districts of the crown under the civil authority of a mayor. This seems to have been finally achieved during the reign of Senwosret III (1878-1841) from which time the building of the great provincial tombs such as those at Beni Hasan came to an end.

Footnotes

[1] See Schulman (1991/2 79-94) who sees Egyptian 'historical art' as depiction of an act which had endless repetition. He views the Narmer palette as being a symbolical re-enactment of an earlier act.

[2] Pieces of a black basalt stone recording heights of the inundation, and periodical censuses.

[3] See Redford (1986).

[4] The Turin papyrus.

[5] The workmen's village at Deir el-Medina has provided a quantity of material of this kind, particularly ostraca.

[6] Harpur (1987) investigates in detail over 600 such tombs.

[7] Lichtheim (1988).

[8] Faulkner (1985).

CHAPTER 5

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN RELIGION: AN OVERVIEW

Religion is a fact of human consciousness that is constantly changing the nature and degree of its own self-understanding.

Sten Stenson

5.1 HISTORICAL ROOTS

Egyptian religion, at the time of the building of the Beni Hasan tombs, had been practised for at least a thousand years. During that time it had been dominated by two main factors, the sun and the Nile.

In summarising the secular history of the period up to the 12th dynasty, it was proposed that Egyptian history was inseparable from Egyptian religion. In turn, the history of the religion was largely conditioned by the environment.

The earliest of the creation myths is based on a primeval ocean from which the land arises, a direct link to the annual flood from which the land reappeared each year. This engendered a concept of annual renewal which became a dominant feature of ancient Egyptian religion. The earliest crude gods of which we have a record are frogs and snakes, again, the result of the inundation. In other words the early creation myths were a reflection of the physical environment of the Nile Valley (Spencer 1982:27).

The history of the country, so closely interlocked with its religion, has, due to its nature, been presented to us through the medium of that religion. We observe it in the temples and embodied in the funeral preparations the Egyptians made in order to achieve and enjoy eternity.

While we tend to divide the spiritual and the material, the ancient Egyptians had no such definitive dividing line. The spiritual part of man which survived the death of the flesh but could retain life in the tomb, balanced the material part of the gods who required to be rejuvenated annually and whose physical bodily needs for clothing and food had to be provided every day in the temples. The line between reality and image was also blurred. To speak or write the name of a man, for him meant life. The recital of offerings, made those offerings viable. Even the drawing had the property to become reality in the tomb.

The history of ancient Egypt's religion, linked as it was to the power of monarchy and priesthood, was not orientated towards a goal as are many of the major world religions. It was not led by a Messiah seeking salvation for his people. There were no prophets, in Old Testament terms, nor did it have a Zoroaster. It revolved entirely around the need to rejuvenate both god and man, a re-birth cycle without end.

This, in turn, was activated by recurring human acts. Of these Eliade says that their value is not connected with their crude physical datum, but with reproducing a primordial act, of repeating a mythical example. The conscious behaviour of the primitive or archaic man recognises no act which has not been previously posited and lived *by someone else*, a being *who was not a man*. Everything has been done before and man's life is the ceaseless repetition of gestures initiated by others (Eliade 1971:4-5). He quotes van de Leeuw[1] in saying that "all religious acts are held to have been founded by gods, civilizing heroes, or mythical ancestors" (1971:22) and goes on to qualify this by saying that not only do rituals have their mythical model but "any human act whatever acquires effectiveness to the extent to which it exactly *repeats* an act performed at the beginning of time by a god, a hero, or an ancestor" (1971:22).

Here one can trace the historical foundations of the ancient Egyptian concept of substitution and repetition in the tomb murals, and the repetition of the god-story, in the celebrations of the *Osiris* myth at Abydos.

The early Egyptian gods were crude, and their origins obscure, as are most primitive deities. Yet, while their early history was lost or early forgotten, certain of them survived, to appear as apotropaic figures, even among the more sophisticated deities of a later age. Typical of such a deity is the frog, one of the earliest creatures to crawl from the primeval waters but which survived even into the Late and Roman periods (Wilkinson 1992:106 Fig 1 = *Fig 47*).

Fig 47 Protective frog on basket, magical knife of the Middle Kingdom.

The mural from a temple of the late period, in which the frog in the guise of the goddess *Heqet*, oversees the birth of *Horus* (1992:106 Fig 2 = *Fig 48*) serves to confirm this assumption.

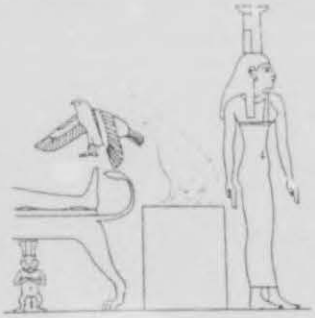


Fig 48 Frog goddess Heket overseeing the birth of Horus. Late period Temple of Hibis.

5.2 GEOGRAPHICAL INFLUENCE ON THE NATURE OF EGYPTIAN RELIGION

Allied to the religious beliefs of ancient Egypt was their concept of the universe. This, as was the history (Ch 4), was closely allied to the geography. The world, to the ancient Egyptians was viewed as a flat plain - i.e. the valley floor, the sky a flat plate supported above it. This concept continued throughout ancient Egypt's history. The hieroglyph for sky is *pet* (Gardiner N 1 = *Fig 49*).

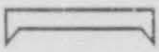


Fig 49 Hieroglyph N 1 pet The sky.

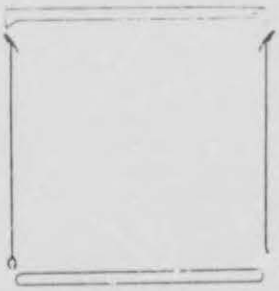


Fig 50 Hieroglyphs Pet, Ta, Was, Heaven, earth and pillars of sky.

Fig 51 Sky goddess Nut Papyrus Nusitanebashru 21st dynasty.

Used as the ideograph or determinative for sky, it is constantly used at the top of walls, gateways, and door frames, symbolising the overarching heavens. It is often shown studded with stars (Wilkinson 1992: 126 Figs 1-4 = *Figs 50-53*).

Fig 52 Sky hieroglyph Papyrus Padiamun 21st dynasty.

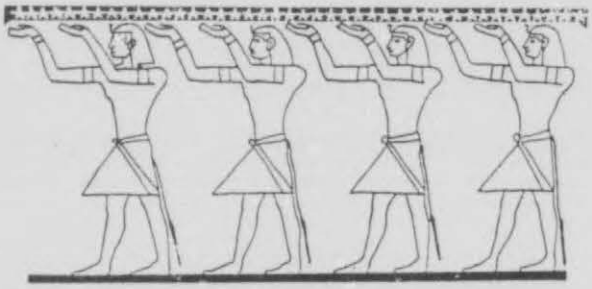


Fig 53 The king upholding the sky. Altar of Taharqa 25th dynasty.

The idea that the sky being upheld by supports, clearly shown in *Fig 50*, was, Spencer believes, influenced by the desert cliffs or escarpment, creating the impression of walls down to the edges of the valley encouraged the Egyptians to conceive the idea of deserts marking the limits of the world. Their ability to retain old ideas together with the new is well demonstrated by the fact that this concept persisted long after the Egyptians had become aware of lands well beyond he confines of the valley (Spencer 1982:27)

Prior to Menes, first king of the 1st dynasty (2920-2270), there is little information beyond a mention of designs on pottery of the late Gerzean period (Naqada II c3050).[2] Some of these designs show boats containing a tall pole with two streamers, on the top of which is an emblem. Assumed to be a fetish of the port from which the boat came, Montet sees these emblems employed to determine territories or towns, or even gods (1964:17 Fig 8 = *Fig 54*). Murray believes the emblem on the pole represented an object of worship, saying that the pole with its two streamers (1951 Fig 14 = *Fig 55*) became the hieroglyph for god, *netcher*.[3]

Hornung comments on Champollion and some later Egyptologists having interpreted the sign as an axe, but he says Egyptian axes were not wrapped round as is the sign and Petrie also

dismissed this idea. Hornung (1982 34 Fig 1) captions the sign as a "staff bound with cloth". However the name 'god' did not necessarily apply to any particular god and the origins and development of the numerous deities which became part of the enneads is open to speculation but cannot be confirmed.

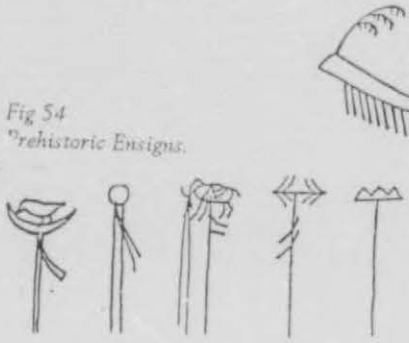


Fig 54
Prehistoric Ensigns.

Fig 55 Gerzean. Poles with streamers later developed into emblem of divinity.

The Nile, born among the waters of the great lakes of central Africa, and fed by the outpouring of the monsoon rains over Ethiopia, was 6,500 km long by the time it reached the Egyptian Delta. It is unlikely that the Egyptians ever became cognisant of its source although they were only too aware that each year it brought down in its flood waters, life-giving rich black soil. They called their country *Kmt* "the black land" and the arrival of the annual flood was seen as the bounty of the Nile god, *Hapi*.

While appreciating the qualities of their river from an agricultural point of view, it is doubtful whether the Egyptians ever analysed its social effect on Egypt. The Romans, acquiring and enlarging the empire of the Greeks, consolidated their vast lands with roads, long-lasting arteries of communication. Egypt was never in need of such arteries. The Nile fulfilled all communication purposes. It carried people, goods and ideas. It was indestructible, so far as man was concerned, and it bound rather than divided. Not least, it probably united the communities' gods. So far as it is possible to tell there was never any fanaticism with regard to local gods. When in time royalty took to itself the premier gods and goddesses, the various local deities were still worshipped by their adherents and preference for one seems to have been no bar to embracing others. Undoubtedly easy transport between communities from early days must have encouraged this communal situation among the Egyptians and their deities and in time even the royal gods and goddesses paid annual visits between their respective temples.

5.3 EGYPTIAN DEITIES

5.3.1 THEIR DEVELOPMENT

Apart from a general survey of the main Egyptian gods and goddesses and their place in Egyptian society, it is not possible, in this dissertation, to enter into lengthy discussion on such a complex subject. The intention is to establish and briefly analyse the gods likely to have influenced the

religious content of the Beni Hasan tombs. This is necessary in order to determine the iconography involved in ritual funeral motifs, and to differentiate between religious, secular, and/or biographical iconography.

As we receive them, the early Egyptians and their gods are already established, and it is impossible to trace their ancient origins with any certainty. Such indications as there are, however, suggest that ancient Egypt became occupied by various tribal groups over a period of time, rather than by a large invasion of one nation. Tribal districts or provinces, (Gk nomes), developed as a matter of expediency or natural selection. That these individual districts had at least one, perhaps a variety, of their own particular deities is a probability, and that in some cases these became assimilated to one another, is more than likely.

One of the earliest of the Egyptian monarchs (c.3000), known as King Scorpion, from a macehead on which the king and scorpion are closely related, throws some light on the early period (Baines and Malek:1980:79). Among other things, the top of the macehead has a series of lapwings hanging below the emblems of King Scorpion's allies (Montet 1964:23). These allies are represented by typical nome signs, three of which clearly show a fetish or totem (Montet 1964:24 Fig 13 = *Fig 56*).

Fig 56 Lapwings on the mace of King Scorpion attached to nome emblems

This was not an isolated case as is clear from both the Bull palette on which the nome standards are depicted with hands grasping a rope binding captives (Aldred 1987:80 Fig 43, *Ch.2 Fig 5*) and the obverse of the votive palette of Narmer where the king is preceded by bearers carrying nome standards (Aldred 1987:83 Fig 46, *Ch.4 Fig 33*).

It might be assumed that the Delta area, historically known as Lower Egypt, was inhabited and developed first, in view of the fact that three creator gods derive from that area, *Ptah* from Memphis, *Osiris* from Busiris and *Re* from On. However the four pairs of primeval deities whose centre was Khemenu (later Hermopolis) and whose leader was *Thoth*, may well have been

established prior to those in the Delta.[4] *Amun*, who came to prominence in the Middle Kingdom, was one of these early southern deities.

The deities in the Delta appear to be well established by the time they reach us and this may be an indication of early consolidation by northern peoples, while the deities in the Southern and Middle Egyptian districts could be the result of gradual infiltration of Nubians who entered Egypt from the South. Although upper and lower Egypt were united by Menes (c.2920), who formed a single monarchy, the official religion as we know it, only becomes apparent in the Pyramid Age (Edwards 1952:21).

Subsequently the monarchial, priestly-controlled religion, which is manifest in the royal and noble tombs, became paramount and exclusive, while the common people undoubtedly continued to worship a variety of gods outside the official fold.

Since the Egyptians never had to contend with the geographical situation that prevailed in Greece and Asia Minor, where individual communities, divided by mountainous regions, existed isolated from, and frequently antagonistic towards, neighbouring societies, the dwellers alongside the Nile had no choice but to be neighbours, compelled and united by their efforts to control and utilise the flood waters of the river if they were to survive.[5] Such an ongoing situation could weld together a far more complaisant and united community than is customary among tribal groups who are geographically separated. This is borne out by the fact that from the time of union under Menes, emerges a tolerant society particularly evident in relation to their religious beliefs. The concept of continual and renewable continuum, expressed and understood as *maat* (truth, cosmic order and equilibrium) eventually came to dominate their religious consciousness, and assume the form of a goddess. It is difficult to say when this positive and representative expression of *maat* in the form of a 'being' was introduced. Certainly the *maat* goddess figure is very prominent in the New Kingdom tombs, although she does not seem to have featured in the tombs of the Old and Middle Kingdom.

While a number of local or non royal gods were worshipped by the ordinary people there were a number who, to a certain extent, filled both roles. One of these early fertility gods was:-

5.3.1(a) *HAPI*

One would have expected an all-powerful Nile god. What emerged was a series of 'Nile gods' more recently called 'fecundity figures' by Baines (1985), (Hornung 1983:77-78 Fig 6 = *Fig 57)*. The only fecundity figure who acquired an independent existence as a deity was *Hapi*, whose fecundity role tended to overshadow the god as an entity. His worship was an annual affair, possibly linked to the time of the inundation (Quirke 1992:50). He is usually depicted as a typical fecundity figure with bulging breasts and stomach (Baines 1985:156 Fig 96(2) = *Fig 58)*. He was believed to live in a cave in the vicinity of Aswan and appears on a bas relief from Philae

where he is shown in his cave, adorned with foliage and dispensing libations to both northern and southern Egypt (Montet 1964:6 Fig 4 = *Fig 59)*.

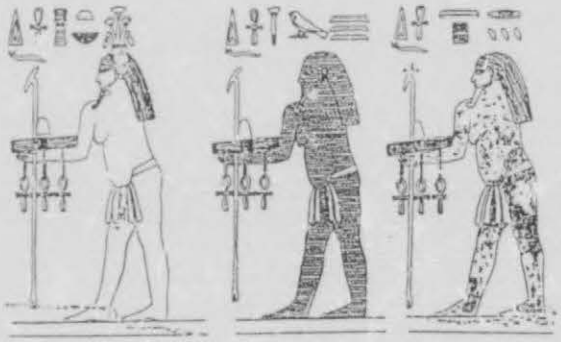


Fig 57 Fecundity figures.

Fig 58 Hapi as a fecundity figure.12th dynasty Meir.

Fig 59 Hapi in his cave causing he waters of the Nile to rise over Upper and Lower Egypt. Bas relief Philae.

5.3.1(b) *HORUS*

"The distant one" he was an ancient god of the sky and kingship, who absorbed a whole set of gods with hawk form (Hornung 1971:227). Our first records show him as the *Horus-falcon* of the dynastic kings, on an ivory panel from Abydos where the name of King Aha (Menes?) appears with the *Horus* (Quirke 1990:20 = *Fig 60)*.

The more familiar representation, however, in which the relationship is clearly seen, is on the 1st dynasty stele of King Djet, also found at Abydos (Kemp 1989:38 Fig 10 = *Fig 61)*.

There is some confusion regarding *Horus*, who appears in various forms, *Horus the Elder (Fig 62)* found at Edfu as a hawk-headed man, and *Horus the Younger (Hor-Pa-Khred)*, son of *Osiris* and *Isis*, shown as a small boy with the side-lock of youth, *(Fig 63)*. In addition there is the familiar falcon *Horus*, his association with the royal house confirmed in the wearing of the crowns of upper and lower Egypt (Hornung 1983:145 fig 15 = *Fig 64)*.

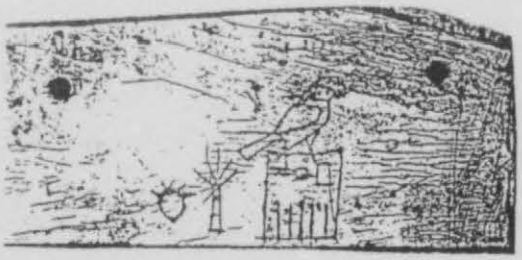


Fig 60 Ivory fragment naming King Aha, with Horus Panel, Abydos.

Fig 61 Djet fourth king of First Dynasty Stela bearing name, Horus and palace facade motif, Abydos.

Fig 62 Horus the Elder.

Fig 63 Horus the Younger

Fig 64 Horus in a Marsh thicket

Fig 65 Horus protecting the 4th dynasty King, Khephren.

Fig 66 Thot, Restorer of the Eye of Horus.

Horus was always a royal god. He played a protective role exemplified in the statue of the 4th dynasty king Khephren (2520-2494) (Keel 1978:190 Fig 260 = *Fig 65*).

Smith (1981) describes this diorite statue which stood against the granite walls of the Valley Temple of Khephren at Giza, as displaying the ideal of god-like majesty, the falcon spreading its protecting wings around the royal headcloth.

As the son of *Osiris* and *Isis*, *Horus* fought and overcame *Seth* in order to revenge his father's death. In the process he lost an eye, later restored by *Thoth* (*Fig 66*) as a consequence of which *Horus*, in an intimate capacity, represented a model of filial devotion and the eye "was henceforth regarded as a symbol for every form of sacrifice" (Edwards 1952:27).

From the earliest periods the eyes of *Horus* were associated with the Sun and Moon, the right eye being the '*Eye of Re*' and the left, the '*Eye of Horus*' or the Moon. The *Eye of Horus* was one of the earliest symbols introduced on the wooden coffins of the Interim and Middle Kingdom periods (Wilkinson 1992:42 Figs 1,2,3 = *Figs 67,68,69*).

Fig 67 The Solar eye of Horus. Pectoral of Tutankhamun.

Fig 68 The Lunar eye of Horus. Pectoral of Tutankhamun.

Fig 69 Eyes of Horus on coffin of Menkabu. First Intermediate period.

Horus also has an association with the West as *Horakhty*. In this guise he is shown as a man with a hawk mask when he is described as, "*Horakhty, Horus-of-the-Horizon*, sun god, usually falcon headed; often combined with *Re* as *Re-Horakhty*" (Faulkner 1985:104 Spell 109)[6]. The fact that *Harakhty* has a hawk head has led to the supposition that an ancient hawk god was one of those gods which became fused with the falcon god *Horus*.[7] His falcon image, however, remained attached to the monarch who retained a *Horus* title among his other nomenclature.

5.3.1(c) *ANUBIS*

The origins of *Anubis*, the jackal-headed god, are problematical. Likely to have been a totem, he most likely developed as a protector of a clan. Few of the ancient Egyptian gods have names which help us to understand their nature or function. *Anubis* is no exception. In the Ptolemaic period efforts were made to interpret these names but this led to flights of fancy such that *Anubis* was interpreted, among other things, as the "wind-water-mountain".

His presentation was constant, however, being depicted as a black canine, possibly a jackal, or, in a mixed form, with a dog's head and a human body. Primitive societies frequently have a behaviour pattern which embraces the concept of *Taboo*. This is a system whereby a person, animal, vegetable or object, is set apart as accursed or sacred.[8]

Animism, is contained in the situation where a people project their own volition outwards, and invest the beings and objects that surround them, with a life and sentiments similar to their own.

Animism, linked to *taboo*, frequently induces fear. At this stage, and in a desire to propitiate, a *totem* may be created.[9]

The creation gods do not fall into this category as they provide an explanation for the universe. They are invisible, other than in the form of a man-made idol, or fetish, while the totem provides an immediate and recognisable aspect of that which man can see, experience, and feels able to control. In time, these totems may lose their 'godly' status and become the identification emblems of the group, as we find in some of the emblems of the nomes.

The 15th nome, adjoining Beni Hasan, has a jackal-anubis as its emblem.

Anubis is believed to have been the chief god of the dead before the rise of *Osiris*, although there is no indication that he was in any way representative of re-birth. The god was probably embodied by a canid which haunted the desert cemeteries, being associated with the necropolis from the earliest of times. Prayers are carved to him in the oldest mastabas, and he is mentioned in the Pyramid Texts e.g Pyr.659 (Wilkinson 1992:65).

Anubis, most commonly shown as a reclining jackal (Wilkinson 1994:154 Fig 107 = *Fig 70*) was not a *deified* animal. Even in the earliest texts he appears as the *god* of the desert cemeteries (Brunner-Traut 1978:102 = *Fig 71*).

He was necessary to ensure proper burial and as embalmment became common he became the master of this operation (Keel 1978:68 Fig 75 = *Fig 72*).

Anubis never changed either his form or his association with the dead. Once a royal prerogative, as a god of death for the Pharaoh alone, *Anubis* became a god of death for all once the monarchy failed at the end of the Old Kingdom.

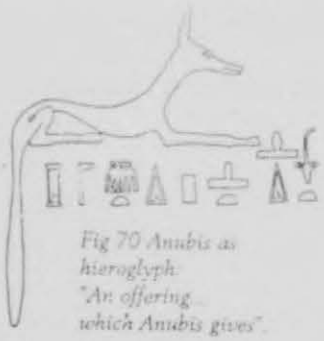


Fig 70 Anubis as hieroglyph: "An offering ... which Anubis gives".

Fig 71 Anubis with was sceptre and ankh.

Fig 72 Anubis as embalmer.

Anubis had four titles among which is the title *Leader of the Shrine of the God*. From early days he was associated with shrines. Although no early shrines remain, representations of them appear in the 1st dynasty and they appear to have been light structures of lattice-work. In the illustrations below *Anubis* himself is associated with the first while the second has reproduced the shape of the god (Murray 1951:227 Fig 11 = *Fig 73*).

That his status did not diminish over the years is evident from the magnificent *Anubis* found in the tomb of Tutankhamen (Desroches-Noblecourt 1963:84 Pl.43; 252 Pl.LII) and the funerary papyrus of Hor and his wife from the Ptolemaic period c.300 BC (Faulkner 1972:150). He is present in a great many of the Coffin Texts both as embalmer of the corpse and assistant at the burial where he supports the corpse at a opening of the mouth ceremony (Keel 1978:68 Fig 76 = *Fig 74*).

Although in the New Kingdom *Anubis* was present with *Osiris*, he was not drawn into the cosmology or myth of that god. When judgement in the underworld became a regular tomb mural, *Anubis* became the central figure, responsible for weighing the heart and adjusting the scales (Brunner-Traut 1988:125 = *Fig 75*).

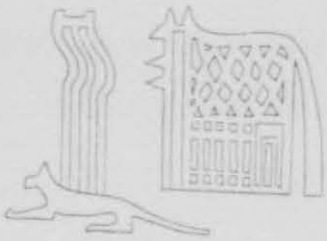


Fig 73 Lattice shrines of Anubis.

Fig 74 Anubis assisting at opening of the mouth ceremony.

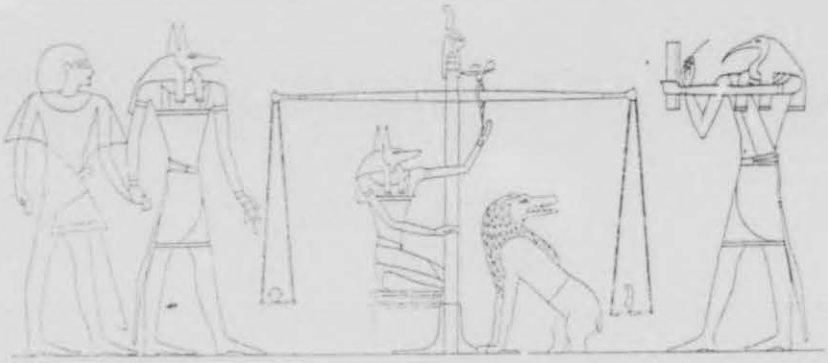


Fig 75 Anubis officiating at the weighing of the heart, New Kingdom.

5.3.2 THE CREATION GODS

5.3.2(a) THE ROLE OF THE GODS

The above gods, while early manifesting themselves among the people, were not incorporated into a 'creation' system. The priests of On (Heliopolis), centre of the sun-worship, produced one such cosmogony in which, among others, *Nun* (primordial ocean), *Shu (a)* air, *Tefnut* (b) Moisture, *Geb* (c,d) earth, and *Nut* (c) sky goddess were incorporated, together with *Osiris (e) Isis (f) Seth (g)* and *Nephthys* (h) (*Fig 76* a-h) This Great Ennead was also followed by a Little Ennead, in which lesser gods were included, under the leadership of *Horus* (Edwards 1952:21).

Gods such as *Ptah* who in Memphite theology was responsible for creation by the 'word', developed myths in their own right, making their evolution or historical development difficult to define. This creator god, was also the patron of artisans and craftsmen (*Fig 76 i*)[10]. *Ptah* never entirely bridged the gap between himself and the *Re* cosmogony. *Osiris* also had a history of his

own, beyond the confines of the On priesthood, in which *Isis*, *Horus*, *Thoth*, and *Seth* (adversary of *Horus*) all play a part.

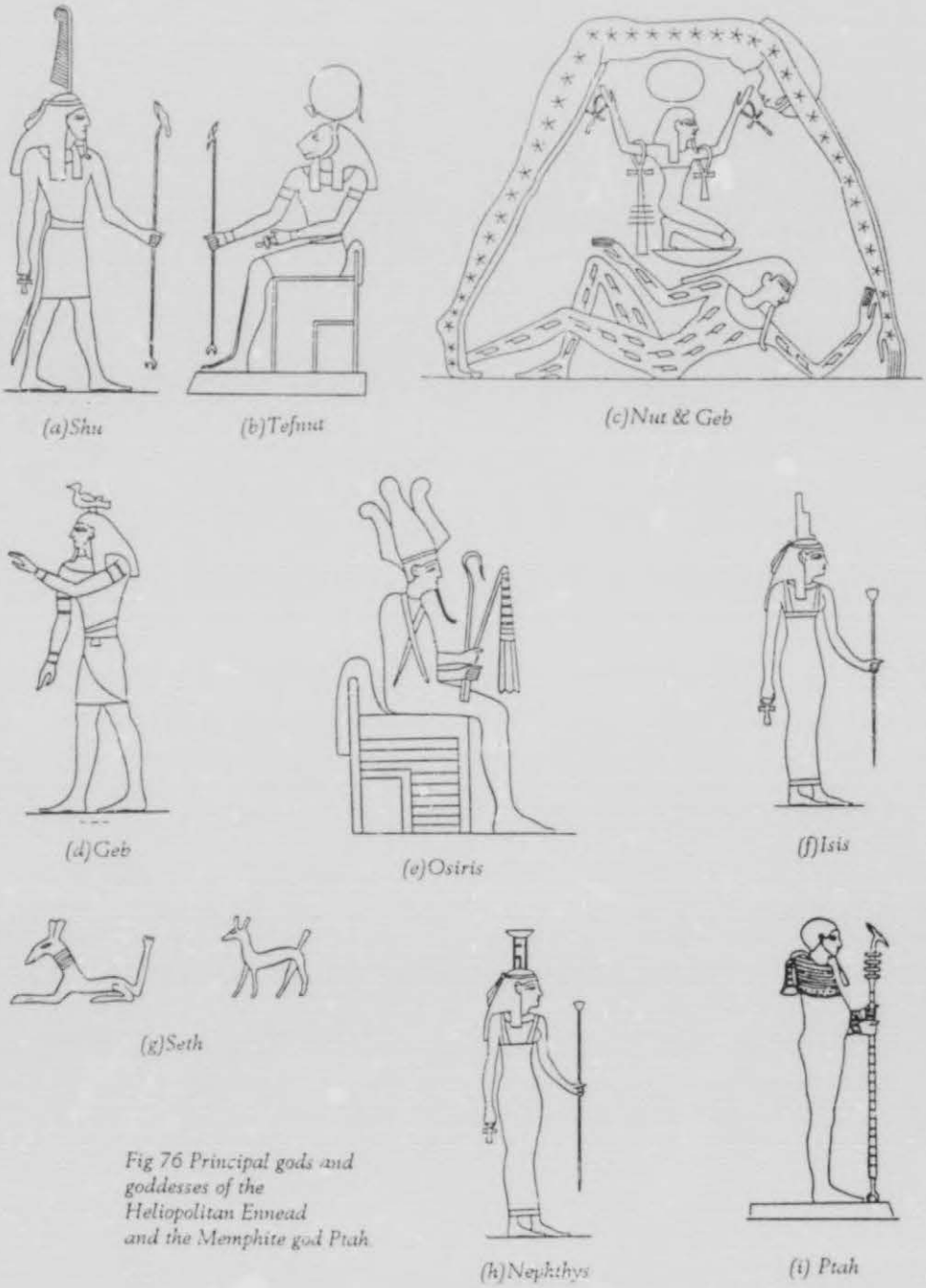


Fig 76 Principal gods and goddesses of the Heliopolitan Ennead and the Memphite god Ptah.

5.3.2(b) *RE*

Hornung says this is the most important and widespread 'name' of the sun god worshipped primarily as creator and sustainer of the world (1982:281).

He was believed to travel in a bark across the sky by day and the underworld by night. His chief centre was On (Gk Heliopolis). Combined with many other gods, and usually depicted in human form, he is difficult to isolate. *Re* frequently appears as a solar disc associated with various other insignia in the headpieces of both gods and goddesses. He is possibly most readily identified in his dead form when he is represented as a ram-headed man. He assumes various forms and in the tomb of Nefertari appears as an Osiride figure wearing the ram's head of *Khnum* (Wilkinson 1994:128 Fig 34 = *Fig 77*).

Fig 77 Re wearing the ram's head of Khnum. Isis and Nephthys either side. Tomb of Nefertari, Thebes.

His cult centre was On (Gk Heliopolis). A royal god, such was his influence, that when the Thebans elevated their god *Amun* (the god who lived in darkness) they linked him to the sun god as *Amun-Re*. This is clearly a contradiction in terms, but a confirmation of the unassailable position of *Re*, who, in spite of the widespread worship of both *Osiris* and *Amun*, continued to dominate Egyptian religion.

5.3.2(c) *OSIRIS*

The great god *Osiris (Fig 76e)* associated with death and rebirth, was linked to the Nile, in respect of recurring fertility. He was not originally the royal dynastic god, and his origins are not clear, which suggests that he was an early god of the people.[11]

Although he became elevated to royal god and was incorporated in the tombs of the 4th dynasty Pharaohs, there are indications that this was not a spontaneous development. Tobin points out that one important characteristic of *Osiris* is that in at least some early traditions, he was considered to be a type of demon, and actually hostile to the dead, certainly to the royal dead. He quotes Utterance 534 of the Pyramid texts in which a protection prayer for the king says:-

> "May *Osiris* not come with his evil coming;
>
> Do not open your arms to him."

Tobin goes on to say that there would appear to have been early hostility between the solar religious system and what he calls "the chthonic religious system connected with *Osiris*". At the same time he points out that we can see from various similar texts, evidence of the synthesis of the two traditions (1989:108-109).

Rundle Clarke (1959:97) calls *Osiris* "the most vivid achievement of the Egyptian imagination", and also the most complex. While the High God is a theological concept of the supreme personification of power, *Osiris* demands sympathy. As the essential victim, his being avenged confirms that justice and order are established on earth. While the other gods are transcendent, *Osiris* is immanent, the sufferer, but equally the power of revival and fertility in the world. To become an *Osiris*, therefore, was to become one with the cosmic cycles of death and rebirth. Clarke sees the other major gods being there to account for the origin and maintenance of the world (1959:98-99).

Petrie, who dug at Naqada at the end of the 19th century, discovered pre-dynastic graves in which the condition of the bodies suggested dismemberment as part of the burial ritual. This has been linked to early *Osiris* worship, the latter, according to the myth, having been dismembered by his brother *Seth*. However there has been much argument about the reasons for this form of burial and it still remains unresolved.[12]

David (1982:74) finds the popularity of *Osiris* in the context of the victory of good over suffering and evil, this having appeal for the ordinary man in preference to the *Re* cult of royal patronage and priestly hierarchy. The aspect of *Osiris* as the people's god overcame all others even after he had been brought into equality with the royal sun god. While *Osiris* developed into the great and powerful god of the netherworld, the other major god, *Re*, was essentially a god of the living. Edwards comments that they did share a common feature, a divine example of survival after death (1947:27). *Osiris*, though murdered by *Seth* (*Fig 76 g*) was restored to life

by *Isis*. *Re*, although not primarily a god of rebirth in the same category as *Osiris*, nevertheless was believed to die each night when he disappeared beyond the horizon to be reborn each morning at dawn.

The myth of *Osiris* with his death, dismemberment and re-birth, (almost certainly a developed form of an early agricultural fertility cult), eventually became incorporated in a great festival which took place at Abydos, where a grave of one of the early kings was identified as the tomb of the god. It is difficult to associate any specific rite with *Osiris* at a given time and the cult became in the end a mixture incorporating the primitive rites of the early community and some of the highest ideals of an advanced form of religion. The dismemberment of bodies as found by Petrie and various Pyramid texts endorsing the *Osiris* legend of dismemberment led to the belief that at an early stage the *Osiris* cult incorporated the killing of the King (as an *Osiris*) and that the later *Osiris* festival was a developed and less barbarous form of this ceremony.[13] It is now believed that the texts were not interpreted correctly and that in fact they refer only to the original *Osiris* myth. Spencer (1982:39-42) covers this question at some length. It is not relevant to this dissertation.

While the cults developed their various creation myths, within the confines of the priestly hierarchy, Frankfort points out that they had little effect on popular beliefs. He says "the sun whose daily rising repeated his appearance on the First Day remained for the Egyptians the Creator"(1978:151). *Osiris*, on the other hand, reigned supreme in the underworld. While the presence of *Re* was retained in the elaborate underworld funerary murals and MSS of the New Kingdom, the position of *Osiris* as the source of re-birth was never challenged.

5.3.2(c) *AMUN*

Theban monarchs of the 11th and 12th dynasties elevated their ancient, local god of Thebes, *Amun*, "the hidden one", to be the supreme god. He is often shown with a tall crown of feathers (Quirke and Spencer 992: 76 Fig 55 = *Fig 78)* and sometimes in the form of *Min*, an ithyphallic god of the desert areas (Hornung 1983:107 = *Fig 79)*.

A mural in the second hall of the Temple of Rameses II at Abu Simbel shows the king offering lettuces to *Min-Amun* and *Isis* (Macquitty 1965:115).[14]

Amun also took the forms of a ram and a goose (Montet 1964:137 Fig 41). The goose image faded but the ram image remained constant, (Quirke and Spencer 1992:211 Fig 161 = *Fig 80)*.

He first made his appearance as one of the Ogdoad, the primitive creatures of chaos from which *Re* arose and of which *Nun* was the primeval ocean. *Amun* and his female counterpart *Amaunet*, were later conceived as the dynamic element of the chaos and the mainspring of creation (Frankfort 1978:155)[15]. They seem to have represented air and wind.

Fig 78 Amun.

Fig 79 Amun in form of the ithyphallic god Min.

Fig 80 Amun in form of a ram, protecting King Taharqa c.690-664 BC.

Although *Amun* rose to prominence during the Middle Kingdom, he reached his greatest heights of influence and wealth when the kings of the 18th dynasty added chapels and endowments to his imposing temple at Karnak.[16]

Since his strongest influence lies in the 18th dynasty and beyond, it is difficult to know the strength of his appeal to the people at the time of construction of the Beni Hasan tombs. Once elevated by the Theban monarchs, his name appears with theirs in their royal insignia when he assumed the role of royal god. It is in this guise that he is recorded at Beni Hasan.

Having arisen from the chaos, *Amun* as an early creator god, could, fairly easily, be linked to the great creator-god *Re*. Hornung says that he is pre-eminent among deities and in one single figure is able to combine all the characteristics of the creator and sustainer of the world (1982:274-5).

5.3.2(e) *KHNUM*

The owners of two of the tombs at Beni Hasan bear the name of this god. A ram-headed god of the cataract region of the south, he was an old creator god from Elephantine. He preserved for himself the unique attribute of creator of man, by fashioning him on a potter's wheel. While he is often shown with simply a ram's head, the most completely identifiable image shows not only

the horns but a pot over the horns, indicating his creative role (*Fig 81*). The Egyptian concept of a *ka*, or spiritual alter ego, embraced the concept of n.. being made in duplicate. Birth scenes on the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri show *Khnum* fashioning the queen and her *ka* (*Fig 82*), both figures being presented to *Amun* her father.

Khnum appears to have been popular in the cataract area around Elephantine where his worship can be traced to the early dynastic period. A temple of *Khnum* at Esna, of which the remains can mostly be attributed to the Roman period, stands on the foundations of a temple of the 18th dynasty.

Fig 81 Khnum

Fig 82 Khnum makes Hatshepsut and her Ka on a potter's wheel.

Since the *ka* performed an important role in relation to the deceased, *Khnum* was able to co-exist with the other creator gods, as something of a separate entity with a specific task.

5.3.3 THE GODDESSES

5.3.3(a) THE MOTHER GODDESSES

Rundle Clark suggests that the main cult of the prehistoric people was that of a Mother Goddess who was also the sky. This goddess worship, he believes would have been kept alive among the common people throughout the ages, reappearing in provincial centres, whenever the official religion lost its grip (1959:28).[17]

Both *Isis* and *Hathor*, mother goddesses who rose high in the ancient Egyptian pantheon, appear to have originated as deities in their own right. Later they were drawn into the Osirian ennead of the priests of On. With time, the main centres acquired a godly triad, of which one

member was a woman, usually wife of the main god. In Memphis *Sekhmet* (*Fig 83*) the lion goddess was worshipped as consort of *Ptah*, *Satet* (*Fig 84*), goddess of the cataract was consort of *Khnum*, *and Mut* was the consort of *Amun* at Thebes (*Fig 85*).

Fig 83 Sekhmet.

Fig 84 Satet.

Fig 85 Mut.

5.2.3(b) *ISIS*

This goddess is so closely united to *Osiris* that her origins have been lost. As his wife, she was accorded status as a queen, and had many descriptive titles, including 'She of the Throne' confirmed by the hieroglyph of her name which incorporates a throne. The same emblem is usually worn as her headdress, as the illustration shows (Hornung 1982:87 Fig 7 = *Fig 86*).

She is often shown, as in the illustration, with her arms embracing *Osiris*, in a similar stance to that found on funerary statues of husband and wife i.e., King Mykerinus and his Queen (Aldred 1980: 74 Fig 35) and the dwarf Seneb and his family (Aldred 1980: 76 Fig 37).

Isis plays one of the leading parts in the *Osiris* drama, seeking his body, restoring him to life, bearing *Horus*, and standing beside him in the Judgement. She is the epitome of the devoted wife and her cult outlasted those of all the other Egyptian goddesses. She was eminently powerful being a *Mistress of Magic*, *Speaker of Spells*, and *Great Enchantress* but while she acquired a variety of epithets, titles and personifications in her long career, her role during the Old Kingdom and into the 12th dynasty, was probably fairly simple and confined to the *Osiris* myth.

Fig 86 Isis and Osiris.

5.3.3(c) HATHOR

Hathor was one of the earliest of Egyptian goddesses. She appears to have been a form of "mother" cow-goddess who was worshipped all over Egypt. She appears both as a woman with a headdress of cows horns *(Fig 87)* and as a goddess of the netherworld (Wilkinson 1992:58 Fig 2 = *Fig 88*).

Fig 87 Hathor with cow horn Headdress

Fig 88 Hathor as goddess of the nether-world.

Fig 89 Ihy, god of music, son of Horus and Hathor

In time she developed a complicated relationship with the power of the King.[18] She is often difficult to define since in the later period, her headdress was worn by *Isis*, from which time the

two became almost inseparable (Wilkinson 1992:59). Developing an association with the underworld as the goddess who received the dead, *Hathor* became, in that role, the Lady of the Sycamore Tree. *Hathor*, in bovine form, is frequently shown emerging from the side of a mountain which represents the necropolis (*Fig 88*).

While *Isis* took on the attributes of devoted wife to *Osiris*, and mother of *Horus*, *Hathor* was associated with the elder *Horus* and with *Ihy*, the god of music, her son (*Fig 89*). *Hathor* acquired a variety of functions appearing, among other things, in desert shrines, where she was known as the *Lady of the Turquoise*. One of the most important shrines was at Serabit el-Khadim where the earliest part of a temple to *Hathor* existed in the 12th dynasty (Baines and Malek 1980:188). In this guise she assumed an apotropaic role in relation to the mine workers. However, she never lost her original identity as a cow-goddess. The columns in her Ptolemaic temple at Dendera clearly show this aspect of her origins (Hornung 1982:114 Fig 11 = *Fig 90*).

Fig 90 Hathor pillar from her temple at Dendera.

Possibly derived from wild cattle, she always exhibits a benign character. Many agricultural chapel scenes show distraught cows following the herdsmen across water to reach their calves. The nature of the cow is exemplified by the use of the determinative of a cow suckling a calf for *to show solicitude* (Gardiner E5).

5.3.3(d) TA-URT, TAWERET

A pregnant hippopotamus standing on her hind legs, *Ta-urt* was the goddess of pregnant women, an apotropaic role, although in the first instance she possibly represented the dangers attached to childbirth (Brunner-Traut 1988:113 = *Fig 91*).

Fig 91 Ta-urt with sign of protection 'sa' V 17

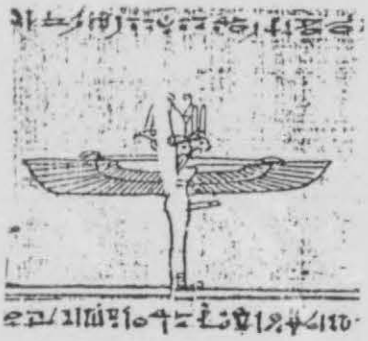


Fig 92 Pakhet wearing plumes, part of an ithyphallic figure.

She was worshipped all over Egypt, and this would doubtless have applied at Beni Hasan. She had no temple of her own, but appears to have been accorded space in others. Perhaps this was influenced by the fact that she was a goddess only relevant to women. She frequently appears on funeral papyrus and on magic amulets or wands, where she wards off evil.

5.3.3(e) *PAKHET*

Peculiar to Beni Hasan at this period, is the goddess *Pakhet* depicted with the figure of a woman and the head of a lioness. She was a fearsome creature who attacked miners working in the desert region. *Pakhet* exemplifies the transition from fear to worship. She has sometimes been confused with *Sekhmet*, whom Hornung describes as a goddess worshipped in Memphis where she formed a triad with *Ptah* and *Nefertem* (1982:282). *Sekhmet* is the better known of the lioness-goddesses, but, although she and *Pakhet* share the same iconography, they are two separate entities. Hornung has no hesitation in designating *Pakhet* as a local goddess, pointing out that many such deities bore names derived directly from the places where they were manifest. He lists various deities, saying that their names were sometimes attributable to typical features of their manifestation, as with *Pakhet*, "tearer apart" who was worshipped as a lioness at the mouths of wadis (1982:72). A rare illustration of *Pakhet* occurs on a papyrus illustrating spells 163 and 164 of the Book of the Dead (Faulkner 1972: 158, 160; Ill on p163 = *Fig 92*).

While Spell 163 does not specifically mention *Pakhet*, Spell 164 says "To be said over (a figurine of) *Mut* having three heads, one being a head of *Pakhet* wearing plumes...". The papyrus is

damaged but the head of *Pakhet* with plumes can be seen on the right side of the composite ithyphallic figure.

Sekhmet is always shown, standing or seated, wearing the sun disc (*Fig 83*). She was the consort of *Ptah* of Memphis, had shrines all over Egypt, and was feared by reason of her association with pestilence. She is not specifically associated with Beni Hasan.

The lion assumed a powerful relationship with the Pharaohs who chose to have themselves identified with a lion's body, in the guise of a sphinx. The female of the species became a woman with the head of a lioness.

Pakhet once having translated from enemy to ally, became an apotropaic goddess not only providing protection against the dangers from her kind but also against the dangers of the desert in general. Beni Hasan is the only known site believed to have had a temple of *Pakhet* at that time.[19]

5.4 PHARAOH AND THE GODS

The relationship between Pharaoh and the deity was substantiated when *Horus* became accepted as the son of *Osiris* and *Isis*, and the Pharaoh became the living *Horus*. Subsequently, on his death, the king became the reborn *Osiris*. The origins of royal sun worship, are not known. That it thrived during the 4th dynasty and beyond is evidenced by the massive pyramid and sun-temple building programmes of the Pharaohs. It possibly developed from earlier star worship, although Quirke says the stars were not worshipped for themselves but for their relation to other beings. The circumpolar stars which never set in the night sky offer a hope of resurrection in the Pyramid Texts where the deceased is directed to become an imperishable star and so live forever (1992:50).

Why sun worship achieved such prominence during the 4th dynasty is not known. It may have been encouraged by the priesthood at On who were being challenged by the strong cult of *Osiris*.[20] Although the Pharaoh bears the title *son of Re* his relationship is not so positive as in the *Horus/Osiris* myth. It is difficult to make a hard and fast distinction between the *Osiris* group of deities and the Pharaonic group in the later forms of the religion.

Since the temples of the 12th dynasty and earlier were largely destroyed it is difficult to compare them with the temples raised by the New Kingdom Pharaohs with which we are familiar from their massive ruins at Thebes. The king seems to have been the High Priest, with certain ceremonies reserved for him alone. Undoubtedly much of the daily ceremonial would have been undertaken by the resident priests, and it was all fairly remote from the general population who were not allowed into the temple, other than on special occasions and then only in a restricted part.

Until the fall of the Old Kingdom, re-birth or renewal was for the king alone. Those fortunate enough to be under the protection of the monarch enjoyed the right to a tomb in which in a strange fashion the spirit was able to attain a half material existence, the form being largely undetermined.

The fall of the monarchy, one is led to believe, opened the way for royal expectations of re-birth to be attained by all who were able to comply with the necessary tomb requirements. It has been described as a form of 'democracy'. However, the early institution and continued worship of *Osiris*, leads one to suggest that the ordinary people always anticipated some sort of after-life. *Osiris* was so essentially a dying and rising god that there would have been little point in worshipping him had life after death not been the ultimate aim. We are probably wrong in assuming that the fall of the monarchy opened the doors to the expectation of the afterlife to all and sundry. It did open the way of eternal life through the previously unattainable royal door although logically the follower of *Osiris* would not have needed the protracted efforts to provide life within the tomb. The retention of both *Re* and *Osiris* in the preparations for the dead is one more example of the ability of the ancient Egyptians to retain doctrines even when they were in opposition to each other.

One rather extraordinary custom was the continued use of the *ḥtp di nswt* formula, not only in the tombs but on the stelae erected in holy places even in the absence of approval from the monarch.[21]

The powerful influence of the king in all aspects of the religion, be it *Osiris* or *Re* worship, never ceased to be paramount. He was the one and only intermediary, whose role was never challenged. Undoubtedly the formula became just that, a formulation of words, but the fact that it was always included is some indication of the indivisible relationship in ancient Egypt between god, monarch and man.

5.5 THE UNSEEN PRESENCE

Implicit in the tombs of ancient Egypt, once the deceased had taken up his residence there, was the presence of the *ka* and the *ba*.

5.5.1 THE *KA*

In *Fig 82, Khnum* is shown fashioning two human beings. The second figure, apparently identical to the other, was, to the ancient Egyptian, a spiritual concept. It was the individual's *ka*. It accompanied the person during his lifetime and assumed the role of provider of the life-support in the tomb. Quirke (1992:37) refers to it as a "sustaining spirit". Frankfort sees the *ka* as the result of the Egyptians' concept of a spiritual view of food. The same word *ka*, denoting man's impalpable force also means his sustenance.

In the Memphite Theology the *ka*, in the plural, are mentioned even before the establishment of justice, as "they that make all sustenance and all food". Having died, a man was said to have gone to his *ka*. Having lost his own vitality, in order to survive, he would have joined the *ka*, representative of his life force (Frankfort 1961:91). It appears as the ideogram *ka* (Wilkinson *1992:49 = Fig 93)* and represents extended (embracing?) arms.[22]

Fig 93 "Ka" Hieroglyph.

The fact that it appears in the Memphite theology suggests that the concept is very old. Certainly it was present in the earliest mastaba tombs where food offerings were made for the deceased. Originally simple, little more than a niche, the offering place was expanded into a small room and included a false door through which the *ka* could emerge (Aldred 1987:113 Pl 75). We also find the introduction of statues through which the *ka* could operate. Sometimes placed in a "cell" or serdab, this inner chamber usually had a small opening on a level with the face, through which the *ka* could issue forth and the deceased could be "sustained" (Stewart 1971:34).[23]

In time, murals expanded to include the familiar offering scene with the deceased sitting at a table of offerings above the door (Stewart 1971:Frontispiece) and a statue of the deceased issuing from the door itself (Aldred 1980:90 Pl 49). The premise was that through the statue the *ka* was empowered to receive the food offerings for the benefit of the deceased. This appears to have been one aspect of the early tombs that was not restricted to the king. Edwards describes the development in Mastabas of both Kings and nobles of the 2nd and 3rd Dynasties (1947:35-44).

Manifestations of the *Ka* were numerous and varied. Incorporated into objects used in rituals, as a sense of "life-power" it is known to have appeared in apposition with the *ankh* (Wilkinson 1992:48 Fig 1 = *Fig 94)*. It was frequently used in funerary contexts (1992:48 Fig 3 = *Fig 95)* and was also extended as a form of headdress, representative of the king's double, as is apparent from the cult figure of the 13th dynasty king, Hor Awibre from Dashur (Aldred 1980:136 Fig 100, Wilkinson 1992: 48 Fig 2 = *Fig 96)*.

Wilkinson believes the *ka* to have been an aspect of both gods and humans and suggests that the name Egypt probably evolved through the Greek, from the ancient name of Memphis: *Hut-ka-Ptah*" or House of the *ka* of *Ptah* (Wilkinson 1992:49).

Fig 94 Palette Ka and ankh.

Fig 95 Deceased offering to Ka on funerary papyrus.

Fig 96 Ka-statue, King Hor Awibre c 1760 BC Dahshur.

5.5.2 THE *BA*

The first written reference to the *ba* would appear to be in the Pyramid Texts which, although largely influenced by Heliopolitan theology show traces of very primitive beliefs. Aldred says that in general the texts were positioned on the tomb walls to ensure that the "*ba* or spirit of the dead king shall mount to heaven" (1987:111). Prior to the Middle Kingdom, only the gods and the king were said to possess a *ba*. The *ba* which has been described as the soul of mobility (Quirke and Spencer 1992:65) was interpreted as a surrogate 'mover', having the ability to move on behalf of the deceased, and to leave and return to the tomb. While the *ka* provided sustenance, the *ba* would seem to have provided the means whereby the deceased could enjoy the benefits of his after-life in and out of the tomb. The *ba* was portrayed as a human-headed bird (Faulkner 1972:52 Spell 26 = *Fig 97)*, human as to spirit and as free of movement as a bird (Montet 1964:167 Fig 44 = *Fig 98)*.

However these iconographic portrayals are largely from the vignettes accompanying papyrus texts , which appear in the tombs from the 18th dynasty.[24]

In the Old Kingdom the function of the *ba*, reserved for the king and the gods, was to make their presence manifest in the world. It is often found in the plural form *bau*. With the assumption of royal privileges in the interim period and Middle Kingdom, when the funerary cult of the king was adopted by ordinary individuals, each person was believed to have one spirit known as a *ba* (Quirke 1992:106-107).

Fig 97 The Ba wearing a djed. Spell 26 Book of the Dead.

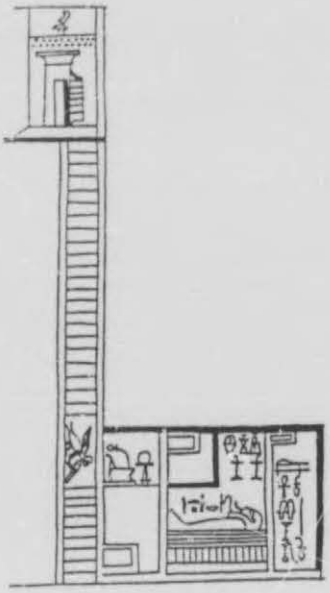


Fig 98 Ba entering a tomb.

Zakbar referring to Osirian Coffin Texts which show the *ba* with the corpse, says that the mortuary texts of the Middle Kingdom, confining the *ba* to the underground, prepared the way for the idea of the *ba* going to the lower Duat, which in the New Kingdom texts is an equivalent for the nether world (1968:110).

5.5.3 *MAAT*

Hornung defines *Maat* as the "personification of the 'Order' of the world"(1982:279). Accorded a position in the hierarchy of the gods, she became the daughter of *Re*. However from an early period she acquired a double image as the "two *Maats*". When depicted in iconographic form she appears as a woman wearing an ostrich feather on her head. From the 18th dynasty she is to be found in the tombs in a variety of symbolic roles, her association with the ceremony of the weighing of the heart probably being the most familiar (*Fig 75*).[25]

Maat would seem to have originated as a concept of order rather than as a goddess, although once proclaimed as *Re's* daughter, she becomes the creator of order in the world.

The Egyptians conceived the creation of a perfect world and attributed earthly misfortunes to the equilibrium of that world having been disturbed. The king, as part god, was seen to be the instrument through which equilibrium was to be maintained, and who by reason of his god/man association had access to an afterlife. Through the king, therefore, the land and its people could thrive and be protected from disaster. Without scientific knowledge to account for natural phenomena, periodic natural disasters could, in ancient Egypt, have no logical cause, and such occurrences assumed an "accountable" image. In time, and particularly as the power of the

monarchs waned at the end of the Old Kingdom, it became the responsibility of every man to become accountable and to maintain the equilibrium, since all disasters were seen to stem from man's acts of omission or commission. *Maat* the goddess became the source and protector of all goodness and stability, both in this world and the hereafter.

This desire for perfection in both the present and after-life permeated the tombs, from the idyllic murals designed to create a perfect environment for the deceased, to the precautions taken against mishap by means of texts, amulets, charms, and the necessary words. In simple terms, what we find in the tombs is the expression of the belief that at all costs things must be kept in order. The question of personal sin[26] does not manifest itself in the Middle Kingdom.[27]

Maat as the goddess or concept on which king and people relied is found in close association with both gods and men. The comprehensive *Maat* figure from the inside of a coffin (Newberry 1980:75 = *Fig 99*), clearly demonstrates the relationship of *Maat* to many aspects of Egyptian religious and power symbolism.

Fig 99 The Goddess Maat wearing the ostrich feather of truth and carrying two ankhs.

There was no concept of Egyptian life she did not enter and she was believed to be revered by the other goddesses, as can be seen in the illustration. Her association with the deceased is exemplified by the worshipping ba birds on either side of her headdress.

5.6 THE EARLIEST RELIGIOUS RECORDS

5.6.1 THE PYRAMID TEXTS

Although appearing in written form only in the 5th dynasty, the Pyramid Texts would seem, from their content, to have been in use, orally, for a very long time. Faulkner supposes some of them to have been in existence for centuries. One refers to a 'sand' burial, another to a mud-brick mastabs of a type no longer used by royalty after the 3rd dynasty. Protective hymns, against malign influences are included, as are references to funeral rites. In some instances, Faulkner finds the texts to be threatening, the king almost bullying the gods to grant his access to heaven (1985:11). Included among the texts is the opening of the mouth ceremony and the offering ritual. These are of particular interest in confirming that such practices, in addition to the *ba* concept, pre-date the Middle Kingdom tombs. The pyramid texts also throw a light on religious beliefs during the early dynastic period since they reflect a belief in an after-life among the circumpolar stars. The pyramid builders, however, had moved away from this concept and believed in a solar after-life for the king in the company of the sun god.

By the Middle Kingdom, when a guaranteed after-life could be obtained by all able to conform to the required funeral rites, the texts appear in hieratic script on the insides of coffins rather than incised and coloured on the tomb walls. They also became greatly expanded by a variety of spells, and prominent among the religious beliefs reflected therein, is the demotion of the sun-god and the promotion of *Osiris*, as the god under whom the deceased wishes to spend the afterlife. Assimilated to the god, the deceased becomes referred to as "the *Osiris* ..(N)".

Faulkner proposes that the judgement of the dead arose as a result of the pillage and tomb robbery during the anarchic and intermediate period, and was intended to act as a deterrent to the lawlessness of the times (1985:12). Originally the god of judgement appears to have been nameless but once *Osiris* became established as the premier god of the netherworld he inevitably took over this mantle and became the god of judgement.

However the greater part of the knowledge we have of these hieratic texts, is from the *Book of the Dead*, the spells transferred from pyramid to coffin, later to papyrus, and included in burials from the 18th dynasty onwards.

In the troubled times following upon the end of the Old Kingdom, tomb construction became expensive and the workmanship poor and in lieu of murals, texts on the coffins, began to be illustrated. This innovation was expanded and while the coffins of the poor were of inferior quality, the coffins of the local noblemen began to be more elaborate and a new feature was the introduction of possessions and funerary equipment brightly painted on the interior surfaces.

Exterior surfaces carried colourful bands of decoration including the palace facade design (a continuation of the design on the exterior of mastabas), a false door and the udjat eyes, these

latter being orientated to where he eyes of the corpse would be (Armstrong 1986:45 Fig 3 = *Fig 100*).

Fig 100 Coffin of Nakhr VII dynasty. Palace facade design, a false door and udjat eyes.

At this time it was still the custom to bury the deceased lying on his side. Originally in the very earliest burials, a foetal position was adopted, the coffin being an almost square box. Embalmment, and the need to orientate the eyes led to the familiar rectangular coffin and the sideways position of the body. New forms of embalmment and mummy decoration dictated the upward facing position in which we are accustomed to see the mummies from the New Kingdom tombs.

5.6.2 MAGIC IN THE TOMBS

The magic incantations or spells which formed the body of the pyramid and coffin texts were augmented by amulets placed on or around the corpse.

Ghalioungui says "Magic was the child of man's ideas about his place in the cosmos" (1963:17). He goes on to envisage early man perceiving himself as a small part of a huge mechanism, dependent upon movements which influenced himself, but which could, in turn, be influenced. Certainly, man became aware of positive and negative forces, even though he might not have expressed himself in those terms. Magic, as man evolved it, enabled him to exert some control over these forces in relation to his own situation. One way to acquire protection against evil or to influence the good was through the use of amulets (Andrews 1984:35 Fig 34 = *Fig 101*, Figs 37,38 = *Figs 102,103)*

From "lucky" stones, to images of various gods, creatures or signs, the range of magic amulets was endless. Their use crossed all barriers of social status and covered the range of every facet of influence.

Fig 101 Human-head heart scarab inscribed with Ch 30B, Book of the Dead.

Fig 102 Selection of funerary amulets.

Fig 103 Glazed amulets. Anubis as pectoral. Winged scarab pierced to stitch to mummy. Ankh, djed and was sceptre.

Amulets abounded in ancient Egyptian tombs. They were, however, vulnerable to tomb pilfering, and since mummies were often torn apart in order to retrieve objects placed inside the wrappings, not even the dead were able to preserve them. While hundreds of such amulets have survived, once removed from their original setting their historical value was lost. In the case of Beni Hasan where plunder was extensive, we can only guess that there were amulets with or around the mummies, but cannot now obtain any relevant information in respect of them.

Other forms of protection such as *wands* were in use in the 11th and 12th dynasties, and these usually carried a selection of figures, both real and mythological. Their purpose was to protect mother and child during childbirth.

The wand, or staff, illustrated below was broken in antiquity (Quirke 1992:113 Fig 64 = *Fig 104)*.

Fig 104 Curved wand, protection in childbirth.

It would have been included in funerary furnishings for protection at (re-) birth but Quirke speculates that it may have been considered too powerful to be kept in one piece next to the dead. This particular example is late Middle Kingdom

5.7 THE HISTORICAL SITUATION RELEVANT TO CONCEPTS IN TOMB DEVELOPMENT

While this dissertation is not concerned with religious developments beyond the 12th dynasty, it is relevant to note that following that period, there was, for just over a hundred years (1640-1532), a loss of continuity in national development in Egypt. During this time a group of foreigners *Hikau Khasut* (Hyksos), of Asiatic origin, gained control of the Delta. The extent of their control beyond that region is questionable but they appear to have imposed their will on the remainder of the country in some measure. Their depredations do not relate with this study of Beni Hasan. Nevertheless their intrusion into Egypt does have an effect on our assessment of the iconography in the Beni Hasan tombs in comparison with the decoration in the New Kingdom tombs.

The *Hikau Khasut* left little indication of their religious practices. Their lasting effect lay in exposing the Egyptians in greater measure to outside influences, in addition to introducing them to the benefits of far-flung conquests.

By 1550 a series of Theban kings had overcome the intruders and established the 18th Egyptian dynasty. This was the beginning of the New Kingdom, which lasted until 1070. The foreign wars of the 18th dynasty enriched both king and nobles and filled the coffers of the temples to overflowing. This inevitably became reflected in the influence of the priests and manifested itself in the opulence of the tombs, and the expansion and manipulation of the concepts therein. One needs to be cautious in comparing Beni Hasan with the tombs of the New Kingdom. The religion was nominally the same, and many of the funeral murals and rites appear to have continued unchanged. It is imperative, however, not to confuse later developments and extensions of funeral concepts within these later tombs with the simpler forms in the Beni

Hasan necropolis. Nor can it be assumed that the ideas behind those later developments were present in the earlier tombs.

Relevant to the above, it is interesting to note the extension of the role of *Anubis* in the 18th dynasty, when he appears in the murals of the 'weighing of the heart'. Introduced into the netherworld, together with the deceased, he becomes the official who weighs the heart (Putnam 1990:58). However at the same time, the priests continued to use the *Anubis* head in embalming rites.[28]

The spells and their vignettes, comprising the Book of the Dead, also show *Anubis* engaged in various activities within the tomb and in the netherworld (Faulkner 1993:146-147).

Maat as a personified goddess is prominent in the New Kingdom tombs as are various other gods and goddesses who are prominently employed in the netherworld, either as judges or as intermediaries between the deceased and the great god *Osiris*.

In the New Kingdom tombs one is very conscious of the deceased in the netherworld, whereas the earlier tombs concentrated largely on the reproduction of earthly life, albeit in an idealised form.

5.8 CONCLUSION

The gods, goddesses, and religious concepts discussed above are not necessarily visible in the murals of the Beni Hasan tombs. The above assessment has been motivated by the intention to include those religious factors that existed at the time of the construction of the tombs, which are present in them, or could have influenced the owners of the tombs in question.

With no documentation other than can be found on the walls of the Beni Hasan tombs themselves, therefore, it must be assumed that the religion as determined in these tombs follows the normal pattern of similar tombs and one is therefore justified in using such comparisons in assessing the Beni Hasan material.

This aspect of general pattern in the religious observances embodied in the tombs will be discussed in the following section concerned with the social aspects of the contemporary religious forces extant at that time.

Footnotes

[1] Gerhardus van de Leeuw, Phanemenologie der Religion (Tubingen 1933: 349ff, 360ff).

[2] Baines and Malek (1980:8).

[3] Gardiner 1957 R8.

[4] Quirke in his chapter 'Power in Heaven', elaborates on these in relation to coffin texts (Quirke 1992:25).

[5] Kemp (1989:II) discusses the assumption that organised society arose from a collective effort to control rivers but says this is not so. While he may be correct insofar as organised society is concerned, my premise is that the situation in which the early Egyptian tribes lived, at the mercy of a recurring natural phenomenon, the inundation, would have led them to accept a peaceful co-existence rather than a rival-orientated development. The latter often occurs when physical geographic barriers exist and neighbours become aliens. My premise is based on early, natural co-existence rather than the development of organised society.

[6] See also Quirke (1992:17).

[7] Hornung (1982:187) links Harakhty with a manifestation of Re. Quirke (1992:17) sees the combination with Re as a fissioning into smaller sections". Lesko (1991:111 Footnote 32) refers to the Late Egyptian form of Re- Horakhty with a definite article, The Re, Horus of the Horizon with reference to the Heliopolitan sun god.

[8] The word emanates from Polynesia although the practice is found to be universal.

[9] Primitive totemism (Reinach:1931:17); Ghalioungui (1963:17-18)

[10] Sadek (1987) lists and illustrates "ear" stelae with prayers addressed to Ptah, found at various New Kingdom sites including the workers village at Deir el-Medina.

[11] Edwards (1952:24ff) discusses the origins of Osiris believing him to have originated in the ninth Lower Egyptian nome, centre Busiris, suggesting he was possibly a local king, later deified.

[12] Reinach (1931:33-34); Spencer (1982:30-44).

[13] Murray (1951:166-167, Fig 6) quotes Plutarch whom she feels to be substantially correct insofar as the premise of the ritual killing of the king was concerned.

[14] Lettuces were associated with Min as an aphrodisiac.

[15] There are various creation stories, this one, referred to by Frankfort, relates to Hermopolis in Middle Egypt.

[16] The Temple at Karnak has an avenue of ram-headed sphinxes, perpetuating the ram-image of Amun.

[17] The question arises as to whether, if ever, the royal religion in ancient Egypt ever had a grip on the common people in the provincial centres?

[18] The Power in Cattle:Procreation, the King and Hathor (Frankfort 1978:162-180) Reliefs at Deir el-Bahari and the temple of Hathor at Dendera show Amenhotep II drinking from the udder of the Hathor cow (Wilkinson 1992:59).

[19] The actual site of the temple is unknown but "Priest of Pakhet" is recorded at Beni Hasan. Hatshepsut (18th dynasty) created a temple dedicated to Pakhet at Speos Artemidos, south-west of Beni Hasan (Baines and Malek 1980:128).

[20] For the relationship between the King/Sun/Amun cf. Frankfort (1978:148-161)

[21] Gardiner (1957:170/171).

[22] Gardiner (1957) D 28.

[23] The serdab of King Djoser 3rd dynasty (2630-2611) can be seen at Sakkara next to his Mortuary Temple.

[24] Faulkner (1985); Zabkar (1968); Quirke (199_:106).

[25] The heart weighed against the Maat-feather (Faulkner 1985:34 Spell 125), the heart weighed against a figure of Maat (Quirke 1992:66 Fig 37).

[26] Piety as it later developed in the New Kingdom, cf. Sadek (1988)

[27] Protestation of innocence, the "negative confession" does not fall under the context of piety.

[28] Tomb of Sennejem (No.1 Deir el-Medina), 19th dynasty, functionary of the cemetary. Anubis on one wall prepares the mummy (priestly rite) and on another leads the deceased in the underworld. A good example of Anubis in both pre-burial and post burial functions.

CHAPTER 6

THE PEOPLE

A generation passes, another stays,
since the time of the ancestors.
From an Amarna tomb,
Borriau

6.1 A CONTROLLED SOCIETY

The image ancient Egypt projects towards the world is that of a controlled and accountable society. From the introduction of communication by glyphs, the keeping of accounts took precedence over the writing of literature.

Everything, including her population, had its name, and, if we are to believe such evidence as has been left to us, its place. Naming was essential. The name of a person recorded and uttered after death, brought life-giving benefits. Extended to include flora, fauna and even inanimate objects, once these were incorporated in the tomb by word or iconography, their survival in the netherworld was ensured for the benefit of the deceased.

The knowledge we have of ancient Egyptian society largely emanates from an image created by the upper or hierarchal group in idealised expectation of their world to come. Included in and necessary to the well-being of this idealised world were the many workers on their estates. In projecting their lifestyle, therefore, the hierarchal group also projected that of the lower social orders. Much of the information we have has been gathered from tomb murals, funerary objects, and texts in various forms introduced into the tombs.

Decoration of the walls of the mastaba tombs in the Old Kingdom only became widespread in the 5th dynasty (Edwards 1947:41). Once the murals were extended to include details of the life-style of the owner, the lower social orders appear in large numbers performing every-day artisan or menial tasks. They are recorded as metal workers, herdsmen, bakers, butchers, in fact as participants in all those operations considered necessary to the tomb owner in his future life.

On introduction to these ancient Egyptian tomb murals, one is impressed by the detail and complexity of the motifs and their execution. From the baboons placidly eating figs while the pickers gather the fruit, the herdsman encouraging the reluctant cow to cross the river, or the master and his lady enjoying the abundance of food placed before them, nothing seems to have been omitted.

The more one studies these murals, however, one is only too aware that the amount of information they present is only offset by the enormous amount they omit. These people who appear to have recorded their lives so efficiently, in fact, tell us very little about themselves. They are well accounted for. Their names, titles, servants, and their aspirations for a future life are well attested, but if one was to look no further one would have the impression of a totally rigid society in which all functioned in their particular callings in the same manner, with little individuality.

The tomb owner usually sits in reserved splendour, surrounded by gifts or provisions which the various members of his staff bring to him. Hieroglyphs, neatly drawn in rows, account for the quantities of foodstuffs or articles.

Formal and repetitive requests to one or other deity, are also included, and occasionally captions detailing the various operations of the tomb owner's staff are recorded to ensure that nothing is misunderstood or overlooked.

On the various walls he supervises his herds, hunts and fishes in the marshes, shows us the numbers of workers employed to keep his domain in working order, and the scribes keeping count of the proceedings. Without any difficulty, it would be easy to reduce the whole thing to a list. It is a personal ideal, displayed in an impersonal fashion.

We do occasionally have a few interchanges between the workers, but these are largely mundane and bear little relation to natural conversation. Many phrases are a means of eulogising the master.

For one brief period, Akhenaten chose to project his family as a unit, enjoying one another's company and even sharing a meal. The period was short lived, however, and was the exception rather than the rule, and never entirely broke away from the conventions. Even the family scenes, which appear to be so personal in comparison with the Old and Middle Kingdom royal tombs, were, in fact, rigidly observant of the religious background which they were intended to promote.

Statuary, and hunting and fishing scenes, depict husbands, wives and children accompanying one another, but the statues are usually rigidly restrained in the positioning of arms and hands, and the murals are largely canonical such that they become records in the accountable sense rather than reproductions of genuine family scenes.

One aspect of ancient Egyptian life does come across very clearly and that is the maintenance of a bureaucratic society, with two very clearly defined social groups, the upper and lower classes. That somewhere in between there was a middle class group, performing tasks for the hierarchy and bridging the gap between the high and the low, is almost a certainty. The Old Kingdom

mastabas were only provided for the upper class, family, friends or administrative staff of the monarch, they alone being allowed the privilege of burial within the vicinity of the royal tomb.

The middle classes, are largely lost to us. Montet defines three groups which he calls "elite" and which can be found in the tombs, the man of action, the official and the landed proprietor (1964:25-26). However, there must have been very many more about whom all direct and personal knowledge has been lost.

One group, can be found both among the high and the lower classes. These are the scribes. They worked for royalty, the priesthood, the administration, the nobles and, when it came to correspondence between families, for those lower down the hierarchal tree.

In order to discuss the scribes in relation to their duties, the community, and their social status, however, it is necessary to consider the question of literacy.

6.2 LITERACY IN ANCIENT EGYPT

6.2.1 THEORETICAL LITERACY

Baines, discussing literacy and ancient Egyptian society (1981:572-599), finds writing to be an integral part of Egyptian culture. We are made aware of it from the earliest of records, and it continued to be a focal part of the Egyptian state during the 3000 years of its existence. However, throughout their country's long history, a large proportion of Egyptians, were illiterate. Generalisation, however, can be dangerous and unreliable.

The definition "literate" has a variety of concepts and interpretatons. Claiborne (1991), comments upon the increasingly large numbers of people who speak English but cannot read it, and the many who can read it but who are incapable of writing it. He defines the latter as people who can put down words on paper, and even spell them correctly, but cannot select and organize their words to convey clearly what they want to say. He goes on to quote Flesch (1981)[1] who estimated that in 1981 a quarter of the population of the United States was totally illiterate. He adds another third who, able to read a label, could do little else. He attributes this state of affairs to the introduction, during the 1920's, of the "look and say" method, which deprived the children of the phonetic method of sounding out the syllables. "This 'progressive' innovation", Claiborne says "turned the clock of literacy back more than three thousand years, to hieroglyphics" (1991:275-276). In other words it depended upon seeing and remembering, much as did the ancient Egyptian method of picture writing.

Initially confined to lists and accounts, writing developed a second use, providing captions on monuments, indicating the name of the owner or identifying the iconographic subject material. Restricted to such use the words did not need to be "read" as linguistic sentences, and Parkinson says that the bare list is a fundamental genre of writing. The expansion to written texts took

place from the 3rd to 4th dynasties but a proliferation of writing and what Parkinson calls "perhaps the most striking innovation" was the appearance of literature during the Middle Kingdom (1991:17).

6.2.2 APPLIED LITERACY: THE SCRIBES

The accountants, record keepers and letter writers to the entire community were the scribes. From the moment it became necessary for an Egyptian to record a transaction on an ostraca, the scribe was born and advanced to becoming an integral part of the daily life of the people. His ability gained him entry into palaces, temples, tombs and the market place, and eventually enabled him, to hold the highest of administrative offices.

In tombs of the nobles many scribes can be seen employed in organising the master's affairs, which included recording the numbers of his cattle together with the agricultural produce from his fields. Their work is also evidenced in the records, in hieroglyphic form, of the offerings incorporated in the tomb murals. Their original writing form, hieroglyphics, was largely in the nature of artistic images, although the scribes themselves were not required to reproduce their work in the tombs. Professional tomb artists merely copied the texts as determined by the scribes. With the introduction of biographical texts in the funerary complex, the services of the scribes were even further in demand (Aldred 1987:90 Fig 54 = *Fig 105*).

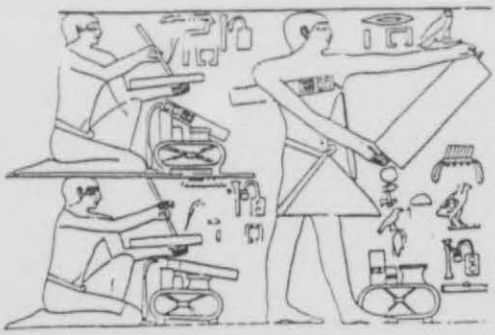


Fig 105 The steward Khai reading an inventory from a papyrus to be copied by the funerary scribes.

In time, cursive writing, based on the original hieroglyphs was developed for use in everyday transactions, the original hieroglyphs being retained for temple and tomb use.

In the initial stages, however, the scribe merely recorded objects, later actions. It was a considerable time before a continuous text with recognisable sentences could be produced (James 1984:154).

The end of the 2nd dynasty (c 2649) saw the scribe as a person of some importance, so much so that even members of the hierarchy were prepared to be known as scribes and to be shown in this capacity in their tombs. Hesyre, an official under Djoser (2630-2611), on carved wooden

panels in his tomb at Saqqara, carries his personal scribal equipment, palette, brush-holder and pigment bag (Aldred 1980:29 Fig 3 = *Fig 106*)

Fig 107 Scribe's equipment as Hieroglyph (Gardiner Y3).

Fig 106 Wooden stela of Hesyre "chief of the King's scribes"

James (1984:155), comments that Hesyre was clearly proud of his title. In the top line of hieroglyphs can be seen the glyph *scribe*, the articles held by Hesyre formally drawn in the accepted style (Fischer 1988: Frontispiece = *Fig 107*). By the Middle Kingdom the palette had become a container for pigment and pens combined (Parkinson 1991:15 = *Fig 108*), and the scribal art was undoubtedly the most valued of all the professions.

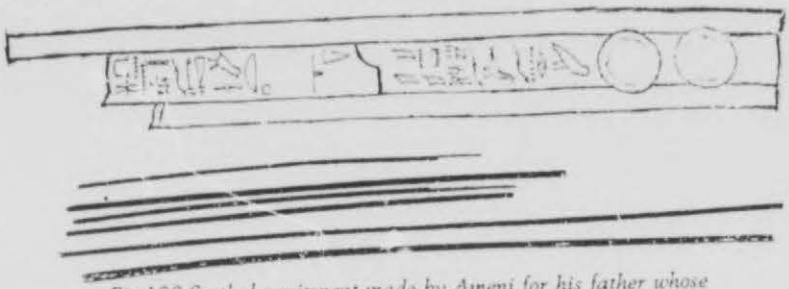


Fig 108 Scribal equipment made by Ameni for his father whose name is lost. Palette has two holes for red and black ink and a slot for reed pens. The inscription includes the Hip di nsw formula. Late Middle Kingdom.

In a manuscript believed to date from the beginning of the 12th dynasty, when a new administration was in the process of formation, the author produces a number of vignettes of non-scribal professions. Called the "Teaching of Duaf's son Khety", it has come to be known familiarly as the "Satire on Trades"(Parkinson 1991 72-76 Text 17). The author, who is journeying south to the Residence to place his son in the scribal school, endeavours to inspire him by praising the scribal profession at the expense of a number of other trades such as sculptors, goldsmiths, metal-workers, gardeners, barbers, and farmers, among others. While there may well be a great deal of exaggeration in his descriptions, the interesting aspect of this work is not the descriptions, but the list itself. Today, a father embarking on the choice of a professional career for his son, would hardly consider labouring or artisan work as an alternative. While making the comparisons, therefore, the father, is making a social statement. The son, is going to be in a school with the children of officials of the court and we know that a scribe could, if he was fortunate, work his way to the top. On the other hand, it does point to the fact that, in spite of the opportunity to hold an exalted position, a scribe could still be considered an "employee" even if in time he rose to the position of master. The "chief of scribes of the king" held a very high position, but the implication was that it was "employment" not an epithet implying intellectual or educational ability alone.

Fig 109 Painted limestone statue of a scribe in traditional pose

Fig 110 Painted shabti royal scribe and overseer of the royal cattle, Thutmes,

In the New Kingdom reading and writing became a matter of status among the elite and sons were encouraged to acquire the art, irrespective of the necessity to earn a living therefrom. By that time the scribe had achieved an image of a certain amount of opulence and scribal ability was not necessarily confined to the those employed to use it. However, even at the beginning of the 12th dynasty Khety could write "Look, there is no scribe lacking food, or goods from the palace" which suggests a somewhat lower social standing than that attained in the New Kingdom.

The accompanying illustrations are particularly pertinent in respect of the social status of a scribe.

Fig 111 Model of granary workers supervised by scribe with writing board on his knees.

The seated scribe, papyrus scroll across knees rendered in painted limestone (Putnam 1990:90 = *Fig 109)* is a familiar and traditional figure.

The shabti of the royal scribe and Overseer of the Cattle, Thutimes, also painted limestone dated c 1500, (Putnam 1990:86 = *Fig 110*) differs from the Old Kingdom wooden panel of Hesyre, and the seated scribe. Those two figures are shown as scribes, the former with his writing implements, the latter with his papyrus scroll. Thutimes has no scribal equipment whatsoever. The shabti is not that of an ordinary "servant" figure, but is an accomplished piece of work showing Thutimes, arms crossed with what appear to be *djed* amulets in his hands. He wears a long kilt and a wig, and is shown as a corpulent man, the form used in Egyptian art for fecundity figures. The image of a practising scribe has given way to the image of the man's prosperous social status.

The third scribal example is a tomb model of a granary showing workers supervised by a scribe with a writing board on his knees (Parkinson 1991:73= *Fig 111)*, a board being the usual writing material for such work.

Here we clearly have three different views of scribal hierarchy. The first, a scribe, apparently of some status, shows a supply boy about his calling. The second, Thutimes, within the royal circle, and in addition to being a scribe the "overseer of the royal cattle", opulent, and anxious to exhibit the fact. The third, an ordinary scribe, supervising the workers. His status is not indicated but it does not appear to be unduly high. Employed in the capacity of "recorder" for a local landowner, the possibility is that both his literary ability and status would be limited.

If one doubts the social implications of the Thutimes' shabti one has only to compare it with the following collection of personal shabtis, ranging from 1750 to 250 BC, to see that in no instance is a fecundity type figure depicted (Andrews 1984:60 Fig 75 = *Fig 112*).

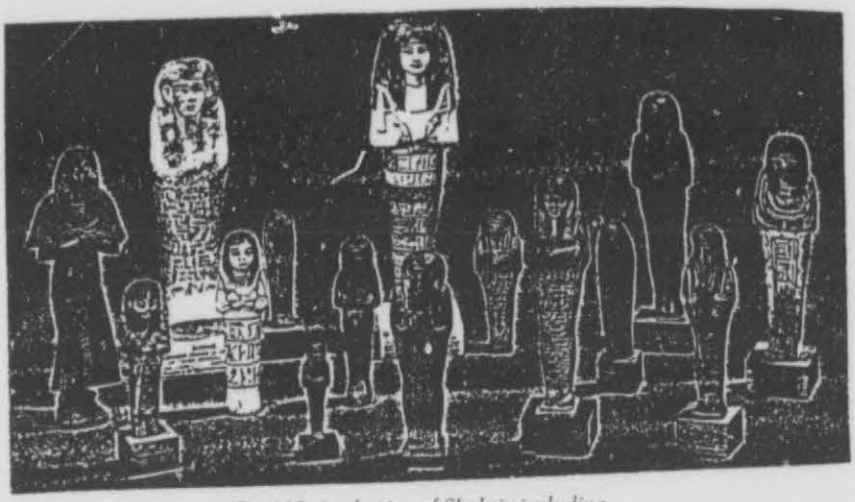


Fig 112 A selection of Shabtis including an unnamed priestess and several kings.

James poses the question whether there could have been scribes on the "lower ranks of the bureaucratic ladder" (1984:137) questioning whether there might have been "amateurs" who could read and write, and able to circumvent the scribal "closed shop". He admits these questions are difficult to answer. There is evidence to suggest that education was largely vocational, being training for various trades or crafts, the son frequently following the craftsmanship and trade of his father. However, James believes the education of young craftsmen contained little of "the intellectual element" and that for education in the traditional terms in which we understand it one must look to the scribal schools which produced not only people able to read and write but "clerks", in the fullest sense of the English language (1984:137). An account of instruction of the young comes from the *Maxims of Ani* of which the handwriting dates to c 1000 but which James believes may have been composed as early as the 19th dynasty. There are also passages dealing with the training and experiences of student

scribes in the *Miscellanies* and elsewhere which suggest teenagers were subjected to intensive training under bullying and tyrannical instructors (1984:140).

An indication of one of the methods employed in teaching comes from *Merikare II 50-51*. Intended to be read to an audience, one portion says "*Do not slay a man whose talent you know, with whom you at one time sang writings*". James says that this is clearly a reference to someone who shared a learning experience by singing or reciting together in class, a way of committing lessons to memory (James 1984:138).

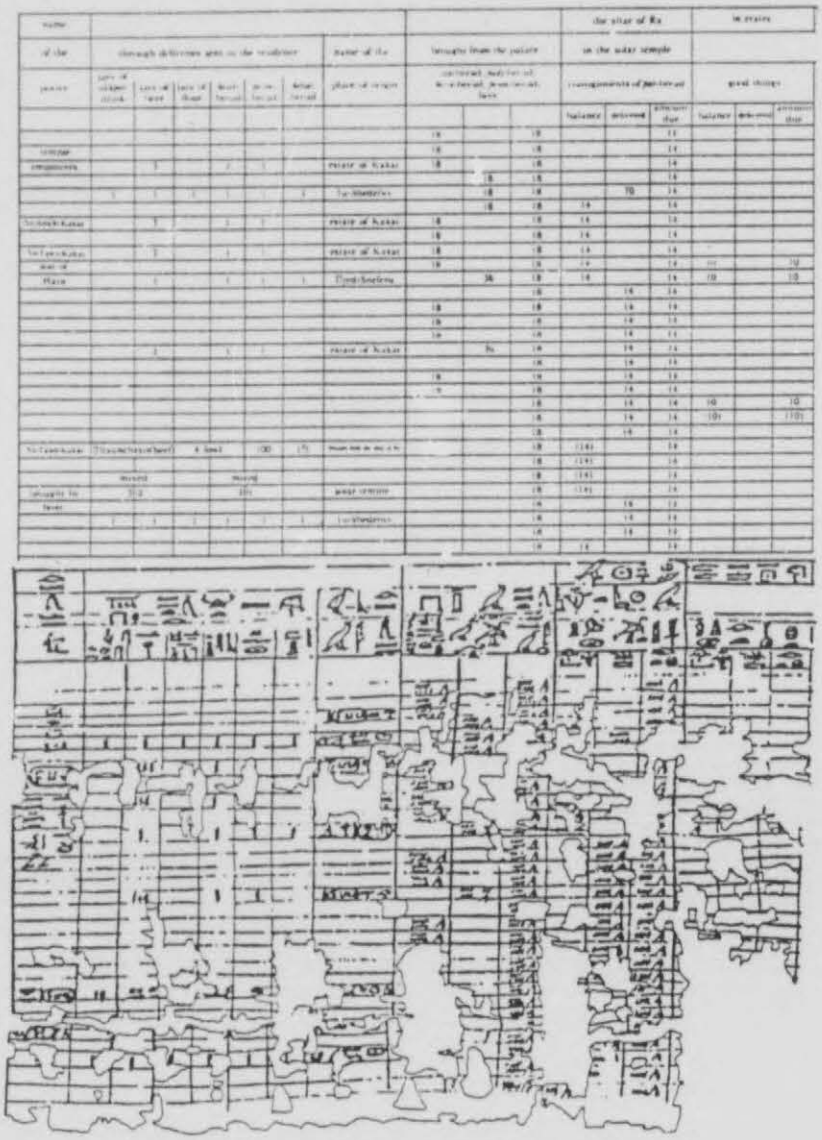


Fig 113 Sheet of accounts of daily income over the period of a month. Administrative archive, Pyramid of king Neferirkara (2446-2426) Abusir.

One application of the scribal art not visible in the tombs is the part it would have played in the Pharaoh's building projects.

Kemp says that a scribe would be responsible for measuring or writing down the measurements taken by another and that the calculation involved in estimating the required materials would have needed considerable skill. He suggests that there may have been ready-made tables. Apart from materials it would have been the scribe's task to estimate the quantity of food required for the workers. His work would have allowed the constant monitoring of what Kemp calls the three essentials, materials, labour and rations. "It was the scribe's pen as much as the overseer's lash or the engineer's ingenuity that built the pyramids" (1989:129,115 Fig 39 = *Fig 113)*.

6.2.3 HIEROGLYPHS TO HIERATIC

Speaking of scripts of the Middle Kingdom, Bourriau says that they showed no radical departure from those of the Old Kingdom, being composed of hieroglyphic images, taken from the Egyptian environment according to the same canons governing the art (1988:74). From early times the hieroglyphic figures from tombs and temples were the least widely used and only a restricted number of scribes would have been able to acquire the training necessary to write and read these texts. However, it is thought that most "literate" Egyptians would have had some grasp of the rudiments of the script.

The most common script in general, in the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms, was a form of hieroglyphs which developed as a result of being written quickly with a brush, and is known as hieratic. By its nature cursive, this hieratic script is to be found in official legal documents[2] where it may be formal and carefully executed, to an almost illegible scrawl of daily business texts[3]. Bourriau comments that while every scribe would know hieratic, "pharaonic Egypt...was a land of restricted literacy" (1988:74).

The question arises as to who these "literate" Egyptians really were. Baines says that several lines of reasoning suggest that in most periods not more than one per cent of the population were literate (1981:584). We know that close to the royal house stood a line of scribes, well trained and efficient. We also know that by the 18th and later dynasties the children of the privileged classes were encouraged to acquire skills pertaining to literacy. To a certain extent we know how they were trained. Where and in what conditions, we do not know. That the royal school was responsible for the children of the king and the privileged few is clear, but the numbers of scribes required throughout the length and breadth of Egypt must have necessitated local schools or possibly, as with artisans, the training took place within the family, producing indifferent standards of competence.

Onomastica, are lists of nouns arranged in categories without explanation or definition. In addition to being lists for teaching vocabulary, they also represent a way of classifying existence

into patterns. Parkinson says that one example, found in the 13th dynasty Ramesseum library[4] is written in a way which suggests a late 12th or early 13th dynasty date. The title is lost, but the list includes, among other things, plants and liquids, oils, birds, fish, desert animals, fortresses of Nubia and Upper Egypt, towns of Upper Egypt, bread, cakes and confectionery. In its present state it contains a total of 323 items, although there should have been 343 (Parkinson 1991:76-77). A series of compositions called Miscellanies,[5] were scribal excercises, used as practise pieces for copying. Many reflect the training of a scribe, but none, unfortunately, gives details of the educational system or establishments available to the likely aspirants.

It is supposed that while the principal offices of state ran their own schools, the provincial administration would probably have made their own arrangements (James 1984:138-139).

These conclusions, however, are largely based on New Kingdom practices, and are not necessarily applicable to the interim and early Middle Kingdom period, for which we have little information.

As is usual in communities following particular trades or professions, sons tend to follow in their fathers' footsteps. In the case of a scribe this would undoubtedly be encouraged since preferment and privileges could be obtained therefrom. Nevertheless, the truly literate people were, if we are to accept Baines' conclusions, not particularly profuse and undoubtedly there must have been a great many 'literates' who would have fallen into the categories of restricted reading capabilities, as well as those able to read and write. The restricted readers would possibly have been able to keep very accurate records, without the capability to produce literature or texts. There is nothing uncommon in this. As previously suggested, there are many people today, considered literate, who have great difficulty with their syntax.

6.2.4 LITERACY TO LITERATURE

Literature at its broadest, has been defined as "the self-conscious use of language" (Bourriau 1988:75). It is an extraordinary phenomenon that at a time when administration in Egypt was weak, or struggling to recover, i.e., from the end of the 11th and during the 12th dynasty, literature was produced that was, by the 18th dynasty and until the present time, considered to be the "classical" writing of ancient Egypt. The language itself, commonly called "Middle Egyptian", forms the basis of our hieroglyphic grammars and dictionaries, and the literary works, only exist because they were valued sufficiently to be copied and to be the mainstay of the scribal schools during the New Kingdom.

Parkinson lists these writings under categories. Briefly, they are, (a) the intelle
cosmos and state, (b) the king, (c) the life of the land, (d) religious life, and (e)
Altogether they total sixty writings of varying lengths and incorporate a wide range

types. From the teaching of a king, a lament, reports, letters, advice to a son, hymns, funerary stelae, and a tale of justice, there is also an, allegedly autobiographical, novel (1991:5,6).

They are remarkable because, presumably for the first time, they present, in ancient Egypt, not an idealised version of society, such as we find reflected in the tombs and tomb biographies, but the hopes, fears, and forebodings of a disillusioned society. This is exemplified by such manuscripts as "The Prophecy of Neferti" which in the form of a lament bewails the social chaos of the anarchic years,[6] and the "Dialogue between a man tired of life, and his soul"[7] (Parkinson 1991:34, 132).

The final years of the Old Kingdom, bedevilled with weak and constantly replaced kings, and an anarchial situation fanned by a serious famine, had, if only temporarily, broken the restraining bonds between monarch and people. The period in which governors of provinces rose to power and undertook the welfare of their own people, and those with the means built tombs for themselves, has been called an age of "democracy". This, however is to introduce our modern concept, into a time long before the Greeks introduced their concept to the ancient world. If one had to find a descriptive title perhaps the age of "reality" might be more appropriate.

One of the most poignant pieces of writing, included in a collection of songs of the New Kingdom, but generally attributed to the Middle Kingdom, is known as the *Song of the Harper*. Its tone and the royal name Intef in the heading point to the earlier period, although only one papyrus copy exists and an incomplete version is to be found on the walls of an Amarna tomb.

"...A generation passes, another stays, since the time of the ancestors. The gods who were before rest in their tombs. (Yet) those who built tombs their places are gone, what has become of them? I have heard the words of Imhotep and Hardedef, whose sayings are recited whole; what of their places their walls have crumbled, their places are gone, as though they had never been! None comes from there, to tell of their state, to tell of their deeds, to calm our hearts, until we go where they have gone!

Hence rejoice in your heart! Forgetfulness profits you: follow your heart as long as you live! Put myrrh on your head, dress in fine linen, anoint yourself with oils fit for a god: heap up your joys, let your heart not sink! Follow your heart and your happiness, do your things on earth as your heart commands! When there comes to you that day of mourning, the Weary-hearted (i.e. Osiris) hears not their mourning: wailing saves no man from the pit.

Refrain: Make holiday! Do not weary of it!

Lo, none is allowed to take his goods with him.

Lo, none who departs comes back again. [8]

Bourriau comments on the significance of the fact that a song which cast doubts on the usefulness of tombs should have been inscribed on the walls of a tomb (1988:76). Certainly the singer of this song anticipated the work of Koheleth, whose "main theme - the only reasonable goal for man is the enjoyment of pleasure..."(Gordis 1973:155) comes across in strong contrast to the customary tomb and its furnishings, providing for the ultimate happiness in eternity.

It is not to be assumed that this sceptical attitude permeated the whole of Middle Kingdom society, but the fact that a document such as the *Teaching of Amenemhet I*[9] could not only be accepted as a classic text, but be retained for scribal use as a medium of instruction, indicates a wide acceptance of reality in contrast to the ideal image of the society normally promoted. Parkinson, who attributes the work to the scribe Khety during the reign of Senwosret I, describes it as an intensely dramatic monologue characterising Amenemhet both as an ideal ruler and an embittered old man. Here we find in full play, the tension between the divinity and the humanity of the king (1991:48). The writings listed above, clearly emanate from the higher class of scribes, although their actual origin is uncertain. Even when the works encompass the community in general, the writers reflect the attitudes of the hierarchy.

In a class by themselves are the documents, sometimes ostraca, by means of which Egyptians communicated with one another. The earliest surviving and comprehensible letter on papyrus is personal in content although emanating from an official source. It is a letter of complaint from a military commander writing from Tura objecting to undertaking a time-wasting journey. Found torn up at Saqqara, it was written in the late 6th dynasty and, as James points out, shows that by about 2200 the verbal message was being replaced by the written form (1984:165). Such a communication would have presented no problems, the sender in his official capacity having at his disposal the services of a scribe or scribes. The existence of the letter, therefore, cannot support the supposition that the sender was literate. In all probability he was not.

A group of letters from c 2000 constitutes business papers of a farmer, Hekanakhte, and his family. This private correspondence contains a wealth of information. Together with instructions to his sons on the running of his farmlands, he deals with domestic problems including a scandal involving a housemaid, and an insight into the onset of famine conditions.

He says "*and I fixed rations for you, well. (Now) the inundation is not (very high) is it?. Look, our rations are fixed for us in measure with the inundation. Endure (this) each one (of you)! Look, I've managed to keep you alive up to today*" (Parkinson 1991:106).

One might conclude that he was a literate 'business man'. However, Parkinson says that he was apparently a priest for the funerary cult of Ipi and was absent from his property due to the fact that he was performing a mortuary function for this 11th dynasty vizier (1991:102). Hekanakhte's appointment as *ka*-servant would have entailed a certain period of service each year, ensuring the provision of the necessary offerings at the tomb. James surmises that in

return he had probably received a small grant of land (1984:165). In those circumstances he is almost certain to have had access to a scribe, even more than one, since two long letters were written with great informality by the same scribe while a third letter came from the hand of yet another scribe, who appears to have had a somewhat flamboyant style. Strangely, this letter was never sent and was found folded and sealed with string and a mud seal impression.

There is a "signature" of Hekanakhte but whether it is his, that of a scribe, or whether it was the only thing he could write, it is impossible to tell (Parkinson 1991:102 = *Fig 114*). James says that Hekanakhte makes no claim to literacy and it is almost certain that, on receipt of the various letters, the offices of a scribe would have been required by the recipients in order to have them read.

Fig 114 The Signature of Hekanakhte

There is another consideration with regard to the writing of letters, and that is the availablity of material. From the letters themselves it is clear that documents of this type were usually palimpsests[10]. Writing material would not have been in unlimited supply but undoubtedly scribes would have had the opportunity to obtain it. Again, much would depend on the status of the scribe. Hekanakhte was probably a minor funerary priest, but would have associated with scribes in pursuance of his duties, hence his ability to arrange his correspondence.

6.3 THE PRIESTS

6.3.1 THEIR CALLING AND STATUS

Accustomed as we are to the opulent tombs and temples of the New Kingdom, with their attendant priestly hierarchy, it is with some surprise that, in comparison with the Old Kingdom, the official cult of the Middle Kingdom, "was not materially altered, and there was still no large class of priests" (Breasted 1956:171). He cites Senwosret II's temple of *Anubis* at Kahun to which was attached only the overseer of the temple, together with the chief lector and nine subordinates. The overseer and lector were constantly in service at the sanctuary, the nine subordinates, laymen, served the temple only one month in the year, a further nine taking their place each month. Six door-keepers and two servants, attended to the menial duties.

Certain individuals were, we know, appointed to be mortuary priests, as was Hekanakhte, but beyond a knowledge of the required ritual, there was little to distinguish a priest of this nature from anyone else, and he may never have been called upon to serve at a temple. Whatever training a priest was required to undergo, there is no evidence that spiritual and moral obligations played a part.

Speaking of the growing supremacy of *Osiris* during the Middle Kingdom, Breasted believes that the priests of that god may, through persistent propaganda, have assisted in popularising the cult. He says that the operations of such priests would have been among the people, and substantiates this by citing the dramatic presentations associated with the *Osiris* cult which were enacted annually by the priests, and which the people were allowed to attend. In some portions of the ritual they were permitted to participate.

Describing the *Osiris* faith as folk religion as opposed to or contrasted with the state cult of *Re*, Breasted finds the latter a political triumph, while *Osiris*, although fostered by the priesthood who stood to gain from magical practices, was a triumph of popular faith among all classes of society. Even the court and nobles were unable to resist (1933:242-3). Although *Osiris* was originally centred at Busiris (Edwards 1952:24) Abydos, once the tomb of one of the early kings was identified as the burial place of the god, and became a place of pilgrimage for the general populace. Breasted says they came to Abydos, "from the vizier himself down to the humblest cobbler" (1956:172).

One result of the growth of the *Osiris* cult was a growing concept of a judgement of the dead. Magical formula and charms were encouraged, becoming both popular and necessary. The Coffin Texts, became the "guide book" of the hereafter, their production the prerogative of the priests. Whether they employed scribes to do the work is speculative. Breasted says that the *Book of the Two Ways* was probably developed for no other purpose than for gain. He adds that this tendency was to become the "most baleful influence of Egyptian life and religion" (1956:176).

Once the cult was accepted by the monarchy, the priests of *Osiris* would doubtless have been appointed by the king as would those serving the royal temples and tomb chapels. In the early Middle Kingdom when, for a time, monarchy was still establishing itself, we have little knowledge of the organisational ramifications of this priesthood.

As a result of the rise in prominence of *Osiris* funerary stelae once incorporated in the tombs, found a new home at Abydos. Votive, in nature, they stood in lieu of burial in the vicinity of the holy place, and contained not only the usual offering prayer formula for bread, beer etc., but included autobiographical details of the owner, and statements denying transgressions.[11] Some are of considerable length. This practice was undoubtedly extremely lucrative for the priests.

Among the stelae of important personages at Abydos, priest Iki (late 12th - 13th dynasty), included on his cenotaph a fat harpist shown performing a funerary song in praise of the tomb. The stela was carved by a draughtsman who left his signature at the bottom. The same man also created a stela for the harpist himself, Neferhotep. It stands as a genuine act of respect, and was instigated by his friend Nebsumenu, a carrier of bricks (Parkinson 115 = *Fig 115*).

Fig 115
Stela of the fat harpist Neferhotep, Abydos.

It is simple, and after the usual *htp di nswt* formula, "An offering which the king gives," it lists the respective articles, bread, beer, flesh, fowl, alabaster and linen and everything good and pure. It continues, "for the spirit of the Harpist Neferhotep, true of voice, born of the housewife Henu. It is his friend whom he loved, the Carrier of Bricks, Nebsumenu who has made this for him. Alas! give him love! The draughtsman, Rensoneb's son Sonebau".

Parkinson comments that without wealth and apparently without family, the harpist is probably one of the humblest of people to have had such a memorial. He says "it must have been a considerable expenditure for his friends"(1991:114-116)

It is interesting to note that although the stela is a personal gift from Nebsumenu it begins in the usual fashion with the formula which in the Old Kingdom would have confirmed that it had been authorised by the king. Clearly the formula has now lost its original authority and has become just a formula in which the king has become the intermediary on behalf of the deceased.

We have little information about the provincial priests who served in the temples of the local deity or deities. We know from the textual biographies in the tombs of the nobles that they held priestly titles, but they also held the title of Mayor, and it is not clear how rigorous their temple duties were. Their degree of control and responsibility for the temple is not confirmed nor is their responsibility for the ordering of the priests.

Provincial leaders are recorded as holding office as priests, and temple appointments also appear to have been held by female members of their families. Information is too scarce to enable us to know whether these religious titles were titles of honour or practicality. It is most likely that the duties involved attendance and performance at certain festivals only. Mortuary priests could be appointed by the tomb owner, such appointments being recorded at Beni Hasan.

Hekanakhte, above, was so employed in a part-time capacity. There is little doubt that the profession of 'priest' was a form of employment, rather than a religious 'calling'.

6.3.2 THE PRIESTS AND THE COMMUNITY

From the time of the development of a royal religion in ancient Egypt, the community at large had been excluded from the ceremonial, and personal benefits of that religion. The concept of the god/king maintaining the equilibrium of the universe and thereby the land of Egypt, included the well-being of its inhabitants, but it is doubtful how well or deeply that theory was comprehended or conceived as a responsibility to be shared by the middle to lower classes. Those closest to the monarch had to be content with acquiring some form of after-life through his good offices, such after-life appearing to be an 'earth-based' existence in or around the tomb. Grimal sees this as the imprisonment of the deceased in the interior of his tomb together with a wealth of precautions taken to multiply the chances of the soul's survival. At the same time he queries the concept of the soul's survival, since it is arguable that the body was also intended to survive. He sees the image of the universe reduced to a set of earthly values and points out that there was no effort to project an image of the afterworld in Middle Kingdom tombs (1992:135). Such innovations appear from the 18th dynasty although even then, with the probable exception of the deceased reaping 'idealised' flax (Garbini 1966:Fig 100 = *Fig 116)*[12], such images were largely concerned with the passage *through* the underworld in the presence of gods and goddesses.

Idealised iconographic interpretations of "paradise" such as the Greeks developed in relation to their gods and goddesses are not present in Egyptian tombs.

Even although the future life for persons other than the monarch was largely problematical as to details, permission to acquire a suitable tomb with its various accessories, was strictly confined to privilege. This is possibly because the royal coffers provided the necessary stone and artisans, with the tombs in close proximity to the royal burial itself. Those outside the favoured circle had to be content with the most mundane of interments.

Fig 116 Sennedjem and wife gathering flax in the nether-world. 20th dynasty.

In the early dynasties, when *Re* was the royal god, there was little in the royal cult for the ordinary person to embrace. Religion among the ordinary people appears to have existed through a series of lesser deities, many in apotropaic guise, and promoted by symbolic magic.

It was only when *Osiris* gained support such that even the monarch could not deny his entry into the royal tomb, that king and people shared a common deity. *Horus* was always associated with the king, but that the people shared other deities such as *Isis*, and, *Hathor*, is certain, since, like *Osiris*, they were possibly local gods, whose nature and benificence, became more popular than others. Once taken into the *Re* ennead by the Heliopolitan priests, even these, in their royally supported temples, tended to be somewhat inaccessible to the masses.

There is a tendency to speak of the "religion of the ancient Egyptians". It is an ambiguous phrase, since most of the information we have about ancient Egypt is derived from one religious source or another and is therefore technically biassed since the ancient Egyptians formed a community over a period of 3000 years of mixed fortunes.

An old Church of England catechism demands of the supplicant an answer to the question of the meaning of a *sacrament* as, "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace". What we observe in ancient Egypt are the visible outward signs of religious practices, with no indication of any form of "inward spiritual grace" attached thereto. Many of the visible signs are in iconographic form, devised by a priestly minority, in order to maintain, together with the monarch, hierarchal power rather than spiritual primacy. This is largely substantiated by their

encouragement of, and profit from, funerary spells and magic amulets, but one seeks in vain for some sign of spiritual relationship between the priests, the deity and the community.

It may be argued that the Egyptians had a very close relationship with their gods, but this can be defined as cosmic rather than personal. Judaism, introduced a personal, spiritual relationship between god and man by which man was responsible to god. The Egyptians had nothing in any way comparable to this. The whole religious accent in the early tombs is the continuance of life. While Egyptians could conceive spiritual entities such as a *ka* and a *ba*, they were never able to divorce their gods from the world. They fed them, clothed them, and performed various cultic acts in order to renew them, on the basis that man's needs were also those of the gods. *Maat*, or eliquibrium maintained on earth, would lead to eternal life. The concentration was on the physical well-being of the earth, *ergo* the cosmos. New Kingdom temple designs confirmed this representing as they did, original creation, which the king as son of the god was expected to maintain. The human aspect of the gods was even further accented during the New Kingdom when, at festival times the priests arranged visitations between the deities, carrying them from temple to temple (Hornung 1983:136 Fig 14 = *Fig 117*).

The triumphal avenue of sphinxes between Karnak and Luxor bears witness to the largest of these processional ways[13].

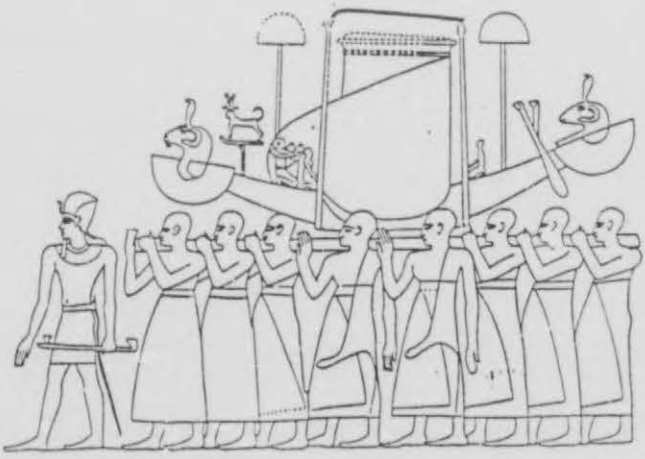


Fig 117 The cult statue of a god in procession.

It was not until the *Osiris* cult offered the possibility of an afterlife to all its adherents, however indeterminate its nature, that the fear of non-acceptance into the world beyond death, promoted the concept of judgement. Man was thus encouraged to see his own bad behaviour as a deterrent to admittance to the hereafter, *by reason of his having upset the maat*. The emphasis however, remained on the achievements of the individual rather than on the negative aspect.

There was no spiritual or moral code of conduct attached to *Osiris*, or to any Egyptian deity, which demanded man's obedience in the way the laws of Judaism were later to do. Nor do the priests appear to have evolved such a code, although their adjustment of the relationships between the various popular deities in the greater and smaller enneads suggests that it could have been done had they wished to impose moral standards upon the population.

The Egyptians, developed both law and judges, but, as do all societies, devised their rights and wrongs from experience. They appear to have been content to leave it at that rather than attribute them to specific instructions from a deity.

Stelae erected at Abydos from the 11th dynasty onwards bear, in addition to prayers for the deceased, biographical details inclined towards protestations of worthiness by reason of social position together with a denial of anti-social behaviour. Employment in the service of the king was regarded as an attribute deemed to exhibit "worthiness" and justification for entry into the afterlife. This would be in keeping with the concept of *maat* by maintenance of order in the kingdom. There is, however, no suggestion of a trend towards *mea culpa*, from either priestly or lay quarters.

A stela of unrecorded provenance, of the priest Qemnen, thought to be late 11th dynasty, contains the formula "an offering that the king gives...." in addition to a short formula of after-life wishes, "May he cross the firmament ... verse the sky ..Ascend to the great god..."(Lichtheim 1988:61), a netherworld orientated prayer-form.

A similar late 11th dynasty stela of the priest Mentuhotep from Abydos, contains a fairly terse and mundane self-presentation, in which he refers to having got bread on time, acquired cattle, raised oxen and developed his business in goats. He says "I built a house, I dug a pond - the priest Mentuhotep" (1988:69). An interesting assessment of behavioural excellence deemed necessary for entry to the netherworld.

By the 12th dynasty, one finds the formula being expanded to include social responsibilities. On one of three stelae of the Chamberlain Intef, son of Sent of the year 39 of Senwosret I (1971-1926) from Abydos, are statements such as "I blackened no man to his master in order to seek favour with a potentate...I gave bread to the hungry, beer to the thirsty, I ferried one I found stranded...I have buried the old, clothed the naked, *I have committed no crime against the people*...I descended from my nome, having done what people love and gods favor..." (1988:108). There is a great deal more in similar vein.

When one considers such texts against the socially-orientated literature of the Middle Kingdom, it is clear that social responsibility, possibly as a result of the deprivations of the turbulent years between the Old and Middle Kingdoms, had either produced self-awareness, or had induced the expression of it, for the first time. This seems to have been a general trend since a similar

statement, "I committed no crime against the people... I buried the old ones of my town" together with a variety of other protestations appears on the stela of the Chief Priest Wepwawet-aa at Abydos in the period Senwosret I-Amenemhet II (1971-1892) (1988:75-76).

While all these formulas, and many more, are linked to propitiation of the deity, there appears to have been no inclination towards a confession of guilt. There is no recognition of the omission of obligations, but rather justification through obligations observed. This form of statement developed, in the New Kingdom, into a long and detailed appeal before the forty-two assessors of the dead. Known usually as the *Negative Confession*, some scholars prefer to refer to it as a *Declaration of Innocence*.[14]

In this respect, Grimal has some interesting observations about the development of autobiography which he says is the oldest and best documented literary genre in Egypt. The typical funerary text of the time of Pepi I (2289-2255) was built up to present a character worthy of enjoying the funerary offerings. Apart from these traditional panegyrics, he finds a purely descriptive element recounting the career of the deceased. Once these biographies were engraved on the backs of statues or on stelae, not necessarily associated with necropolises Grimal suggests that they reflect the development of society. In the Old Kingdom they evoked a form of humanist loyalty, then, with the rise of local power, a form of individualism. The Middle Kingdom finally saw a return to a loyalty which was in itself intertwined with personal bonds (Grimal 1992:82).

It would be naive to suppose that biographical details of offices held, duties performed, and social obligations discharged, were included entirely on a religious basis. In the declaration of personal achievements and elevation to high office, self-aggrandisement cannot be dismissed under the guise of service.

Yet, if the statements are to be believed, a sense of obligation on the part of both priests and the hierarchy towards the common people would seem to be well established, bringing reality rather than idealism into the orbit of the tomb.

Unfortunately, with the exception of the stela of the harpist, this is upper class territory and we can gain little knowledge of the common man. If, however, the hierarchy could exhibit what must be considered a fairly naive approach towards the expectation of afterlife, one can only assume that the ordinary man would have been fairly crude in regard to his religious concepts and expectations.

While the presence of the gods appears to have dominated every part of their existence, the Egyptians did not subscribe to those invisible spiritual barriers and self-restraints, such that, failing to maintain good moral behaviour and ethics, could cause personal alienation between man and deity.

If one confines oneself to the early Middle Kingdom, when monarchial control was still in the process of stabilisation, it is not unrealistic to question the depths of the religious beliefs of that period. Royal gods, *Re* or *Amun* would have little personal appeal for the lower classes. Apotropaic deities, local or otherwise, would undoubtedly have been popular, their efficacy augmented by magic of various kinds including the use of amulets with magical properties.

Local temples were in evidence in most of the small towns, and we know that they functioned with priests, who made sacrifices to the various deities. These temple supplications would have largely been for protection or well-being for the living. Sacrifices and cult ceremonies performed in the tombs would have been confined to the well-being of the deceased. In both circumstances the priests were officials not spiritual mentors, and how or whether the general populace was involved in these proceedings is not clear.

The majority of priests employed to service the temples were employed in a rotative fashion, the greater part of their lives being occupied in other pursuits. This is exemplified by the stela of Mentuhotep (above) and the absence from home of Hekanakhte while serving as a mortuary priest. It is interesting to note that while the scribe is shown employed on specific tasks (*Fig 111*) he is also shown, with his writing implements, or without, as a figure in his own right, and often of some prestige (*Figs 109, 110*). The priests, who appear in so many of the funerary murals or papyrus MSS, are always depicted as employed in carrying out their functions as priests (*Fig 74*)[13]. There appears to have been no spiritual "calling", for the priests or proselytising on a moral basis for the people, nor do they appear to have risen in social status as did the scribes. The priesthood held by the monarchy was closely allied to the *son of Ra* title and was clearly of different standing from that of the ordinary priesthood. While the royal priesthood appears to have been permanently hereditary, the remainder of the priesthood possibly had to be appointed.

The priests of *Osiris* may have sought and encouraged adherance to their cult, but whether this included individual instruction as to the *Osiris* myth is doubtful. It is almost certain that in a mainly non-literate society, instruction would be by means of the mystery plays at Abydos, which told the myth in a visible fashion. Its *raison d'etre* was, through the death and rebirth of *Osiris*, a means of commemorating and re-enacting the eternal return. This in turn implied a concomitant re-birth for adherents of the cult. Rundle Clark, writing of the popularity of these Abydos ceremonies, comments that *Osiris* was not only the fertility demon turned universal god, but that he was also the prototype of every soul who hoped to conquer death (1959:134).

Private houses of the earlier periods have not survived, but in the houses of the 19th dynasty artisans at Deir el-Medina, private votive shrines were found, as they were in the houses of the workmen in Amarna. Referring to the lares or household shrines at Deir el-Medina, Sadek (1987:77) says that these were to be found in niches in the walls of houses, sometimes with a

small stela, and a table of offering. He notes that many of the shrines are dedicated to *Meretseger*, *Penenet* or to both (as two aspects of one deity). Since these were often found in the kitchen, darkened by smoke from cooking, he presumes that *Renenet/Meretseger* was a patroness of food and abundance. *Sobek*, *Amun*, *Taweret* and *Hathor* were also found with stelae and offering-basins. He also says that there was a cult of deceased members of the family.

One is not justified in assuming with certainty that the same cultic practices existed in the early Middle kingdom, but it is more than likely. One recognises that household gods are possibly one of the most universal of cultic possessions. The Bible mentions them (Gen 31:30) and one can still see household shrines with their small figures, in the ruins of ancient Pompeii. In our own society holy statuettes, sometimes with a small lamp before them, may serve the same purpose. In Italy today shrines of this type are a familiar sight, not only within dwellings but also built into exterior walls.

That such personal shrines were to be found among a group such as the artisans of Deir el-Medina, whose sole occupation was perpetuating the cultic requirements of the royal tombs, is symptomatic of the distance between the royal religion and the people. We know that these people were, by reason of their proximity to Thebes, exposed to and doubtless participated in larger festivals and that they worshipped the great god *Ptah*, who was their patron, but this in no way affected their allegiance to and reliance upon their local personal deities.

Fig 118 Female fertility figures, guarantees of eternal rebirth

The Egyptians were slow to discard anything. It was acceptable to introduce the religion of *Osiris* into the *Re* cult already present in the royal tombs. The inclusion of both cults inevitably

resulted in some of the concepts in the tombs being diametrically opposed to each other. The priests must have been aware of this, yet seem to have been content to support an inclusive pantheon rather than determine a single deity. Akhenaten endeavoured to do so but with little lasting success. So far as the priests of the Old and Middle Kingdoms were concerned it would appear to have been a question of the provision of the correct cultic observances, irrespective of their incompatibility, so long as all the necessary steps were undertaken to ensure eternal life. A variety of apotropaic figures on wands (*Fig 104*) and primitive fertility figures as a guarantee of eternal rebirth (Quirke 1992:124 Figs 72-74= *Fig 118*) have been found in many tombs.

These, together with curse figures of enemies it was wished to destroy (1992:120 = *Fig* 119) suggest a deep-seated primitive side to the religion which should not be overshadowed by the theological concepts of renewal and eternity maintained in the canonically developed conventional tomb murals.

Fig 119 Curse figures of enemies to be destroyed. Middle Kingdom c 1900.

Essentially the ability to provide a suitable tomb and payment of some kind to the priests, was concomitant with continued services necessary to procure eternal life. There is no evidence to suggest that the priests exhibited any concern for the eternal well-being of those unable to afford such luxuries. Papyri of the late New Kingdom, detailing investigations and trials suggest that nothing was sacred, temple grain disappeared, temple equipment and fittings were plundered and tombs were robbed. The less arduous forms of theft and dishonesty drew in officials as well, including temple priests (Kemp 1989:242). During the New Kingdom a great proliferation of magical essentials for inclusion in the tombs ensured wealth and prestige for the priesthood with apparently little genuine regard for religious concerns. This is confirmed in many of the vignettes

incorporated in the Book of the Dead where sometimes the spells are almost meaningless and the iconography accompanying them does not have any connection with the spell. Andrews in her Introduction to Faulkner (1993:12) writes of the chapters of the Book of the Dead of the New Kingdom and later, which incorporate at least three separate traditions, and goes on to elaborate on the ability of the Egyptians to accommodate a variety of conflicting beliefs. She also says that there was little attempt to regularise the order in which selected chapters appeared.

"Often too, variants of the same chapter appeared in different parts of the same papyrus. In other instances chapters were cut off in the middle of the text purely because the scribe had run out of space. Some papyri give proof that the text and illustrations were produced separately without regard to each other, for chapters and their vignettes do not coincide" (1993:14).

This was at a time when society was affluent, tombs of outstanding workmanship were being constructed, and literacy was greatly valued. Perhaps these inequalities only appeared in the less affluent tombs, however it says little for moral or ethical interaction between priesthood and people.

6.4 THE NOMARCHS

6.4.1 ORIGINS AND STATUS

The existence of provinces or nomes can be attested from the earliest of recorded periods and these are recognisable from the standards on both the Bull palette (*Fig 5*) and also on the Scorpion macehead (*Fig 56*). We can assume, therefore, in the predynastic period, the existence of a governing class of chieftains, leaders of their clans or tribes, from among whose ranks ancient Egypt acquired her first kings. Around these kings would have developed hierarchal groups, possibly family members, who would automatically have inherited status and privileges not granted to the common people.

Faulkner (1991:88 = *Fig 120*) defines the word *pat* as *patricians*, followed by *mankind*. It will be noted it is a plural noun and can be applied to both sexes, given the appropriate feminine suffix.

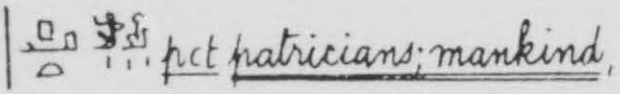


Fig 120 Definitions and references to 'pat'.

The word lists into which the ancient Egyptians categorised almost everything, could include aspects of the cosmos, heaven, earth, etc., but also persons, offices and professions, human

types, towns and buildings, together with component parts of these. Montet refers to Gardiner[15] and quotes from an onomasticon, which names and defines groups of people under the common title *remt*. This details three categories of human beings: "the *Pat*, *the Henemmt*, and the *Rekhet*". These words, he says could all be synonymous with *remt*, human beings, but that more often they referred to sections of the same word, *remt*, in the sense of 'Egyptian'. The three words appear together on a triumphal stela of Ahmose (1550-1525), founder of the 18th dynasty, after his defeat of the *Hyksos*.

"He seized the *henemmt*. He captures the *rekhet* and the *pat* adore him" (Montet 1964:22-23).

Montet points out that while the two groups *henemmt* and *rekhet* were subject to constraint, the *pat* welcomed the victory "with unmitigated joy".

At the time of the Pyramid Texts the *pat* were associated with *Horus* and on his coronation day the king received the *pat* "as if they were his own flesh and blood".

On the death of the king the *pat* mourned while the *henemmt* and *rekhet* appeared to be unmoved.

A stela instructs the magistrates to distinguish between the *patu* and *rekhet* while a vizier prides himself on having praised the *patu* to the detriment of the *rekhet*.

The word *patu* being a collective noun the expression *iry-pat*, *iret pat* in the feminine, signified those who belonged to the *pat*.

An early recipient of this title was Imhotep, Djoser's architect. Queens of the Old and New Kingdoms were *iret-pat* but whether the title was given automatically is not certain.

The Old Kingdom saw the title given to not only the sons of the royal household, but the governors of provinces, and high ranking magistrates. Montet points out, however, that the rank did not necessarily carry the title with it and even men honoured by a letter in the king's hand, granted a tomb, and sent on important missions to foreign countries, were not automatically *iry-pat*, although they might hold several honorary titles and were *hati-a* (princes), Unique Friends of the King. It is possible, therefore, that the title of *iry-pat* was reserved for a fairly numerous special class (1964:22-23).

An interesting sidelight on this is the assertion of a man named Zasu, son of an *iry-pat*, whose two sisters were in turn married to Pepi II (2246-2152), who declared himself to be a "true" *pat*. This could be significant, considering the period, and the possibility that there were those whose claim to nobility was of more recent date.

At Beni Hasan one of the governors claims to have inherited, through his maternal grandfather, the titles of *iry-pat* and prince. This claim and the reason for it, will be discussed when dealing

with the particular autobiography, but it is relevant here in respect of the social status of the nomarchs in general.

That the claim was made at all would suggest that much as in the period of Pepi II and the declaration of Zasu, certain of the nobles, and particularly those claiming the right to govern provinces or nomes, may well have usurped, or attempted to usurp, this particular title.

Aldred speaks of a virile and self-assured culture being the most characteristic expression of the national ethos during the Old Kingdom. The officials close to the king were, he says, the educated elite. On the other hand while forming a privileged class Aldred believes that as architects, engineers, writers, theologians and administrators, they represented the men of action and intelligence of their day (1987:119). Such men almost certainly orbited within the influence of the royal court but we have no way of knowing how great their numbers were. Also, in the main, their skills would have been employed in the service of the monarch and much of their work would have been concerned with the funerary and temple cult of the king. It is difficult to assess their influence among people such as the feudal nobles or to what extent they survived the fall of the monarchy. Whether the feudal nobles themselves possessed any of the educational attributes of this elite group is problematical, and the assumption cannot be taken for granted. It should be borne in mind, also, that these persons were not necessarily *pat*.

6.4.2 POLITICAL POWER AND ASPIRATIONS

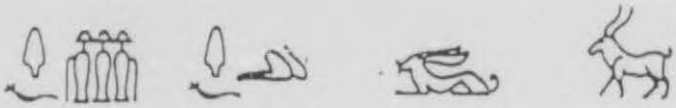
The turbulent years of Theban/Herakleopolitan contention for control of the country must have seen many aspirant leaders rise and fall. Even the 12th dynasty *Teaching of Amenemhet I* supposes the monarch to say *Gather yourself against subjects who do not (really) exist, whose respect cannot be trusted* (Parkinson 1991:49). That this king was assassinated would appear to be certain and although this piece of writing is addressed to his son who later held the throne, it would seem that the king's enemies were of his own household. There is no indication who was responsible, although it would appear to exonerate his son. This could possibly be the reason for its composition.

Grimal speaks of the rise of local power expressed in the form of individualism at the end of the Old Kingdom. The nomarchs and governors could hardly have been unaware of their potential strength and Grimal points out that the weakening links between the central power and Middle and Upper Egypt, played a key role in the control of transport from north to south both by river or caravan (1992:83). It was within the power of a strong provincial nomarch to cause a great deal of disruption among river transport, had he the mind to do so. Zwaty (Asyut), capital of the 13th (Lycopolite) nome of upper Egypt was in a strategic position, being situated where the Libyan desert encroached on the cultivated land, narrowing the Nile Valley. It was also a departure point for the caravan route to the *el-Kharga* oasis further south. During the 1st intermediate period the nome formed the southernmost limit of the Herakleopolitan dominion.

The "Great Overlords of the Nome", staunch supporters of the Herakleopolitan kings, were consequently adversely affected by the ultimate victory of the Thebans.

The 16th (Oryx) nome in which Beni Hasan (capital *Menat Khufu*) lay, seems to have remained fairly neutral, until such time as it was advantageous to bow the knee to Thebes. Sufficiently distant from both Herakleopolis and Thebes, their standing does not seem to have reached the importance of a centre such as Zwaty. While they must have suffered some deprivations from the general conditions of the land and the turbulent period, they do not record having fought their fellow countrymen, although this possibility cannot be discounted. Biographical texts from Zwaty, on the other hand, provide valuable information on the history of the conflict with the southern nomes (Baines and Malek 1980:122).

We lack an authoritative history of ancient Egypt, and details of the internecine confrontations of Upper and Lower Egypt in the anarchic and intermediate periods. Such history as we do have of the Theban and Herakleopolitan power struggle, however, is largely derived from information provided by the necropolises of the 13th, 14th and 16th nomes of Upper Egypt (Baines and Malek 1980:15 *excerpt = Fig 121)*.



13 *14* *15* *16*

Fig 121 Ensigns of Upper Egyptian Nomes

The tombs of the princes of the 15th (Hare) nome in the necropolis of el-Bersha, have provided the basis for reconstruction of a royal dynasty, claiming descent from the Memphite kings, but the princes of the 16th (Oryx) nome, who were related to those of the 15th nome, remained neutral for a long time, until Bakht III formed an alliance with the Thebans in the time of Mentuhotpe II (2061-2010) (Grimal 1992:144). Gardiner comments that if any part of Egypt was relatively peaceful in the Herakleopolitan period it was the portion midway between Memphis and Thebes (1961:114).

6.4.3 PERSONAL POWER

The personal power of the feudal lords and nomarchs, could not in any way have been uniform. Some, like the Herakleopolitans and the Thebans aspired to the monarchy, others, less powerful would have been less ambitious and satisfied to be allowed to keep their feudal lands intact.

Gardiner quotes a series of excerpts from a tattered papyrus in the Leiden collection, possibly 19th dynasty, but referring to the period at the end of the Old Kingdom. It reflects a vision of political confusion, dissolution of the laws, destruction of public offices, the wealthy reduced to poverty and the poor becoming wealthy (1964:109). Undoubtedly written by a privileged member of society it could well be exaggerated and biased but the subsequent anarchy and wars between the overlords confirms its basic reflection of a disintegrating society.

Gardiner says of the weakening Memphite kingdom that it failed any longer to command the allegiance of the nomarchs farther upstream. Direct information from the Delta ceased, but we know that expeditions in quest of the turquoise of Sinai came to an end, not to be resumed until the 12th dynasty (1964:110). Gardiner refers to a "barbarous-looking" cylinder with the cartouche of Khendy, and a scarab with the name of Tereta, kings named in the Abydos List, saying that if these objects really did belong to the two kings, the indications were that the Egyptians at that time had to look to Syrian skill for such "trumpery objects" (1964:110-111)[17]. In the turbulent times that followed it was to be expected that the organised artistic centres under the patronage of the monarch, also fell into disarray.

Once the Memphite domination was weakened and finally lost, the Egyptian nomarchs took it upon themselves to ensure their continued existence in the after-life. In so doing they ceased to rely on the intermediary powers of the king, preferring to turn to their local gods, whose importance grew in direct relation to the nomarch's own powers. Secondary divinities such as *Wepwawet* of Zawaty, *Khnum* of Elephantine and *Montu* of Thebes rose to important positions in the divine hierarchy (Grimal 1992:150).

Unable to mount quarrying expeditions for the necessary stone to provide a sarcophagus, door jambs or statues for the mastaba tomb, nomarchs such as those at Beni Hasan and the adjacent nomes quarried their tombs directly from the rock of the escarpment. Wooden coffins had been in use for some time and during this period became generally accepted. While continuing to incorporate the usual canonical textual formulas and murals, we find biographical material in iconographic form introduced into the tombs. Innovative, it strays from the usual funerary subject matter promoting speculation as to the reason for its inclusion.

The tombs themselves reflect the period in which they were created, the ancient Egyptian tomb always having been known as a 'house of eternity'. The rock-cut sepulchres of the early Middle Kingdom, created without the subsistence of the monarch, were dependent for the quality of their construction upon the ability of the nomarch or feudal lord to provide the workers and materials. The question, when dealing with tombs such as those at Beni Hasan is, how much ability, power, and/or wealth did those nomarchs or governors have at their disposal?

Gardiner goes into some detail with regard to the princes of the 15th or Hare nome, neighbours to the 16th nome of Beni Hasan, finding that a new family had replaced the nomarchs of the

Old Kingdom. They feature on a large number of ink-written graffiti from the alabaster quarries at Hatnub in the Eastern desert, where they are praised as nomarchs and where the regnal years, normally reflecting the king, are recorded of the provincial princes themselves (1964:114). We may assume that this was a wealthy family, which their tombs confirm, who may well have had monarchial aspirations.

The Beni Hasan nobles have no such means of recall as provided by the graffiti of their neighbours. Their somewhat stereotyped biographies are recorded in their tombs which, although varying in opulence, leave an impression of fairly simple orthodoxy. While the Hatnub graffiti link the princes of el-Bersha to mining operations, there is no such link with the lords of Beni Hasan.

Fig 122 Kahun. Poor housing in upper section, larger houses with courtyards and columns in lower section.

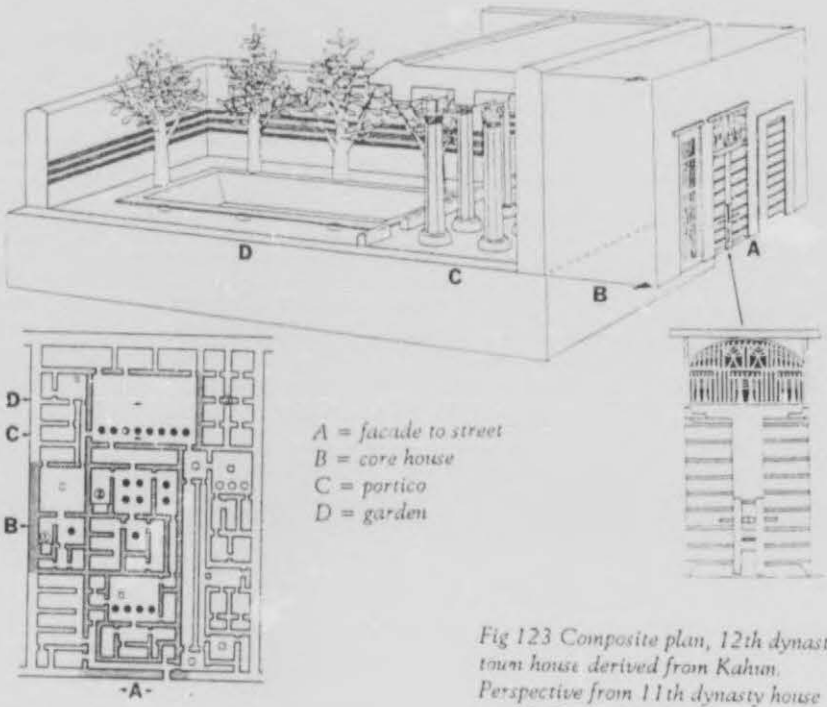


Fig 123 Composite plan, 12th dynasty town house derived from Kahun. Perspective from 11th dynasty house models Tomb of Meket-ra, Thebes.

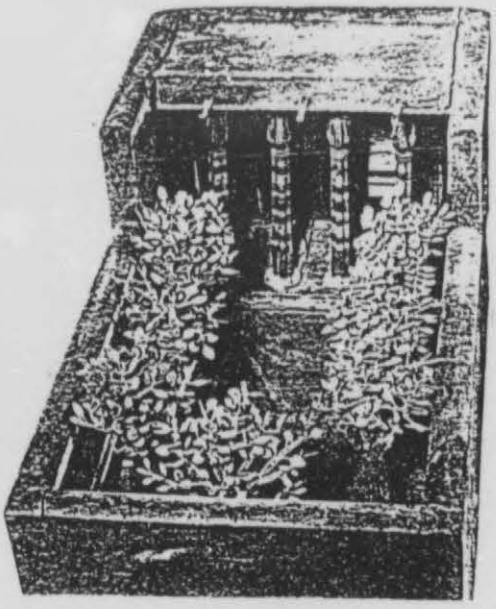


Fig 124 House model, Tomb of Meket-ra, Thebes, from which perspective of town houses was derived.

Menat Khufu the town which seems to have been the main centre of the district has not been found. So far as information on housing at that time is concerned, Winlock discovered a complete and untouched cache of tomb models in the 11th dynasty tomb of Meket-ra at Thebes and has detailed these in his *Models of Daily Life in Ancient Egypt* (1955). Kemp (1989:152) has drawn upon them, together with the plan of Kahun, the town attached to the pyramid of Senwosret II (1897-1878) to compile a plan of a large town house, showing the core house surrounded by storage granaries and workshops (150:Fig 53 = *Fig 122*, 152: Fig 54 = *Fig 123*).

The model house from which the drawing was derived is Winlock, (1955 Fig 9 = *Fig 124*).

In the porticoes of two houses in Winlock's collection can be seen the traditional columns representing bundles of papyrus bound together at the top (1955 Fig 11 = *Fig 125*).

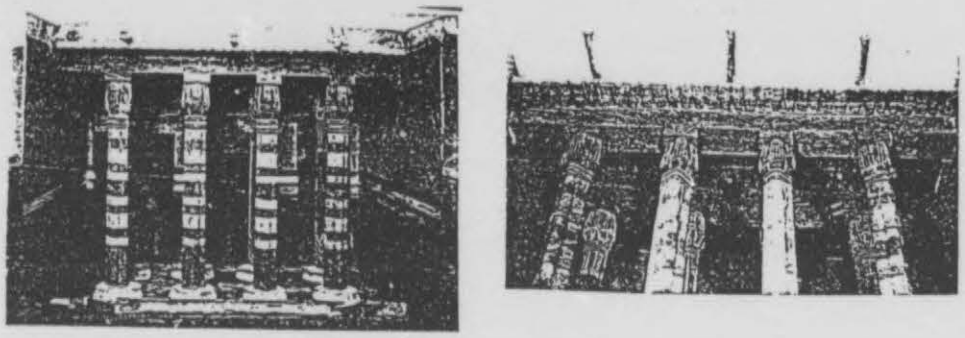


Fig 125 Details of columns and porches. Tomb Models, Meket-ra.

Kemp also compares the core house with the 18th dynasty house of the sculptor Thutmose in Amarna (1989: 295 Fig 98 = *Fig 126*). Two master bedrooms with bed alcoves and grain silos, are clearly visible in the Amarna drawing.

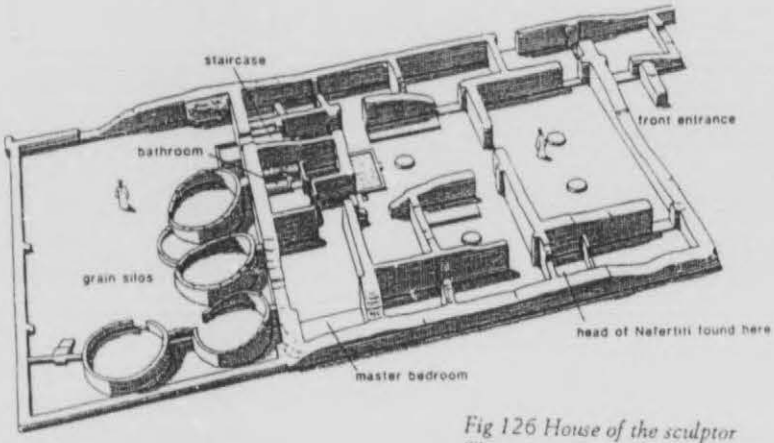


Fig 126 House of the sculptor Thutmose, Amarna, 18th dynasty.

Kahun, the 12th dynasty town specifically established for those employed on the construction of a pyramid, was laid out in regular rows, planned to contain houses for both the well-to do and the poorer section although the latter, appears to have been divided from the former by a wall *(Fig 122)*. The hieroglyph for a town, however, is a circle crossed by two lines at right angles, suggesting that the inhabited area was divided into four equal parts. Whether this was strictly adhered to is doubtful. It probably represents an early walled enclosure which developed into a town, leaving its hieroglyph as a permanent record.[18] James says that there seems to have been very little town planning other than in towns such as Kahun or the fortress towns of Nubia, that is towns constructed for a particular purpose, where it would not be expected to find normal urban life (1984:214-215).

The expansion of towns was restricted. While there was no shortage of land for settlement, it was largely desert on the verge of cultivation and the main criterion of suitability was its distance from the Nile, necessary for both communication and irrigation. Although information is scarce, James finds such evidence as we have points to a great density of population in the ancient towns, in which buildings and people were crammed together (1984:215). In Kahun there appears to have been provision for different social classes, but there is nothing to suggest that towns such as *Menat Khufu* would have been so planned or that they would have been planned at all. However while the town itself and the location of the upper class dwellings is unknown, it would be fairly safe to envisage such houses somewhat similar to those in the diagrams above *(Figs 123-126)*, incorporating a core domestic property surrounded by areas housing large granaries, in addition to workshops and store rooms. The houses of the governing lords of Beni Hasan could have held no less.

Ancient Egypt had no monetary system. It relied entirely upon an exchange of commodities or labour, although Kemp says that the system was adequate for the demands placed upon it, and that the people were able to cope (1989:117).

The system developed methods whereby procedures allowed for the manipulation of commodities, with loaves, jugs of beer, and *hekats* of wheat being common denominators in determining values. Times of natural disasters such as famine or political unrest which had a negative effect upon normal orderly agriculture, eroded the very basis of this system which could have been undermined or even destroyed entirely. In modern society we speak of putting something away "for a rainy day". Money invested will beget money even if the owner possesses no land or saleable assets. When a land such as ancient Egypt experienced prolonged drought, devastation of lands, or destruction of property, there would have been very little to fall back upon. Granaries not replenished could not have been filled by prosperous neighbours since it was to Egypt that the surrounding peoples turned when their commodities failed and the drought, affecting one, usually affected all.

From the 11th dynasty early inscriptions in a tomb at Mo'alla just south of Luxor, detail the rise to power of a certain 'Ankhtify who became the nomarch of the 3rd Upper Egyptian nome of Nekhen. Bidden by *Horus* to set it in order, he "took over" the chieftaincy. Clearly not an hereditary chieftain it is interesting to note that he authenticated his position through *Horus*. At a time prior to the establishment of the Inyotefs (Inyotef I 2134-2118), the inscriptions record fighting between an alliance of Thebes and Koptos, against Armant, into which the nomarch was drawn. Among the descriptions of his own valour and heroic deeds are repeated mentions of years of famine, during which 'Ankhtify claimed to have supplied other towns beside his own with gifts or loans of corn (Gardiner 1964:111). However the area of the Nile in which the 3rd Upper Egyptian nome lay was far more volatile than that of the Oryx nome. The future kings were to acclaim themselves from Thebes and, if 'Ankhtify's reports are even partly true, there was considerable in-fighting in the area before the Theban lords were able to take over the monarchy.

The impression one gains from Beni Hasan is one of local power, unwilling or unable to enter into contention with either Herakleopolis to the north or Thebes to the south. These lords, not all of them nomarchs, do not feature in graffiti or despatches and what we know of them must largely be drawn from the tombs which they built for themselves when the height of the conflict was past.

Footnotes

[1] On illiteracy in U.S.A cf. Flesch R (1955, 1981) and in Canada (Johnson 1970). Literacy in ancient Near East cf. Cornelius in *JNSL* XIX (1993:66, note 21); literacy in South Africa note 22.

[2] The Will of Mery, son of Intef, Bourriau (1988:80).

[3] A military despatch from Nubia, Bourriau (1988:79).

[4] One of twenty-three papyri placed in 13th dynasty tomb on the west bank at Thebes. Now known as the Ramesseum papyri.

[5] See Gardiner, 1947. *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica* 3 vols: Oxford University Press; *Late-Egyptian Miscellanies* 1937. Brussels.

[6] Preserved in New Kingdom copies, it appears to have been composed in the early years of the 12th dynasty.

[7] From the 12th dynasty library, it explores the two aspects of death, its horror and its blessedness, as proclaimed in funerary texts and iconography.

[8] British Museum EA 10060 (P Harris 500) *The Song of the Harper* [translation of M.Lichtheim] is recto col.6 2-7.2.

[9] Roll BM 10182 = Papyrus Sallier 2.

[10] Palimpsests were writings produced on once-used papyri from which the original writing had been removed. It is not thought that once folded letters could have been re-used so the material must have been rolled, and was possibly recovered from old documents no longer required. Palimpsests are not confined to Egyptian use, they were used in the early Christian world for a considerable time.

[11] Lichtheim (1988) details tomb autobiographies of the Old Kingdom, together with translations of the texts from stelae of the Middle Kingdom, many from Abydos.

[12] Tomb of Sennedjem, Deir-el Medina, Thebes. 20th dynasty.

[13] Murray (1951:184-5) processions, festivals and the god involved in land disputes.

[14] Faulkner 1993: 31-32 Spell 125.

[15] The priest can be identified in this drawing by the leopard skin draped across his shoulders the tail hanging between his legs, the usual garb for a priest.

[16] Gardiner *(1949)*.

[17] Kings not listed in Baines and Malek but doubtless fall under the designation "7/8th dynasty 2150-2134 Numerous ephemeral kings" (1980:36).

[18] Gardiner O49 the Ideogram in *niut* 'village with crossroads'.

CHAPTER 7

SEPULCHRES OF THE DEAD

They call the houses of the living Inns, because for a small space we inhabit these: but the sepulchres of the dead they name eternal mansions, because they continue with the gods for an infinite space. Wherefore, in the structures of their houses they are little solicitous, but in exquisitely adorning their sepulchres they think no cost sufficient.

Diodorus Siculus, Book I

7.1 EARLY TOMBS AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT

The earliest recorded kings of the united Egypt were buried at Abydos, main centre of their culture prior to the removal of the royal court to Memphis. Excavated at the end of the 19th century AD and re-excavated since 1977, the tombs of these kings have yielded, in addition to artifacts such as a quantity of pots, an ivory heqa sceptre and a clay vessel marked with a scorpion, some of the earliest hieroglyphic writing yet found. They have also provided a clearer picture of the construction of early royal tombs (Dreyer 1993:10-12).[1] Remains found at Abydos, show that these took the form of a mud-brick, roofed chamber, built inside a large pit. Extended over the pit was a second roof made of wood and matting, the whole covered by a mound of earth. It was in such a tomb that the 1st dynasty king Djet was buried. Petrie who worked on the Abydos site in the earlier period, recorded early tombs with unplastered walls, faced with wood (1993:11).

Kemp believes that the unification myth which emerged with the 1st dynasty was merely one aspect of the projection of kingship as the symbol of power and supremacy and sees in the subsequent development of architecture, the royal tomb as the principal public statement on the nature of kingship (1991:53).

7.1.1 THE PALACE FACADE

Along with the matting patterns which recur constantly over the dynastic periods, one finds the "palace facade" design. This was a form of walling decorated with niches to give a panelled effect. In time these were painted, such decorations possibly having been substituted for the original long strips of brightly coloured matting lashed to horizontal poles between the niches. Although associated with tombs, this design was assumed to have originated with the royal

palace, although it was not until 1969 AD that this was confirmed, when a stretch of such walling was found which was not in any way part of a tomb (Kemp 1991:54-55 Pl 2).

This whole royal palace design, appears to have become integrated into tomb architecture, as the enclosure of the step pyramid (*Fig 30*) clearly shows. Always associated with the monarch, the *Horus* name of the King (*Fig 61*) on which the panelling design (serekh)[2] appears, was, Kemp believes, "the principal public statement on the nature of kingship" (1991:53).

In time, favoured court personnel were allowed to use it and eventually the whole design of panels, recesses and matting patterns became a recognised and fixed scheme of decoration on sarcophagi, coffins, and in tomb chapels.

Since it will be necessary to determine the nature of the tombs and their decoration at Beni Hasan it is relative to note here that this design, which appears in these tombs, did not originate in temple architecture. It may originally have been utilitarian, since the possibility is that the panelling and niche device was developed as an architectural method of strengthening large walls. Once installed, however, its expanded use, assuming that Kemp is correct, became, insofar as royalty was concerned, a political statement and with time, developed into a positive identification with the *per-a* or "Great House". This being one of the many ways by which the royal palace was known (Gardiner 1964:52), it accordingly retained its association with a "house".

Its extension to tomb architecture would be in accord with the premise that the tomb itself was a house of eternity. A reconstruction of the mastaba tomb of Queen Merneith of the 1st dynasty over which this pattern dominates, gives some idea of the imposing structures constructed for the royal tombs. The small tombs surrounding are believed to have been those of sacrificed servants (Aldred 1987:89 Fig 53 = *Fig 127*).

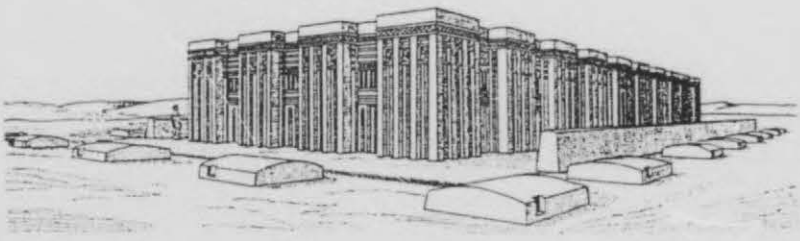


Fig 127 Reconstruction, tomb of Queen Merneith, 1st Dynasty. Mud brick walls panelled in "palace facade" pattern.

7.1.2 THE MATTING PATTERNS

Matting, as found in the tombs possibly has a longer history than does the mud brick. A light and reasonably easy shelter material, it undoubtedly first made its appearance in the construction of dwellings, extending to a variety of uses, both sacred and secular, where manageable, portable screening was needed.

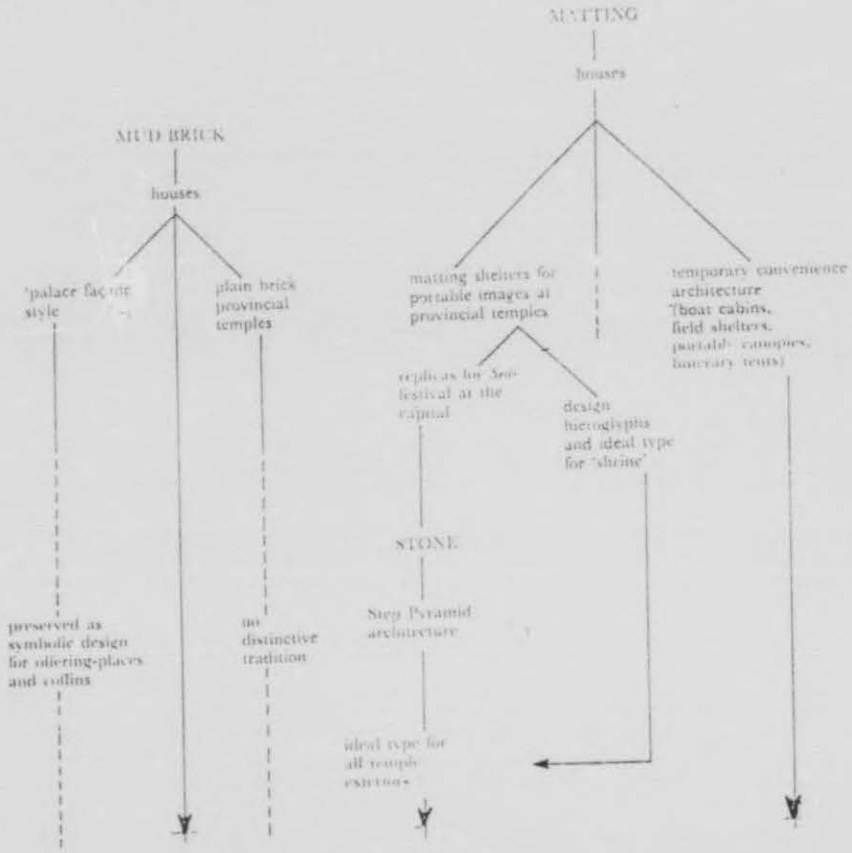


Fig 128 Sources of Egyptian architectural styles.

In time it was used for providing portable shelters for the gods of the provincial temples. Kemp gives a very clear exposition of the development of the utilisation of both mud brick and matting (1991:99 Fig 36 = *Fig 128*).

Well established by the period of the 1st dynasty kings, the use of matting for shrines is attested by replicas of such shrines in early tombs and deposits at Abydos where they vary between mud brick and faience, and in size from four to ten centimetres. On such replicas the shapes and matting components are clearly indicated (1991:93 Fig 33). The same architecture as that used

for the shrine is shown as a portable tent in a tomb of the 5th dynasty, the matting patterns clearly indicated (1991:96 Fig 34 (3) = *Fig 129*).

Fig 129 Portable framed tent with matting 5th dynasty tomb at Sheikh Said.

Confirmation of matting in tombs having become traditional, is exemplified by the walls of the underground galleries of the step pyramid of Djoser (2630-2611), lined by glazed ceramic tiles to simulate rush matting (Stewart 1971:34-35)[3].

7.1.3 THE EARLY ARTIFACTS

It may be assumed from the early dynastic tombs that, by the inclusion of articles deemed to be necessary for the afterlife, a future existence was envisaged. Both the mastaba of Queen Merneith (*Fig 127*) and Dreyer's report (1993:11) where he records the finding of many human bones of young men, suggest that the practice of killing servants at the time of the royal burial, presaged a need for their services in the afterlife.

Among the ubiquitous pots and other artifacts in the royal tombs, the motivation for the inclusion of sherds of cylindrical vessels bearing inscriptions, the owner's name and origin of contents from both Upper and Lower Egypt is unclear, but certainly these finds do indicate the inclusion of actual records rather than mythical or idealised objects for use in the future. Dreyer says that they are "our earliest evidence of revenues collected from both parts of Egypt for royal needs" (1993:11-12).

7.2 ARCHITECTURAL AND DECORATIVE DEVELOPMENT

7.2.1 THE ARCHITECTURE

While the early tombs surrounding the royal mastaba such as those of Queen Merneith were (presumably) those of servants, this practice seems to have ceased quite early in the Old Kingdom and until the end of the 8th dynasty (2134), tombs surrounding the burial place of the monarch belonged to officials and members of the king's family and were a sanctioned royal privilege.

These quasi-royal tombs were in the main, of three types, the stone or mud-brick mastaba built above ground level and containing the tomb chapel, the rock-cut tombs, hewn in the side of solid rock which would also incorporate a tomb chapel or inner shrine, and a tomb type which was a mixture of the two previous structures (Harpur 1987:1). The majority of these tombs contained one or more subterranean burial chambers situated directly below or in close proximity to the chapel. In the early days when the whole burial was enclosed in a mound, identification was by means of a stela, erected nearby. With tomb development, however, inscriptions giving particulars of the deceased were incised on and around the facade of the chapel entrance, and/or by relief or painted inscriptions inside the chapel itself.

It is not to be supposed that the development of mastaba tombs automatically confirms a steady and simple growth in tomb decoration. Some of the earliest known scenes of outdoor pursuits depicted in any private tomb come from Maidum, and are possibly 3rd dynasty. In general, however,

(a) The development of the content of scenes in private tombs was fairly slow particularly between the 3rd and 4th dynasties (Harpur 1987:33).

(b) In the initial stages offering rooms were little more than a recess built, sometimes within the body of the superstructure, sometimes partly outside it (Edwards 1952:39). With the development of the tomb structures themselves the offering recess became a room, decorated in relief and/or painted, with a false door usually built into the West wall, with an altar for the supply of food for the deceased.[4]

(c) At this stage statues of the deceased began to be introduced into the offering rooms together with scenes in relief and/or paint, these most commonly showing servants bearing food and drink to the deceased.

Since the provision of a tomb was under the aegis of the monarch who controlled, through the priests, the scribes and artisans working therein, it was inevitable that some of the work prepared for the monarch, became repeated in the private tombs. Thus the development of a canonical form of interpretation of both human figures and artifacts was upheld in the private

tombs and certain of the scenes, such as those depicting marsh pursuits were also adopted at a fairly early stage.

The impression created by the canonical restrictions upon Egyptian art tends to leave an immediate impression of the identical execution of scenes in both content and application. Although restricted by the formalism of religious requirements, however, it is possible to recognise constant movement and development in the rendering of details in the tomb murals.

Harpur refers to a gradual grouping of broad themes comprising typical aspects of some major activity. In the earliest chapels these did not completely fill a wall, but the wall area taken up by each theme became larger with the increase in the repertory of scenes. By the mid-5th dynasty entire walls were filled with elaborate compositions, with a peak being reached in the early 6th dynasty (1987:175).

This progression negates any suggestion that the funerary obligations insofar as the iconographic content of the tombs was concerned, stemmed from an initial and complete dogmatic understanding of essential religious requirements. No written dogmatic religious statement has ever emanated from ancient Egypt and one must recognise that ancient Egyptian religion, as is common with most religions, tended to change and develop alongside the evolutionary and/or historical situation of its adherents. One must also concede that over a long period, and in the absence of any common written text, together with a low ratio of literates, it is unlikely that the Egyptians as a whole had a deep understanding or appreciation of the theological premises which might or might not be developed by the priestly hierarchy. This, more particularly, since the Old Kingdom funerary rites emanated from and were exclusive to the royal establishment.

From the inclusion of the barest necessities interred with the early burials, once tombs were built to include areas in addition to the tomb chamber itself, it became possible to expand both the material offerings, and the various services performed on behalf of the deceased. It is not clear how the offering table evolved but it is probable that a form of ancestor worship initiated the idea of continued sustenance for the deceased, who was probably seen as an intermediary between the living and the deity. It is not illogical therefore, to conclude that this was the first form of post burial activity, extended by those able to afford them, to procuring the services of a priest to perpetuate these rites on their behalf. Perpetuity being unattainable on earth, in time, priestly services would almost certainly cease, by default, or by the family not being able, or willing, to maintain the costs involved. The idea of substitution, that is an iconographic image of a person or object being able to replace or be transformed into that person or object, has no reality for us. It had reality for the ancient Egyptian and it would therefore have been a totally logical progression beyond the provision of the actual offerings, that these necessities for the deceased be presented in iconographic form within the tomb itself. This substitution also extended to text which became allied to the offerings by pleas to visitors to the tomb for prayers to be said for the required offerings. Beyond mentioning the 'offering murals' in passing, these

can be said to be unquestionably iconographic funerary manifestations, and while they vary in presentation, their meaning is beyond question. Since all the presentation is an anticipated action in the life to come, they can in no way be even considered as remotely biographical, other than to indicate the possible beliefs of the people concerned.

7.2.2 SCENE DEVELOPMENT

Almost all of the repertory of scenes of the Old Kingdom fall within eight basic themes. These are the funerary meal, the funeral ceremonies of the deceased, including his 'journey to the West,' marsh pursuits, agriculture, pastoral activities, horticulture, workshop pursuits, banqueting (Harpur 1987:175). The development of these themes can be discerned from the 3rd to the 8th dynasty (2649-2134) with the innovation of certain marked trends at the end of the Interim period and the early Middle Kingdom.

The formal murals representing the funerary meal, banqueting, priestly rituals and the presentation of foods by bearers, are in themselves restricted by the nature of their subjects and are less susceptible to innovation or change than are the outdoor scenes in which, once the canonical artistic requirements are observed, lend themselves to original innovations. Sometimes, as will be shown, these innovations, because they are relevant to the time and circumstances, pass into the repertoire of tomb art.

So far as painted murals are concerned, there are some in the rock-cut chapels in the North but only a few at Giza where the tradition of relief sculpture was strongest. In the main, relief was used for texts since presumably these were considered to be of greater importance than the painted walls. The relief itself was usually painted in colour or black but by its nature was resilient to damage, the relief remaining if the paint deteriorated. Maidum has produced some of the earliest of the decorated tombs, substantiating the existence of a developed and competent artistic skill fairly early in the 4th dynasty. However, not all the Maidum tombs are decorated.

Middle Kingdom provincial tombs were largely painted, and of these Harpur says, "there is more evidence of unusual innovation" (1987:7). The provincial tombs occur in nineteen main sites covering the period from mid-5th dynasty to well into the 12th dynasty (c2419-c1840). During the 6th dynasty it was not unusual for a son of a nomarch or high official to assume his late father's offices. Such families built their tombs in the vicinity of each other, making some genealogies and dating possible. In such tombs trends in customs and decorations can be observed.

It might be supposed that there would have developed a rigid formula of architectural construction and/or interior tomb design. Since so many scenes resemble each other, there has been an effort to determine trends towards siting certain murals on particular walls. In some

cases this appears to have prevailed, although the variety of tomb types, orientation of entrances and extensions of passages and rooms within the tombs would seem to have precluded any rigidly set pattern. There is no indication that a canon existed for the subject matter of the murals as there was for their artistic rendering.

In her chapter on Orientation, Harpur (1987:59-123) describes seven chapel types giving a broad picture of scene and figure orientation in tombs south of Memphis and says that collectively they illustrate one general point. At Memphis the orientation of the tombs was largely affected by the topography of the sites together with the knowledge and experience of the local artists. Provincial chapels, however, interpreting the decorative schemes in the Memphite chapels "are often very different from one another, yet in certain respects still quite logical" (1987:123).

For the purposes of this dissertation a certain number of tombs from Beni Hasan and two adjacent necropolises, Meir and Deir el Bersha have been selected for comparison and discussion. In several of these tombs the reigning monarch is named and their dates can therefore be confirmed. Others have their dating approximated by reason of kinship between the tomb owners. They are by no means the only tombs in the respective sites but omission of the others is due either to the indifferent condition of the murals or, more particularly, to failure to date them with any degree of accuracy.

7.3 THE SITES OF THE TOMBS UNDER DISCUSSION

7.3.1. MEIR

This is a local name for the site of the necropolis on the west bank of the Nile, in which lie the tombs of the nomarchs of the 14th Nome of Upper Egypt. Their capital city, Cusae, also on the West bank, is now lost although the tombs carry its name in association with the local deity, the goddess *Hathor*, the "Lady (or Mistress) of Cusae".

7.3.2 DEIR EL-BERSHA

This is the name by which the site of the tombs of the nomarchs of the 15th Upper Egyptian (Hare) nome is known. It lies on the East bank of the Nile in the Wadi el-Nakhla, an area where limestone has frequently been quarried. The tombs have suffered from the effects of the quarrying and of an earthquake which badly damaged the largest and most important of them, that of the "Great Overlord of the Hare Nome", Djehutihotpe. However this tomb contains one of the most important scenes of statue transport, and can be positively dated.

7.3.3 BENI HASAN

This site lies on the East bank of the Nile, and is the necropolis in which the lords and officials of the 16th (Oryx) nome of Upper Egypt built their tombs. Several of these tombs have references to the ruling monarch, and the owners in some other cases are related, so identification is fairly positive.

The following chart indicates the periods to which the various tombs under discussion have been assigned, together with their relative dates. All the tombs fall into either the 6th dynasty (2323-2150), the 11th dynasty (2134-2040), or the 12th dynasty (1991-1783) The early 11th dynasty was Theban and unity was only achieved in 2040, this being the commencement of the Middle Kingdom. The two 6th dynasty tombs from Meir are dated Pepi I and Pepi II by Blackman (MEIR I:5,6). The tombs dated 11th dynasty do not have names of kings recorded in them. The relevant kings and tombs are listed below.

PEPI I (2289-2255) (6th Dyn.)	TOMB A1	MEIR
PEPI II (2246-2152) " "	A2	MEIR
11TH DYNASTY (2134-2040)	29	BENI HASAN
	15	BENI HASAN
	17	BENI HASAN
AMENEMHET I (1991-1962) (12th Dyn.)	14	BENI HASAN
	B1	MEIR
SENWOSRET I (1971-1926)	2	BENI HASAN
	B2	MEIR
AMENEMHET II (1929-1892)	B4	MEIR
	3	BENI HASAN
	2	DEIR el-BERSHA*
SENWOSRET II (1897-1878)	C1	MEIR**
	2	DEIR el-BERSHA*
SENWOSRET III (1878-1841)?	2	DEIR el-BERSHA*
	C1	MEIR**

Baines & Malek (1980:36) query the end date of 1841 for Senwosret III.

* The owner of Tomb 2 at Deir el-Bersha possibly lived through three reigns.

** The owner of Tomb C1 at Meir possibly lived through two reigns.

The dates of Amenemhet I and Senwosret I overlap, the latter having ruled jointly with his father from 1971.

7.4 GEOGRAPHICAL RELATIONSHIPS

Cities such as Asyut, Abydos, el-Kab, Karnak and Memphis, appear on maps from the pre-dynastic and early dynastic Egypt. Beni Hasan, Meir and Deir el-Bersha, which lie in fairly close proximity almost half way between Memphis and Karnak, are shown on maps of Middle

Kingdom Egypt, but seem to have declined in importance from the end of the 12th dynasty. This is partly substantiated in that the towns of Menat Kufu (Beni Hasan) and Cusae (Meir) have been lost.

The district in which the necropolises of the 14th, 15th and 16th nomes of Upper Egypt lay, lacked a truly important religious centre. Cusae (Meir) had a fairly well-known temple to *Hathor*, but the area was isolated from the larger and more influential and ritually important towns. During the anarchical and interim periods after the end of the Old Kingdom, this part of Egypt appears to have been somewhat more stable than an area such as Abydos, which fell under the control of first the Herakleopolitans and then the Thebans. Whether the nobles of Beni Hasan, Meir or Deir el-Bersha chose to participate or supply troops in these local hostilities, is not clear from their tombs, although biographical texts indicate local fighting and destruction of towns and some nobles show an inclination towards assuming monarchial powers. (See Excursus II: GROUPING THE TOMBS)

Footnotes

[1] Gunter Drever finds an early date for the development of phonetic complements to differentiate ambiguous signs but this is a contentious matter at the present time, open to investigation and discussion (Hammond 1993)

[2] The *Horus* name and the serekh,, (Gardiner 1964:52)

[3] Stewart gives an exceptionally clear coloured illustration of one of the tiles showing the interwoven textures of the simulated reeds.

[4] Edwards (1952:35-44) gives a comprehensive overview of the development of mastaba tombs.

CHAPTER 8

TOMB MURALS - THE BASIC THEMES

The dominant impression is of its humanity. The main subject of this art is man and his many activities in an Egyptian milieu.

Cyril Aldred

8.1 OFFERING SCENES AND BANQUETS

The foundations for these scenes were laid from the moment the first dagger or cooking-pot was introduced into burial ritual, to accompany and assist the corpse in the hereafter. Since these acts or, in time, depictions of acts, were coupled to the religious beliefs of the period, they can have no direct biographical application. From the simple external stela and offering niche (Edwards 1952:39), to the internal developments, of false door, statue niche and serdab, they served an interment requirement which, in the course of time became expanded, while retaining their funerary functions.

Biographically, they record the names of owners of tombs, lists of offerings, identification of retainers and priests, and usually include the tomb owner's wife, children, and close family members. This may perhaps be termed biographical record, since there is little reason to suppose that there is any idealised concept in the naming of these individuals who undoubtedly existed. However, it is outside the scope of biography as such, and iconographically the somewhat stylised depiction of the various family members, as can be seen on the south wall of Tomb 3 at Beni Hasan would also fall into the category of 'illustrated record' (BH I Pl XXXV = *Fig 130*).

While reference may be made to this class of decorated wall, it is not the intention to discuss in detail the developments or contents here in view of its non-biographical classification.

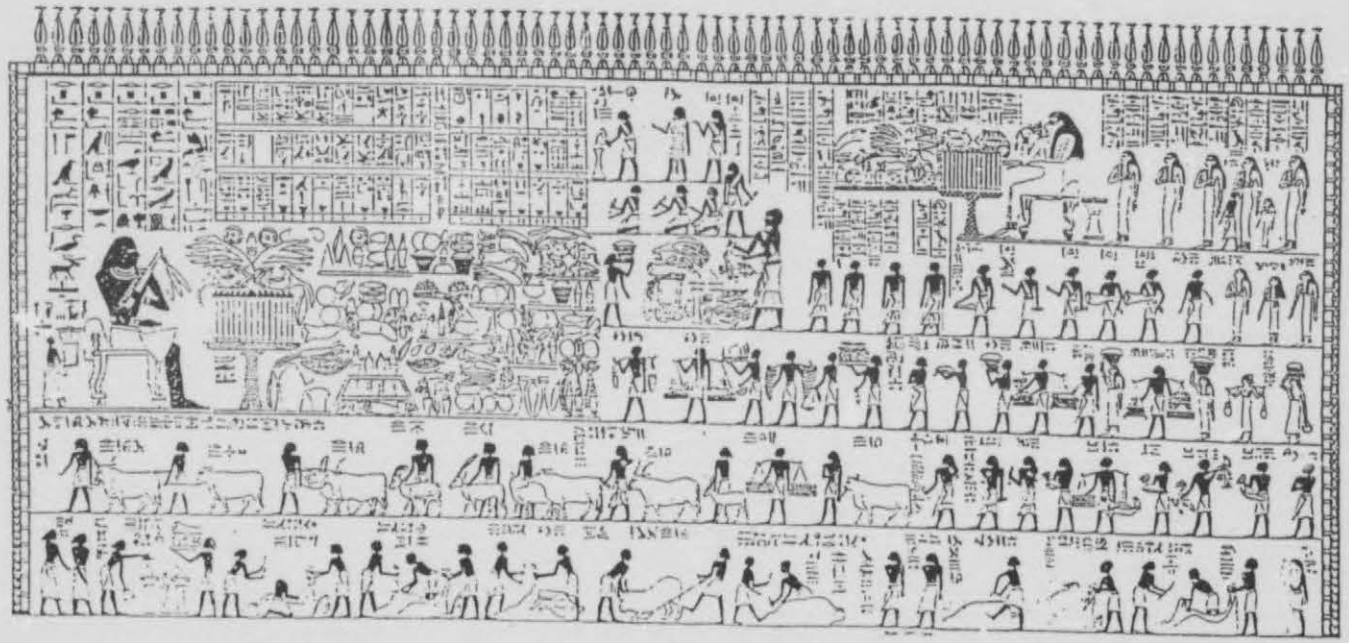


Fig 130 Beni Hasan Tomb 3, South Wall

8.2 MARSH SCENES

8.2.1 FISHING SCENES

When Harpur details marsh pursuits depicted in Old Kingdom tombs, she lists twenty-three marsh scenes which she says form a repertory, although no one tomb encompasses every one of the subjects (1987:176). Of the first six of these, fishing, fowling, various composites of these, papyrus "pulling" and the pleasure cruise are given priority. The fishing-fowling combinations occupy the first four places and she explains this by suggesting that a "main scen encompassing all or some of the first six, was used as a f--al point. A selection of the others, i.e. hippopotamus hunt, hand netting, activities involved in the gutting and carrying of fish, papyrus gatherers, mat makers, and a variety of other activities which she feels were perhaps less significant in real life were never so firmly established as the other scene types. The immediate and relevant question is the initial reason for the inclusion of this type of activity in the tombs.

The earliest preserved marsh scene comes from the west wall of a 3rd dynasty tomb at Saqqara (1987:177), although most of the scenes sharing a long waterband on the same wall, are lost. However the presence of animals legs and traces of male figures near a crocodile suggest a fording scene. Outdoor pursuits introduced into tomb chapels, tended to be placed near the chapel entrance and since the above scene is separated from the table scene and other formal representations of the owner, it could possibly have been a part of various other outdoor pursuits.

The next evidence of the inclusion of marsh pursuits comes from an early, 4th dynasty, fragmentary clapnet scene from the valley temple of Snofru (2575-2551) at Dahshur.

While this dissertation is not concerned with royal tombs or temples, the presence of this theme in a royal context immediately raises the question of the dependence of the private tomb murals on the murals in the royal funerary and temple buildings and whether the private versions contained ritual connotations. Harpur is concise on this point, maintaining that in the absence of food acquisition scenes being preserved in the valley temple of Snofru, it must be conceded that the clapnet scene could be part of a ritual "with a different context from its seemingly daily life setting in private chapels". However, the fragments are not in situ nor are there any intact parallels in any other mortuary or valley temple dating to the Old Kingdom (1989:177, 515 Fig 167 = *Fig 131*). Incomplete as these fragments are, however, they do show that the clapnet was hexagonal in shape, filled with groups of swimming birds, and flowers, and similar to those in later chapels (1989:177, 481 Fig 79).

It is perhaps appropriate at this point to examine the dependency of themes and scenes in private tombs/tomb chapels, to royal tombs/temples. Harpur, discusses the study by Brinks of Old Kingdom and large mastabas, in which he compares multi-roomed chapels of 5th and 6th

dynasties and maintains that the functions and scene positions were present just as they were in a temple. However, Harpur responds to this by pointing out that Brinks is primarily concerned with architecture, that Old Kingdom temples are too badly damaged to warrant certain conclusions as to the original pattern of scene orientation, and says that "many subjects in private tombs do not occur in temples" (1987:109).

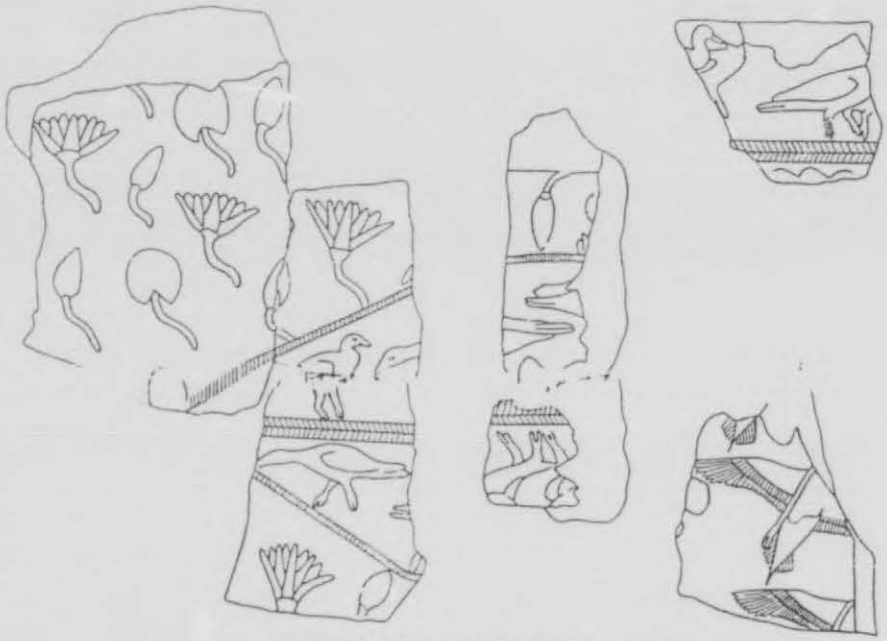


Fig 131 Fragments of early clapnet scene from valley temple of Snofru, Dahshur.

Quite apart from this, if one examines the reasons for the inclusion of certain themes such as the marsh clapnet in a royal context, one must bear in mind that the temple and its ritual was the prerogative of the king and priests. Ritual pertaining to monarchial obligations towards the deity would in no way be permissible within a private tomb, and since until the end of the Old Kingdom the tomb itself was only permissible by approval of the monarch, there can be little doubt that any similar theme present in the causeway or entrance to a temple could only have been copied in a private tomb on an artistic basis and in a secular context.

That in time this particular scene did become ritually orientated is confirmed by the stylised clapnet scene from the great hypostyle hall at Karnak where *Horus*, *Khnum* and Ramesses II (19th Dynasty 1290-1224), operate a fowler's clap-net in order to contain "un-rule", in a simple allegory from nature, where the wildfowl represent disorder (Kemp 1991:49 Fig 15(excerpt) = *Fig 132*).

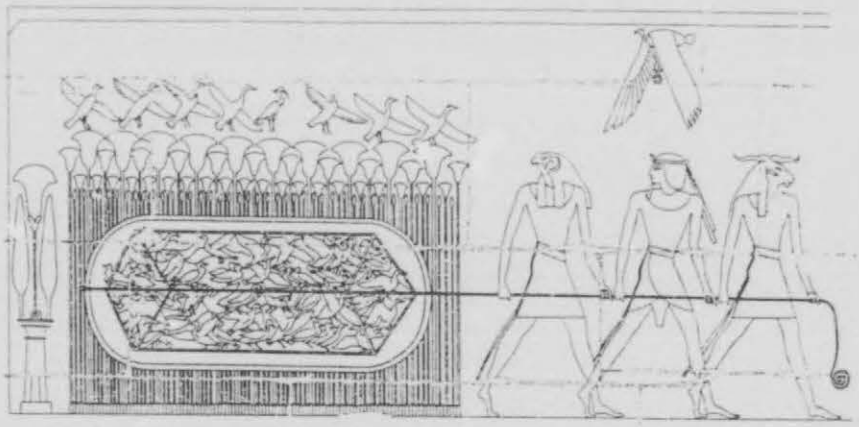


Fig 132 Ramesses and deities controlling disorder in allegory of wildfowl caught in clapnet.

Unfortunately there is a tendency to attribute this adaptation of the theme to such scenes in general, without reference to the period in which they developed.[1] The Old Kingdom and early Middle Kingdom tombs show no such use of the theme nor has any Old Kingdom temple relief been found in which the clapnet is associated with deities.

Harpur recognises the recreational aspect of spear fishing and fowling being implied in reliefs dating from the late 5th dynasty onwards, family members being depicted more actively involved, and even accompanied by their pets (1987:181 Note 131).

It was the 5th dynasty sun temple of Neuserre (2416-2392), however, that provided a wide variety of outdoor scenes although only six marsh pursuit scenes from this group have parallels in private chapels. Since these have no earlier parallels it is not improbable that these private tomb murals were based on murals in the Seasons' room of the Neuserre sun temple. With artists emanating from the royal schools, it is not surprising that, after the reign of Neuserre, there is to be found an increase in the number of tombs containing marsh scenes.

The answers to the ready inclusion of such scenes of fishing and fowling in private tombs are possibly found in the clapnet scene, one of four, in the 4th dynasty tomb of Nfr-ma't and Itt at Maidum. It occupies a lintel over a niche and shows a simple clapnet design of a hauler, the net, some bearers and the recipient, the tomb owner's wife. This scene, with various additions, can

be found in later chapels, and it accords with the established offering scene, in the presentation of wildfowl to the deceased (Harpur 1987:517 fig 170 = *Fig 133*).

Fig 133 Netting and offering of wildfowl. 4th dynasty Tomb of Nfr-ma't and Itt at Maidun.

8.2.2 WILDFOWLING

It is usual to phrase "fishing and fowling" in that order. In fact the fowling appears to have taken precedence over the fishing in the initial stages of the marsh scenes. While fishing activities in all stages of development appear throughout the repertoire of marsh scenes, "fish bearers" feature thirteenth on the list of twenty-three marsh pursuits of Harpur and fowling is only superseded by spear fishing, in the same list. Wild and domesticated fowls have high priority in the food offerings murals where, apart from the familiar flapping birds held by their necks, piles of trussed and (presumably) cooked birds appear on many of the offering tables. In the multiple marsh scenes, fishing on one side is usually balanced by fowling on the other.

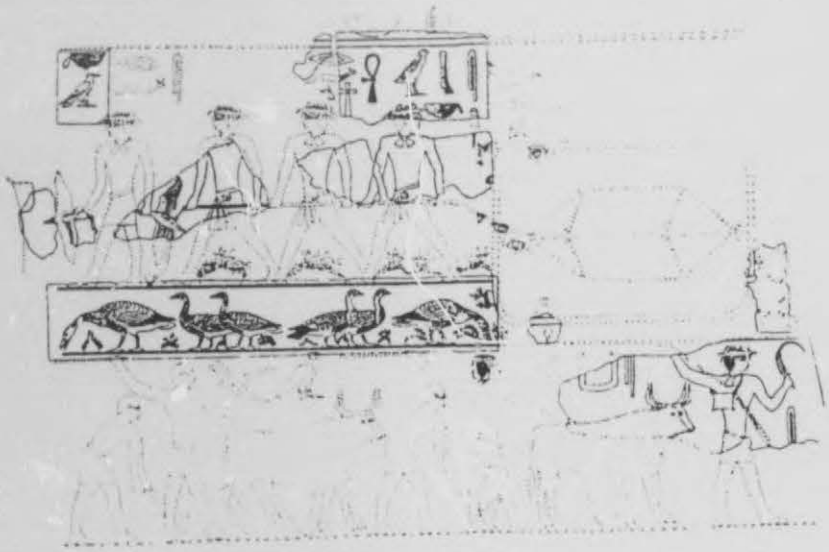


Fig 134 Frieze of painted geese. Tomb of Nfr-ma't and Itt, Maidun

Together with the familiar ducks, geese form part of the earliest marsh scenes. The above mentioned tomb of Nfr-Ma't and Itt at Maidum which, contains some of the best preserved marsh scenes of the 4th dynasty, also contains the familiar frieze of painted geese below what was probably a clapnet scene (Harpur 1987:517 Fig 171 = *Fig 134*).

In this frieze one has the perfect combination of reality and artistic balance, where the beautifully proportioned painted geese are positioned three each side of a focal point. It presages a development which was to pervade many of the marsh scenes from that time onwards, where attention to balance and detail in aquatic, bird and animal life reached far beyond the simple "necessities for an afterlife" category.

8.2.3 FISHING

Before the Nile-dwellers had learned to exploit the annual inundation of the river for agricultural purposes, the most immediate and readily obtainable item of food was almost certainly fish. Brewer and Friedman (1989:9) suggest that the most celebrated fish hieroglyph[2] is a catfish, Heterobranchus (1989:63, Fig 3.21 = *Fig 135*), used to write the name of Narmer on the famous palette (*Fig 33*).

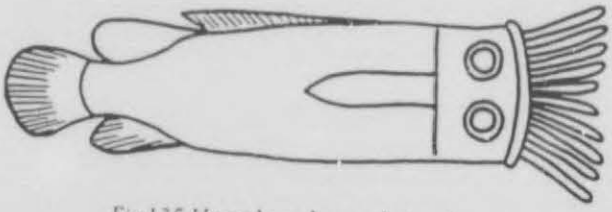


Fig 135 Heterobranchus as depicted on the Narmer palette.

A catfish appears again on a 1st dynasty wooden plaque recovered from Saqqara, which shows five people walking towards King Djer (1989:11 Fig 1.4 = *Fig 136*).

Associated with what is believed to be human sacrifice (top register lower right), Brewer and Friedman suggest this is either a funeral or a Sed festival where the king is magically rejuvenated. This procession shows a lighted brazier, a statue, a catfish, a bird and a spear. It is also suggested that this is a procession of royal ancestors, or that it has an association with royal spear fishing, proof of virility and the ability to master chaos. In an unplundered tomb of the 2nd dynasty at Saqqara, a meal laid out on plates next to the burial pit included a fish, cleaned and dressed with the head removed. However, from the early dynastic periods until the end of the dynastic era,

funerary offering lists do not mention fish, and they are rarely depicted iconographically in an offering context.

Fig 136 Catfish in procession, upper register. Wooden plaque, Sakkara, 1st dynasty.

Yet fishing scenes abound in the tombs, and the artists appear to have had a good knowledge of the fish and fishing techniques. From the tomb murals all the types of fish now caught in the Nile are recognisable, and the various methods of catching fish are also given in some detail. However, there would seem to be a good case for suggesting that while artists turned out numbers of drawings, accurate in themselves, the adaptation and use of such drawings was not necessarily correct. The techniques used in catching or spearing the fish do not always correspond with the conditions prevailing and such idiosyncrasies as deep water fish being caught in shallow water nets is just one example. This would confirm that much of the material introduced into the tombs was available on a general basis, the architect adapting and using it, as required.

That there was at some time and particularly in some places, a taboo on the eating of fish among the Egyptian hierarchy seems to be reflected in its absence in their tomb murals. Memphis probably had a taboo in regard to the eating of fish, but in contrast to this at least two species of mullet were at one time venerated at Elephantine. Provincial nobles however, do not seem to have objected to fish as a funeral offering and in the Middle Kingdom even coffin texts confirm the acceptance of fish as appropriate to food in the after life (Brewer and Friedman 1989:15).

We know that fish were dried, and used by marsh workers, and it is suggested that the large fishing scenes in the Old Kingdom tombs were there in order to provide food for the servants.

The 5th dynasty causeway of Wenis at Saqqara shows unprocessed fish sold in the market while the tomb of the Two Brothers, of the same dynasty, also at Saqqara, shows details of fish preparation (1989:13 Figs 1.5, 1.6).

Fish were also used in lieu of currency. A 6th dynasty tomb, of the vizier Kagemni at Saqqara, contains pictures of fishermen taking their catch to be recorded by scribes, a portion being distributed to various officials, the fishermen retaining the rest to be traded for other commodities (1989:12).

The introduction of the tomb owner in the fish-spearing scene is almost certainly taken from a royal marsh scene. Such a scene appeared on a 1st dynasty ivory label on which King Den is shown thrusting a bident into a pool of water.[3] King Sahure, 5th dynasty, is shown on a boat with a mound of water filled with fish rising before him. It is suggested that the water has been elevated in order to accommodate the traditional stance of the monarch smiting the enemy, in this case the chaos of the marshes. This scene passes into the "political" category with the fish the Lates and Tilapia, artificially speared at the same time. The Lates would normally be found in the deep, well-oxygenated waters of Upper Egypt, while the Tilapia would be more prolific in the shallow vegetated waters typical of the Delta. Before it extended beyond the royal domain, this almost certainly represented the unity of the two kingdoms (1989:24). It can only be supposed that once freed from its royal interpretation, the motif retained its typical characteristics without the political overtones. While it may still have represented the overpowering of the forces of chaos inherent in the marsh-lands, we cannot know this and it is more than likely that in time, with the addition of family members it lost its original connotation. In any case it is hardly conceivable that the ordinary tomb owner would be shown uniting Upper and Lower Egypt. Brewer and Friedman comment that the motif was adapted by the nobles, and draw attention to the inappropriate clothing, including jewellery, the ceremonial false beard and the royal *shendyt* kilt.

In time the fish are shown speared and held above the water, and by the New Kingdom the political message becomes superseded by a religious one. The Lates is now replaced by a Tilapia, the latter carrying with it an association of fertility and rebirth. This would suggest that the original royal application had not continued into the private tomb, making the adaptation from a recreational to a religious interpretation possible. This is a particularly good example of the need to assess these murals within their own milieu.

Harpur who details Old Kingdom marsh scenes from the mastabas of the nobles gives a 3rd dynasty dating for a portion of a fording scene (1987:359), and a certain number of marsh scenes appear in the 4th dynasty, but by far the greater number appear in the 5th and 6th dynasties.

8.3 AGRICULTURAL SCENES

As tombs became larger and there was more space available on the walls, agricultural scenes, together with the marsh scenes, were the most popular. They were poorly represented in 3rd and early 4th dynasty tombs at Memphis, but reappeared in late 4th dynasty rock-chapels at Gizeh. Again, the 5th dynasty saw the proliferation of the agricultural scenes.

In general agriculture was presented as sequential. The preparation of land initially involved the sower, followed by the ploughing, hoeing, and/or animal treading sequence. Harvesting included the reaping the bundling, tying of the sheaves, threshing, winnowing and the final storage and recording of accounts. The depiction of a variety of working methods, and clothing used by the workers, suggests that there was a freedom to present the motifs as an actuality rather than a stereotyped action. In copying, certain scenes and themes did become stereotyped, but in view of the long period over which they were reproduced and re-worked this would in any case have become inevitable.

It is likely that originally these agricultural murals were included in order to augment the offerings, the giving of provisions being supported by the growing and processing thereof. The extension of the space available and the need to fill it, encouraged the artist to expand his repertoire in the presentation of the elements within a theme, while retaining the basic theme itself. Fairly rigid conventions appear to have required the tomb owner to appear in a dignified stance at all times. No such restriction seems to have applied to his various servants, however, and these figures readily lent themselves to adaptation.

Animal husbandry also accompanied the agricultural scenes, where all the animals from the bulls to the donkeys perform some subsidiary act relative to the workers. All are accounted for as possessions of the master particularly so in the scenes which depict large numbers of cattle and other beasts involved in the recording of numbers. There are no scenes of herds of cattle in their natural environment, other than driving or fording scenes which strictly speaking belong to the marsh scene category. The accent is entirely on profitability in one form or another with the occasional natural gesture or behaviour pattern added by the artist.

These herds are not to be confused with the cattle presented for sacrifice in the main offering scenes, usually at the bottom of the wall where there are also scenes of butchering. The cattle which the owner is often described as "watching" perform an entirely different function.

In the Middle Kingdom fighting bulls are frequently included and these will be discussed as they appear in the murals under review.

Domesticated livestock including large quantities of ducks, also appear in "farmyard" scenes.

8.4 THE NATURE OF TOMB MURALS

The initial intention of ensuring survival of the deceased by means of food offerings had, over the years, become enlarged to include the production of the food itself. In turn this introduced the tomb owner "supervising" or "watching" the various activities involved therein. These murals have been categorised as "idealised" the supposition being that they represent the ultimate expectation of the deceased for eternity. The difficulty arises when one tries to determine the nature of those expectations.

In the early reigns of the Old Kingdom, eternal life was a royal prerogative. The provision of life-supporting tombs of the royal family and courtiers, in close proximity to the royal tomb would seem to have developed from the period when servants were slain and buried close to their king in order to continue to serve him in the afterlife. With the rejection of this form of sacrificial burial, a concept of right to eternal life by reason of kinship or royal preferment, led to the privilege of interment in close proximity to the monarch, as the mastaba tombs which grew up in the various pyramid sights can testify. This is a complete reversal of the earlier situation where the servant obtained immediate eternal life in servitude to the monarch.

In none of the Old Kingdom tombs of royalty and hierarchy is the wish expressed or illustrated that the owner would be in a position of attendance on the monarch. One sees the priests in attendance for the ritual services to be performed on the deceased, but scenes such as those in the 18th dynasty tomb of Pernefer and others at Akhetaten, involving monarch and courtiers, are nowhere to be found (Desroches-Noblecourt 1963:144 Fig 81, 145 Fig 82 = *Figs 137,138*).[+]

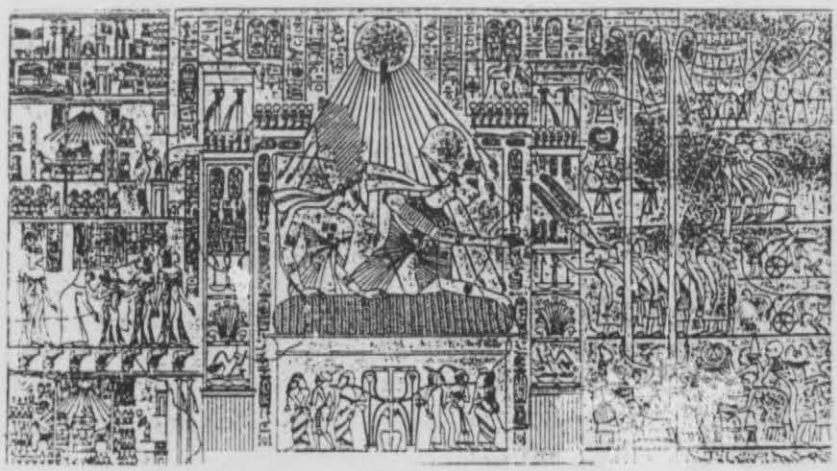


Fig 137 Akhenaten and Nefertiti at the Great State Window, making awards to courtiers including Pernefer. On left the royal princesses and plan of the palace. Tomb of Pernefer, Master of the King's Household.

While it was customary for officials of their estates to be represented and named in the tombs of the nobles, no composite scenes of attendance of the nobles themselves upon the monarch have been found.

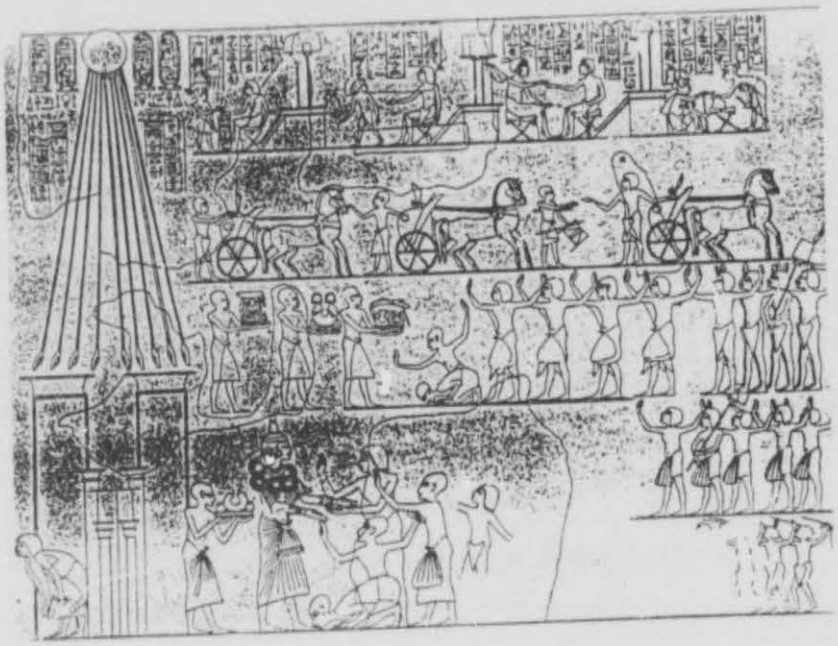


Fig 138 Akhenaten awarding red-brown leather gloves to the "Divine Father" Ay, as Master of the King's Horse.

Textual records exist, particularly from the Middle Kingdom, of appointments and positions granted to the owners of tombs but these suggest self aggrandisement rather than a statement of servitude. The private tomb owner himself secured service in the eternal future by the inclusion of numbers of shabti figures - "the answerers" - to be on call in case of need. The monarch, apart from authorising the tomb, and acting as intermediary with the deity, is not in any other way involved.

While the royal kin and officials of the court may have expected to take up their lives and continue serving the monarch as before, the murals in no way depict this sentiment and such indications of a future life as we have vary greatly from a form of solar existence to life in the elysian fields.

Kemp says that while the aim of the artist was to render the elements of his pictures truthfully the subject matter showed reality only within frames of reference taken from a world of myth and ideals. Tomb art created scenes comprising a world of banquets with friends, of hunting

parties and of overseeing the affairs of a country estate, which included busy craftsmen. From this, Kemp believes, it would be easy to assume that Egyptians of all ranks lived in the country in a society without towns and cities (1991:84), which is patently not true. However, in the absence of an industrial society, a rural setting would seem to have been unavoidable.

If one takes as the point of departure the necessity to provide sustenance for the deceased, the marsh and agricultural scenes can be accommodated in this category, and a town life would not seem to qualify. Nonetheless, once the "watching" and workshop scenes occur it is necessary to seek a change in perception insofar as the objective of the tomb murals is concerned.

8.5 WORKING AND WORKSHOP SCENES

8.5.1 ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTS OTHER THAN OFFERINGS

Illustrations of activities falling in neither the marsh nor agricultural categories, appear in the 4th dynasty tomb of Queen Meresankh II, wife of Khephren (2520-2494) at Giza, where servants are shown making a bed, with mattress, bed clothes and headrest. A carrying chair is also shown in relief in this tomb, again receiving attention from two of the Queen's servants (Killen 1994:32 Figs 38,39 = *Figs 139,140*).

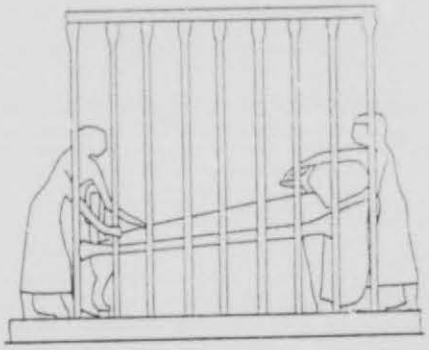


Fig 139 Bed canopy and bed-makers. Tomb of Queen Meresankh III, 4th dynasty Giza.

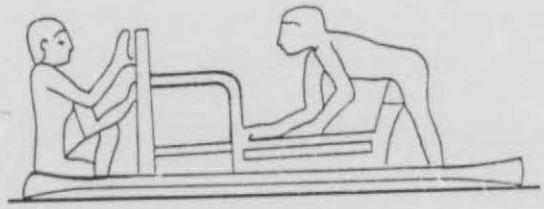


Fig 140 Carrying chair. Tomb of Queen Meresankh III. 4th dynasty Giza

These illustrations are of particular interest since similar furniture and a chair were found in the tomb of Queen Hetepheres wife of Snofru (2575-2551) and mother of Khufu (2551-2528) (1994:30 Fig 37). The practice of providing artifacts, furniture, and domestic items for the use

and comfort of the deceased has already been mentioned and has a long history (7.1.3). It predates the "food offering" murals together with their additional marsh and agriculture scenes and continues throughout changing religious concepts, even among royalty, as exemplified in the tomb of Tutankhamun. Constant also, are the prayers recorded for sustenance for the deceased, the usual formula encompassing food, drink, alabaster and linen. In these 4th dynasty tomb paintings of Queen Meresankh, however, we have one of the earliest examples of *illustrations* of furniture, in both use and manufacture, applicable to living but not necessary for the perpetuation of life.

In time, "workshop scenes" become a part of the repertoire of the tomb artist and by the 5th dynasty it was usual to include reliefs of activities performed as part of the normal daily life. Killen points to the tomb of Ti, of this period, in which many of these scenes are present such as carpenters manufacturing boxes, and a bed under which is shown a headrest of the fluted column type. In particular he draws attention to a pair of carpenters seen hand-finishing the lid of a long box, similar to the curtain box discovered in the tomb of Queen Hetepheres. Yet another carpenter is shown using a bow-drill. That these motifs are drawn from life with meticulous attention to detail has long been recognised, and has meant that from them we can determine occupational activities and tools in use at a given period (1994:33,34 Figs 40,41 = *Figs 141,142*).

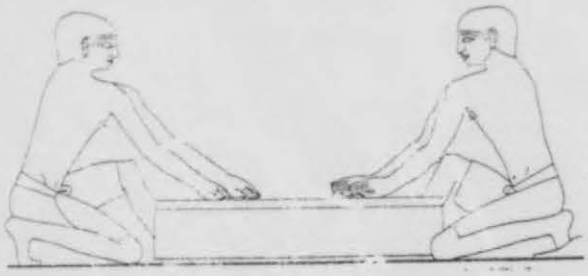


Fig 141 Carpenters sanding a box. 5th dynasty tomb of Ti, Saqqara.

Fig 142 Carpenter working with a bow-drill. 5th dynasty tomb of Ti, Saqqara.

But these have little to do with the provision of food offerings for which the original murals were devised and the usual explanation is that they represent the ideal activities on the estate of the tomb owner, which he hopes to enjoy in the hereafter. In many cases this may well be.

Yet the complexity of the *Ka* and *Ba* concepts via statuary and false doors, and their direct association with the deceased, inevitably restricts the corpse to the tomb and the environs of his community. The approach is a strange mixture of the spiritual and physical, both in the case of the *Ka* who partakes of the food on behalf of the deceased and the *Ba* who by proxy allows the deceased to participate in certain activities, even sexual gratification.

There would seem to be little doubt, therefore, that towards the end of the 5th dynasty, if not before, there is a dichotomy in the non-royal tombs where the old concept of sustenance is deemed sufficient to give the deceased the wherewithal to enjoy some sort of afterlife in juxtaposition with the tomb, and a concept of a total life outside the tomb and in an elysian world where all the component parts of living will be re-enacted.

Osirian influence permeated funerary concepts by the 5th dynasty, but while *Osiris* himself, almost certainly based on an ancient fertility cult, was probably the most effective demonstration of death and re-birth, we have little information as to what that Osirian re-birth was expected to comprise.

The only constant in ancient Egyptian tombs was confidence in a continued existence after earthly death.

8.5.2 THE WORKSHOP MURALS

Perhaps one valid explanation for the diversity of themes lies in closer scrutiny of the workshop murals.

Baking, brewing, butchery (other than the sacrificial act), can be categorised as food-sustenance themes. Spinning and weaving (preparation of the linen for the deceased), shrine building, the dragging of statues, journey to the west, and the journeys to Abydos and Busiris, all of which gradually found favour in the tombs, cannot in any way be so classified.

If one may revert to the original offering wall, the inclusion of priestly activities in relation to the embalming, purification and opening of the mouth ceremonies, must all fall under the category of preparation for or participation in the funeral rites themselves. It is a controversial point as to whether the bearers of the offerings are themselves intended to present these in the after-life. The offerings would be made by the priests, before the statue of the deceased at the false door and the partaking of the food would be by the actions of the *ka* within the tomb. Together with food, alabaster and linen appear to have been among the earliest requisites, although whether these are life-supporting or funerary necessities is not clear. Nevertheless the inclusion of

funerary acts would suggest that these scenes contain both pre-interment, and post interment material. They demonstrate basically *earthbound activities, carried out by the living*, representing funeral rites and the necessary *on-going rites within the tomb itself*.

It is not suggested that these activities are intended to be biographical. It is suggested, however, that these scenes confirm and reiterate the rites of burial, ensuring thereby that the *deceased has received, and will continue to receive*, all that is deemed necessary for his future well-being. They do, it is suggested, bridge the gap between a purely idealised world of substitution and the reality of the funeral activities, not necessarily intended to accompany the deceased into the other world but to ensure that he reaches and survives there.

Eternal life does not anticipate a future death.

All the preparations in the workshop murals, therefore, directed towards funerary rites and/or artifacts, would be meaningless in the context of an eternal life, were they assumed to be substitutional. Journeys to the west, Abydos and/or Busiris, included in these murals need no repetition because their object, acceptance to the other world, would have been achieved. On the premise that they were included to confirm, as in the case of funeral rites on the offering walls, that these observances had been fulfilled and therefore justified the deceased acquiring life after death, then their presence is logical.

In including these activities, the break has been made with the original idealised iconographic offering murals directed towards the future life. The developing workshop murals move slowly away from this *future* concept, and focus on what *had been done* with and for the deceased. Non-biographical, these provisions and activities may themselves be idealised representations. Andrews (1984:53-54) speaks of the (often unattainable) complicated water journeys with the corpse, and says a wooden model of the mummy on a boat or *representation of the journey on the tomb wall* in which the deceased is usually shown as a statue, had to suffice. In the same way the journey to Busiris was often depicted without it necessarily having taken place.

While some workshop activities might be deemed applicable for the after-life, such as the manufacture of jewellery and furniture, in the main these objects still continued to be interred with the corpse and short of the tomb being robbed, would not need replacement as would the food. Ironically, it was the enclosure of valuable objects within the tomb and the mummy bandages that inevitably led to the plunder of the tomb and invited destruction of the body.

Smaller themes such as fighting boatmen, fighting bulls, military subjects, etc. some present in the Old Kingdom, others which make their appearance in the Middle Kingdom, have not been discussed in this chapter in which only the main trends and scenes have been included. They will, however, be discussed at some length when they appear on the walls of the tombs under review. (See Excursus III: DO THE WRESTLER SCENES CONSTITUTE A SEPARATE THEME?)

8 6 TOMB MODELS AND ARTIFACTS

8 6.1. AN ADDITIONAL REALITY

An innovative development of the Middle Kingdom was the introduction of wooden models into the tombs, and it is possible that they replaced murals when, in an unstable period, these were difficult to produce either from unsuitability of the tomb or lack of artistic resources. This may well account for their origin, but it would appear that their popularity outlived their utility since they have been found in at least one tomb of a very high 11th dynasty official where neither tomb unsuitability nor lack of resources would have accounted for their inclusion.

The discovery by Winlock (1955) of the complete and undisturbed set of models in the tomb of Meket-Re at Thebes, was the most valuable find of its kind to have been made. Meket-Re, whose tomb is now destroyed, was a high official in the court of the 11th dynasty king *Nebhepetre* Mentuhotpe (2061-2010). Winlock describes the tomb as possibly the "most imposing one in the Eleventh Dynasty cemetery at Thebes" (1955:10). He estimates that it was plundered by tomb robbers and quarrymen of the late Middle Kingdom and/or the early years of the New Kingdom. Since the Hyksos occupation fell between these two periods, however, the destruction may well have taken place during that time. The cemetery itself ceased to be of prime importance when the centre of administration was removed to Itawy. The discovery of the intact serdab together with its contents may seem to have little relevance with respect to Beni Hasan. Yet it is invaluable for its certain provenance and dating and dismisses the assumption that the models were used simply as a matter of expediency in difficult times by those unable to provide anything better. Among the collection were no less than eight house models (*Figs 123, 124*), twelve models of boats, two large figures of offering bearers, a group of four small ones and a large scene of Meket-Re inspecting a parade of his cattle (1955:13 Pl 4-7,55). The reproduction of models showing cattle breeding, bread and beer making, spinning and weaving, including the construction of the loom, and a variety of occupations in the carpenters shop, all confirm many of the workshop murals in other tombs. An interesting observation of Winlock is that these models varied in quality and appeared to have been made in different workshops, thus confirming that these were probably not in any way unique.

That some such models would have been included in the Beni Hasan, Meir and Deir el Bersha tombs is almost certain. Easily removed, they were seldom found in a tomb which had been plundered.

On a slope below the tombs of the Beni Hasan nomarchs was a necropolis, containing a large number of small tombs. Garstang in 1902-4 excavated 880 of these, finding a variety of objects, including a small amount of furniture.[5] In tomb 366, believed to be early 12th dynasty, he found a model of painted wood and linen showing the sacrificial killing of an ox. Bourriau believes that the model represents "both an activity which may be endlessly repeated in the Next

World and an actual event which took place at the funeral[6]. A fourth figure, whose feet remain near the hind legs of the ox, would possibly have been waiting to cut the haunch, symbolising the meat offering (1988:106 Fig 93 = *Fig 143*). From the same tomb we have a model of bakers making bread and beer (Samuel 1994:9 = *Fig 144*).

Fig 143 Model of servants slaughtering and cooking an ox. Beni Hasan Tomb 366.

Fig 144 Model of bread and beer making Beni Hasan Tomb 366

8.6.2 FUNERARY COMPONENTS: THE PRACTICAL REALITY

Bourriau comments that because so many more Middle Kingdom cemeteries than towns or villages have been excavated, one tends to categorise almost any object found in these tombs as of funerary origin. Yet she points out that while many of the objects found in the tombs were not specifically made for burial, there existed all over Egypt workshops specialising in making funerary furniture. There is, she says, evidence that contractors built tombs *en bloc*, selling the space as required, and that between the 11th and the 13th dynasties a wide variety of local styles and types of coffin decoration were evolved.

It has already been suggested that there was probably a lack of theological depth or even knowledge among the ordinary Egyptians and the fact that custom took precedence over reality is plainly indicated by the fact that while canopic jars were part of the funerary objects interred

with the corpse, in the Middle Kingdom the organs which they were intended to contain were rarely actually removed from the body (Bourriau 1988:82).

At Beni Hasan no evidence of mummification, (defined as the removal of internal organs and brain and the application of natron to the body), has been found. Such mummies or parts thereof recovered at this site were merely tightly wrapped in layer after layer of linen. This would have been completed by a funerary mask made of alternating layers of plaster and linen, and painted to produce an idealised version of the human face and placed directly over the head of the corpse. Such a mask, somewhat damaged and with only part of the wig remaining, was found in the IIth dynasty tomb 275 at Beni Hasan (1988:89 Fig 69 = *Fig 145*).

Fig 145 Mask of the Steward Thay Tomb 275 Beni Hasan 11th dynasty.

The coffin of a woman from tomb 65 (1988:88 Fig 68) is of interest. Fairly plainly decorated, it is inscribed on the lid and long sides for a woman named Senuitef, yet bears the name Arthotepet on the head and foot ends. The names show no sign of alteration, leaving one to assume that there was only one owner, so the assumption must be either that the owner had two names or as Bourriau suggests, the undertaker, busy assembling a number of coffins at the same time, wrongly assembled the component parts of two coffins. Bourriau comments "undertakers' assistants were almost certainly unable to read". The name Senuitef itself occurs on the coffin in a variety of versions with hieroglyphs transposed or omitted, to accord with balance or space, or simply through carelessness combined with ignorance. That this indifferent and incorrect work would have been accepted by the purchasers would suggest that the family personnel responsible for the interment were also illiterate.

While the murals cannot be divorced from this kind of indifferent and/or illiterate work, the paintings themselves are, on the whole and in spite of their idealised approach, likely to be more reliably informative.

Footnotes

[1] Harpur refers to Alliot, who discusses scenes in the temples at Karnak, Edfu and Esna where the clapnet has ritual significance. The only parts of the clapnet preserved in Old Kingdom temples is the trap with wild birds inside (1987:177, Note 127).

[2] Gardiner (1957:476-477) does not list this fish as a hieroglyph.

[3] The bident was a two-headed, unilaterally barbed spear.

[4] The appearance of Akhenaten and Nefertiti at the "Great State Window" was, according to Deroches-Noblecourt, "apparently a heretical innovation" (1963:144).

[5] Details of these finds have been drawn from the works of other authors, Garstang's *Burial Customs of Ancient Egypt* being unobtainable.

[6] My italics.

CHAPTER 9

PREDECESSORS OF THE BENI HASAN TOMBS

There is no enjoying the possession of anything valuable unless one has someone to share it with. ...people believe their eyes rather more than their ears, the road is a long one if one proceeds by way of precepts but short and effectual if by way of personal example.

Seneca Letter VI

9.1 EXAMPLES AND COMPARISONS

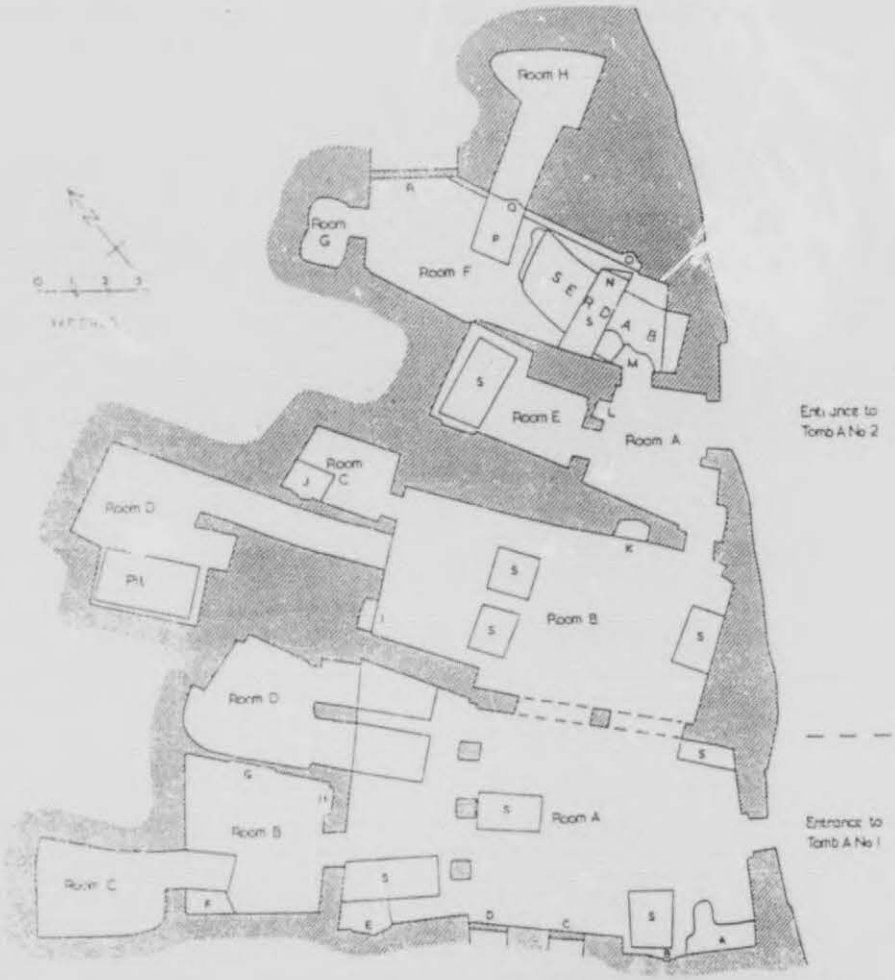
The only information available to us in respect of the Beni Hasan tombs is vested in the tombs themselves. In order to reach conclusions concerning them it would seem to be necessary to view them alongside tombs constructed immediately before the end of the Old Kingdom, in addition to examples, known to be contemporary. Normally this should present no great problem, but in the case of these late-interim/early Middle Kingdom tombs, the period of ineffectual kings (7th & 8th dynasties 2150-2134) followed by the 1st Interim period (2134-2040),[1] leaves a gap in continuity.

Two non-royal tombs from Meir have been selected, which have been dated to the periods of Pepi I (2289-2255), and the last king of the 6th dynasty, Pepi II (2246-2152). It would seem legitimate to compare those tombs with those at Beni Hasan since they belong to governors of a nearby nome, and in the main reflect the situation and conditions in which they were built at the end of the Old Kingdom.

9.2 OLD KINGDOM TOMBS A1 AND A2 MEIR NI-ʿANKH-PEPI, AND PEPI'ONKH (*Fig 146*)

The plan shows the tombs, of father and son, Ni'Ankh-Pepi the Black (A1) and Pepi'Onkh with the 'Good Name' of Heny the Black (A2). As shown on the plan, (*Fig 146*) rooms A and B in Tomb A1 form one large pillared hall. The line of division, however, is clearly marked at the northern end by a short length of partition wall, and from thence south, by a step up and corresponding architrave, supported by a pillar.

Tombs built in wadis, as were the tombs of Meir and el-Bersha, or on a ledge of the escarpment, as at Beni Hasan, were governed as to orientation by their geographical position. While Beni Hasan tombs have west-facing entrances, each of these Meir tombs faces south.



TOMB-CHAPEL A, NO. 1

A. ROUGH BLOCK ABOUT 1 METRE HIGH
B. FAÇADE-STELA
C & D. BLOCKED ENTRANCES TO HORIZONTAL SHAFTS
E. FAÇADE-STELA AND OFFERING-TABLE
F. ROUGH BLOCK ABOUT 15 METRE HIGH
G & H. UNFINISHED STATUE-RECESSES

TOMB-CHAPEL A, NO. 2

I. STATUE-RECESS
J. FAÇADE-STELA AND OFFERING-TABLE
K & L. STATUE-RECESSES
M. ROUGH STEPS DOWN TO SERDAB
N. BLOCKED ENTRANCE TO HORIZONTAL SHAFT
O. FAÇADE-STELA
P. SHAFT LEADING TO ROOM H
Q. FAÇADE-STELA
R. CEMENT PARTITION
S. SHAFTS

FIG 146 PLAN OF TOMBS A1 AND A2 MEIR
A1 NI-'ANKH-PEPI: A2 PEPI 'ONKH
(Overall size of complex 26m x 22m).

If one had any doubt that the design of these rock-cut tombs was largely at the discretion of the builder and limited by the terrain, such doubt must surely be dispelled by these two tombs. Their ramifications are many and even with close scrutiny it is difficult to find any determinative siting of the various pits and stelae.

So far as ownership is concerned, while the identity of the father seems certain, the identity of the son is questionable, the owner of Tomb A1 having given three of his sons identical names. Ni-'ankh-Pepi himself, was a member of an influential family whom Blackman (M I:9) calls "Princes of Cusae".[2] Their history is irrelevant here, but the murals in their 6th dynasty tombs are of particular interest in that:-

(a) They were still (presumably) under the privilege of the monarch.

(b) They exhibit little of the innovative introductions to tomb murals which occurred in the Middle Kingdom.

(c) They provide a positive point of departure for comparison with the Beni Hasan tombs.

9.2.1 TITLES AND STATUS OF NI-'ANKH-PEPI THE BLACK

Listed in MEIR V:1-2 are the titles of Ni'ankh-Pepi the Black.

They total twenty-three, among which is the title Governor, indicated by the hieroglyph *ḥaty-*[3], which Gardiner translates as a "prince" or "mayor", and which is usually understood to imply an appointed title. He also uses the strange title, "*Real* Superintendent of Upper Egypt". He is associated with two ancient towns as the Herdsman of Nekhen and Chief Nekhebite. Of interest is the title "Superintendent of the Two Swamps", in which the hieroglyphic determinative G49, (ducks heads above a pool) is used twice and suggests that perhaps certain waters were the preserve of the monarch. He also holds at least six titles relative to priestly activities. No divinities are depicted in the murals and only *Anubis*, *Osiris-Khentamenthes*, *Ptah-Seker* and *the great god*, are mentioned.

There were probably biographical texts, now largely disappeared, and the Old Kingdom form of the *ḥtp di nsw* formula - "A boon which the king gives" - *Osiris/Anubis* (Gardiner 1957:170)[4] appears on numbers of occasions.

Perhaps the most indicative of all titles is contained in the inscription on the West thickness of the doorway where Ni-'ankh-Pepi is shown leaning on a staff. He has a pendulous breast, which is described as "markedly feminine in character" (MEIR V:7) and his titles include "[Govern]or, Superintendent of Upper Egypt, [Treasurer] of the King of Lower Egypt,...". Here he acknowledges both Upper and Lower Egypt yet at the same time, above his head Ni-'ankh-Pepi

has the "Pepi" enclosed in a cartouche, a privilege accorded only to the monarch (MEIR V Pl V = *Fig 147*).

Fig 147 Ni-ʿankh-Pepi. Name enclosed in a cartouche. Tomb A1 Meir. Doorway: West thickness.

Ni-ʿankh-Pepi is again shown wigless, with a protruding stomach and pendulous breast on one of three pillars of the partition wall. He is portrayed in the conventional manner on the other two columns (MEIR V Pl VI). From one of these we learn that he had a second name, "Merire" also shown enclosed in a cartouche. There are various other instances of Pepi's name being enclosed in a cartouche, including the West wall in Room A where the stela with offering table repeats the cartouche-enclosed Pepi name at the bottom of the outer horizontal lines of text (MEIR V Pl X) Such inclusions raise problems assuming this tomb to be 6th dynasty when a monarch was in power.

9.2.2 THEMATIC MURALS

There are indications that the construction of this tomb was a lengthy process,[5] with additions and statues never completed. Subsequent damage by plunder and earthquake was extensive but while many details are missing, it is possible from the remaining murals to say with some certainty that they are mainly concerned with the provision and presentation of food offerings. On the East wall an inscription confirms that Ni-ʿankh-Pepi is inspecting work being done in the watermeadows. Men are shown with clapnets, and also fishing but the general depiction is simple and fairly crude and the clapnet and fishing scenes are divided by offering motifs which fairly conclusively connect the marsh operations with the funerary theme.

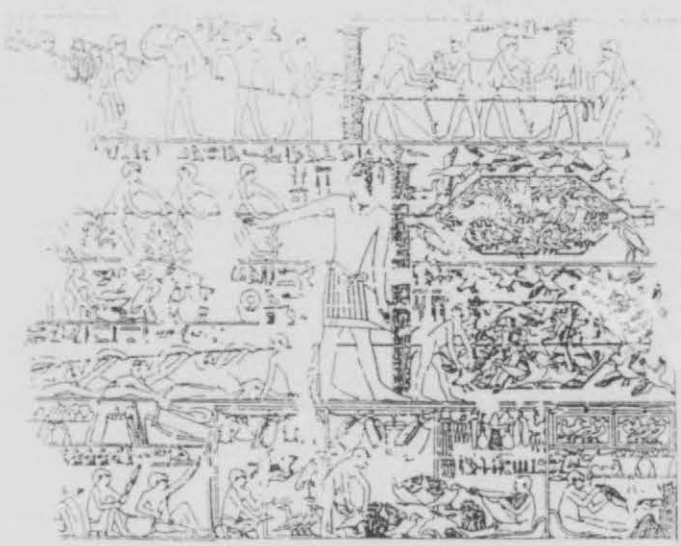


Fig 148 Marsh scene,
latter end of 5th dynasty

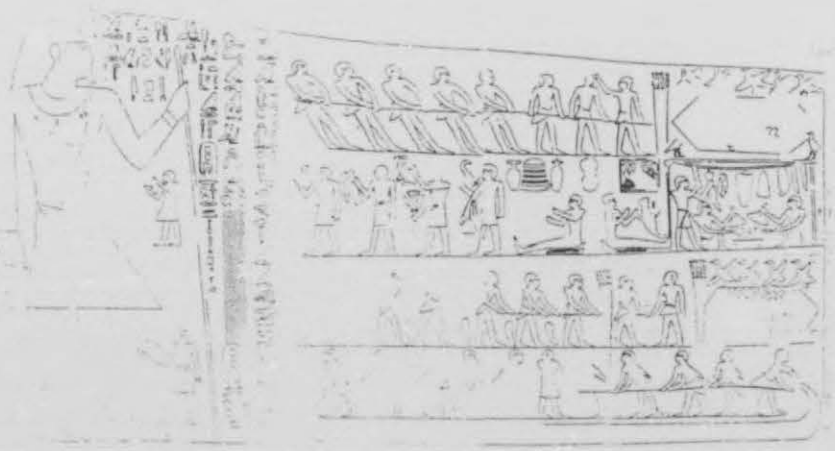


Fig 149 Tomb A1 Meir Ni'Ankh-Pepi Room A
East Wall Offering scene with marsh motif

The figures are stereotyped with little individuality and the marsh itself is merely suggested. Little comparison can be made with these and the developed marsh scenes of the earlier tombs from the royal necropolises (Harpur 1987:142, 479 Fig 76 = *Fig 148*, MEIR V Pl XIII = *Fig 149*)

The fairly simple and crude work found in *Fig 149* is characteristic of the indifferent skills utilised in the construction of some of these provincial tombs.

A number of Ni-'ankh'Pepi's relations, and dependants are included and are named in the murals, but these are irrelevant to this work and are not under discussion.[6]

9.3 TOMB A2 MEIR

9.3.1 TITLES AND STATUS OF PEPI'ONKH WITH THE GOOD NAME OF HENY THE BLACK

The owner of Tomb A2, son of Ni-'ankh-Pepi rose to greater heights than did his father. He lists twenty six individual titles among which is that of Vizier. He is a *ḥa*-prince, but there is no mention of an hereditary title. He shares a number of titles with his father, but quite a few of the father's titles no longer appear while the son holds a number of new titles. One gains the impression that he has an extended household and his dependants hold a larger number of appointments than did those in his father's household. His wife and three sons are mentioned, the same number of family members as in his father's tomb. He had a number of names, some with the attribute "the Black" attached (MEIR V:24).

He held a number of priestly appointments, including *Regulator of a Phyle* (of priests), but no mention is made of service to any particular divinity. The divinities mentioned are *Anubis* and *Osiris-Khentamenthes* and various references to *"the great god"* and *"his god"* which it is suggested may have been the King (MEIR V:23 Note 2). As with his father's tomb, no divinities appear in the murals.

Many of his appointments and those of his dependants are in direct association with the royal house. There are scribes of royal records, a royal scribe, and various other appointees bearing titles in which "royal" or "Great House" occur.

9.3.2 THEMATIC MURALS

In contrast to A1, the tomb of Pepi'onkh contains a wide variety of themes, with five of the six walls fully decorated. There is a constant repetition of the names and titles of the deceased, recorded over the majority of scenes in which he appears i.e., *Superintendent of Prophets, Heny. Superintendent of Upper Egypt, Heny. Governor, Pepi'onkh. Treasurer of the King of Lower Egypt* and so forth. Attendants are named and craftsmen are designated. His duties to the royal

house are constantly acknowledged, and yet he has no hesitation in repeatedly enclosing his name in a cartouche.

The decorations in this tomb are extensive, varied and, one suspects, considered appropriate for the tomb of a vizier. There is a wide variety of offering murals, including "inspection" scenes in which the funerary objective is fairly clearly indicated by the naming of *ka* servants. Among other scenes, fighting bulls appear in this tomb. They are an innovation in provincial tombs of this period and will be discussed later.

On the west wall of A2 Room A, Pepi'onkh is shown *Viewing all the work of the craftsmen*. These encompass stone statue and vase makers, metal workers, and jewellers. All the activities can be attributed to funerary preparations, the more so since in one instance where various articles of jewellery are placed upon two stands they are listed as made of *Green felspar and fine gold*, presumably assuring that their worth be recognised (MEIR V Pl XVI = *Fig 150*).

The jewellery could fall into the after-world category of necessities for the deceased. Menat necklaces appear in many of the scenes, but at this stage they cannot positively be connected to the *Hathor cult*. In later Meir tombs they have a definite connection. Statues must certainly be attributed to confirmation of tomb and funerary rites efficiently executed. Were they completed statues one might consider them to be substitutions, but since they are still in process of manufacture this cannot apply, particularly since the ancient Egyptians had something of an obsession with showing objects in their entirety.

The North wall of the same room contains scenes of carpenters at work, two of whom are engaged in sculpting a wooden statue of Pepi'onkh. Bread and beer appear in this mural but are specifically said to be *bread and beer for the draughtsmen and sculptors*. Comments of the workers are recorded on almost all the motifs but they are, in the main, trite and mundane and have nothing original or biographical about them.

In Room B on the South wall, seven large ships are shown, three in full sail and three with sails lowered and being rowed, with a fourth boat which appears to have been designed for towing. From similar paintings in another tomb at Meir, they are thought to be a part of the "inspection" process.

On the west side of the south wall of A2 Room B is a marsh scene, in which the text says Pepi'onkh is *spearing a very great catch of fish in the swamps of the Upper and Lower Egypt*, and shown spearing the usual two fish (8.2.3). On this wall, Pepi'onkh also appears in a duck hunting scene, and the text says that he is, *traversing the flooded fields, the swamps and every kind of marsh; hurling the throw-stick and idling in the nesting place of the wild fowl*. The expressions "*every kind of marsh*" and "*idling in...*" suggests that this is a generalisation of fowling

Fig 150 Tomb A2 Meir Room A West w ll Pepi'onkh "viewing" the workmen, his name in cartouche above.

and that it is recreational. In neither the fishing nor fowling scene is there any suggestion that Pepi'onkh is subduing chaos.

9.4 PERSONALISED REALITY

An indication of the intrusion of what may be called "personalised reality" as opposed to "idealised reality" occurs in the middle scene on the East wall of Room B. It is a palanquin scene. Pepi'onkh is being borne by twelve footmen and accompanied by such officials as a *Caterer, Superintendent of linen, Royal scribe, Scribe of the Royal records*, an *Inspector of Treasurers and Master-Mariner*. He also has twenty-two male and female attendants many of whom carry or lead pet dogs and monkeys.

Pepi'onkh himself holds what may be a pen and a whip made of three fox-skins. It has been suggested that, since he holds the same articles in a specific "inspecting" scene in another mural (MEIR V:Pl XXXII), Pepi'onkh is being transported in state to supervise the exaction of the impost of cattle, goats, sheep and asses (MEIR V Pl XXXI = *Fig 151*).

There are various inscriptions, mostly identifying the attendants and a few short exchanges of dialogue, until one comes to the Master Mariner, who, spatulate wand in one hand, the other steadying the roof-support of the palanquin calls out, *A beautiful road is the West!*

Blackman and Apted refer to a discussion (MEIR IV:42ff) on words such as *the goodly West* and *the western cemetery-hill* when it was felt that the intention behind such utterances was to transfer the action of the scenes in which they occurred from *the life of this world to the life after death* (MEIR V:40). If this is so, then we have passed beyond the concept of funerary offerings or substitutions in order to *sustain the corpse*, into the realm of "expectations of position and preferment in the after-life". It reaches beyond the activities of the *ba*, and introduces a new dimension into funerary anticipations.[8] Idealistic these anticipations may well be, but they are clearly orientated to the reality of the life-style of the tomb owner and details such as the pets and the specific naming of individuals is an added indication of this. That the latter were in fact part of the entourage of Pepi'onkh is borne out by the fact that one personage, the Steward *Itjai* either fell from grace in the eyes of his master, or more probably alienated other members of the household since, in all except one instance, his name was subsequently erased!

For the purposes of this work there is little point in detailing the large number of stereotyped *offering* and *inspecting* murals. Room F in A2, however, is relevant and of particular interest. Originally a roughly rectangular cellar-like chamber intended as a serdab, it was subsequently enlarged, and various alterations made including the introduction of a large door. The serdab,

the floor of which was originally sunk was filled to level the floor, in the process of which a third of the serdab walls were lost.

The remaining areas, however, are covered with representations (in sunk relief) of statues of Pepi'onkh. With enlargement the function of this chamber appears to have changed and the new east and west walls were decorated with ink drawings depicting some of the ceremonies performed in the Tent of purification and in the Embalmer's Workshop, together with the processions thereto.

The burial rites of the ancient Egyptians were contained in two important ceremonies, separated from one another by a considerable amount of time. The original ceremony, the Procession to the Tent of Purification and Embalmer's workshop is contained in seven episodes, of which, in this tomb, the first two are missing (MEIR V Pl XLII = *Fig 152)*

The second ceremony again includes a procession to the Embalmer's workshop (to collect the corpse), thence to the Tent of Purification and finally to the place of burial (MEIR V Pl XLIII = *Fig 152a)*.

These illustrations can at best only give an idea of the detail encompassed in the original drawings. The journeys are not the same as those to Abydos or Abusir, often depicted in Middle Kingdom tombs, but are specifically concerned with the preparation of the corpse and its burial. Since tomb murals were essentially made with a specific intention, one is entitled to ask why this subject was included. It has no bearing on sustenance for the corpse, nor expectation of the good life in the future. One can only conclude that again, a new dimension has entered the tomb, a desire to show and confirm that the owner has received all the necessary rites and obligations to enable him to enter into eternal life. Perhaps one might call it an '*affirmation of worth*'.

An interesting text appears at the end of episode 4, where the ship being towed to the landing place is shown having completed the journey. On land eight men pull at the tow-rope and between them and the boat is written, *This is the escort of an honoured one (to be repeated twice). A very happy old age.*

A similar text appears with the illustration of the three men bearing the sarcophagus on a lion-bier, preceded by a *lector* an *embalmer* and a female mourner in episode 7. Above the bearers is written *Escorting to the Embalmer's workshop. A very happy old age!*

Whether this concept was prevalent at the time we cannot tell but it certainly negates the assumption of an active life enjoyed by a far from old man, as depicted in the murals. Nor does it suggest a re-birth. It merely envisages a continuance of life.

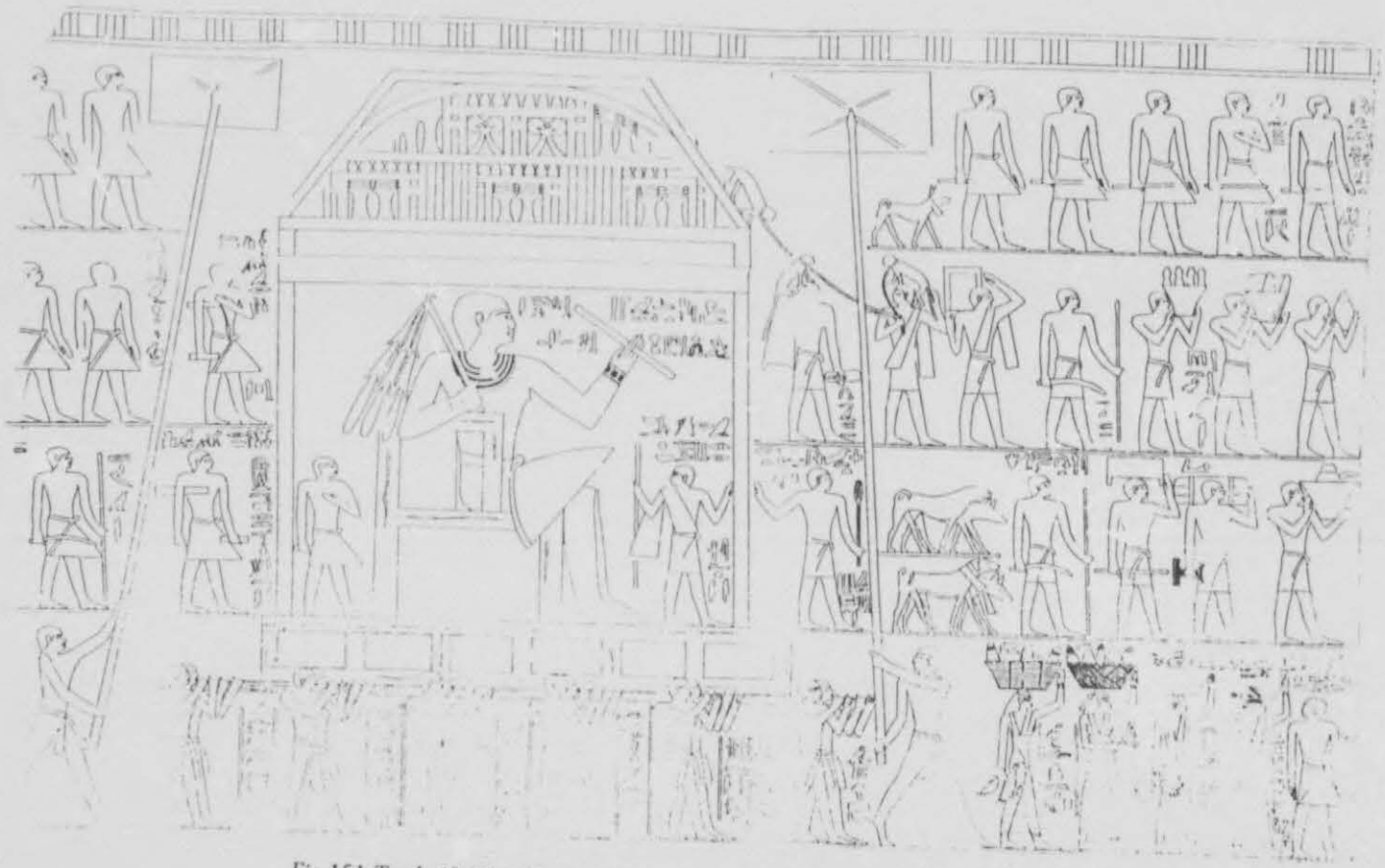


Fig 151 Tomb A2 Meir, Pepi onkh transported by Palanquin, accompanied by his various pets. Middle of east wall.

Fig 151

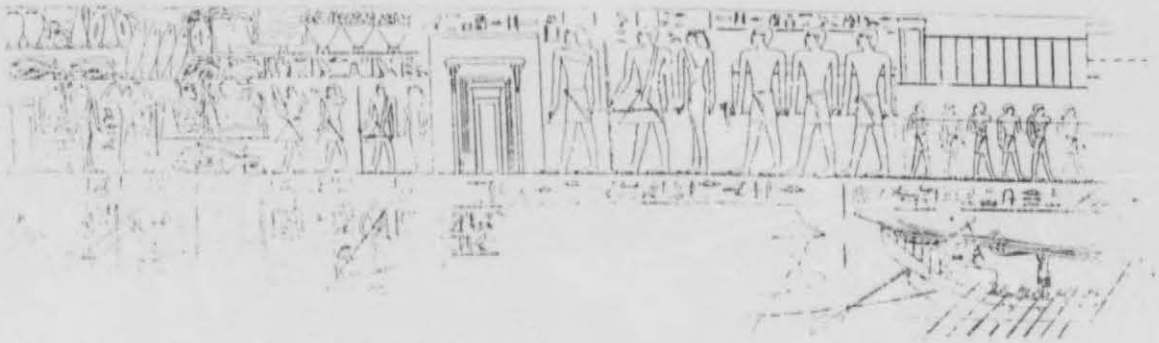


Fig 152 Tomb A2 Meir, Pepi ʿonkh procession to the Tent of Purification and embalmer's workshop. First ceremony.

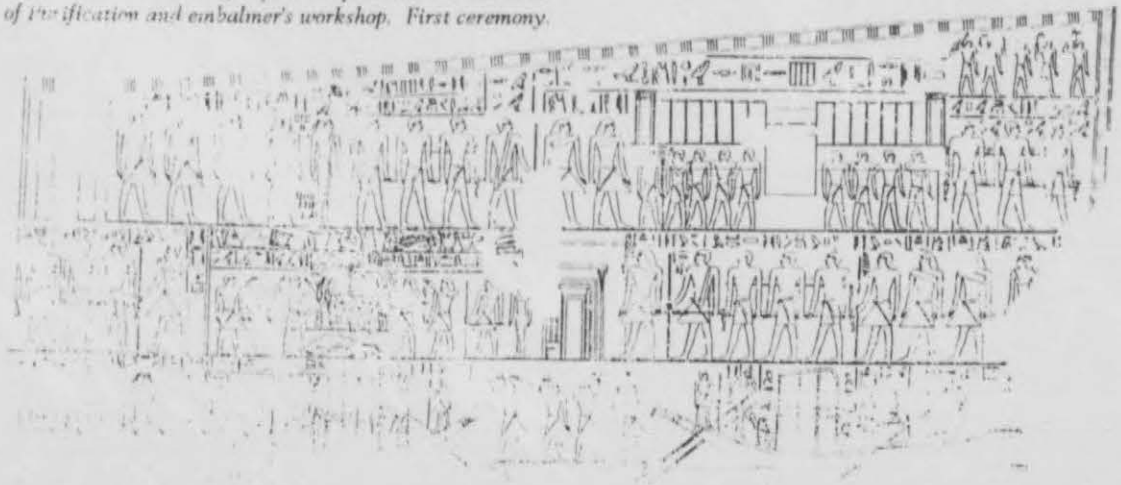


Fig 152a Tomb A2 Meir, Pepi ʿonkh procession to embalmer's workshop, Tent of Purification and cemetery. Second ceremony.

It would be unrealistic to presume that motifs such as the palanquin scene, and the elaborate funeral rituals, did not have some bond with personal aggrandisement. However, while this aspect has to be taken into consideration, it cannot be positively confirmed. It would be difficult indeed, however, to refute all relationship between such murals and the personal lifestyle of the tomb owner, particularly since each scene would seem to be appropriate to his office as vizier.

We do not necessarily have biography here but we do have a very positive movement away from the original concept of sustenance for the deceased in the hereafter.

Footnotes

[1] Baines & Malek 1980:36.

[2] Blackman (MEIR I:9-13) gives details of the various family members buried at Meir and includes a family tree of the Princes of Cusae in the 6th dynasty and those of the 12th dynasty. They were an illustrious group apparently able to survive the anarchic and interim periods.

[3] Gardiner (1957:55, 162 F4).

[4] Gardiner says the *ḥtp di nsw formula* 'a boon which the king gives' is of very ancient date. In the Old Kingdom the phrase was used in reference to favours of various kinds bestowed on his subjects by the king. Food offerings made by the living Pharaoh in the pyramid temple of his father or predecessor were known as *ḥtp nsw* "a boon of the king". This assumes that all funerary gifts and privileges were in a certain sense boons given by the king. Gods such as *Anubis*, *Osiris* or *Geb* were also givers of benefits. Gardiner finds that in the Old Kingdom the King and whatever god is named are mentioned *in parallelism* with one another as givers of the boon or boons. By the Middle Kingdom, although the formula was used it had undergone re-interpretation, the idea behind the *ḥtp-di-nsw* formula being that the king gives or has given or is to give an offering to some god in his temple, in order that the latter in turn may give offerings to a private individual in his tomb. (1957:171-172). In time the formula probably became an automatic funerary specific.

[5] Work possibly undertaken by his son.

[6] Details appear in MEIR V:2-4.

[7] These are typical Old Kingdom conventional murals and only one or two have been reproduced in this text.

[8] It is not suggested that this is the first appearance of the concept but that such a concept has been established in the tombs.

CHAPTER 10

11TH DYNASTY TOMBS AT BENI HASAN

This quiet Dust was Gentlemen and Ladies,
And Lads and Girls,
Was Laughter and ability and sighing...
Emily Dickinson

10.1 DATING IN RETROSPECT

In the absence of specific dating such as the inclusion of the name of a monarch, one can only approximate the dates of private tombs. Newberry (BH I:1-3) discusses the dates of twelve Beni Hasan tombs of which six can be dated from the names of kings and family relationships. The three tombs nos 29,15 and 17 are listed in that order, tombs 33 and 26 separating 29 (Baqt I) from 15 (Baqt III) and 17 (Khety I). From inscriptions in tomb 17, it appears to have been made for the son of the owner of tomb 15. However, Newberry merely lists these as pre-Amenemhet I (1929-1892), the first positive dating by royal cartouche of this king appearing in tomb 14. From the relative positions of tombs 14 and 15, Newberry concludes that 15 is the earlier. Since the age of "the group in general" is 12th dynasty, and the name of the first monarch of that dynasty appears in tomb 14, the three tombs, 29, 15 and 17 are listed as 11th dynasty, although there is no positive confirmation.

10.1.1 THE ORYX NOME

Beni Hasan, in the Oryx or 16th nome of Upper Egypt was possibly one of the less important or influential of the nomes. It does not appear to have had or developed a history such as did Memphis, Herakleopolis or Thebes. That it was long-established, however, is confirmed by a list of estates providing income for the pyramid temple of the 4th dynasty king, Snofru (Seneferu 2575-2551) at Dahshur. The personified Estates are depicted as females carrying food offerings and they are grouped according to their administrative district or nome (Kemp 1991:116 Fig 40 = *Fig 153)*. Beni Hasan is represented by the second figure from the left.

How influential or powerful the local families were it is difficult to assess and without complete records succession is also doubtful. In the early days of the 11th dynasty a dichotomy may well have occurred among the middle Egyptian nomes in regard to their relationships with both the 9th and 10th dynasties of Herakleopolis to the north and the 11th dynasty Thebans to the south.

As the Beni Hasan tombs will show, the governors of the 16th Upper Egyptian nome had no difficulty in accepting the Thebans of the 12th dynasty.

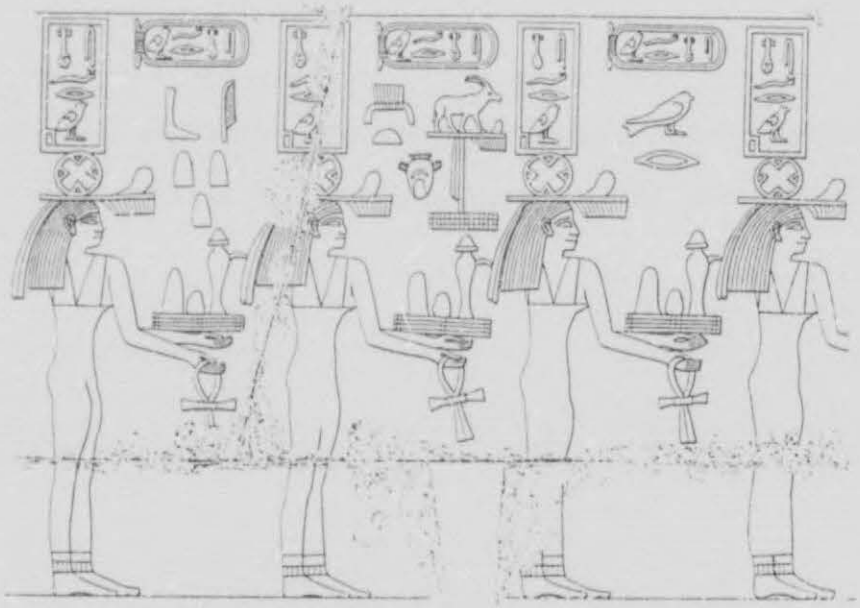


Fig 153 Estates with offerings. The district of Beni Hasan designated by Oryx nome sign. Pyramid Temple of King Snofru.

10.2 TOMB 29: GREAT CHIEF OF THE ORYX NOME BAQT I (*Fig 154*)

10.2.1 ARCHITECTURE OF THE TOMB

Tomb 29, cut into the side of the limestone escarpment on the East bank of the Nile, presents no architectural features in its doorway which is plain and gives entry to an almost square tomb chamber containing six mummy pits (not shown on plan), one of which is unfinished and placed askew. The door itself has a pivot hole on its northern side, presumably to accommodate a wooden door.

The architect or builders would appear to have been inexperienced or ill-trained, since the masons went too high in the rock stratum with the result that the roof had to be left full of very rough boulders. Failure to allow adequate thickness in the roof also resulted in parts of it having fallen in. Much damage was subsequently done by the Copts who broke through both the north and south walls into two adjacent tombs.

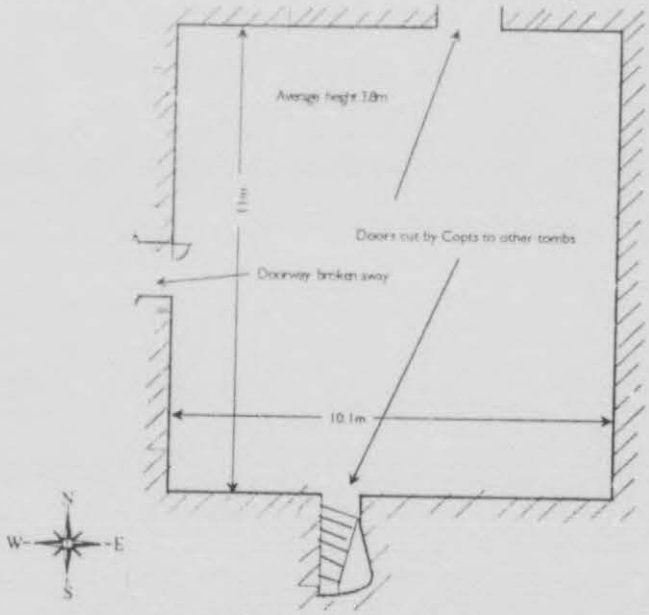


FIG 154 PLAN OF TOMB 29 BENI HASAN
BAQT I

10.2.2 TITLES AND STATUS OF BAQT I

Baqt I is presented as Great Chief of the Oryx Nome. He lists in addition eight other titles, one of which is *ha*-prince. There is no claim to the title *erpa-prince (1) hereditary noble*: (2) *heir* (Faulkner 1991:148). His other titles are the fairly usual *sahu** *biti*, (Treasurer) of the King of Lower Egypt, Confidential friend of the King, Royal acquaintance, and three legal titles, the first, an unspecified title, "He who is in the chamber", the other two specifically associated with the cities of Nekhen and Nekheb. The latter titles were probably not exclusive since they appear in the Meir tombs and would seem to be authoritative, and legal. Neither his father nor mother are named, but his wife Tehutiqa, a priestess of *Hathor* and a son Baqt are recorded.

There are no long lists of attendants and servants, as in the Meir A1 and A2 tombs, and in general the opulence of the latter bears no comparison with the simplicity and even crudity of tomb 29 Beni Hasan. The conclusion must be drawn that the circumstances in which tomb 29 was constructed were vastly different from those at the time of the construction of Tombs A1 and A2 at Meir.

* Faulkner (1991:258) reads the sign *sḏ3w* "treasurer".

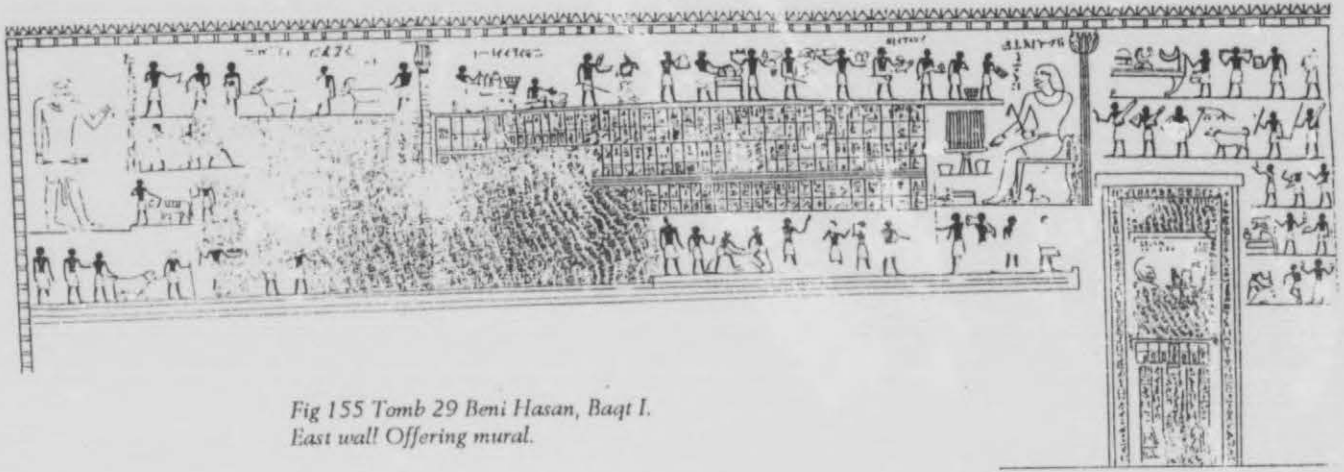


Fig 155 Tomb 29 Beni Hasan, Baqt I.
East wall Offering mural.

10.2.3 THEMATIC MURALS

10.2.3(a) THE EAST WALL (BH II:Pl XXX = *Fig 155*).

Although it is not the intention to discuss the contents of formal "offering walls" which are present in all the tombs, nevertheless the east wall of Tomb 29 is of interest from the point of view of the simplicity of its design and execution. It is stylised with little innovation, suggesting a limited availability of skilled labour. There is little to remark other than the very plain presentation of the offering table before Baqt, the small and rather insignificant dog beneath his chair, and the absence of scribal work and text. Of interest is the figure of Baqt, wearing the customary priestly leopard skin. Since he is accorded no priestly title one wonders if this design was purpose-made or standard, possibly the latter. The false door is completely stereotyped, Across the top of the architrave the *htp di nswt* formula addresses the *Great God Lord of heaven* and is followed as usual by the name and titles of Baqt. On either side the same formula appeals to *Anubis* and *Osiris*. There is no indication as to whom the Great God refers.

One interesting feature is that of the third figure from the left above the false door, who holds an animal by a lead. It appears to be an ichneumon, a small mongoose or weasel-type animal, usually found in the marsh scenes where it climbs towards the birds' nests, in search of eggs or chicks. Montet (1964:89) says that civets, mongooses and wild cats, were kept in cages and released in the marshes to climb the stalks of papyrus and disturb the parent birds, making them an easy target for the hunters. Usual marsh scenes do not show this, although the animals are almost always present. This picture of such an animal on a lead would seem to go some way to proving Montet's contention. The five men in the same register all carry weapons for hunting and fighting (BH II:34), and in addition to the ichneumon a hunting dog is shown between the third and fourth figures so one may conclude that this is a "hunting-theme" picture.

10.2.3(b) THE WEST END OF THE NORTH WALL (BH II:Pl XXVIII = *Fig 156)*

This wall comprises fishing and duck hunting scenes, which, when Newberry recorded them, were in a very bad state of preservation. Baqt is shown standing and "inspecting" tribute, the (wild) cattle of the desert in a register above fowling and fish catching scenes. The impression is of an effort to include as much as possible in as simple a form as can be accomplished. To this end, the fowling has a simple clap net, and the fishing sequence includes a small section of fish gutters, with fish netting, spread over the two lower registers. Cattle crossing and the typical calf-on-shoulder inducement to the leading cow has a small space to the left of the bottom register.

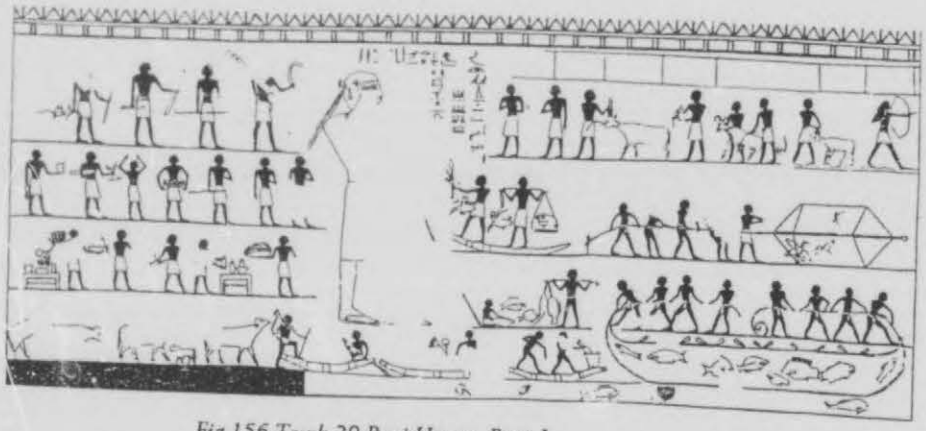


Fig 156 Tomb 29 Beni Hasan, Baqt I.
North wall west end, fishing and duck hunting.

10.2.3(c) EAST END OF THE NORTH WALL (BH II: Pl XXIX = *Fig 157*)

The first three registers are allocated to a Baqt fishing scene, in which he is accompanied by his wife and possibly his son (much damaged), with Baqt spearing the usual fish (two?) and papyrus pullers beyond. A simple "boatmen fighting" scene has been included on the lower right register. Across the top of the wall there is a scene showing the handling of wild animals. It is devoted to restraint only, none of the men being shown as hunters.

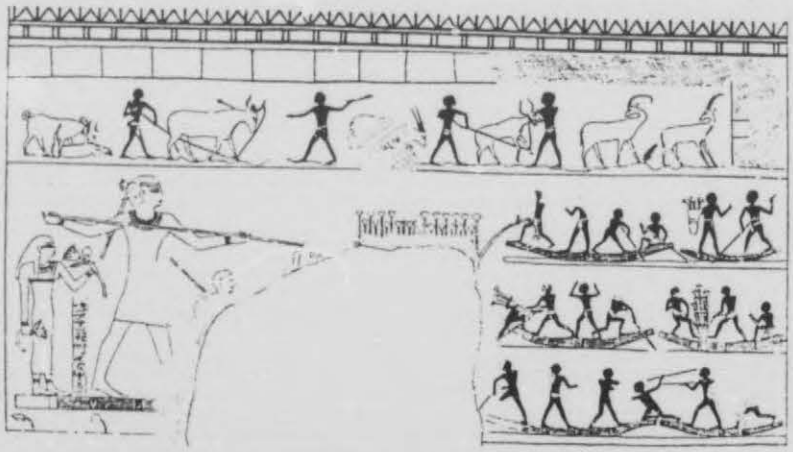


Fig 157 Tomb 29 Beni Hasan, Baqt I.
North wall east end, marsh scene.

10.2.3(d) WEST END OF THE SOUTH WALL (BH II: Pl XXXII = *Fig 158*).

Although the figures are just as simple as the previous walls, here there is the first indication of personal status. To the left Baqt stands with a staff and a baton of office. Behind him are a *sahu*

(treasurer), and an attendant sandal bearer, and three dwarfs, called *Nemu, Zeneb, and Au.* The sandal bearer and treasurer are not named, leading to the supposition that this also is a stereotyped image. The dwarfs, could also possibly be part of the same image of the "status" or "wealth" of Baqt since almost identical figures are repeated in Tomb 17.[1] Before Baqt, and separated by a vertical line of hieroglyphs is a much damaged scene showing domestic cattle, ploughing, and men herding goats. In the top register are six pairs of wrestlers without an inscription.

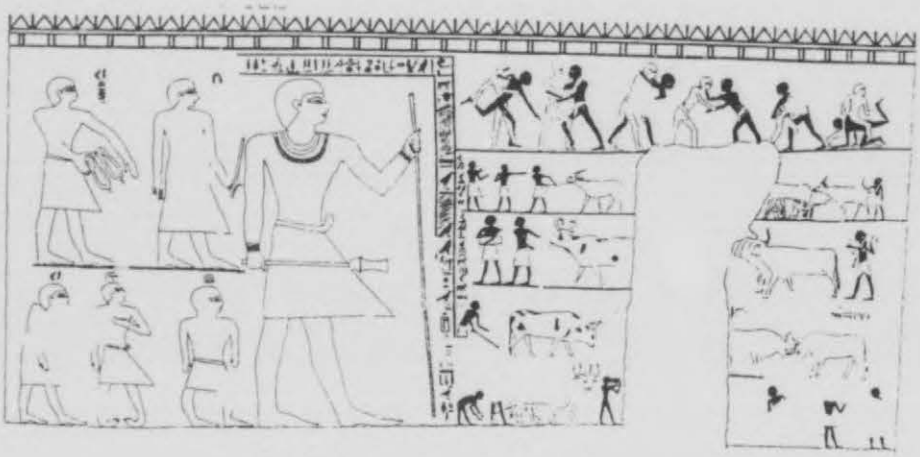


Fig 158 Tomb 29 Beni Hasan, Baqt I.
South wall west end, Baqt with dwarfs.

Wrestlers gradually appear in tombs of this period. Here they are presumably in recreational pose, but in later tombs they appear on walls linked to martial affairs.

An interesting small agricultural group is on the right of the fourth register from the top, where two bulls confront each other head on. Galan (1994) says that fights between two bulls began to be present on the walls of *the tombs of local chiefs* from the 6th dynasty and continued until the reign of Thutmosis III in the 18th dynasty. Assumed to be a part of the bucolic life to be perpetuated in the after-life, Galan now proposes that the representation is not descriptive but symbolic and links the overpowering of one bull by the other as a struggle to maintain leadership in the netherworld, the deceased being identified with the triumphant bull. This hypothesis/interpretation is maintained on the strength of certain funerary texts but Galan does concede, "Nevertheless, the reason behind the representation of bull fights on tomb walls remains uncertain, since not all the themes attested in funerary texts were depicted" (1994:93).

Since there is no specific indication of this interpretation in Tomb 29, one cannot attribute the bull-fighting pictures to anything other than the way they are shown as part of a farm scene. Nothing else in the scene suggests a covert nether-world connotation.

That these murals were probably of standard pattern, with the addition of certain texts is suggested by the vertical line of hieroglyphs separating Baqt from the wrestlers/farm scene. While above his head are given his titles, the vertical line says, *the ḥa-prince, pleasing the heart of all people, making monuments of eternity in the temple of Horus, Smiter of the Rekhyt, Great Chief of the Oryx Nome, the pillar of the South, Baqta*" (BH II:36). It would seem that the iconography and the text are not in agreement. An "inspecting" text should link Baqt to the farm/wrestling scene, but the text sounds as though it should accompany a workshop or statue making mural.

10.2.3(e) EAST END OF THE SOUTH WALL (BH II: Pl XXXi = *Fig 159*).

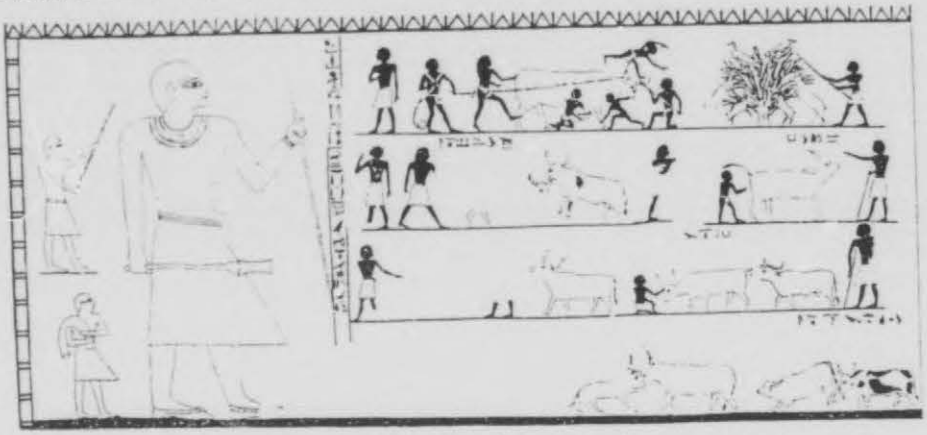


Fig 159 Tomb 29 Beni Hasan, Baqt I.
South wall east end.

This again shows Baqt with staff and baton and accompanied by two unnamed attendants. The vertical line of text before Baqt merely lists titles and epithets but does not link him to the scene towards which he faces.

Newberry says traces of a hunter with bow and arrows, shooting the lioness attacking the bull, could just be seen in the lower register. There is nothing remarkable about the other registers except perhaps the man being tossed by a bull which others are trying to restrain. The acacia (*sont*) bush to the right with browsing goats is a familiar motif.

All in all this tomb has little personal iconography, other than the dog under the chair and the dwarfs. Even these, however, may well have been developing into standard motifs. If they had to be categorised they would probably be classified "status symbols".

10.3 TOMB 15: GOVERNOR OF THE ORYX NOME BAQT III (*Fig 160*).

10.3.1 ARCHITECTURE OF THE TOMB

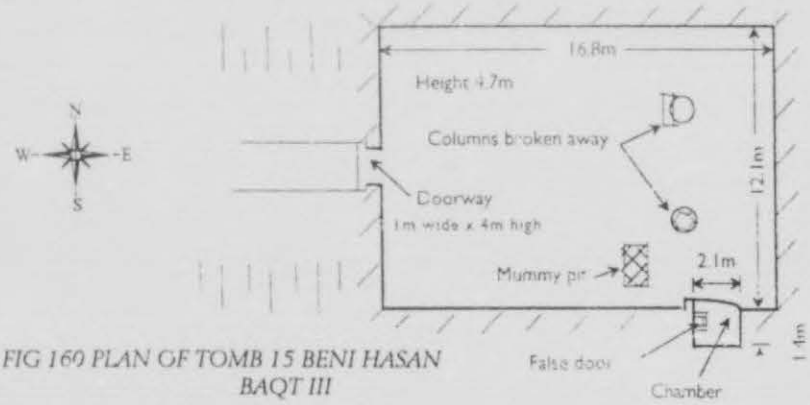


FIG 160 PLAN OF TOMB 15 BENI HASAN BAQT III

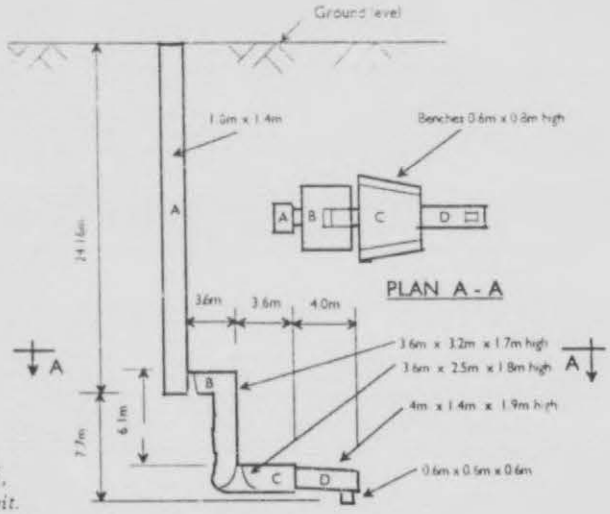


Fig 160a Tomb 15, detail of mummy pit.

The doorway of this tomb is plain, without architectural features the main chamber being divided at the East end by two quatrefoil columns of the lotus-bud type (*Fig 161*). The ceiling is undecorated.

A small shrine containing an altar was excavated in the south-eastern corner of the main chamber, but apart from scenes of men preparing an ox and viands, the paintings were too defaced for Newberry to copy (BH II:50). There are seven mummy pits in the tomb. Only one of these is shown on the plan and as can be seen from the elevation, is very elaborate in construction.

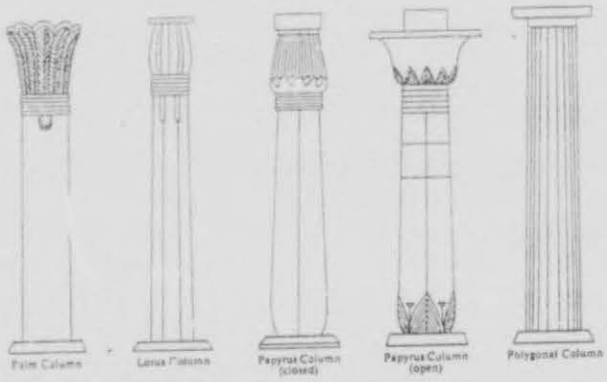


Fig 161 Columns used in Egyptian architecture

10.3.2 TITLES AND STATUS OF BAQT III

The son of Baqt I was interred in Tomb 33, his family relationship clearly recorded. The tomb, plain and similar to tomb 29, was badly damaged, and little could be gleaned from it. Baqt of tomb 15, is designated III although there is no direct connection between him and the previous two.

Baqt of tomb 15 is listed under "Rank" by Newberry as "The Governor of the Oryx nome, the XVIth nome of Upper Egypt" (BH II:43).

The title of Great Chief does appear along with the *htp di nswt* formula but in a less prominent position. Again the familiar titles of *sahu* of Lower Egypt, Confidential friend of the King, True Royal acquaintance, occur together with the legal titles vested in Nechen and Necheb. No priestly titles appear although in the offering formula he is referred to as *beloved of Khnem, Lord of Herur, beloved of Heqt of Herus, beloved of Hathor, mistress of Neferus, favoured of Horus, Smiter of the Rekhyt and beloved of Ptah-Sokar*.

His father's name is given as *Remushen*, mother *Hoteperfu*. He had a daughter who stands behind him on the north wall, and who is called *Hathor-neferheputa*. We are told she is "Devoted towards *Anubis*, upon his hill" (BH II:47). Strangely, neither mother nor daughter are listed as priestesses.

10.3.3 THEMATIC MURALS

The murals in this tomb are a mixture of normal thematic motifs, interspersed with a variety of additional subjects. Allowing for parts of murals having been destroyed, there does not appear to have been the conventional large marsh, fishing/duck hunting scene, in which Baqt would have taken part. When he appears he is always shown in the staff/baton standing posture, except for one occasion (Western end of South wall), when he has a staff in one hand and a lotus in the other. He is not shown participating in any of the activities. In the main he seems to have been content to have his name and titles painted above and before him without detailing

his participation in the events. Text is scarce and largely confined to identifying the objects or actions. Newberry comments that the style of painting is uniform throughout, and says that the human figures are boldly and spiritedly drawn, while the birds and animals are weak. Subsequent attention to some of these drawings does not necessarily confirm this view.

The East, North and South walls are covered in murals which include a very wide range of motifs. The decoration of tomb 15 is almost a complete antithesis of the decoration in tomb 29 where a modest range of subjects in simple figures was covered as economically as possible. The walls in tomb 15 offer a closely packed sweep of figures, actively employed in a variety of occupations and vastly wider in scope than the subjects in tomb 29. Whereas in the latter tomb one has the feeling that a commitment to the necessities has to be observed in the simplest form, in tomb 15 one has an impression of an outpouring of exuberance. One wall, the West, is very badly mutilated. Newberry suggests that the upper part of the wall may well be similar to the corresponding wall in tomb 17, which will be reviewed later.

10.2.3(a) NORTH WALL (BH II: I & IV = *Fig 162*).

This wall is divided into six registers, four of which, at the west end, are taken up by standing figures of Baqt and his daughter. Register 1 (top) is devoted entirely to a hunting scene, fairly stereotyped in design and spacing. It has a wide variety of animals including two mythical creatures on the left hand side, a long necked leopard and a winged creature walking behind what appears to be the *Seth* animal (*Fig 162a*). A variety of buck can be recognised, also a cheetah, a hare, and what is possibly an ostrich. These desert scenes are typical of others at Beni Hasan in that they are devoid of any real action. The following register is devoted to people and their various occupations. From left to right they show a barber, a chiropodist, the master of linen, linen manufacturers, spinners and twine manufacturers, men quarrelling, and painters at work. The reason for the introduction of two women into this all male assembly is not clear.

The women come into their own on the next (3rd) register, where they are occupied with spinning and weaving, and performing as acrobats (*Fig 162b*). The ball game is possibly a part of the acrobatic sequence and may fall under an "entertainment" category. Animal husbandry, tax gathering, knife and sandal-makers appear in the 4th register from the top, while in the 5th, a variety of herdsmen, musicians, goldsmiths, painters and sculptors are shown in a series of motifs having little in common with each other.

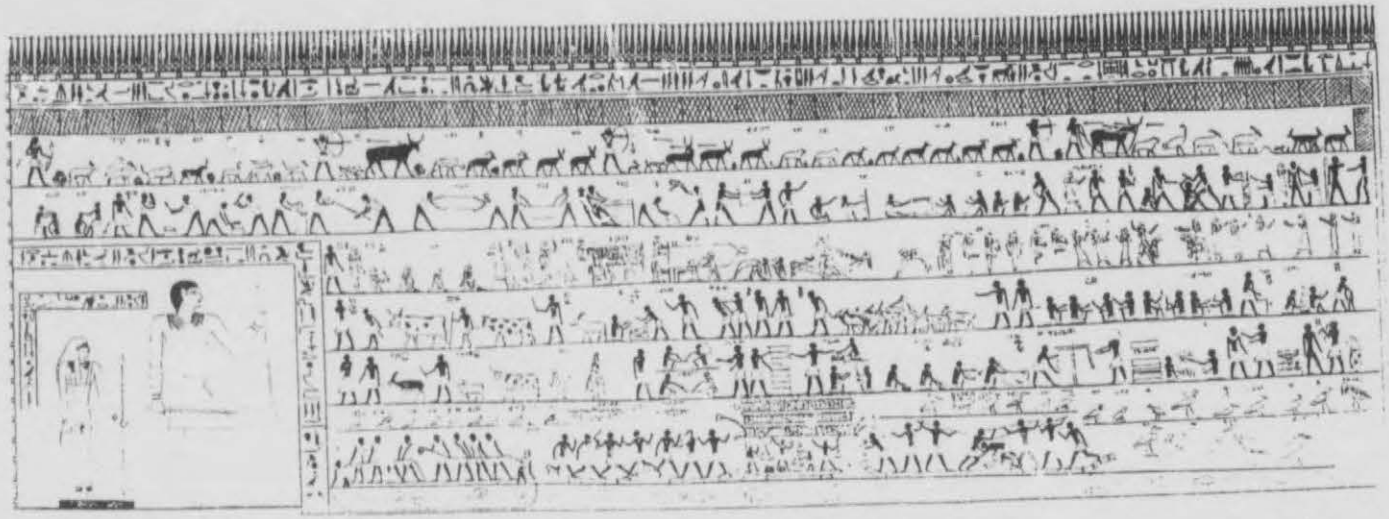


Fig 162 Tomb 15 Beni Hasan, Baqt III. North wall.

Fig 162a top register. Detail Mythical animals

Fig 162b 3rd register from top. Girls at play. Detail

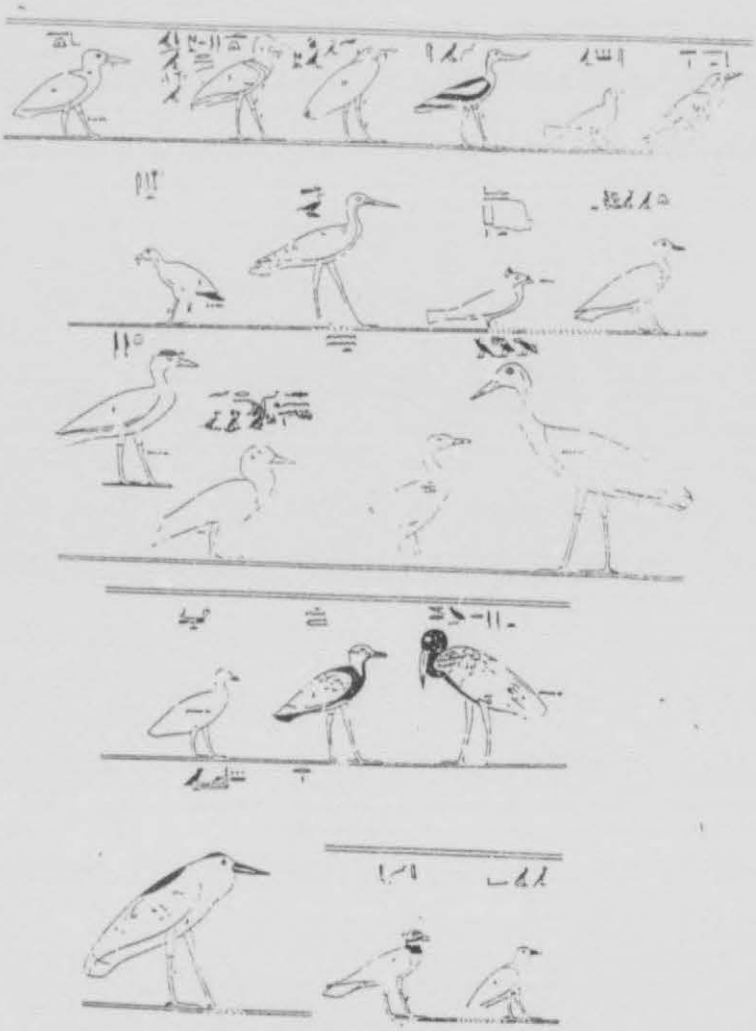


Fig 163 Tomb 15 Beni Hasan, Baqt III.
North wall, birds on lower register right,

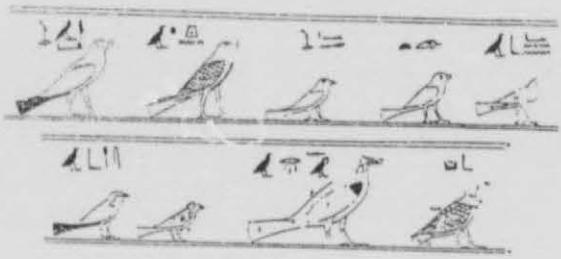


Fig 164 Tomb 15 Beni Hasan, Baqt III.
North wall, birds on lower register left.

The final register introduces the usual marsh scene but concentrates on the activities of the fishermen and boatmen. In the light of other similar motifs, the boatmen are believed to be jousting. Baqt and his wife appear in a very small fowling scene, all the more unusual because Baqt is shown much smaller than the fishermen and boatmen.

Perhaps the most interesting of all the motifs on this wall are the birds in the bottom register, which make no pretence to being a part of the scenery, but are simply drawn and named as though the artist wished to make a record of local bird life. Even more remarkable are the bats.

Davies (1938) who endeavoured to interpret some of the earlier work on these bird and bat paintings, found that due to their accessibility to visitors the lower scenes had suffered badly. However, she says that where the outlines were visible they "are extremely well drawn and show great familiarity with bird-forms"(1938:13, Pl II = *Fig 163*, Pl III = *Fig 164*). This tends to negate Newberry's comments on the bird and animal drawings which he found inferior to the humans.

Davies found the lines of the bats had become confused and uncertain, but says that they were originally in almost perfect preservation, including a bat drawn side view. The colour was a drab brownish-pink, with the one on the right a darker browny-red body. Two varieties are pictured quite distinctly and both species are still present at Beni Hasan (1938: 14 = *Fig 165*). She comments that the artist was at pains to draw two views as if he were making a study of them. Such drawings are extremely rare and these bats at Beni Hasan may be unique (1938:14).

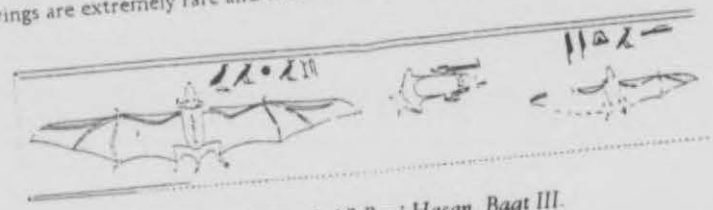


Fig 165 Tomb 15 Beni Hasan, Baqt III.
North wall, bats on lower register left.

If comment on this wall has been somewhat detailed, it is because here in a private tomb we have, in addition to the stylised motifs, a totally realistic series of pictures, even to the extent of detailing the drawings the painters are preparing (5th register right). The introduction of what appears to be a genuine ornithological record of the local birds suggests we may be seeing the hobby of Baqt himself, or the artist who was allowed to add these records to Baqt's tomb. We are not afforded any written clues, but while we may relegate the "working, playing and sports" motifs to realistic, if stereotyped, examples developed over a long period, these birds, meticulously drawn and notated, cannot be anything but the expression of the interest of an ancient Egyptian naturalist.

It had long been the custom to introduce recognisable species of birds into marsh scenes, but this 'clinical' iconographic approach is quite new and remarkable.

10.3.3(b) WEST END OF THE SOUTH WALL (BH II: Pl VII = *FIG 166*)

Immediately below the top frieze, a line of hieroglyphs contains the usual *ḥtp di nswt* formula, invoking *Osiris*, *Anubis* and *Khnum Lord of Herur* in respect of *percheru* offerings. Along with Baqt's usual titles and the names of his parents, are added the titles *mery Ptah Sokar* beloved of *Ptah Sokar* and beloved of his lord (the King) truly whom he praises, from day to day (BH II:49). There is no indication in this tomb of the identity of the reigning monarch and this phrase has probably become part of a formula. However, the *Ptah Sokar* title is interesting since it is largely associated with Memphis, and may indicate the district or school from which the scribe or supplier of the text has emanated. This can only be conjecture.

The wall itself has seven decorated registers but would seem to have contained eight. There are two figures of Baqt one taking up all the registers on the left accompanied by a (mutilated) hawk, and a smaller figure covering, with text, four visible, almost certainly five registers. The large figure has staff and baton, the smaller staff and lotus.

The first three unbroken registers would fall under the heading of pre-interment, although the text around the large figure gives no indication of the activities. All that have been included textually are the titles and name of Baqt. Primarily from the top left is shown the transport of a statue of Baqt in a naos, and the procession associated with it. Half way along the procession ends, and a scribe is shown listing various funeral goods, ornaments, weapons etc.

The second register departs entirely from the previous theme and enters into the stock-taking of oxen. From the left, a scribe registers the numbers, but just beyond that motif is a scene of punishment where, according to Newberry a defaulter is being bastinadoed (BH II: Pl VII [Detail] = *Fig 166a*). Other defaulters are being driven along, so if these are tax evaders, the man on the floor is not an isolated case. This scene gives every indication of being tax collection which appears to have nothing to do with the listing of funeral requirements as in the top register. The herdsman leading the third animal, a cow, is shown walking as though crippled. Crippled figures feature in tombs at Meir, where they are rather more defined. The figures at the end of the 2nd register are preparing food for the cattle.

The 3rd Register from the top repeats the stocktaking theme applied to asses. Immediately under the chastisement motif in Register 2, women also feature under some sort of restraint.

The figure in the front being threatened or beaten, holds a child in her arms, the third woman also partly crippled, leaning on a staff, is supporting herself on the seated figure. Perhaps they are petitioners for, or wives of, the men being brought along by the attendants (*Fig 166a*).

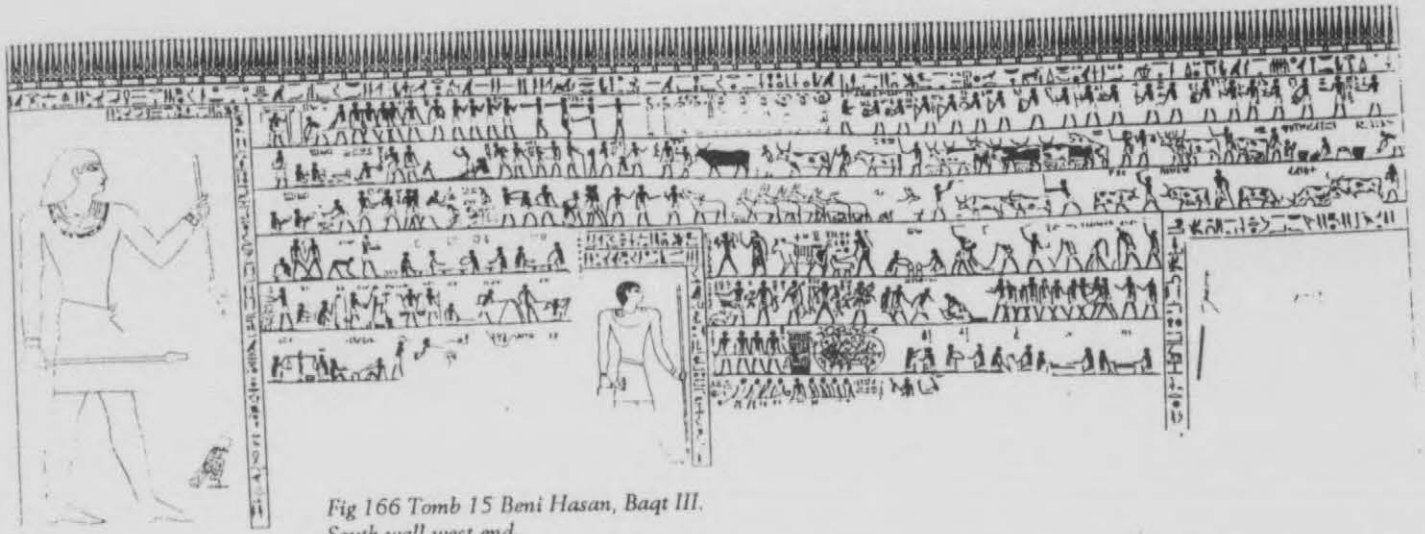


Fig 166 Tomb 15 Beni Hasan, Baqt III.
South wall west end.

Fig 166a 2nd, 3rd registers. Punishment of offenders. Detail.

Registers 4-6 between the two Baqt figures, are potters working at wheels 4, potters at a kiln 5, and men straightening rods of wood. In 6 metal workers weigh the metal and others blow the furnace. Before the smaller figure of Baqt with the lotus the hieroglyphs state that he is "watching the work of the fields". Before him, the first halves of Registers 4,5, 6 and 7, should confirm this text. Register 4 does show a calf being carried and a cow and calf being led. In Register 5 men are bringing dead and live ducks and lotus flowers. Register 6 is a marsh clapnet scene, and Register 7 possibly a fish netting scene. Western halves of these registers are concerned with a series of games. A large figure of Baqt once stood at the end of the wall, presumably watching the games. The "watching fieldwork" caption would be more suited to the usual "ploughing, winnowing and storing grain" murals.

10.3.3(c) EAST END OF THE SOUTH WALL: ENTRANCE TO SHRINE (BH II: Pl VI = *Fig 167)*

The paintings inside the shrine itself were too defaced for Newberry to copy. The east and south walls contained scenes representing the sacrifice of an ox and men preparing various viands. A small altar, much mutilated, stands against the west wall. No formal offering scene is to be found in the main chamber but there would doubtless have been something of this nature incorporated in the shrine. Newberry speculates that the lost drawings probably represented a vintage scene, a small part of which remains, and at the end of which is a tree with birds and a trap (BH II: Pl VI = [Detail] *Fig 167b)*.

On the left of the doorway, in a partly divided register, is a standing man before whom is a cat, and an animal Newberry calls a rat but which has the hieroglyphic *pnw*, mouse (Faulkner 1991:89), above it. The hieroglyph is minus its determinative (Gardiner 1957: F 27), but the drawing was probably considered sufficient. It is quite out of proportion with the cat but, as in the bird lists, the animals are not a composite part of a scene. The word baboon *i'n (Faulkner 1991:11)*, is written over the baboons, and the artist has included two species (BH II Pl VI [Detail] = *Fig 167a)*. The man is armed with a weapon of some kind but there is no suggestion of a hunting scene. The two small hieroglyphs just below the cat and mouse are possibly *ft ft* leap (Faulkner 1991:99), but they are indistinct. Registers 3 and 4 from the top are concerned with preparing various foodstuffs and confectionery, while registers 5 and 6, show offerings being transported. With the exceptions of the animals, which have no apparent place in this theme, it would seem to be an offering mural in keeping with the entrance to the shrine.

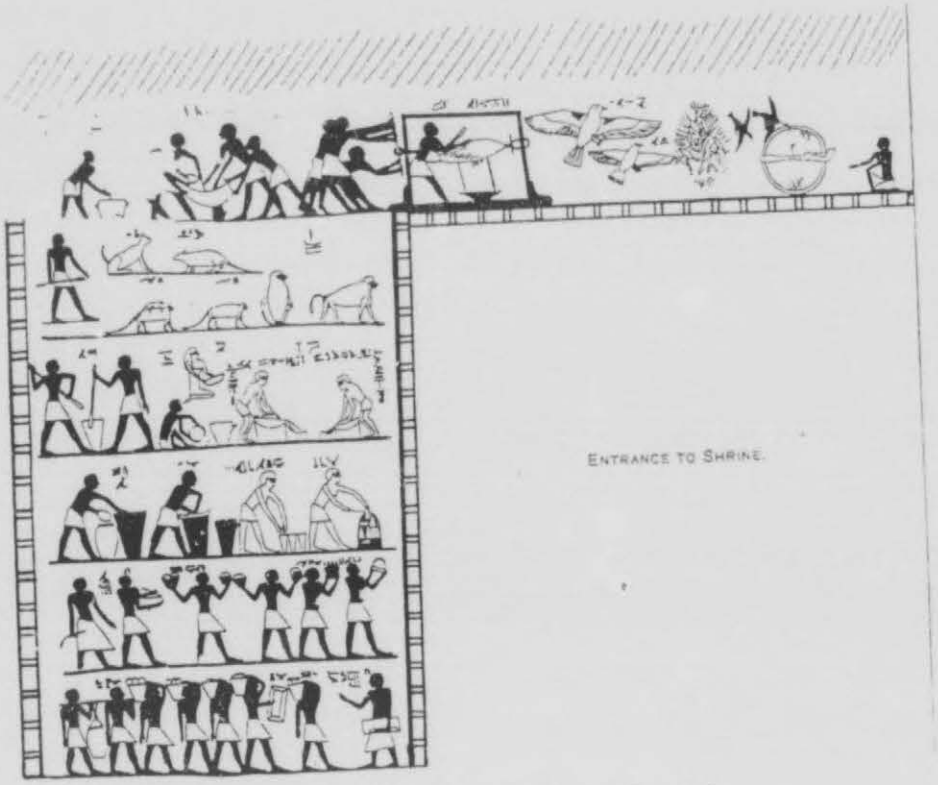


Fig 167 Tomb 15 Beni Hasan, Baqt III. South wall east end.

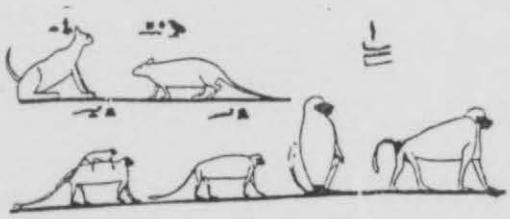


Fig 167a Cat, Mouse, Baboons. Detail

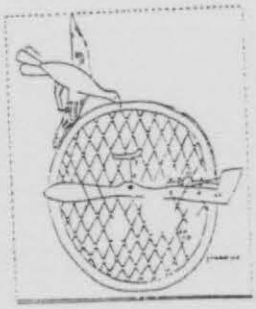


Fig 167b Bird Trap. Detail

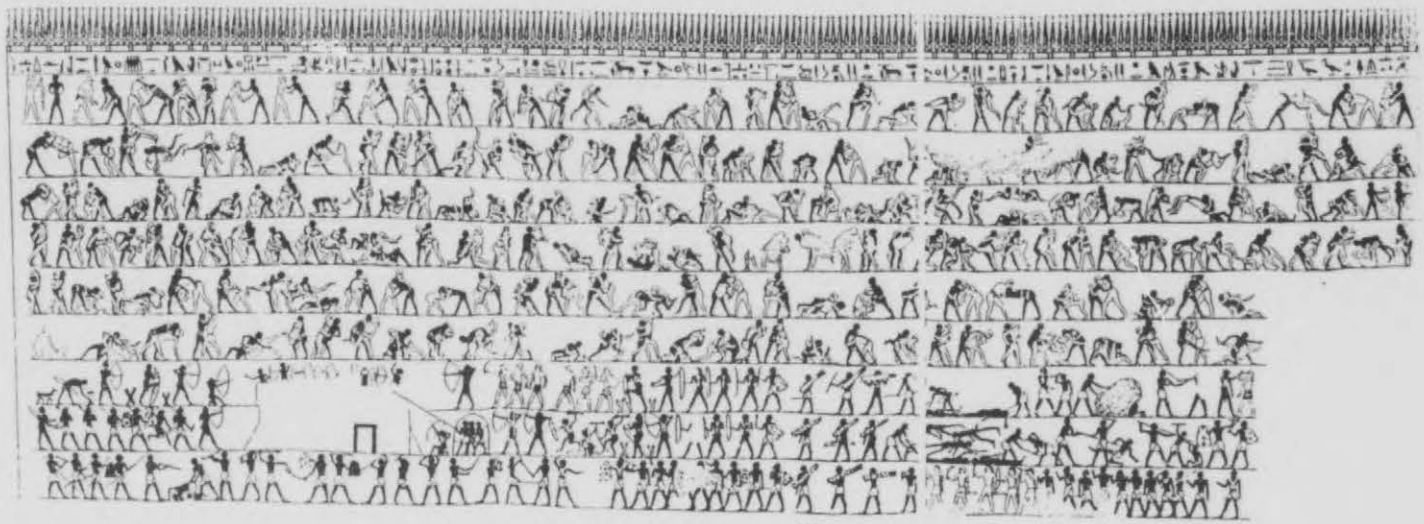


Fig 168 Tomb 15 Beni Hasan, Baqt III. East wall.

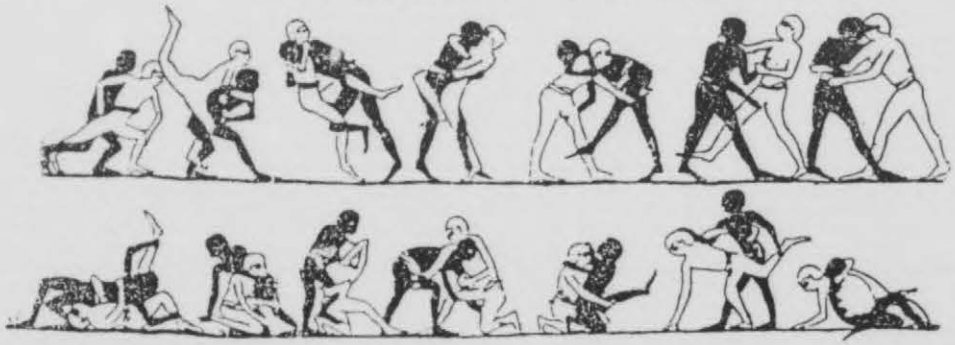


Fig 168a Wrestlers. Detail

10.3.3(d) EAST WALL (BH II: Pl V = *Fig 168).*

This wall, is composed entirely of male figures, with the exception of a single dog introduced at the end of the 7th register (left). There are 9 registers of which 1-6 (from the top), are filled with two hundred and twenty groups of wrestlers in as many attitudes (BH II Pl V:*Fig 168a*, Detail). Registers 7-9 are occupied with a battle scene showing soldiers attacking a fortress. There is no text other than the usual *ḥtp di nswt* formula, a prayer for offerings and the names and titles of Baqt.

10.4 WAR SCENES IN THE BENI HASAN TOMBS

The Egyptians never acquired a warlike reputation per se, until the latter part of the New Kingdom, although warlike scenes of conquest have been found since the earliest kings. In addition to the famous Narmer palette on which the king is shown smiting an enemy (*Fig 33*), an ivory sandal label shows King Den smiting an Asiatic (Aldred 1987:86 Fig 49 = *Fig 169*) and a line drawing on rocks near Buhen in Nubia shows the conquest of Nubians and villages, possibly also 1st dynasty King Djer (1987:86 Fig 50 = *Fig 170*).

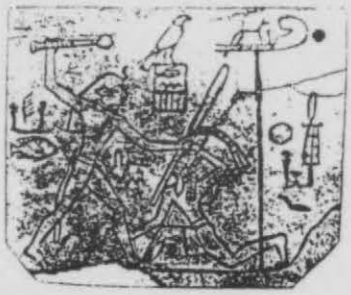


Fig 169 1st dynasty King Den smiting an Asiatic. Ivory label.

Fig 170 Conquest of Nubians from rocks near Buhen. 1st dynasty King Djer.

War scenes appear in private tombs just prior to and after the establishment of the Middle Kingdom. Forts included in war scenes of this period can be recognised as they are shown in elevation, not basically in plan as were those of the Old Kingdom (Gaballa 1970:39). With the disarray in the monarchy after the 6th dynasty, and the advent of the anarchic period, many of

the nomes had been exposed to war. To the north the Herakleopolitans (9th and 10th dynasties) consolidated their power by driving out the Asiatic immigrants in the Delta, and fortifying their eastern borders. Inevitably the aspirations of both Thebans and Herakleopolitans led to civil war (cf. 4.8). Once some sort of stability was restored, it quickly became necessary to re-establish and control trade with Nubia. General Intef, buried in western Thebes (Tomb no 386), and who lived during the reign of *Nebhepetre* Montuhotpe included, in addition to the usual marsh, agricultural and handicraft murals, scenes of wrestlers together with war scenes, spread over four registers. One scene depicts an attack on a besieged fort. Armed men roll a siege tower, while others in boats attack troops on the shore (Gaballa 1970:38 Fig 3 = *Fig 171*).

The Nubians are easily distinguished by their thick hair style (Aldred 1987:123 Fig 83 = *Fig 172*). The murals fall into the same category as war scenes from the temple of Mentuhotpe, and as Intef himself is shown participating in the action, it is fairly safe to conclude that these scenes are intended to represent an actual situation.

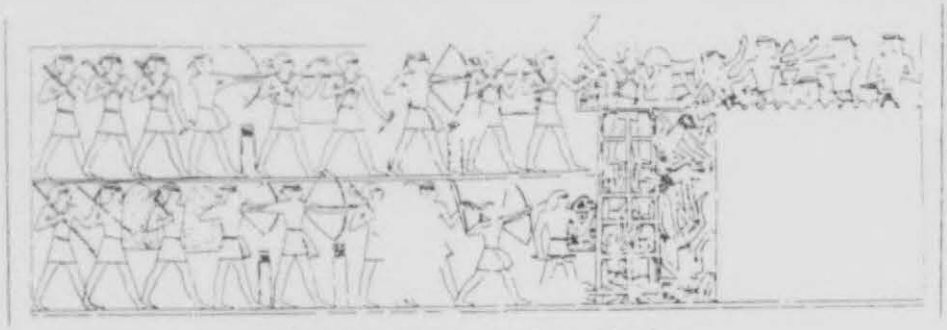


Fig 171 War scene, tomb of General Intef Egyptians and Nubians attack Asiatics.

Fig 172 Model of Nubian archers their thick hair worn as a protective helmet, wearing garments of dyed leather. Tomb of Mesehti, Asyut, 1st Intermediate Period.

Kemp (1991:168) says that "following the First Intermediate Period the reconquest of Lower Nubia under Mentuhotpe got under way rapidly with a further campaign in the year 29 of King Amenemhet I, the first king of the 12th dynasty (1991-1962). This is confirmed by graffito found in Lower Nubia. An ongoing building programme, which included a line of forts and fortified towns regularly spaced over the 400km between the first and second cataracts during the Middle Kingdom, confirm the extent to which Nubia was subdued and controlled. Typical of the largest of the Nubian forts was that of Buhen. Kemp's reconstruction of part of the fortifications gives some idea of the parapet with the slope at the base of the walls similar to the fort shown in tomb 15 (Kemp 1991:170,171 Fig 61). The difficulty with any identification of the war-scene in tomb 15 Beni Hasan is that if the intention was to project a Nubian fort, then the combatants, all Egyptian, are incorrect. On the other hand, fortifications were erected in the Delta, in which case Asiatics or Libyans would most likely have been the opponents. There is no indication that such large fortifications were ever constructed along the Nile in Egypt itself. Unlike the scene in the tomb of Intef, the tomb owner does not participate and there is nothing to indicate the origin of the scene.

10.5 TOMB 17: GREAT CHIEF OF THE ORYX NOME KHETY (*Fig 173*)

10.5.1 ARCHITECTURE OF THE TOMB

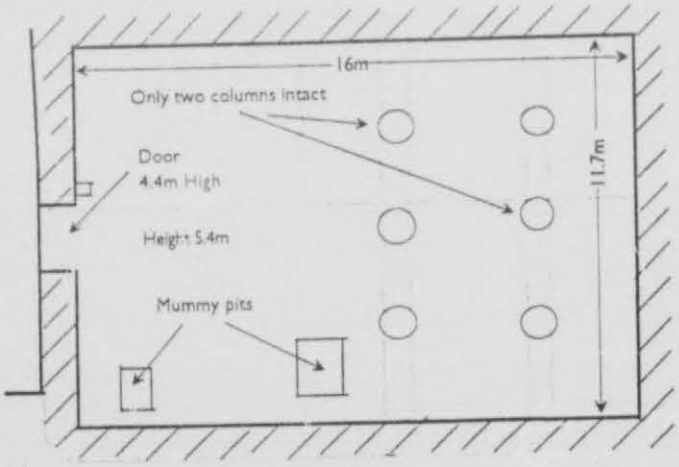


FIG 173 PLAN OF TOMB 17 BENI HA'AN KHETY

Similar to tombs 29 and 15, the facade of this tomb is cut into the side of the rock with a large plain doorway leading to a rectangular chamber. There is no shrine but the eastern half is crossed by two rows of three quatrefoil columns of the lotus-bud type. Newberry found two of these still intact. Architraves running transversely to the axis of the tomb had hieroglyphic inscriptions (BH II:62, Pl XVIII). The inscriptions, some unfinished, are concerned entirely

with the names and titles of Khety. Newberry describes the columns as elaborately painted, representing four lotus stems with unopened buds, the stems tied together by five cords of different colours. The buds were blue, the sepals a white line [illegible] red (BH II: Pl X). The ceiling is in the form of a flat arch. There are two mummy-pit

10.5.2 TITLES AND STATUS OF KETY

Khety is ranked as Governor, his title "Great Chief of the Oryx nome to its entirety". He holds all the titles held by his father, Baqt of Tomb 15, but in addition is "Administrator of the Eastern Desert" and "Captain of the soldiers in all difficult places." He holds no priestly titles and apart from his father's name, there is only that of his wife Khnemhotep and his son Khety, there are no recorded lists of officials. No representations of divinities occur but *Horus* Smiter of the Rekhyt, *Khnem* Lord of Herur, *Hathor* Lady of Neferus, *Heqt* of Herur and *Sekhet* Mistress of Hunting are recorded.

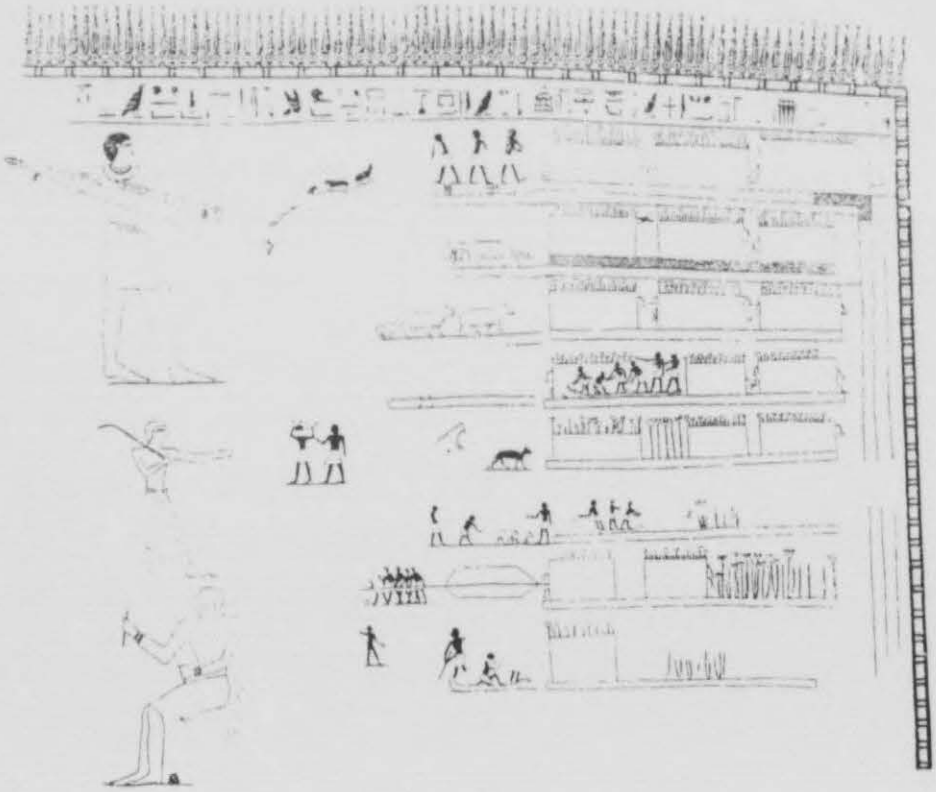


Fig 174 Tomb 17 Beni Hasan, Khety.
West wall north side.

10.5.3 THEMATIC MURALS

The painting is uniform throughout the tomb but it is generally very coarse. In every case the human figure is poorly drawn and the hieroglyphs are ill formed and badly painted. The North-West and East walls strongly resemble the subjects on the corresponding walls of Tomb 15.

10.5.3(a) NORTH END OF THE WEST WALL (BH II: Pl XII = *Fig 174*).

This side of the entrance door is only partially completed, but even so the method of drawing the marsh is extremely crude. It does, however, follow the Old Kingdom practice of placing such scenes at the entrance to the tomb. The *ḥtp di nswt* formula appeals to *Anubis*, as does the formula on the South side.

10.5.3(b) SOUTH END OF THE WEST WALL (BH II: Pl XII = *Fig 175*).

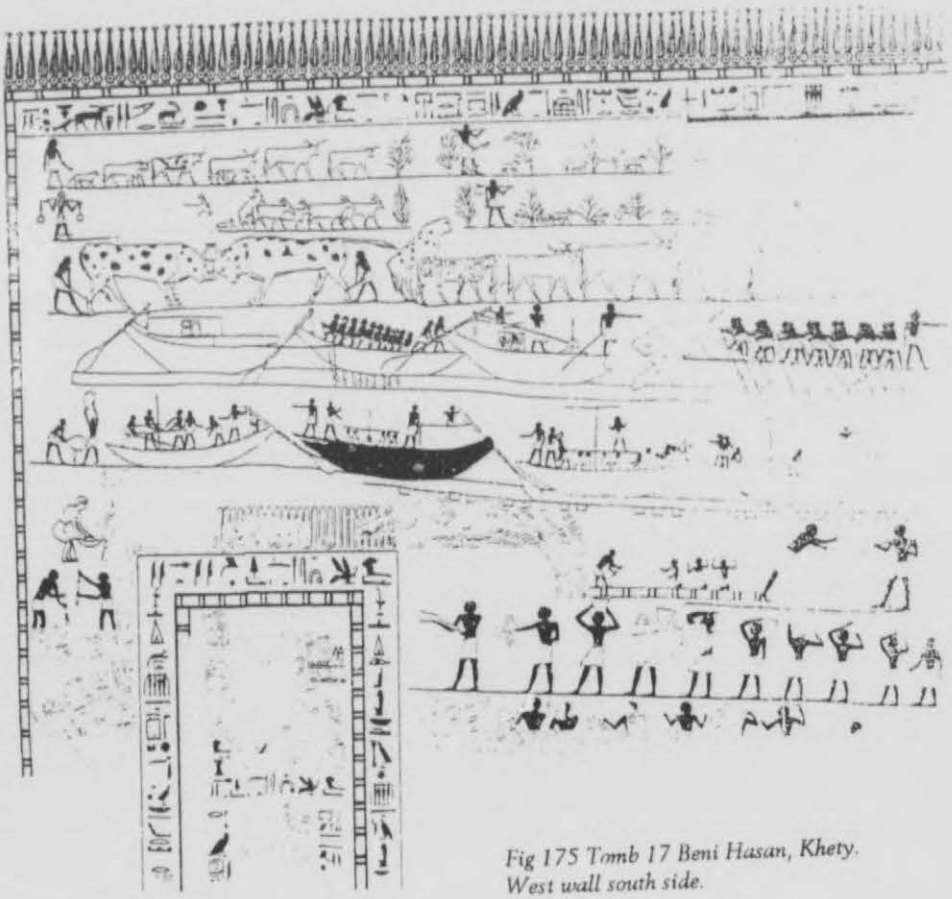


Fig 175 Tomb 17 Beni Hasan, Khety. West wall south side.

In registers 4 and 5 are eight ships, four in each register. In register 5 two men appear to be driving in a mooring post, suggesting landfall of some kind, but there is no text, and little detail

on the ships themselves. Their inadequate portrayal becomes evident if one compares them with the ships in the procession pictures from tomb A2 at Meir (*Figs 151, 152*).

The ships in tomb 17 show no funeral content nor is their objective indicated. The bulls shown head to head and the copulation scene following, possibly indicates nothing more than the strength of the herd, the calves being bred from the strongest animal.

This portion of the wall contains a false door. On either side of this feature, registers 6, 7 and 8, although badly defaced, are concerned with the provision of offerings.

10.5.3(c) WEST END OF THE NORTH WALL (BH II: Pl XIII= *Fig* 176).

There would be little point in illustrating this wall other than to co. .pare it with the North wall in tomb 15, which it so closely resembles. If anything it is rather more crude than the latter, the figures very stiff and badly drawn. The desert scene is spaced out, rather like an iconographic record. Of interest is the continued inclusion of mythical animals, the long-necked leopard and the winged beast, together with the *Seth* animal. They have been varied as to position but the overall similarity with the corresponding wall in tomb 15 is sufficient to suggest copying. At the very damaged bottom of the picture appears to be an attempt to recreate the birds but no effort has been made to identify them and only a few remain. Khety and his wife only appear as small figures on the right of the 4th register, standing in a naos drawn by seven men. No "watching" figure is included.

10.5.3(d) EAST END OF THE NORTH WALL (BH I: Pl XIV = *Fig 177)*

This mural is composed of a mixture of subjects. Of interest are the small individual pictures of traps (BH IV: Pl XXII), birds in a sont bush and a stylised hawk carrying what appears to be an egg.

Khety himself, with wife and three dogs, is shown in a conventional pose. His wife, Khnemhotep, is "devoted to *Hathor*" but is not named priestess. Khety has the usual titles but among the hieroglyphs on the Western and Eastern pilaster, described by Newberry as "fanciful and semi-comic" (BH II:58), can be found "Mayest thou love millions of groups of women". Also between the pilasters we find "he who performs [the office of] captain of the host in every difficult place". Neither his father, nor the previous tomb owners record this title, although his father may well have held it. The Oryx nome sign appears on the vertical line of hieroglyphs in front of Khety.

10.5.3(e) EAST WALL (BH II: Pl XV = *Fig 178).*

This wall, so similar to that in tomb 15 leaves little doubt that it was copied. The same number of wrestlers has been included, and again there is no repetition of attitudes. Shown in dark and

light drawings for clarity, the pairs were similarly tinted and Newberry says they were all Egyptians.

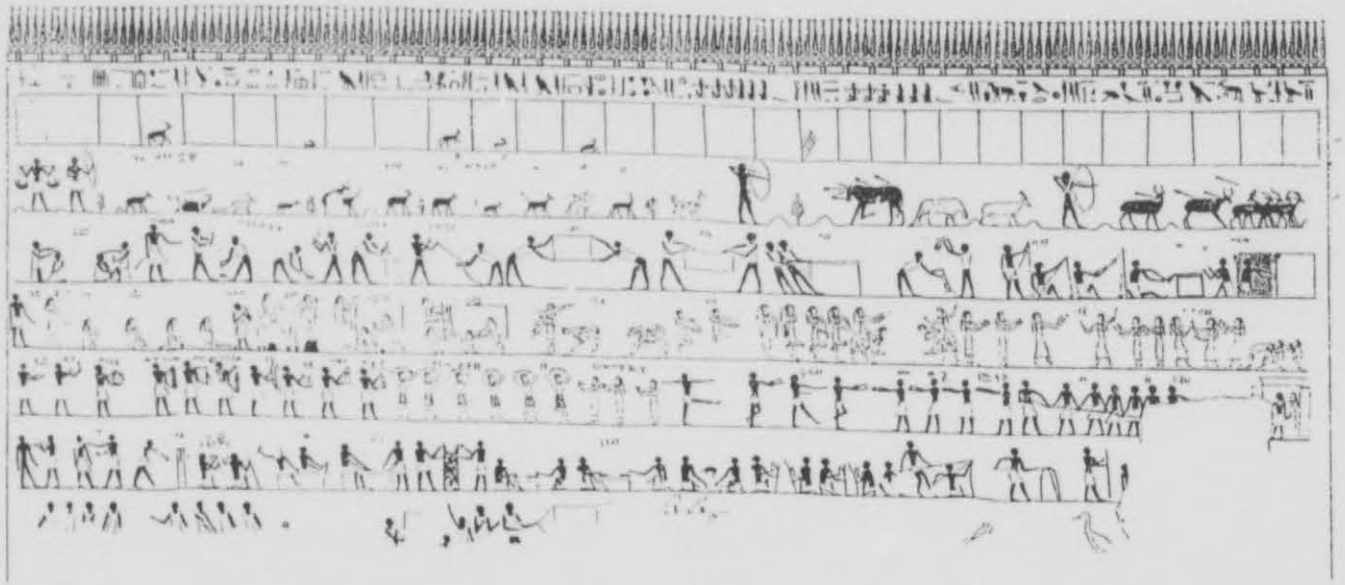


Fig 176 Tomb 17 Beni Hasan, Khety. North wall west end.

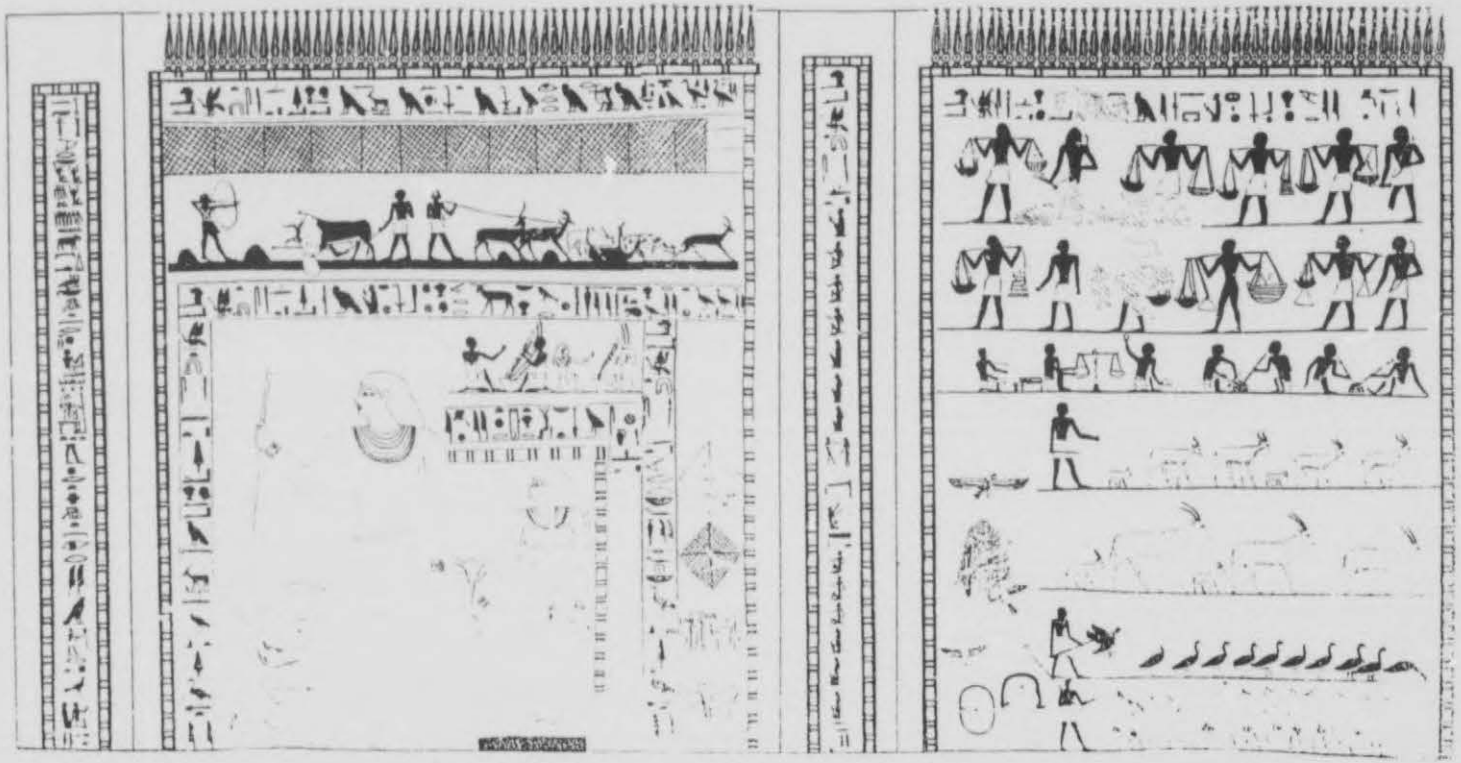


Fig 177 Tomb 17 Beni Hasan, Khety. North wall east end.

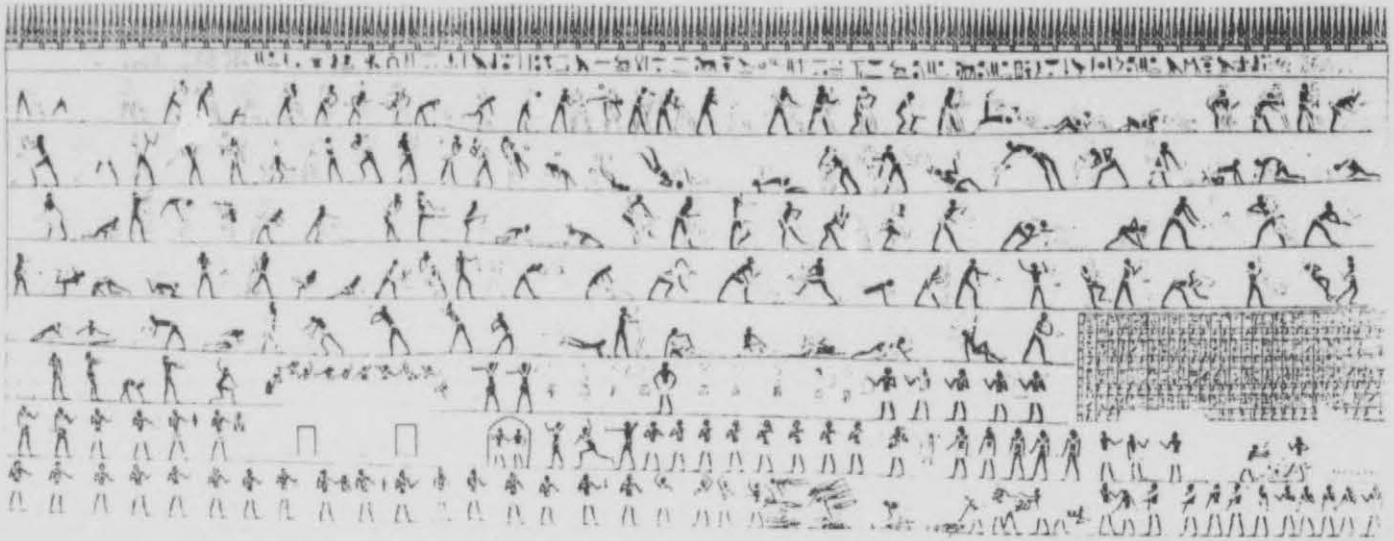


Fig 178 Tomb 17 Beni Hasan, Khety. East wall.

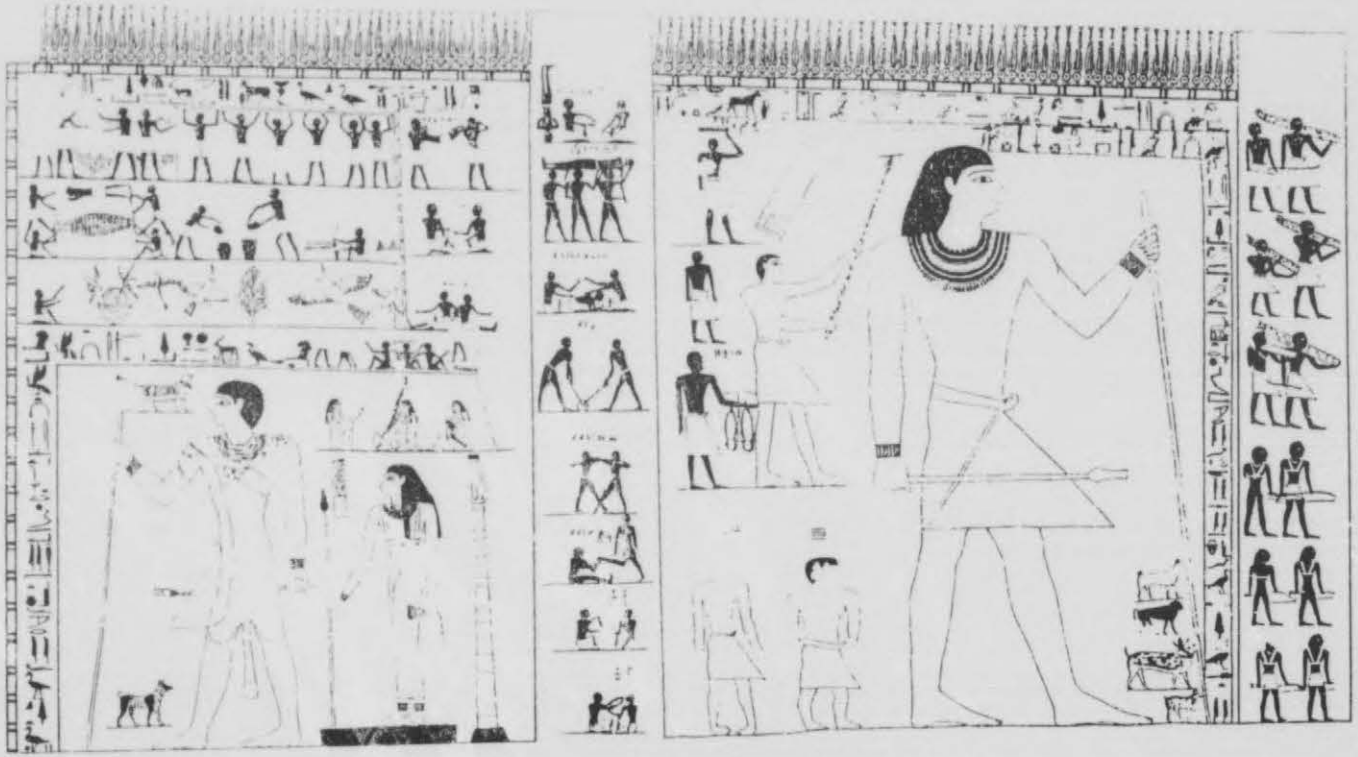


Fig 179 Tomb 17 Beni Hasan, Khety. South wall east end.

In the war scene, Nubians identifiable by their hair style and leather skirts, would seem to have been fighting alongside the Egyptians, as in tomb 15, but insufficient detail makes it impossible to identify the enemy. In view of the fact that Khety is named as one who "performs" as Captain of the host, is it not possible that this is exactly what the wall is intended to convey? If Khety's father was also responsible for maintaining a small band of soldiers, these walls could be the clearest way to express the fact. That these troops were called upon to fight on behalf of the monarch is a distinct possibility.

Texts in both these tombs are scarce and are largely devoted to the usual titles and prayer formulas. In their tombs the Egyptians did not set out to record history. On the other hand, their walls were not decorated for the sake of the decoration alone. The type of fort in both tombs, would seem to suggest a campaign in Nubia. However, once established, perhaps this became a basic design for depicting local troops employed in some sort of action. It may be suggested that these walls cannot in any way be considered biographical and incorporated in a theological framework. This will be argued later. On the other hand it would be difficult to visualise in them an idealised expectation of the hereafter.

It will be noted that five registers of the lower right hand section of the similar wall in tomb 15 are missing. The artist employed on tomb 17 has filled the space with lists of offerings, and it may be that tomb 15 was similarly decorated, although this is in no way an "offering" wall.

10.5.3(f) EAST END OF THE SOUTH WALL (BH II: Pl XVI = *Fig 179*)

This wall comprises a variety of subjects, none of which directly reflects an offering theme. The men at the top (left) in the 1st and 2nd registers would seem to be concerned with gathering and pressing grapes but they are isolated from the main figures. Register 3 again shows a preoccupation with bird life. Traps are fairly carefully depicted and the bird on the right seems to have been caught in a noose. The hieroglyphs above the figure of Khety give his titles. The nome sign is clearly visible. There are also some "fanciful hieroglyphs" (BH II:61) which Newberry translates as "entering first, going out last". Musicians play in the register above his wife, and a dog stands at his feet. Just before the head of Khety, and standing in its own small register, is a hawk-headed monster which Newberry calls *sak*, wearing a collar as if tame. Khety wears a leopard skin, the head of the leopard visible on his breast. This is a priestly garment and whether it applies to Khety, since he is not named a priest, or whether it is a stylized mural, it is not possible to determine.

The pilaster in the centre is taken up with various games. To the right, a large picture of Khety with staff and baton and standing in the usual inspecting or watching pose, has three dogs and a baboon in front of him, and two typical dwarfs named *Nemu and Zeneb* behind. Also behind him stand, from top to bottom, the superintendent of the washing of linen, an attendant, a sandal bearer and a man holding a sun-shade. This scene has no association with any of the

activity around him and again bears the words "making monuments of eternity in the temple of *Khnem* Lord of Herur". The text is not in any way applicable to the iconography. The western pilaster contains six pairs of armed foot soldiers but bears no text.

10.6.3(g) WEST END OF THE SOUTH WALL (BH II; Pl XVII = *Fig 180*)

This is a simple, funeral offering wall. Hieroglyphs below the frieze give the name and titles of Khety with some interesting additions, "beloved of his townsmen, favoured of his country-people, heir of Nekht in every place, by whose deeds the gods are pacified." These are not royal attributes, but concerned entirely with his local position as Great Chief. A simple procession accompanying a statue of Khety in a naos occupies register 1, the remainder of the wall is taken up with agricultural and offering motifs.

10.6 THE 11TH DYNASTY TOMBS 29, 15, 17 AT BENI HASAN.

Although no accurate dating is available, the dating of tomb 14 which follows, positively confirms the appointment of a nomarch made by Amenemhet I at the beginning of the 12th dynasty, precluding the three tombs above from being after that date.

The fact that they were able to be built at all suggests the period of calm, however uncertain, when the 11th dynasty Thebans were taking over and extending their claim to a united country. In the case of tomb 29, inexperienced unskilled labour, possibly accounts for its crude building and embellishment. An inability to afford better is also probable, since the tomb itself does not suggest opulence, and there being no signs of a shrine having been commenced. Neither did Newberry find traces of statues, as in other tombs where, even though they had disappeared, their past presence was confirmed.

Noticeable in each of these tombs is the lack of the large marsh features embodying the owner fish spearing and duck hunting which were familiar murals in Old Kingdom tombs. Also the offering murals, where they exist, are simple and lack the usual overwhelming numbers of participants. That some form of offering mural was always included is certain. In tomb 15, it would at least have been in the shrine. However, if one compares the A1 and A2 tombs at Meir, with their repeated offering walls, and their many statues, with the tombs of these Governors of the Oryx Nome the latter must, in their general construction, be found to be inferior.

These are specified "in their general construction", because while their overall appearance is much more simple than the average Old Kingdom tomb chapels, they have a quality, lacking in the latter, which is a feature of these Interim Period/Middle Kingdom tombs. Spontaneity, exuberance and emotional impact abound in them. Meir tombs also developed this characteristic, and while judgement made from an artistic and/or technical point of view may find some of the art-work poor and of little interest, the immediate impact must be one of intense vitality, the quality of the murals notwithstanding.

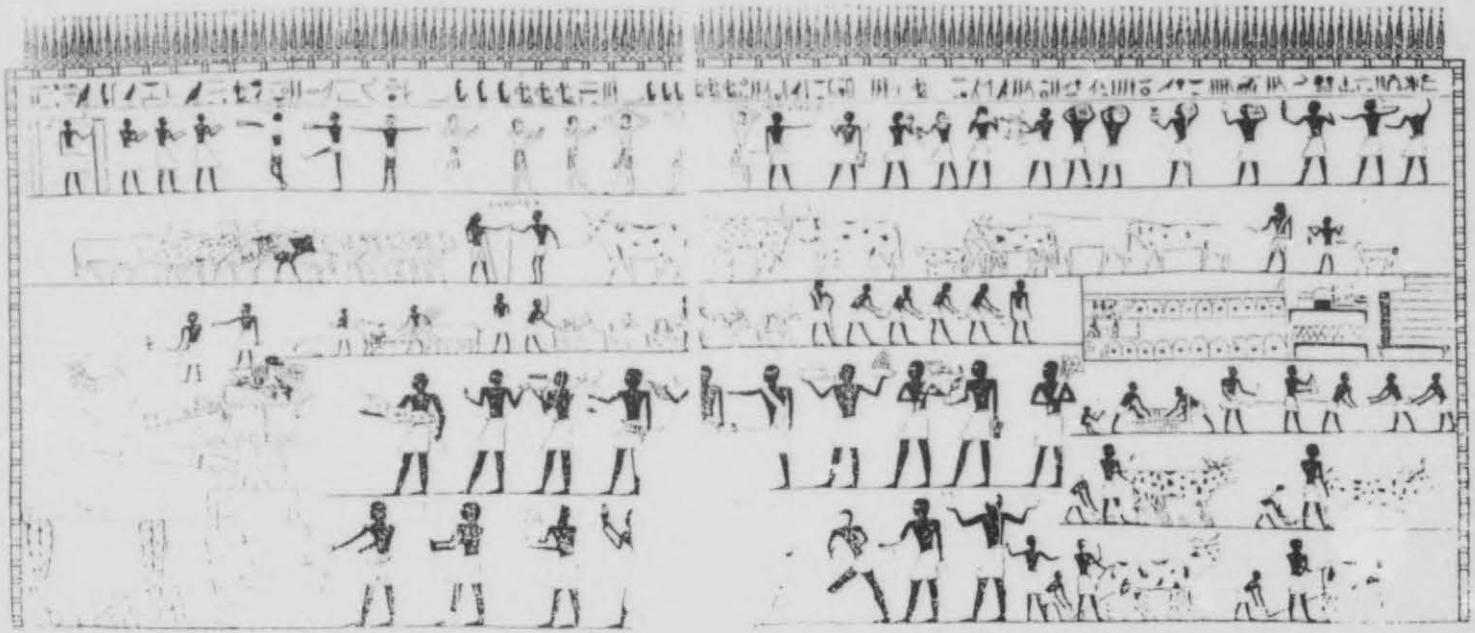


Fig 180 Tomb 17 Beni Hasan, Khety. South wall west end, offering mural.

If one may return for a moment to *Figs 23 and 24* (Ch 2), the Charioteer at Delphi and the Apollo/Daphne group in Rome, one has here the typical example, (a) of the charioteer not artistically perfect, with little more than static stance and features, who yet can arouse the most immediate and deeply felt emotion, while (b) the energetic and magnificently sculpted Apollo/Daphne statue, perfect in its portrayal and breathtaking in its beauty, which has almost no ability to arouse genuine emotion other than in its artistic perfection.

The rows of wrestlers in tombs 15 and 17 have been adjudged stereotyped and not particularly well produced, but much as cartoon figures can depict movement extremely accurately, so one has the feeling that here one is looking at perhaps the earliest of strip cartoons, which could easily be brought to life

That these pre-Middle Kingdom tombs adequately project the period of their construction is undeniable. Of uncertain stability, yet in a period when the country was recovering from both famine and destructive civil war, they exhibit an attempt to retain the Old Kingdom traditions within the newly acquired freedom from royal monopoly.

Footnotes

[1] Dwarfs were much valued in the 6th dynasty and appear in provincial tombs from that time. A classic example is the correspondence between the young 6th dynasty monarch Pepy II and the explorer Harkhuf, on his return from Nubia, reporting his acquisition of a dancing pygmy. In the 18th dynasty and thereafter certain dwarfs seem to have become a guild of craftsmen specifically working with gold.

CHAPTER 11

EARLY 12TH DYNASTY TOMBS AT MEIR AND BENI HASAN

And I have felt a presence that disturbs me with the joy of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused, Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns...

Wordsworth

11.1 DATING OF CONTEMPORARY TOMBS: B1 MEIR, 14 BENI HASAN

The tomb of Senbi, son of Ukh-hotp at Meir was numbered B1 and dated to the reign of Amenemhet I by Blackman, who traced the somewhat complicated family tree of the Princes of Cusae in the 12th dynasty from information gleaned from a variety of Meir tombs (MEIR I:8, 11-13). See Appendix for genealogical tree.

Tomb 14 of Khnemhotep I at Beni Hasan, needs no family tracing. An historical inscription, badly damaged when Newberry examined it, produced, in the first two lines the titles of Khnemhotep, an address to visitors and a prayer for funeral offerings with, in the 5th line, the name *Sehetepibre*, prenomen of Amenemhet I, in a cartouche, followed by "Son of Ra" and another cartouche with the name Amenemhet. "A naval expedition to ..." is also recorded. In line 7 it says that the king created Khnemhotep *ḥa*-prince of the town of Menat Khufu for certain services which he had rendered the king (BH I Pl XLIV = *Fig 181 Detail*).

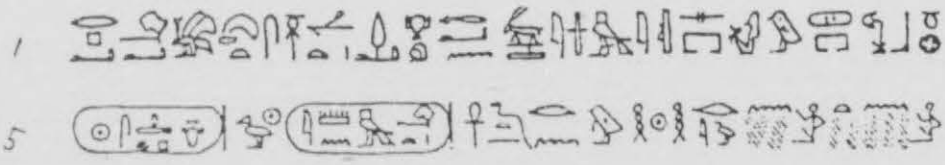


Fig 181 Tomb 14 Beni Hasan, Khnemhotep. Inscription.
Line 1. Name and titles of Khnemhotep I
Line 5. Cartouches of Amenemhet I.

We have a great deal of information about Khnemhotep and his grandson, Khnemhotep II of tomb 3 Beni Hasan, from an inscription in far better condition in the latter tomb, which re-records much of the information on the establishment of his grandfather as Nomarch of the 16th Oryx Nome of Upper Egypt (BH II:7). See Appendix for genealogical tree.

11.2 TOMB B1: UKH-HOTP'S SON SENBI, NOMARCH OF THE 14TH NOME OF UPPER EGYPT (MEIR I Pl I = *Fig 182)*

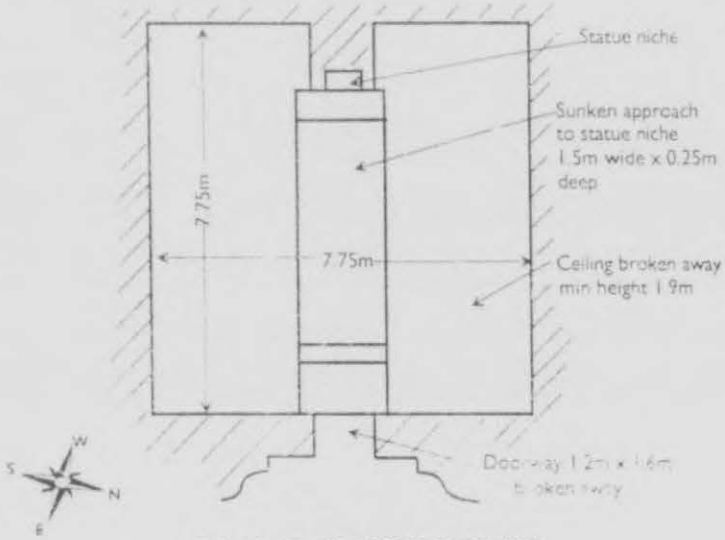


FIG 182 PLAN OF TOMB BI MEIR

Senbi is the first of the 12th dynasty Princes of Cusae about whom we have some information. Although only the name of his father Ukh-hotp is recorded, Senbi himself was followed by sons and grandsons who continued to hold office until the monarchy of Senwosret II. Their tombs also lie in the necropolis of Meir.

Their city of Cusae, now possibly under a modern town, was the capital of the nome. The name of their principal deity, *Hathor*, frequently occurs in the necropolis, usually as *Mistress of Cusae*.

11.2.1 ARCHITECTURE OF THE TOMB

This tomb, the northernmost of the decorated tomb chapels of the 12th dynasty nomarchs comprises a single, almost square rock-hewn chamber. Little remains of the entrance but so far as can be seen it was plain, with a wooden door. The entrance is from the East and a niche, which doubtless contained a statue of the deceased, juts out from the west wall facing the doorway. An unusual feature of this tomb is the approach to the statue niche, which is slightly wider than the doorway, and is sunk below the level of the floor chamber forming a wide mastaba or bench on either side (MEIR I:21). At a little more than a metre from the threshold the approach is raised about 20cm by two steps and finally ends in another very shallow step. The north, south and east walls were decorated in four registers above a black dado surmounted with a border of blue, red and yellow lines. The background of the reliefs was dark grey or indigo against which, Blackman comments that the brightly coloured figures and hieroglyphs must have stood out boldly in pleasing contrast (MEIR I:21). The colours of the tomb murals

have not been discussed previously, but this comment is particularly relevant since it applies to so many of them. Unfortunately, quarrying inflicted heavy damage on a number of these decorated walls. The West wall, which was never decorated and was left in its original rough-hewn condition remains intact, although the step and lower part of the niche are broken.

Perhaps it is relevant here to mention the inscription which is usually found in these tombs, to the effect that the son has provided the tomb for his father. This, one imagines, is a formality and probably reflects the time when tombs were not so extensive and burial places were prepared by the eldest son who supervised the burial. With the development of such elaborately decorated tombs it is obvious that they must have taken a considerable time to construct and would have been commenced in the lifetime of the deceased. It would have been the duty of the eldest son to supervise the funeral rites and burial, but the fact that many of these tombs are incomplete would suggest that such work as was left unfinished on the death of the owner, remained so after the interment. This is only conjecture but would explain the existence of so many unfinished, otherwise well decorated, tombs.

There is no indication of the whereabouts of mummy pits. A basin cut in the floor to a depth of 40 cm was found in the north-east corner and a similar one 35 cm deep in the south-east corner. A circular hole 30 cm in diameter and 45 cm in depth and tapering almost to a point was found on the northern side of the central pathway. However, quarrying was so extensive in and around these tombs that mummy pits, undoubtedly ransacked, would have been filled in and are not readily visible.

11.2.2 TITLES AND STATUS OF SENBI SON OF UKH-HOTP

Senbi has the hereditary title *erpa*-prince. He is also a *ḥa*-prince, an appointed title. Blackman translates these two titles as Baron and Nomarch but *ḥa*-prince occurs where the owner is not a Nomarch. In this work the *erpa* and *ḥa* as used by Newberry is preferred.

Senbi is also Treasurer, Confidential Friend, Superintendent of Priests and Chief Lector, the latter two being religious titles.

His wife, *Per-hemut-Meres* or *Meres* is called Possessor of Honour, and the Honoured One, but is not listed as Priestess of *Hathor*, as might have been expected. Eight titles of officials and servants, appear in various murals. Of these one is an embalmer, one a lector and another a *sem* priest, possibly concerned with funeral rites.

Mentioned but not depicted are *Isis*, *Osiris*, *Nephthys*, *Two apis Bulls*, *Hesat*, and *Hathor*. Noticeably absent is *Anubis* who is usually present in tombs in view of his association with embalmment. However if *Anubis* is not present, there is a clear indication of a dependency upon the goddess *Hathor*, which is not present in the tombs at Beni Hasan.

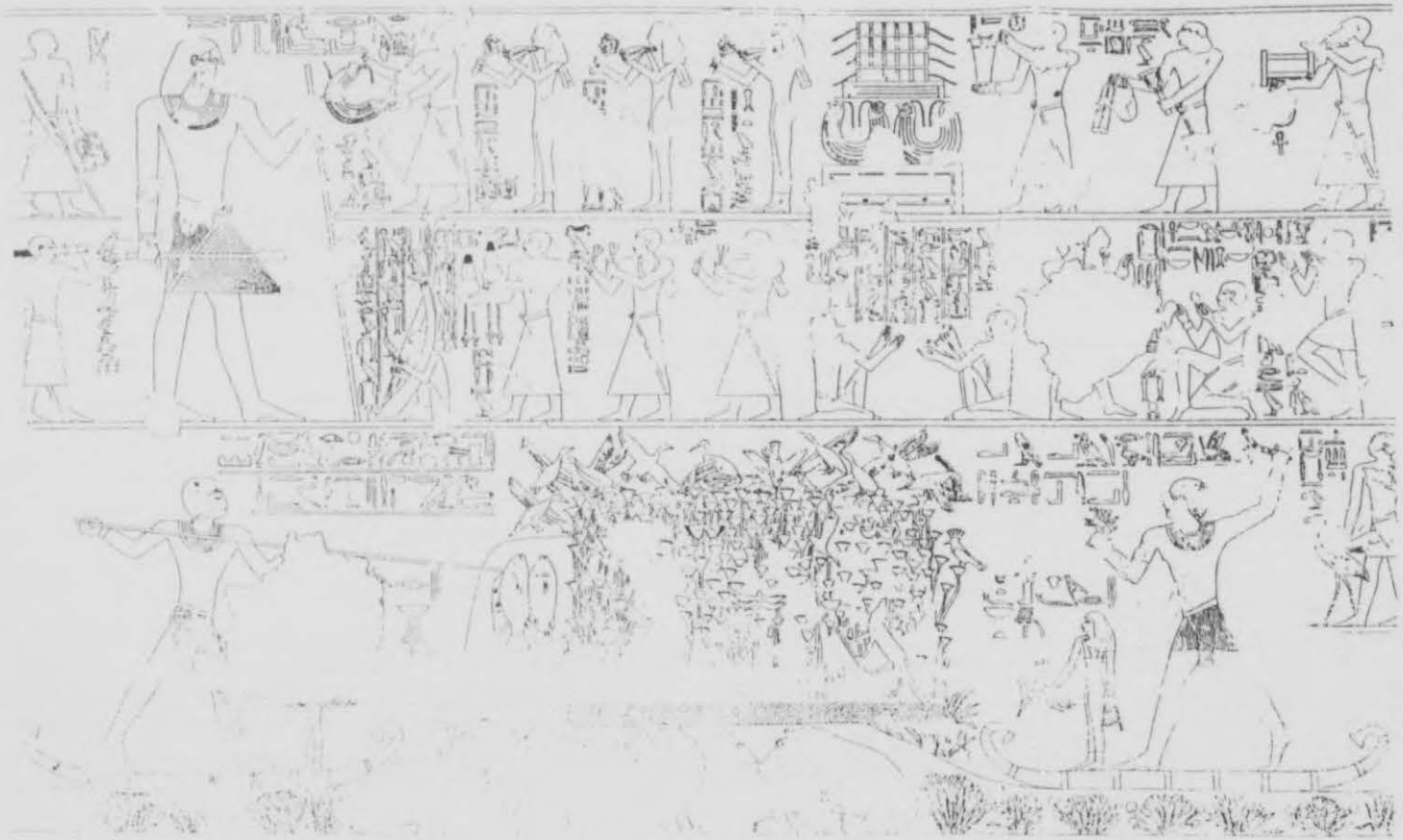


Fig 183 Tomb B1 Meir, Senbi. North wall west end.

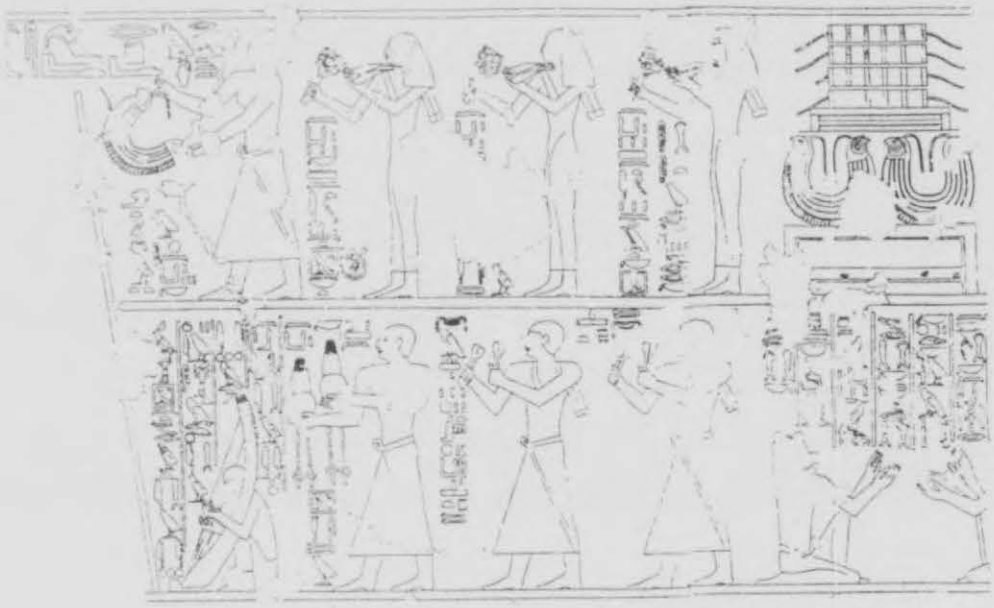


Fig 183a Tomb B1 Meir, Senbi. Religious ceremony with menat collars, rattles and sistra. Detail.

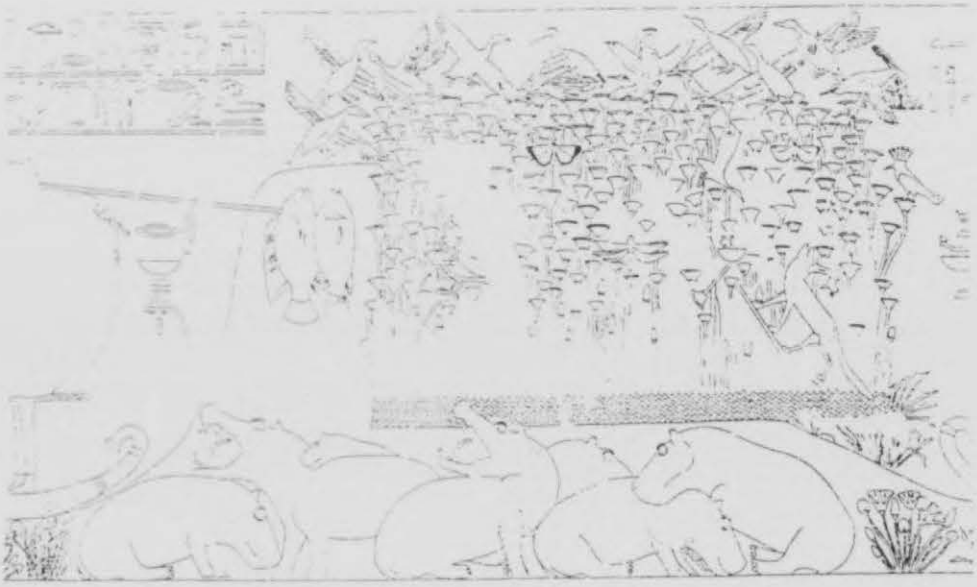


Fig 183b Tomb B1 Meir, Senbi. Marsh scene with hippos and foliage. Detail.

11.2.3. THEMATIC MURALS

11.2.3(a) THE ART OF CUSAE

The murals in certain of the Meir tombs exhibit some very striking features. It is believed that after the fall of the 6th dynasty when the prevailing influence emanated from Memphis, a new local school of art arose in Cusae, reaching maturity by the beginning of the 12th dynasty. The artists of this school appear to have developed a style of their own characterised by a remarkable naturalism in the treatment of human, animal and vegetable forms (MEIR I:17). This art, at its best and in its purest stage, is to be seen in the two tomb chapels B1 and B2 at Meir (see Appendix). In tomb B4, while the technique is perfect, the murals are executed, except for one very mutilated fishing and fowling scene, in the ordinary though very finest 12th dynasty style.

In Tomb C1, frescoes take the place of sculpture.[1] But Blackman says that they are frescoes of a very remarkable kind, the artists displaying an extraordinary appreciation for, and an ability to represent, natural life.[2]

11.2.3(b) WEST END OF THE NORTH WALL (MEIR I Pl II = *Fig 183)*

This wall has two distinct scenes, the upper, a religious ceremony (*Fig 183a)*, and the lower a marsh scene *(Fig 183b)*. The latter has been illustrated here because it is a particularly good example of Cusite art, in the presentation of the hippos. Otherwise, the interest in this wall lies mainly in the first two registers.

Senbi stands on the left hand side, while a steward offers him *Menat* necklaces "for thy Ka", followed by girls holding *sistra*. Several such necklaces appear in the register. A harper plays and girls sing in the second register, the latter holding out the rattles, menats and sistra, saying, "the Menats of Hathor, Mistress of Cusae".

The offerings continue with variations on the *Hathor* theme, "that she may show thee favour, that she may prolong thy life unto the years thou desirest". Just behind the harper a man offers loaves of bread, the tongs, with which he has removed them from the oven, dangling from his hands. He says "for thy Ka the *snw*-bread of Hathor".

There is little doubt that depicted is an actual ceremony relative to the *Hathor* cult. Blackman devotes several pages to identifying aspects of this mural with known ceremonies of *Hathor* (MEIR I:22-26), and a similar depiction of the attitude of the dancing girls before Senbi is to be found in the Tale of Sinuhe.[3] (Grapow 1952: 98, 23 Excerpt = *Fig 184)*.

The scene is that in which Sinuhe, brought before the king, exclaims "Here I am before you. Life is yours. May his Majesty do as he wishes! (260-264). The royal daughters then enter, and Sinuhe is introduced to them and to the Queen. The story continues with the *Hathor*

ceremony, much as shown on the West end of the North wall. "Now having brought with them their necklaces, rattles and sistra, they held them out to his Majesty" (267) (Lichtheim 1975:23_). Promises of favours are then made to the king himself.

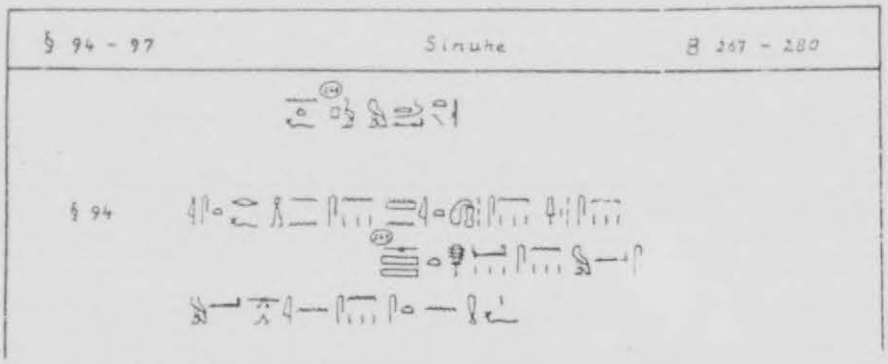


Fig 184 Excerpt from Sinuhe
"Having brought with them their menats, rattles, and sistra".
Note the determinatives.

The lines that follow, praise the king and entreat him to have mercy on Sinuhe. "He made the flight in fear of you, He left the land in dread of you, A face that sees you shall not pale. Eyes that see you shall not fear!" His Majesty said: "He shall not fear, he shall not (280) dread! He shall be a Companion among the nobles. He shall be among the courtiers"(Lichtheim 1975:232).

Here we have the *raison d'etre* for the *Hathor* mural. In the words of the text "That she may show you favour". The wish that *Hathor* should prolong Senbi's life, links the ceremony to the living, while the favour bestowed by *Hathor* is doubtless to ensure his acceptance and gratification in the netherworld much as the king receives Sinuhe back into the royal court and heaps honours upon him. In modern terms it is a 'blessing' and an affirmation of his worthiness to acquire eternal life by reason of his excellence in his lifetime, particularly in his role as one of *Hathor's* priests.

The scene is continued across the wall and in the central portion depicts a festival of *Hathor* where people are providing amusement for themselves and Senbi. The North end is almost totally destroyed. The rest of the top register is relative to the burial itself. It contains the bringing of funeral objects, a priest reciting, and several men carrying the sarcophagus of Senbi, although much of the latter has disappeared.

As indicated above, registers 3 and 4, the fishing and fowling scene, is an excellent example of the skill of the Cusite craftsmen.

11.2.3(c) EAST WALL SOUTH OF THE ENTRANCE (MEIR I Pl VI = *Fig 185*)

Devoted to the traditional hunting scene, the figure of note is Senbi who is shown raising himself on the toes of his right foot while he takes aim. It is quite unusual, and gives an impression of vitality and strength in keeping with the Cusae art. It is doubtful, however, whether the stance is correct.

The figure behind Senbi (possibly his son), carries a variety of pieces of equipment, which are well depicted. Both figures wear what Blackman calls "an appendage", in shape rather like a highlander's sporran, which would probably have been made of leather and appears to be similar to a primitive penis sheath (MEIR I: 31 Fig 7).

Spread over a somewhat large register, the artist has been able to introduce various desert contours. However, the animals have not noticeably been reduced in size from top to bottom which would have suggested perspective. The hare and hedgehog, bottom left, seem to have become a normal inclusion in these desert scenes. The hare has been given a natural running image, legs thrust out behind. No mythical animals such as are to be found in the Beni Hasan tombs have been included and perhaps this is symptomatic of the naturalistic approach of these artists. The top of the mural is badly damaged but from the small piece remaining would seem to have been an offering scene, with the traditional table, loaves, and feet of a seated figure of Senbi just visible.

11.2.3(d) SOUTH WALL (MEIR I Pls IX, X, XI = *Fig 186*)

This whole wall is a traditional cattle and offering scene. On the top of the west side Senbi sits at a table of offerings before which attendants are slaughtering an ox, while a priest, embalmer and kneeling lectors confirm the funerary theme. A line of beasts, mostly cattle, are led towards him by a tribesman, who Blackman says is Hamitic and probably from the Eastern Desert (MEIR I:29). The collective name for these people is "Beja" which is used throughout. He is quite distinctive, with a long straight nose, scanty moustache and whiskers and tufted beard. These herdsmen appear in several of the Meir tombs. They are always shown emaciated, in contrast with the Egyptians. This may have been their natural physique or could suggest that they have been employed at a time when their own herds had been decimated by drought and they were facing starvation. The two lower registers show Senbi "seeing" his cattle, again being led by a Beja, not only emaciated but apparently crippled.* Above Senbi is the usual *ḥtp di nswt* formula which Blackman believes associates the "seeing" scene with the provision of food for the hereafter.

Since this formula appears so many times in a variety of contexts in these tombs, its presence does not necessarily mean that it is directly associated with the lower iconography, and in this case would seem more suited to the offering scene above.

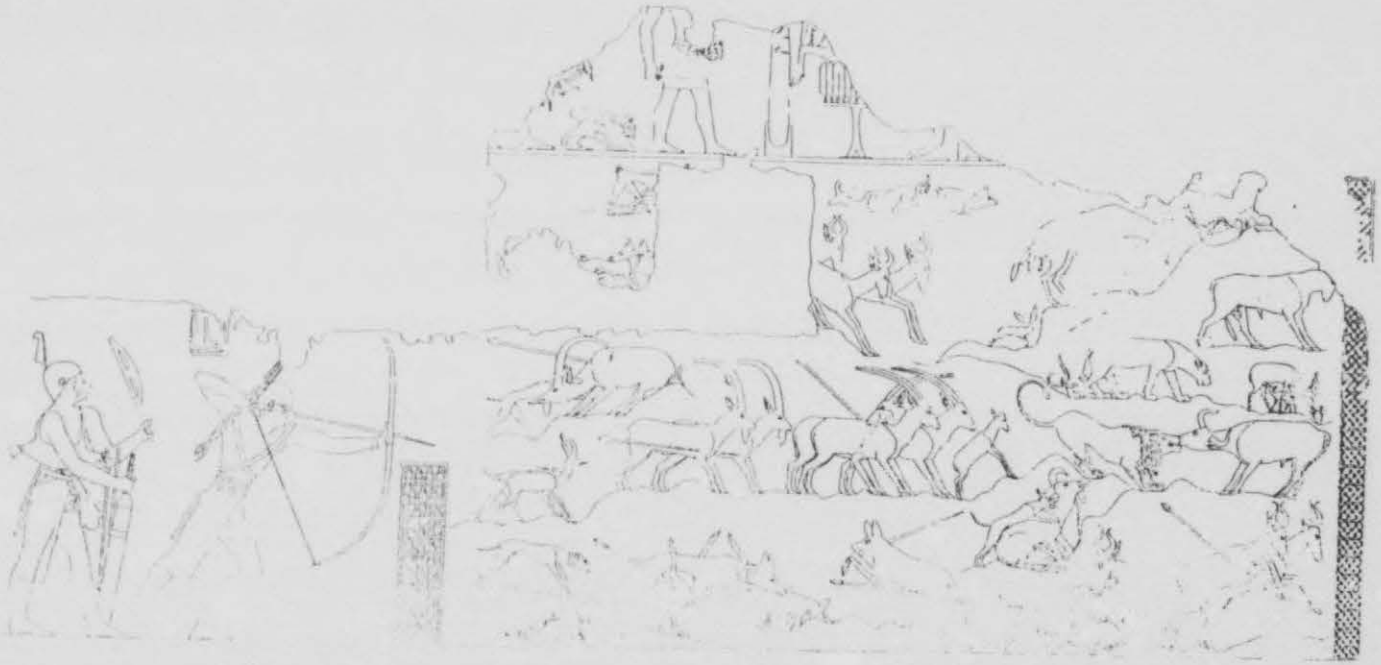
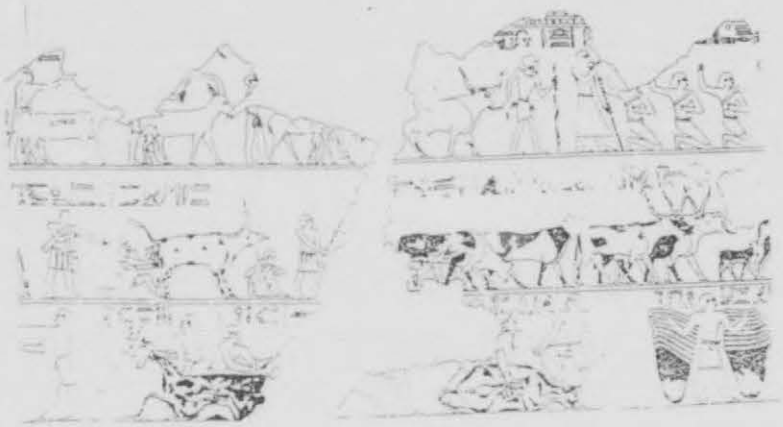


Fig 185 Tomb B1 Meir, Senbi. East wall south of the entrance.

East End



Centre

West End

Fig 186 Tomb B1 Meir, Senbi. South wall.

Of interest are the two sets of "ribs" carried by the bearer in the lower register (centre strip). Gardiner (1957:466 F43) shows a hieroglyph almost exactly the same as each of the ribs, as the determinative for *spḏt* "ribs of beef". This word does not appear above the picture but the drawing is unmistakable, even although it is out of proportion.

The birthing of the calf in the middle register is well presented together with an unusual picture of a man asleep in front of the cow. Perhaps this is a little more Cusae naturalism. Birthing scenes are probably complementary to the copulation motifs, both intimating the expansion and fertility of the herds.

Of the same period is the tomb of Khnemhotep I, No 14, at Beni Hasan.

11.3 TOMB 14: GREAT CHIEF OF THE ORYX NOME KHNEMHOTEP I(*Fig 187)*

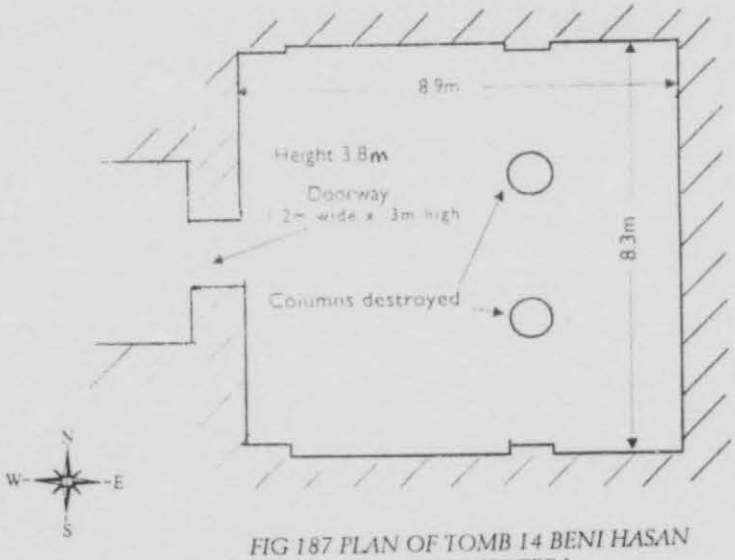


FIG 187 PLAN OF TOMB 14 BENI HASAN KHEMHOTEP I

11.3.1 THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE TOMB

Similar to the previous Beni Hasan tombs, the tomb of Khnemhotep, cut into the rock face, is featureless, with a large plain doorway (BH I Pl XLII). The almost square main chamber is divided at the east end by two lotus bud columns, surmounted by a plain architrave running traversely to the axis of the tomb. The flat ceiling is cambered to form a very flat arch. The tomb contained two mummy pits.

11.3.2 TITLES AND STATUS OF KHNEMHOTEP I

Khnemhotep, Governor of the Oryx or 16th nome of Upper Egypt, and *ḥa*-prince of the town of Menat-Khufu, held several civil titles in addition to a religious one. With the exception of *erpa*-(hereditary) prince, which the previous Beni Hasan tomb owners did not claim, his titles are similar to theirs, *sahu bity* (Treasurer of the King of Lower Egypt), Confidential friend of the King, True royal acquaintance, Great Chief of the Oryx Nome, *ha*-prince of Menat Khufu, and three legal titles, "He who is in the chamber", "He who belongs to the city of Nekhen", and "Chief of the city of Nekheb". He also claims to be "Superintendent of the Priests" (no particular divinity defined).

No representation of any divinity was found in the tomb and prayers are only addressed to *Osiris* and *Anubis*. Other deities named in inscriptions are, *Horus*, "Within Hebnu" and "Smiter of the *Rehyt*", *Khnum*, *Heki*, *Hathor* "Lady of Neferus" and *Hathor* "Lady of Nekhen-bu". There is another title, (not defined) which probably has something to do with *Hathor's* title of "The Golden One" since the hieroglyph embodies the "gold" sign.

His father is unknown, his mother was a lady named Baqt (a strange anomaly that both male and female could have the same name). He was married to Sat-ap an *erpa*-princess and had a son Nekht and a daughter Baqt.

The Inscription mentioned above (11.1), will be referred to in depth in the tomb of his grandson Khnemhotep II.

11.3.3 THEMATIC MURALS

The paintings in this tomb were originally boldly drawn and the work itself bears a close resemblance to that in tomb 15 Beni Hasan. When Newberry examined them, however, they were much faded and could only be identified with great difficulty.

11.3.3(a) WEST WALL (BH I Pl XLIV:84)

The upper half of the south side of this wall carried the Historical Inscription. Traces of a boating scene could be discerned on the lower half but they were too badly damaged to copy. The upper half of the north side shows traces of women, and in the left hand corner the remains of a false door with three painted but much mutilated captions. One gives the *ḥtp di nswt* formula to *Osiris* the other to *Anubis* and the third, the prayer for offerings[5] for the deceased who is said to be devoted towards *Horus* Smiter of the Rekhyt.

11.3.3(b) NORTH WALL (BH I Pl XLVI = *Fig 188*).

The hieroglyphs at the top of this much damaged wall give the usual *ḥtp di nswt* formula and include both *Osiris* and *Anubis*. The wall appears to have been conventional, with a hunting

scene in the top register, a wine-press and vases in the second, the three following registers are concer vith offerings and an offering table. Khnemhotep is not shown seated, but stands with h behind two rows of hieroglyphs in which he is said to be "seeing" various activities. From the mutilated titles above the figures, it is possible to discern that Khnemhotep was born of Baqt. Some bowmen and a man with a shield are shown to the right of the mural.

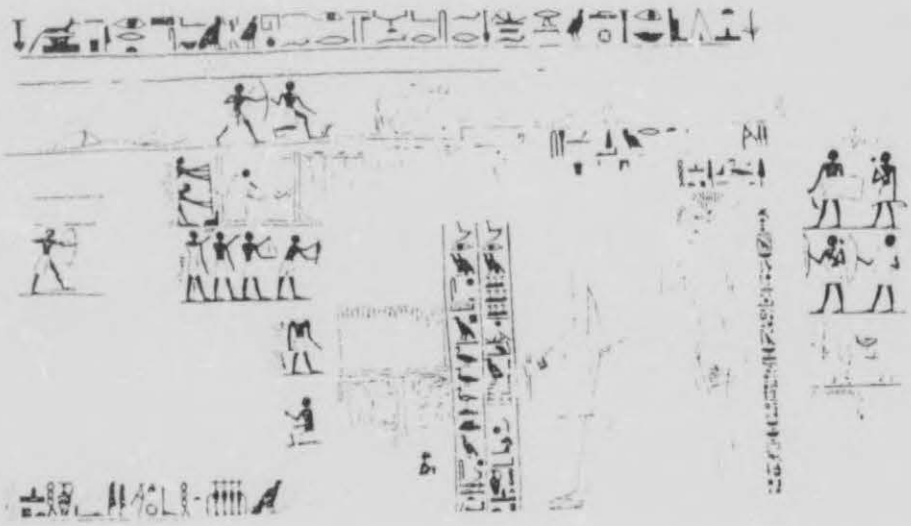


Fig 188 Tomb 14 Beni Hasan, Khnemhotep I. North wall.

11.3.3(c) EAST WALL (BH I: Pl XLVII = *Fig 189)*

So mutilated were the murals that only fragments could be traced. These are shown in Fig 189. Fortunately they are some of the most interesting and informative in this tomb. The wall consisted of six registers in the first three of which, (not illustrated), wrestlers appear in a variety of attitudes, while the bottom rows (shown [in part] *Fig 189)* soldiers are fighting and attacking a fortress although the latter is not included in the illustration. Again, there is the apparent link between the wrestlers and the military theme. Although it is not possible to see the type of fortress in this mural, at last, we have an indication with regard to the site of the action. At the south end of the fourth register a group of foreigners *(fig 189 centre)*, identified as Libyans are shown being led by an Egyptian superintendent. The detail is quite positive and two of the figures, copied in colour, are to be found in BH I XLV. They do not appear to be combatants, and possibly represent nomadic peoples caught between the adversaries. Nevertheless it suggests the Delta area and if this represents an engagement in which Khnemhotep or his troops took part against invaders from Libya, it may well represent the services rendered to Amenhemhet I for which Khnemhotep was made *ḥa*-prince of Menat

Khufu. This being so, we would have here an iconographic confirmation of an historical/biographical statement.

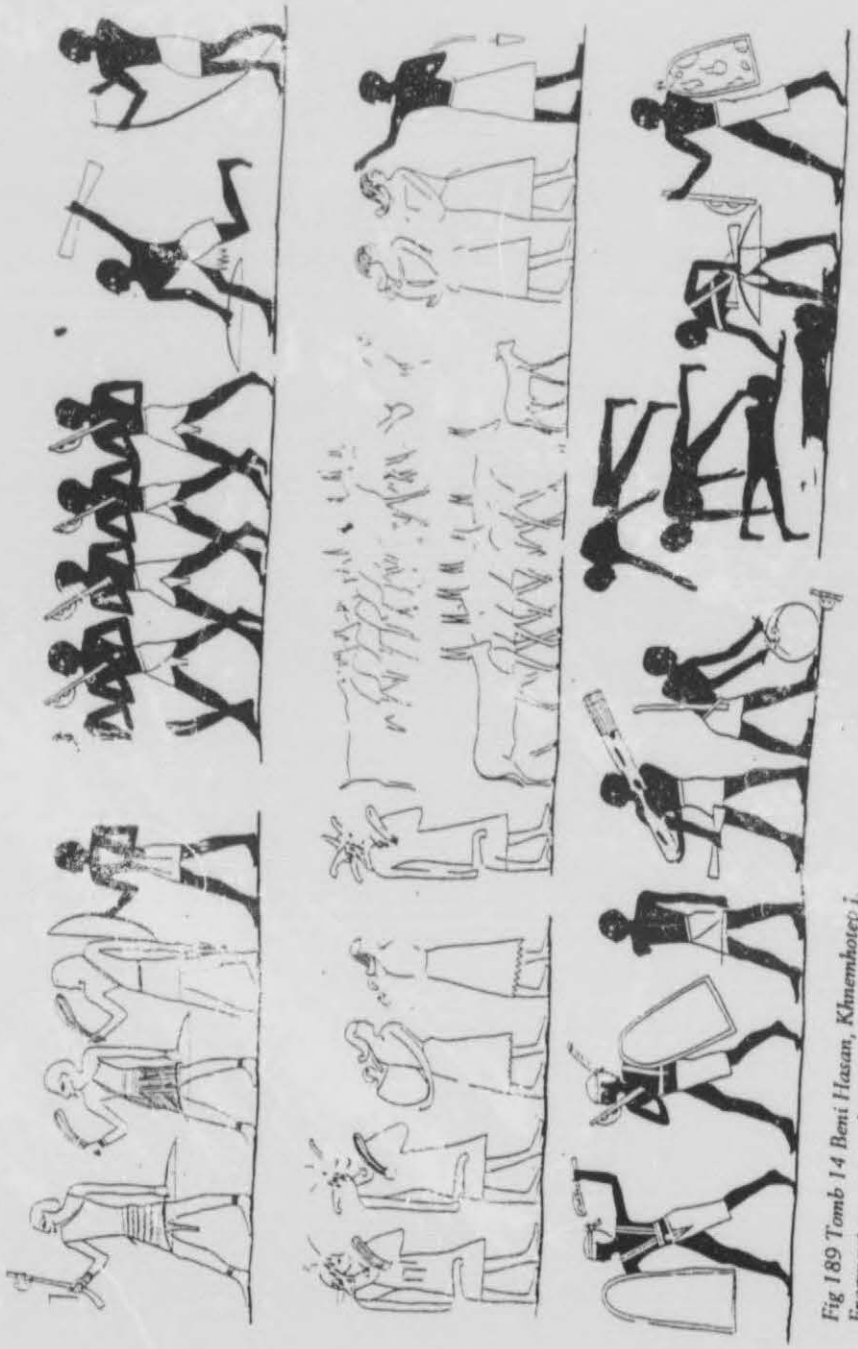


Fig 189 Tomb 14 Beni Hasan, Khnemhotep I.
Fragmentary scenes showing foreigners, east wall.

Fig 189

11.3.3(d) SOUTH WALL

None of the paintings could be copied.

11.4 THE TOMBS BI MEIR SENBI AND 14 BENI HASAN KHNEMHOTEP I

While in construction and general appearance the tomb of Khnemhotep is similar to the three earlier tombs, 29, 15 and 17, at Beni Hasan, in contrast, the tomb of Senbi at Meir shows a marked difference from the Old Kingdom tombs A1 and A2 of that necropolis. In its construction, although it shares the simple one-chamber design of tomb 14 Beni Hasan, the tomb of Senbi has the addition of a statue niche and the somewhat original design of the slightly lowered path to the niche with sides resembling mastaba benches. Certainly it exhibits none of the opulence of the expanded tomb chambers of the other two Meir tombs, although no attention seems to have been spared in the work on the murals.

However, while such murals as could be ascertained in tomb 14, largely followed the standard murals in the other tombs, with a continuation of the wrestlers and war scenes from tombs 15 and 17, Senbi's tomb in Meir, introducing what must be considered innovative material, focussed on a religious rather than a secular theme.

None of these tombs, as far as can be ascertained, had overlarge marsh scenes as occur in some of the Old Kingdom tombs, nor are there extensive workshop murals. Certainly the various workshop activities are depicted, but in the main they are scattered and a far greater emphasis is placed on offerings and the various cattle handling scenes that accompany these.

Each tomb has a particularly personal aspect. In Senbi's tomb it is the North wall where the ceremony and festivities of *Hathor* are different from anything found in the Beni Hasan tombs. That they reflect the strong *Hathor* cult which flourished in Cusae is certain. They introduce a local diversion into standard (possibly Memphite) material, in use prior to the development of the Cusae traditions[6].

The introduction of religious ceremonies, other than purely funerary rites, is perhaps a step on the road towards the 18th dynasty proliferation of gods and goddesses which filled the tombs of the wealthy, and which entered, with them, the realm of the underworld. There are no such underworld scenes in these Middle Kingdom tombs, and the innovations we see are largely directed towards personal concerns. This also accounts for the lack of uniformity in the innovations.

Footnotes

[1] Newberry says the painted and moulded plaster work in B4 illustrates the transition from reliefs in actual stone to pure painting *in tempera* (MEIR I: 17 Note 2).

[2] A trend towards naturalism possibly exhibited in the birds of Tomb 15 Beni Hasan.

[3] Lichtheim (1975:235 Note 22): "The princesses hold out the emblems sacred to Hathor and perform a ceremonial dance and a song in which they beg a full pardon for Sinuhe". See also Literature of Ancient Egypt (ed Simpson) 1973:72/73.

Parkinson (1991) subtitled "Anthology of Middle Kingdom Writings", lists the *Tale of Sinuhe* under "The intellectual setting of cosmos and State", calling it "one of the supreme masterpieces of Egyptian literature. For text and translation see Lichtheim (1975) and Grapow (1952).

[4] For individual figures, excerpts from the murals, see Appendix.

[5] Newberry calls these offerings "*percheru*" (BH I:53) Faulkner (1991:91) gives *prt-ḫrw*, invocation offerings, later *prt-r-ḫrw* Gr. p. 172. Gardiner (1957:565) *prt-ḫrw* (03) invocation offferings, lit. a going or sending forth of the voice.

[6] It is preferable to use "tradition" rather than "school", because the former is generally apparent whereas the existence of a school, however probable, can only be speculation until confirmatory evidence is found.

CHAPTER 12

12TH DYNASTY TOMBS: SENWOSRET I - B2 MEIR, 2 BENI HASAN

My fathers were lords since their ancestors,
sons and seed of primeval ones,
nobles of the first day.
Stela of a Chief Priest, Abydos.

12.1 DATING OF THE TOMBS MEIR B2 AND BENI HASAN 2

Tomb B2 at Meir was built for Ukh-hotp, son of Senbi of Tomb B1. While the tomb itself contains no positive dating, cartouches of Amenemhet II occur in the tomb-chapel of another Ukh-hotp, thought to be his great-nephew, which makes it probable that Ukh-hotp son of Senbi lived during the reign of Senwosret I. Since he held the title "Great Chief of the Atef-nome" (MEIR II Pl XII), it must be assumed that he was nomarch of the 13th as well as the 14th nome of Upper Egypt.

Tomb 2 at Beni Hasan was made for Amenemhat (or Ameni), a nomarch of the 16th (Oryx) nome of Upper Egypt. His term of office was during the reign of Senwosret I, confirmed by the name of the king appearing in the tomb in a biographical text which records the appointment. Although he possessed one of the most imposing of the tombs at Beni Hasan, Amenemhat, while claiming to be an *erpa* (hereditary) as well as a *ha*-(appointed) prince, does not record his parentage, nor does he seem to have been in the line of succession in the family of Khnemhotep I. All that is known of his family is that his mother was Henu, whom he claims was of noble descent, the daughter of a *ha-prince*. From the biographical text, his office has all the earmarks of being held by preferment of an official the king wished to reward for services rendered. Whether he previously had any connection with Beni Hasan is not indicated.

12.2 TOMB B2 MEIR: SENBI'S SON UKH-HOTP, NOMARCH OF THE 13TH AND 14TH NOMES OF UPPER EGYPT (*FIG 190*)

12.2.1 THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE TOMB

This tomb chapel is separated by only a comparatively thin partition wall from that of his father Senbi, Tomb B1. Similar to the latter tomb, but with a much shorter sunken pathway leading to a statue niche. Two mummy pits or burial chambers from between 10m to 12m deep were found, but contained nothing of interest and were filled in. The roof, supported on two pillars,

was largely destroyed by quarrymen. Originally intended to be completely decorated, most of the reliefs on the north and south walls were unfinished and the east wall south of the entrance had only received some preliminary sketches by the draughtsman.

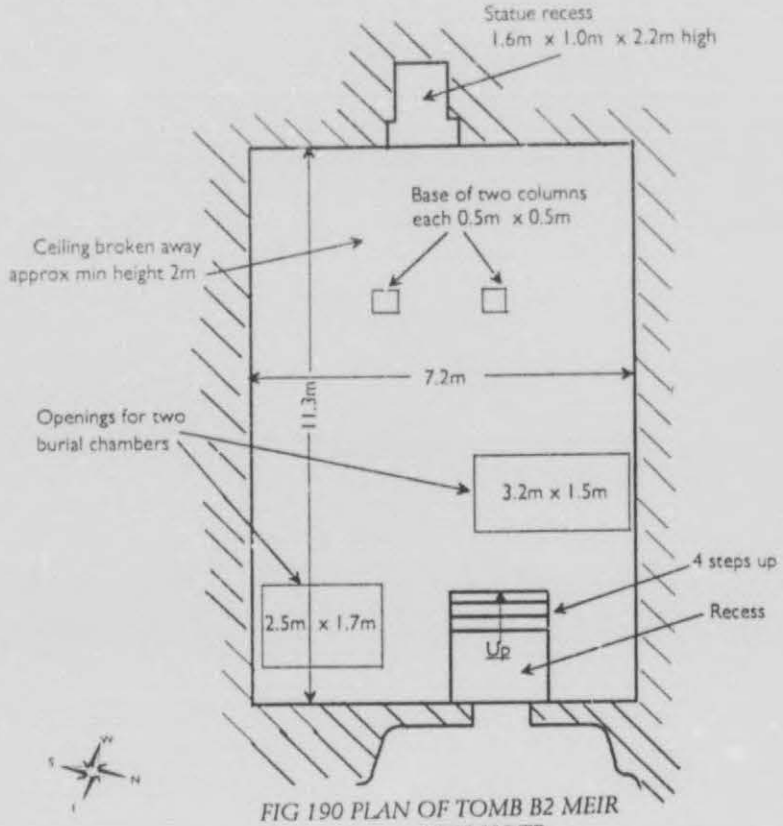


FIG 190 PLAN OF TOMB B2 MEIR UKH-HOTP

12.2.2 THE TITLES AND STATUS OF UKH-HOTP SON OF SENBI

It is appropriate here to draw attention to the name Ukh-hotp. As pointed out previously, the deity worshipped at Cusae, principal town of the 14th nome, was *Hathor*. An object associated with her worship was the sign *wḫ*[1] *(ukh)*. This sign developed a number of variations, appearing in four different forms in the Meir chapels (MEIR II Pl XVIII = *Fig 191*).

Used as a determinative in the Old Kingdom when it was always written with consonants, by the Middle Kingdom it had become a word-sign in itself (MEIR I:3). Colouring suggests it was possibly made of wood with two feathers, beneath which, in one form, is a solar disk between two pendulous uraei. It was possibly a wand or sceptre. Several of the Meir nomarchs included the *Ukh* in their personal names.

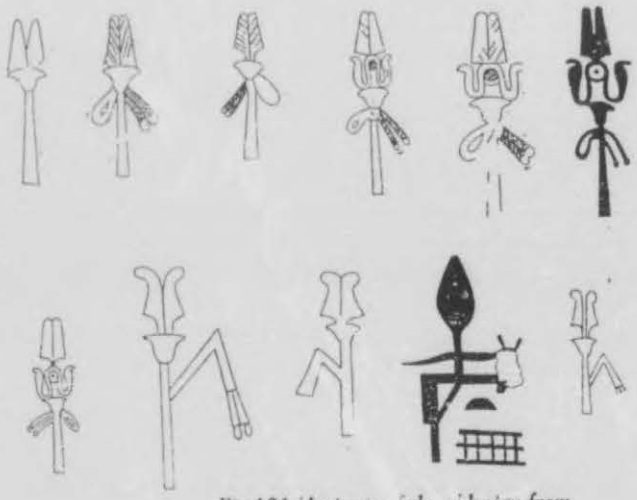


Fig 191 Variants of the ukh sign from tombs B1, B2 and B4 Meir

Ukh-hotp of Tomb B2 was an *erpa*-prince, a *ḥa-prince*, Confidential Friend and Treasurer, all of which titles were held by his father. Ukh-hotp had the title Priest (*ḥm-nṯr*) which Blackman suggests applies to the son of one who acted in the same capacity formerly. Ukh-hotp was also Superintendent of the Priests of *Hathor*, Mistress of Cusae.

Shown in *Fig 192* is a condensed version of the appointments held by Ukh-hotp taken from MEIR II:2,? which, in addition to fourteen attributes distributed throughout the murals and texts, give some idea of the importance accorded to exhibiting these facets of the deceased in these private Middle Kingdom tombs. The titles *erpa*-prince *and ḥa-prince*, singly or together, appear no less than fourteen times. Listed also is a wife, Thut-hotep, and a son, Senbi.

The range of divinities is larger. *Osiris* and *Anubis* are associated with the offering formula, *Thoth* is named, possibly due to Ukh-hotp's title "Scribe of the God's Book", *Horus* (Lord of Mankind), *Hathor* as Mistress of Cusae, Mistress of All, and Mistress of the Two Lands. *Sekhet* the marsh goddess, also called The Mistress of Sport, the *gods* who are in the necropolis, the *Great Ennead* which is in Heliopolis, and *Ukh*. In addition there is the Northern and Southern *Itrt*. This is a word associated with shrines, a statue niche, and a box for ushabtis but Faulkner (1991:33) does not show the hieroglyph with the same determinatives as appear on the South wall of this tomb.

A few priests, officials and servants are listed but surprisingly enough his wife is not shown as a Priestess of *Hathor* as one might have expected.

We do not find "Captain of the Host" in any of the lists, either as a title of Ukh-hotp himself or an official, nor does a military scene accompany any of the wrestlers, of which the groups are very few in comparison with those at Beni Hasan.

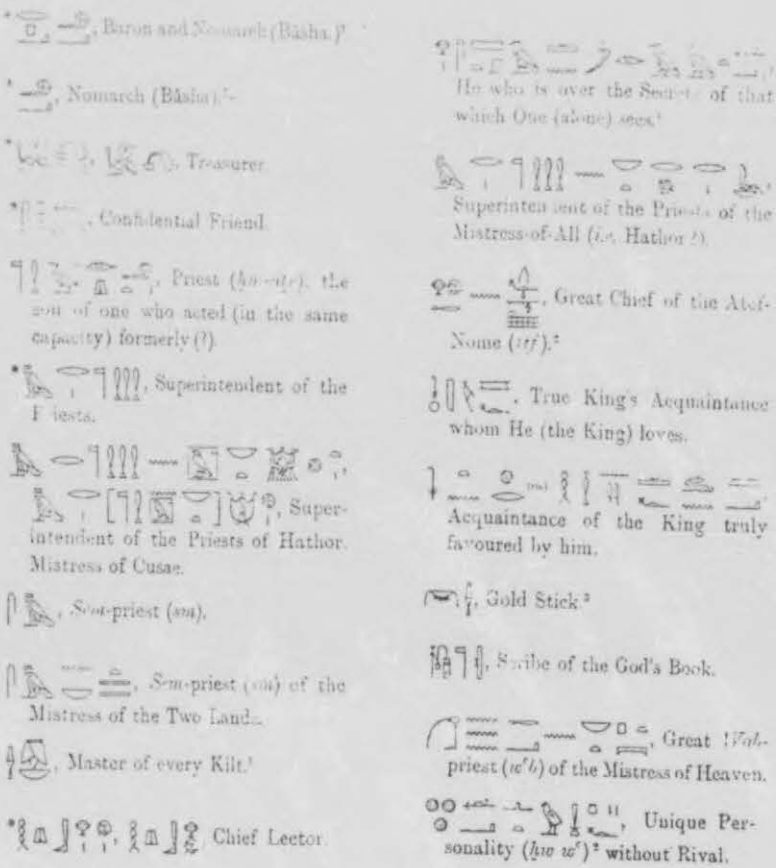


Fig 192 Tomb B2 Minor Official Titles of Ukh-hotp

12.2.3 THEMATIC MURALS

The fragmentary nature of many of the murals does not allow copying of entire walls. In this tomb, therefore, illustrations will be concentrated on those murals or pieces of murals which are particularly relevant to this dissertation.

12.2.3(a) NORTH WALL

Scenes are sculptured and are characteristic of the realism of the Cusite craftsmen of the first half of the 12th dynasty. At the West end, Ukh-hotp stands with his wife watching wrestlers and servants bringing food offerings. In the centre of the mural, Ukh-hotp is with his wife, he sitting on a stool and she smiling up at him. They are being entertained by a flautist, a harpist, and a singer, who rests his head on one hand and gesticulates with the other. Both he and the harpist are blind depicted by their vacant faces and half-closed eyes. In keeping with their

presence before the wife, presumably in the *karim* they, sightless, are allowed to face the lady, while the flautist who is apparently sighted, sits with his back towards her.[2] Note the fingers of the harpist somewhat similar to the fingers of the spinner in Tomb 3 Beni Hasan (*Fig 12*). The design seems to have been left unfinished and Blackman remarks that such a scene has no place among the rest of the wall which has cattle (Beja herdsman), papyrus gatherers, and an unfinished clapnet scene (MEIR II Pl III = *Fig 193* Detail).

Fig 193 Tomb B2 Meir, Ukh-hotp. Centre of north wall. Musicians, Beja herdsman and papyrus gatherers. Detail.

The excerpt from the East end (MEIR II Pl IV = *Fig 194*) is of interest for the artist's portrayal of the energetic efforts of the herdsmen to overthrow the bull (top register) and the old man at the bottom of the picture. Fighting, or jousting, boatmen occupy the lower register

The rest of the wall is either unfinished or damaged.

12.2.3(b) EAST WALL

The north side, which seems to have been a mural of Ukh-hotp and his wife with some attendants, is badly damaged. On the South side the artist had only just started to draw in the design.

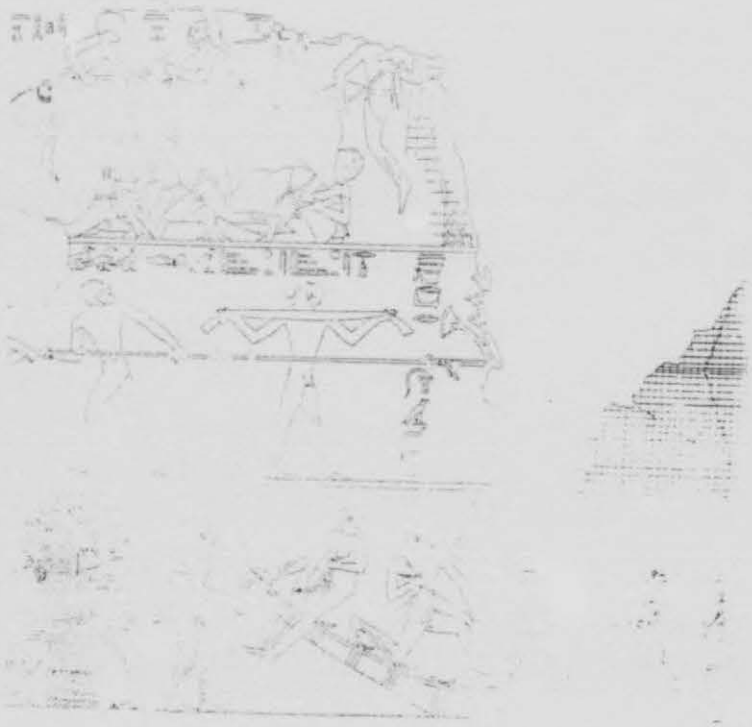


Fig 194 Tomb B2 Meir, Ukh-hotp. North wall east end. Top, herdsmen and bull. Bottom, old man with boatmen.

12.2.3(c) SOUTH WALL

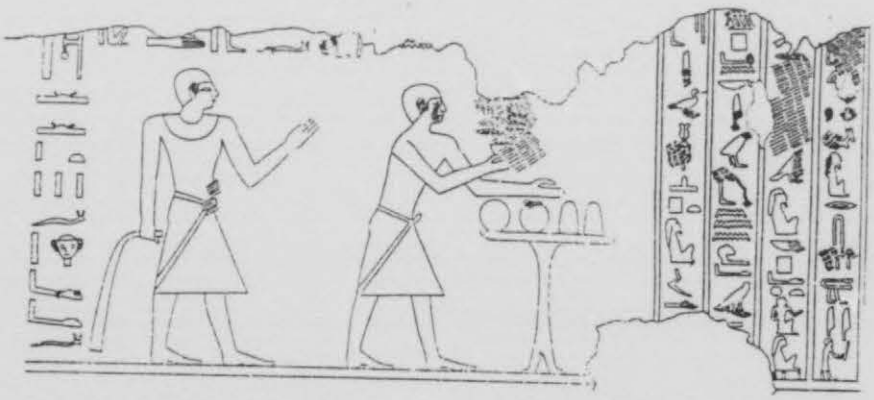


Fig 195 B2 Meir South Wall East End Incense burner and assistant with cloth to remove footprints on leaving.

The scenes are in three registers mostly concerned with funerary offerings. Perhaps the most interesting feature of this wall is the text which has the usual *ḥtp di nswt* formula but which is expanded to include in addition to *Osiris*, *Thoth*, the southern and northern *Itr't*, and the great *Ennead* in Heliopolis. *Anubis* is also included and the text continues to confirm the intention and belief that these written lists would provide food for the hereafter. The tomb owner being listed as a scribe, could be responsible for the developed texts in his tomb. The offering texts are certainly more extensive than are normally found (MEIR II:16).

At the East end of the South wall, just above the hunting scene two men perform funerary rites. Neither wears the priestly leopard skin, but one is burning incense and the other, holds a long cloth in his hand, for the obliteration of footprints at the end of the ceremony (MEIR II Pl VIII = *Fig 195 Detail)*.

12.2.3(d) WEST WALL SOUTH OF THE STATUE RECESS (MEIR II Pl XV = *Fig* 196)

This wall is probably the most informative. Fortunately it was almost completed. Blackman found the reliefs of animal and human figures to be good, but the cutting of almost all the hieroglyphic signs, except in register three, "atrocious" (MEIR II:24). Here is a *Hathor* ceremony, similar to that in the tomb chapel of Ukh-hotp's father, Senbi (B1). This mural, unlike the latter, incorporates an offering table at which Ukh-hotp and his wife are both seated. The rest of the figures in this register probably belong with the figures on the register below, since they form part of the ceremony as depicted in Senbi's tomb. They appear to have no connection with the offering table. The first man is a herald, the second, the Superintendent of the Temple, *Ini*, carries a box and behind him are various officials of the cult with the customary *Hathor* rattles. Below is the man with the *snw* bread of *Hathor*, the tongs again hanging from his arms, followed by the dancers with sistra and menats. The unfinished wall still retains its grid of red lines. The man and girls proclaim "for thy Kas ...*Hathor* that she may show thee favour, ...that she may prolong life, ..that she may overthrow thy enemy" (MEIR II:24). One refers to "thy mother *Hathor*".

Ukh-hotp stands with a jointed staff in his right hand and wears a *menat*, to which four weighted pendants are attached[7]. In his left hand he holds an elaborate variant of the *wḫ (ukh)* emblem. Mention has already been made of the interpretation of fighting-bull murals (10.2.3). Galan linked them to ascendancy in the netherworld, but the possible connection with the *Hathor* cult also has credence.

On the bottom register of the West wall (*Fig 196)* in a scene which has no connection with domestic cattle, two bulls are seen meeting head-on, followed by the figure of a cow.

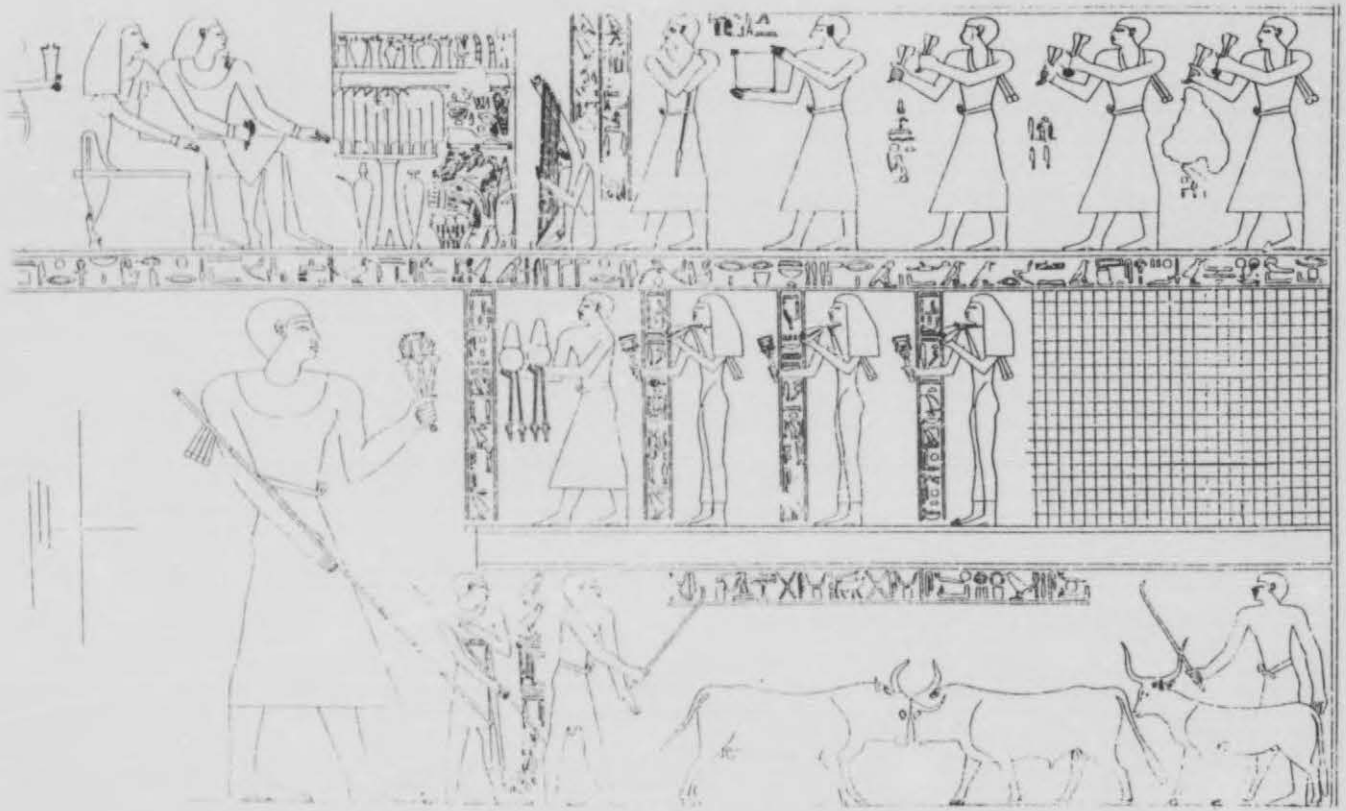


Fig 196 Tomb B2 Meir, Ukh-hotp. West wall south of statue recess. Hathor ceremony with rattles, menats and sistra.

The texts which accompany the scene give a banal exchange between the herdsmen, which could apply to any scene of bull fighting, but only too often text and iconography are not in agreement with each other. In favour of some cultic connection is the presence, immediately in front of Ukh-hotp, of "the Superintendent of the Temple-land, Rensi's son, Hen " The question is whether the scene is an overflow from the other side of the recess, or is it in fact a part of the *Hathor* ceremony? It is known that sacred cattle were attached to the cult of *Hathor*. While sanctity would have encompassed the whole herd, Blackman suggests the possibility of one particular cow being singled out as a manifestation of a special degree of divinity. *Hathor* is always associated with the cow figure (see *Figs 87, 88, 90)* and as such would almost certainly have possessed a consort. Have we, in this mural, a representation of two bulls fighting for the honour of becoming the mate of the cow/goddess (MEIR II:25)? At best, however, and in the absence of positive confirmation, this can only be speculation. While it is recognised, that there is the possibility of such an interpretation on this occasion, it must be borne in mind that basically a cow and a bull are just that and no more, and that the figures or cult doctrines they are called upon to convey, are only cogent in respect of the milieu in which they appear. Assumption that all such bull-confrontation scenes are linked to (a) ascendancy in the hereafter, or (b) the *Hathor* cult, are unwarranted.[4] One point which would seem to be confirmed is that we have on this wall the depiction of the *Hathor* cult as practised among its living adherents.

12.3 TOMB 2 BENI HASAN: AMENEMHAT (AMENI) GREAT CHIEF OF THE (16TH) ORYX NOME

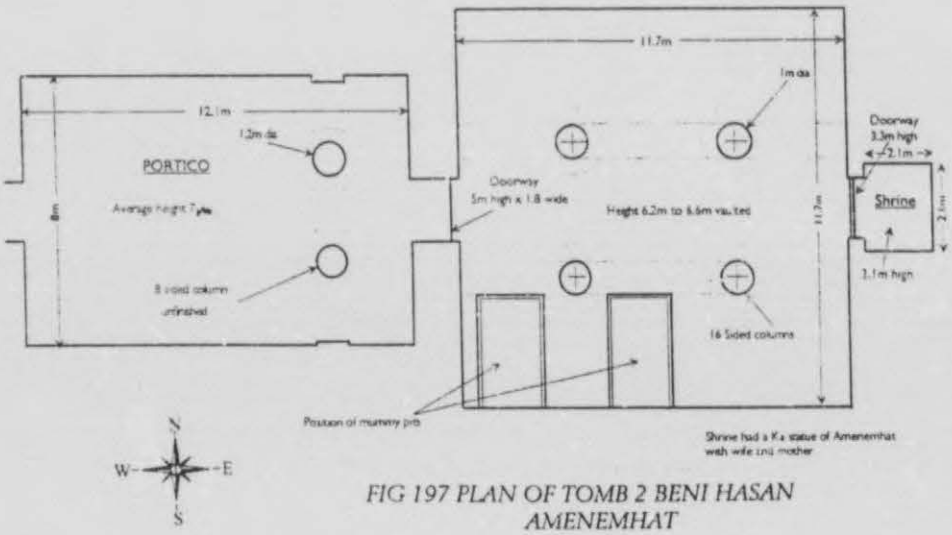


FIG 197 PLAN OF TOMB 2 BENI HASAN AMENEMHAT

This tomb belonged to the last recorded Great Chief or Nomarch of the Oryx, or 16th nome of Upper Egypt. It can be positively dated to the period of Senwosret I by reason of an extensive biography left by the owner whose official standing and the extent of his overlordship is plainly set out in one of the most prestigious tombs at Beni Hasan. Not only did it boast an open outer court with columns, but Newberry confirms that a road marked by dark brown boulders could still be traced from the tomb down to the edges of the cultivated land when he conducted excavations there.

12.3.1 THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE TOMB

Fig 198 Interior Tomb 2 Beni Hasan (Restored)

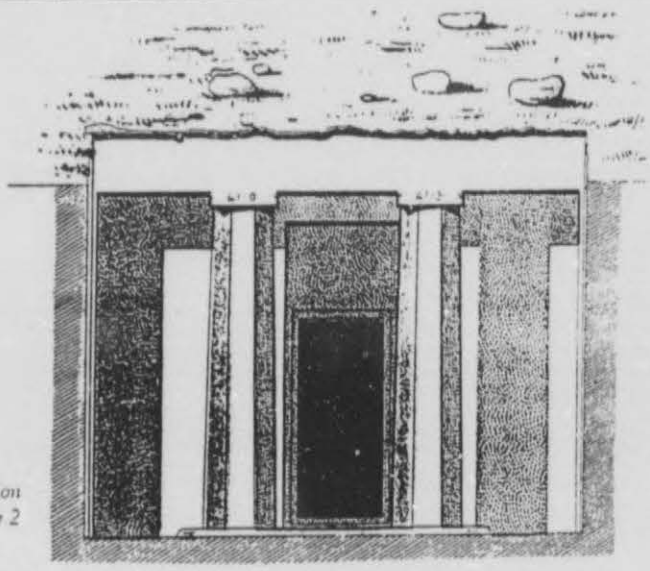


Fig 199 Elevation of Portico Tomb 2 Beni Hasan

One can see from the reconstructions of the entrance, that the tomb must have been impressive with a low wall around the open court, and a portico with two (unfinished) eight-sided columns. Possibly the exterior was left to the last since the floor at this point is also very rough. The (restored) drawings (BH II Pls II, IV = *Figs 198, 199)* give some idea of the original appearance.

The doorposts and lintel, flat and slightly projecting from the wall, carry the titles of the tomb owner. The biographical inscription (BH II Pl VIII*)* was found on the door jambs. There was no light other than from the door, a pivot hole for which remains. As the plan shows, the vaulted ceiling rose from an architrave supported by four pillars. The shrine *(Fig 198)* was closed by double doors, and contained a large statue of Amenemhat flanked by his wife and mother. This tomb has only two mummy pits on its south side.

12.3.2 TITLES AND STATUS OF AMENEMHAT

In all, Amenemhat held fourteen civil titles, which included the usual *erpa*-prince, *ha-prince*, and "Great Chief of the Oryx Nome". In claiming to be an hereditary prince, however, he fails to give his ancestry or father's name. In addition to the usual titles of royal preferment, he held several unusual ones, such as that which Newberry translates as Superintendent of the two (?) pools of sport. It raises an interesting question as to whether certain pools were reserved by the crown or local nobles and not available for ordinary use, in which case the fishing and fowling scenes in which the tomb owner takes a prominent part may well represent the privilege accorded to him by his use of the pools.

Another title is the of "Overseer of horns, hoofs feathers and minerals", which would seem to refer to the animals and mines of the desert. The nobles on the eastern banks of the Nile did control certain desert areas on behalf of the crown. He also calls himself, "Superintendent of all things which heaven gives (and) earth produces", i.e. of natural productions of all kinds. He held the usual legal titles held by other Beni Hasan nobles.

He was also "Chief Captain of the Host of the Oryx Nome" (BH II:11,12).

Fifteen different titles are accorded him in the religious field and fourteen different divinities or aspects of divinities are recorded. Interesting are the inclusion of *Pakht*, *Shu*, *Tefnut*, and *Ptah Socaris*. Here also, for the first time in these and the Meir tombs under review, is the inclusion of his wife as Priestess of *Hathor*, Lady of Neferus, Mistress of the two lands, Priestess of *Pakht*, Lady of the Valley. She was also accorded the title, "The true royal acquaintance". His only recorded son, Khnemhotep, was in addition to a Lector, a Treasurer, and Captain of the Host.

Officers of his administration and household servants are scattered liberally throughout the tomb, the majority given individual names. They total over seventy and range from a number of

scribes, including a royal scribe, to various maid house-messengers (BH II:14-18). Eleven priests are listed, including the embalmer.[5]

12.3.3 EXTERIOR INSCRIPTIONS (BH II:21-23)

12.3.3(a) LINTEL (BH II Pl VII = *Fig 200)*

Five horizontal lines of text in the first of which, reading from right to left, are the name and attributes of Senwosret I. The name is not in a cartouche. The next four lines are given over entirely to the name and attributes of Amenemhat.

Fig 200 Tomb 2 Beni Hasan, Amenemhat. Exterior inscription on lintel and doorposts.

12.3.3(b) LEFT-HAND DOORPOST (BH II:22)

Reading from right to left, Line 1, has the usual *htp di nswt* formula "may the king give an offering, *Osiris* Lord of Dadu" followed by the usual invocation offerings, "to the *ka* of the worthy one Amenemhat true of voice".[6]

Lines 2-4 begin with the usual titles of Amenemhat, followed by various attributes. In line 4 he is said to be a master of the art of causing writing to speak (able to read). He does not, however, proclaim himself a scribe.

12.3.3(c) RIGHT HAND DOORPOST (BH II:23, reading left-right)

Line 1 Similar to that on left-hand doorpost but the god named is "*Anubis* upon his hill within the city of embalmment, Lord of the sacred land".

(BH II:23 Line 2) - After the usual titles, there are no attributes of position relative to the monarch such as found on the left-hand side, but declarations of worth.

"Pleasing the heart of all people,
making to prosper the timid man
making a coming to every person
forwarding (travellers) up or down the river".

Line 3 - after the *erpa*-prince and *ha-prince* titles, "superintendent of priests

arriving at his appointed time
free of planning evil
nor was their greediness in his body
He spake the words of truth".

Line 4 has various epithets, among them

"unique as a mighty hunter
apportioning the places of feeding".

An incised figure of Amenemhat seated on a chair and holding the staff of command in his left hand, faces a similar figure on each side of the doorway, below the inscription.

Anyone acquainted with what are known as "negative confessions" on stelae erected during this period, at such centres as Abydos, will recognise the same type of protestation (Lichtheim 1988:76). One is a declaration of innocence, the other a positive declaration of good deeds performed. Line 3 on the left-hand door post says that he is "a noble of great tact"!

12.3.3(d) BIOGRAPHICAL INSCRIPTION, DOORWAY TO MAIN CHAMBER (BH II:23-27)

This inscription is incised on the jambs of the doorway in five horizontal and sixteen vertical lines (BH II Pl VIII = *Fig 201*).

In horizontal lines 1-4, date of burial, is given as year 43 under the King, *Kheperkare* (Senwosret I). In Line 3 the year is given in accordance with the nomarchy of Amenemhat - "year 25 in the Oryx nome".[7] The first line is again confirmed in line 4 by "the year 43, second month of the inundation, day 15".

A NORTHERN JAMB.

B SOUTHERN JAMB.

Fig 201 Tomb 2 Beni Hasan, Amenemhat. Biographical inscription on jambs of door leading to main chamber.

Lines 4 and 5 are concerned with invocation offerings and an address to visitors.

Line 6 is the first vertical line reading from the right.

Lines 6-11 record Amenemhat's first expedition to Kush (BH II:25 line 8).[8] He says he sailed as the son of a *ḥa-prince*, royal *sahu* and chief captain of the host of the Oryx nome.

He sailed southward through Kush (Nubia), removed the boundary of the earth (extended the boundaries of Egypt), received much praise and "not was there loss among my soldiers". An impossible feat as anyone leading an expedition in such difficult circumstances would know, but it is an interesting comment because it suggests that he may have taken local men, inviting opposition and acrimony when they failed to return.

Lines 11-14 tell of a second expedition undertaken by Amenemhat, this time "to bring treasures of gold" to the king. He was accompanied by one of the king's sons. This time he specifically says that he took 400 men "consisting of every chosen man of my army. Returning back in peace, they had not decreased". Again the insistence that all the men had returned, a doubtful statement to say the least. "Chosen men" may be intended to suggest that they were not conscripted. Certainly he is anxious to be both highly successful and blameless in all things. The King's son, he maintains, publicly thanked him.

Lines 14-15 describe yet a third expedition with 600 men "every valiant man of the Oryx nome" to "bring treasures to Coptos". He is accompanying a prince, Senwosret, whom Newberry suggests was possibly the future Senwosret II. The numbers of men grow with each expedition.[9] It is doubtful whether he alone led any of these expeditions, certainly the third was led by the king's son. The Oryx nome was probably called upon to supply a certain number of fighting men.

Lines 15-21 are concerned with the character of Amenemhat. They begin as a statement of commission, but from line 17 become the familiar negative confession or affirmation of innocence. All are very reminiscent of the stelae declarations. Among other things Amenemhat firmly asserts that at the annual stock-taking "there were no arrears to me in any of his (the king's) offices". One wonders how many accounts were correctly rendered!

It is illuminating reading, if only as an indication of the illegalities and injustices that must have been perpetrated fairly frequently to have warranted such denials.

12.3.3(e) ARCHITRAVE INSCRIPTIONS

There are four inscriptions on the two architraves of the main chamber, painted in large green hieroglyphs and mainly concerned with the titles of Amenemhat. They are repetitive and again there is the consistent desire to be considered "worthy". A thought provoking epithet is "free of greediness in consequence of his love of the city". He again confirms "arriving at his appointed

time" also "free of arranging ill...obedient to the royal messengers...doing the things approved by the nobles...clear of speaking fraud". Possibly one of the most telling statements is in relation to the Council of Elders where he "finds order in its entanglement". He also declares that he knows "the place of the foot in the house of the King and is long-suffering in the midst of the nobles." Who could imagine that this is anything but reflections of actual situations. The hyperbole must be accepted, and although some of the negative confession toward the end has a familiar ring and was possibly standard, so far as Amenemhat personally is concerned, there is a ring of reality about the biography that is undeniable, even if he is presented as rather more than human.

12.3.4 THEMATIC MURALS

12.3.4(a) CEILING

Three tombs at Beni Hasan have decorated ceilings. Tomb 2 is one of them. Far from being rough, this ceiling was well prepared, divided into three segmental vaults with plain curved soffits, and each compartment being covered with a painted pattern (BH I:29, Plate VI = *Fig 202)*.

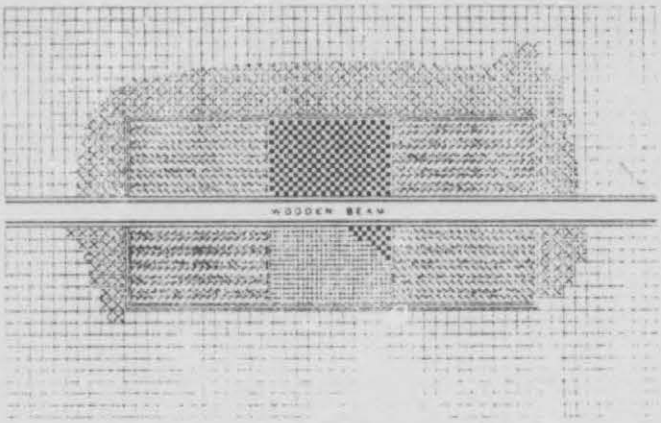


Fig 202 Tomb 2 Beni Hasan, Amenemhat.
Details of ceiling decoration.

A beam painted to simulate wood, ran longitudinally down the centre of the compartment painted yellow, with brown graining with two thick lines of dark blue and inscriptions in blue hieroglyphs. They are the usual prayer to *Osiris* and *Anubis* with the names and titles of Amenemhat. The outer design is divided by black lines into red and yellow squares, containing black and red quatrefoils. In the centre is a rectangular space of a different pattern in which the colours are yellow, red and black. The remaining spaces, as can be seen on *Fig 202* are filled with imitation mat-work. This was in yellow and brown. In 7.1.2 Matting Patterns (*Figs 128,129)*, and their development in architecture have been discussed and the design in Tomb 2 gives every appearance of being typical of Old Kingdom matting. The central square, of

different pattern to the rest, is believed to represent loose matting intended to cover an opening in the roof of a house. Such mats were hung under the openings to catch pieces of mud or straw which might fall from them (Smith 1981: 172 Pl 163). That tombs were built as "houses" of eternity is supported by this form of matting roof which is a typical domestic design. As discussed in 7.1.2, matting in tombs can be traced back to the step pyramid of Djoser.

The painting on the walls varies in quality, the South wall being carefully executed with a well-prepared thin plaster surface, and delicately worked hieroglyphs. The North, West and East walls, are boldly but coarsely worked, with many of the figures badly proportioned. The hieroglyphs on these walls are roughly executed in green.

12.3.4(b) WEST WALL (BH I:31, Pls XI, XII = *Fig 203)*

This wall, incorporating the false door, contains a prayer for invocation offerings immediately below the frieze. The wall is divided into eight registers on the south side, three of which are divided by the false door. The conventional designs are of agriculture, fishing and fowling, musicians, confectionery, with, at the bottom, a cattle fording scene. The false door on this wall sited towards the West does not necessarily have any direct connection with the scenes surrounding it. It would have been more suitable on the South (offering) wall, but would then be wrongly sited. The North side of this wall has seven conventional registers comprising manufacturing flint knives, sandals, carpentry - bowyers, coopers, arrow-making, chair-making, box making etc. metal working, pottery and in the lower registers, agricultural pursuits. Although Newberry cites "chair making" this is questionable. The length of the piece of furniture and the design suggests an embalmment couch. These top three registers show preparations for the burial although bow and arrow makers suggest the normal pursuits of the estate. If this is a pre-burial "funeral preparation" mural perhaps the bows and arrows were to be buried with Amenemhat.

12.3.4(c) NORTH WALL (BH I:32, Pl XIII = *Fig 204)*

This would appear to be a conventional "viewing" wall. The text says Amenemhat is "seeing". The top register is the usual desert/hunting scene. No small animals occur, there is very little detail, nor are there any mythical animals. Register 2 under the desert scene is a procession pulling a naos or shrine with a statue of Amenemhat. The next three registers are concerned with the bringing of produce and cattle. The artist appears to have had some difficulty with the necks of the animals in the centre of the fourth register. The last two registers are concerned with the accounting of taxes. There is a man being chastised, presumably for default, and the scribes keep the accounts. On the lower register the first man leading an animal appears to be crippled, but the execution of this is very inferior indeed.

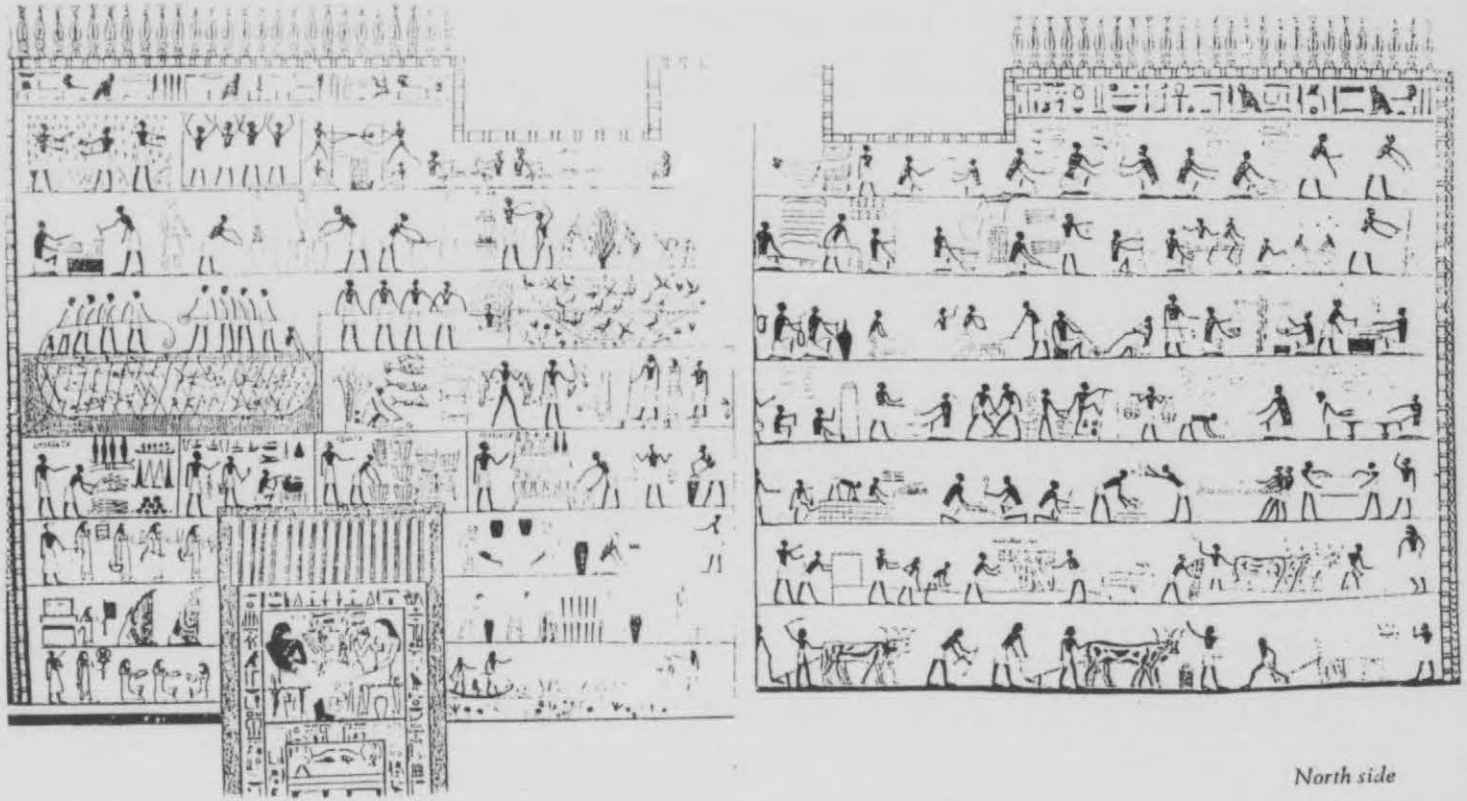


Fig 203 Tomb 2 Beni Hasan, Amenemhat. West wall.

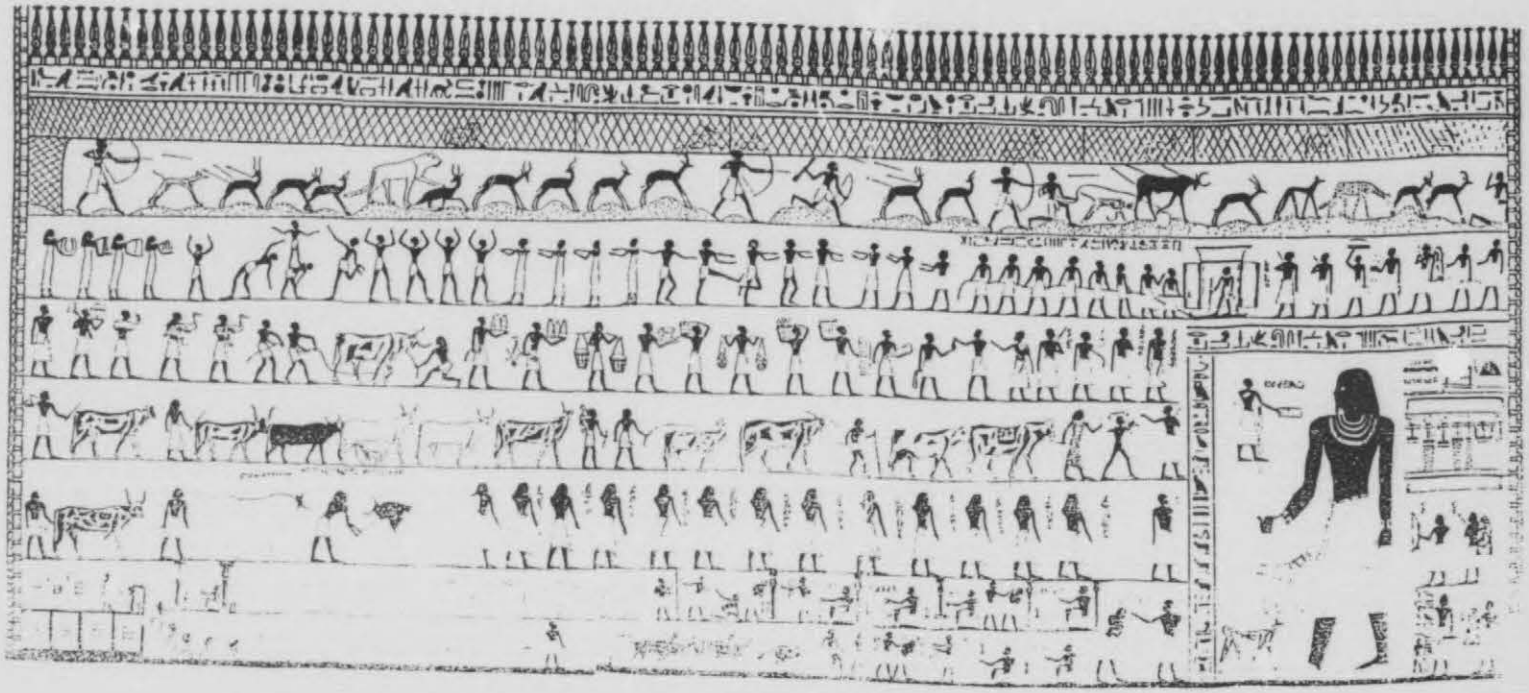


Fig 204 Tomb 2 Beni Hasan, Amenemhat. North wall.

In the frame on the right, Amenemhat stands with two hunting dogs, they do not appear to be domestic pets, and behind him, where it would be normal to see one or two personal attendants, there are four soldiers. Standing before Amenemhet and proffering a papyrus roll is "the scribe Bakt". The scroll is in hieratic,[10] dated year 42, and in the second line Newberry translates the words "writing of the cattle of the house of eternity, come from the stalls". In line four there is a total of 30,000 asses, 3000 oxen. Line five says "reckoning of the stock farms of the house of eternity, the stock farms of the nome." The text, however, is very badly mutilated. A reference to royal herds and the house of eternity appears in tomb 2 at el-Bersha.

12.3.4(d) SOUTH WALL (BH I:33, Pls XVII, XVIII = *Figs 205, 206*)

Although such a large offering section for a wife was fairly unusual in such tombs, it is entirely conventional. The offerings are beautifully set out, the lists of offerings well executed, and conventionally correct, the son of Amenemhat, Khnemhotep leading the procession of priests. The texts are all either formal offering texts, names and attributes of Amenemhat and his wife, or explanatory, i.e. "Bringing choice joints and wild fowl to the great *hat* for his *ka*..." Some measure of the excellence of the work on this wall is exemplified in the enlarged drawing of a girl balancing a container on her head while grasping a wildfowl (BH II Pl X = *Fig 206a)*. Note a tentative sketch of her face, to the right. Her name is Anebi, and she is in the fifth register from the top of the offering mural for Amenemhat's wife.

12.3.4(e) EAST WALL (BH I:33, Pls XIV, XV, XVI = *Figs 207, 207a, 207b)*

The East Wall contains the entrance to the shrine. Murals either side of shrine entrances are usually offering scenes. Amenemhat chooses to have five registers on either side composed of wrestlers (1-3), warfare (4-5), with funeral journeys occupying the final larger register (6) at the bottom.

The latter, on the North side *(Fig 207a)* shows the mummy on a funeral barge being towed by two ships in full sail "voyaging against the stream to obtain the benefits of Abydos for the prince Amenemhat", and on the South side *(Fig 207b)*, the *harim* boat towed by two ships with their masts down and laid across the tops of the cabins, "voyaging down the river to obtain the benefits of Dadu (Busiris) for the prince Amenemhat". This is a journey described by Andrews (1984:53-54) in which she draws attention to the difference between this and the journeys for purification and embalmment.[11] Many of these journeys are misrepresented particularly in later tombs, but here the purpose and detail is specified and accurate. Since the murals of the Abydos/Busiris voyages were often considered to be sufficient without the actual journey having taken place, they must have been considered a necessary adjunct to the funeral process, interpreted as an act conferring privilege and assisting the deceased to enter the netherworld.

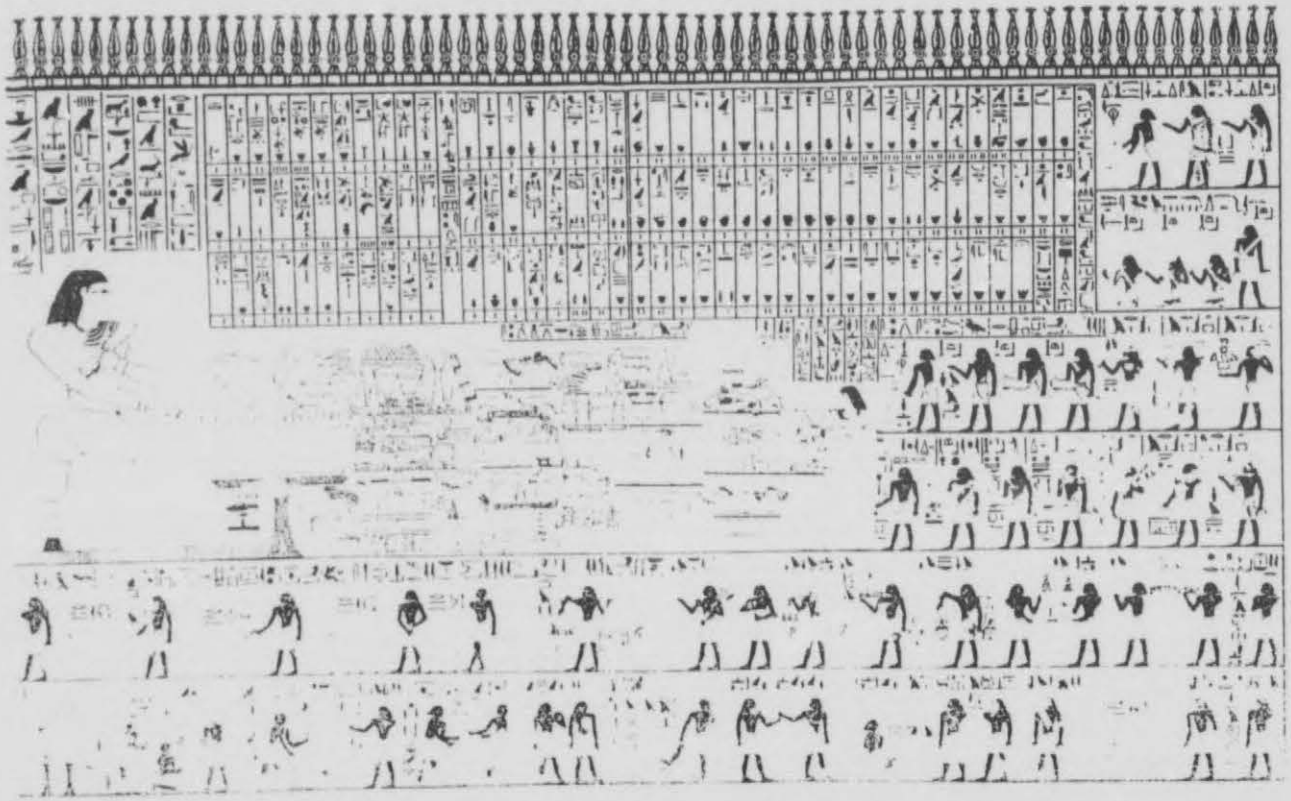


Fig 205 Tomb 2 Beni Hasan, Amenemhat. South wall east end.

Although enacted post death, it was an obligation performed in this world, not the hereafter and could have had no relevance in terms of substitution.

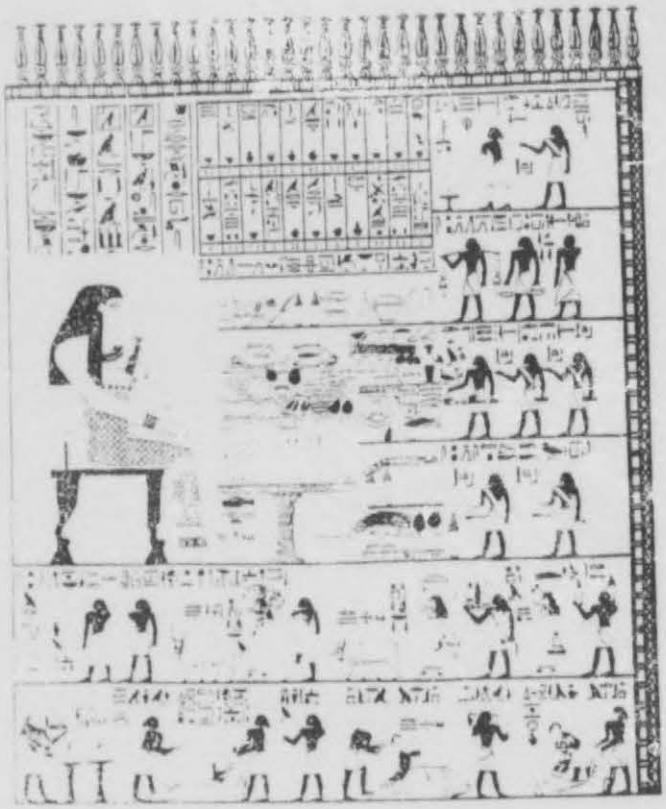


Fig 206 Tomb 2 Beni Hasan, Amenemhat. South wall west end.

Fig 206a Tomb 2 Beni Hasan, Amenemhat. South wall west end. Anebi. Detail.

As in the other Beni Hasan tombs where warfare and wrestlers are shown, there are no comments or texts to indicate any historical basis for the pictures. However in this particular instance we do have Amenemhat's own confirmation of the fact that there was an army of sorts in Beni Hasan at that time, Amenemhat himself was the Captain of the Host, and that he did venture forth on three expeditions. This being one of the less well painted walls, the fact that the nature of the opponents is not shown is probably due to the fact that the artist merely reproduced the mural in the other tombs. The glacis at the bottom of the fort is indicated, if only roughly, as are the crenellations at the top. Three figures in the 5th register on the south side, from their leather skirts and thick hair, could possibly be Nubians, but there are insufficient numbers to suggest that they were the enemy.

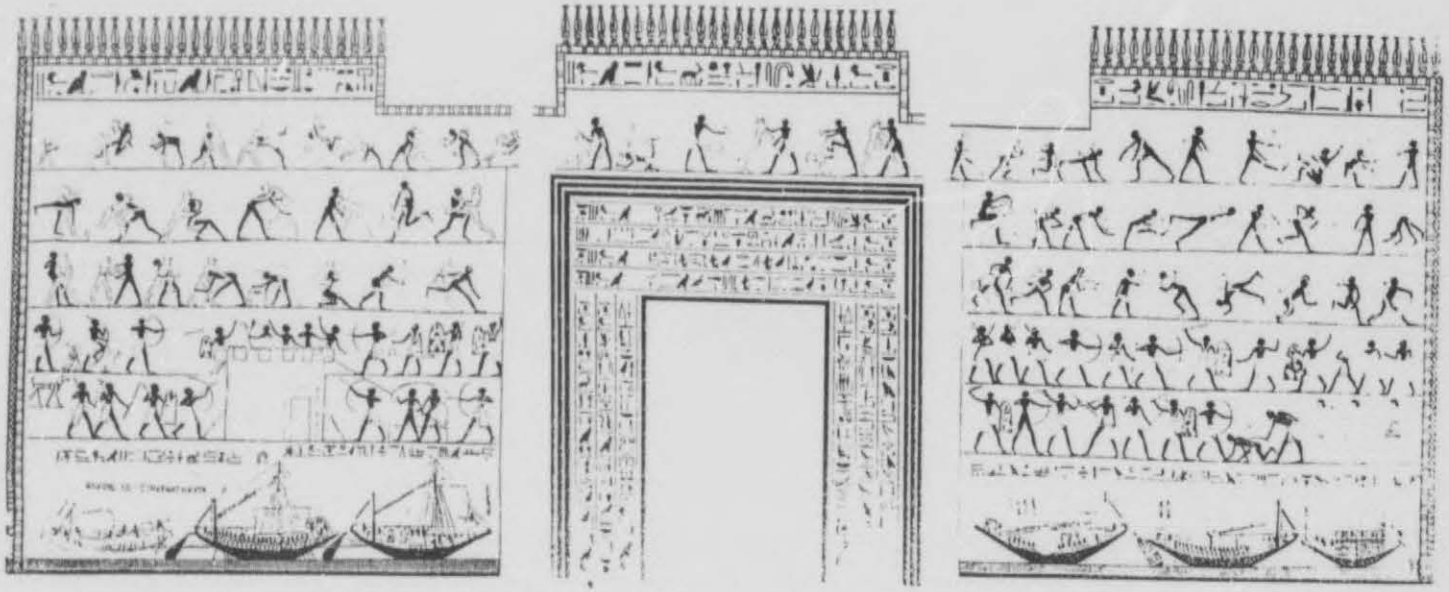


Fig 207 Tomb 2 Beni Hasan, Amenemhat. East wall, outer entrance to shrine.

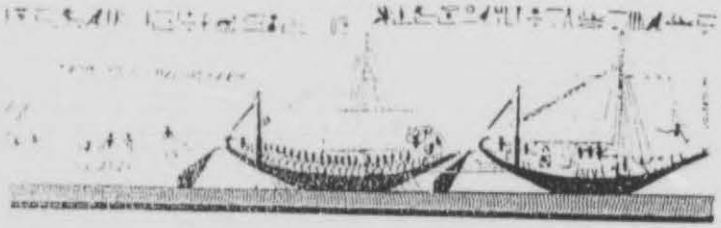


Fig 207a East wall north side Detail.
Journey to Abydos "against the stream"

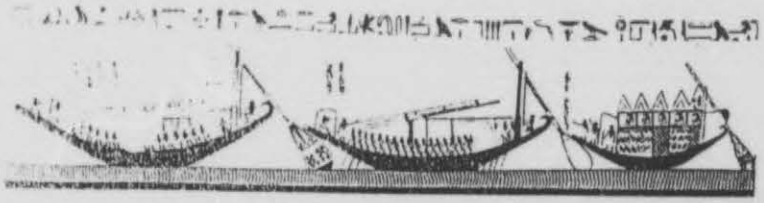


Fig 207b East wall south side Detail.
Journey to Busiris "voyaging down river"

This wall gives every indication of having become a Beni Hasan stereotype, in which case, not being history in the sense that date and place are indicated, one must look elsewhere for the reason for its inclusion.

This is the last of the Beni Hasan tombs to contain a military mural. It may be supposed that the reason for its introduction in the earlier tombs was no different from its inclusion in Tomb 2. It stands as a statement of an aspect of the responsibility of the local chief or governor at that particular period. It is not to say that this was not extant before this time, but that its relationship towards funerary obligations had changed. It is not proposed to discuss this question here as the nature of these murals will be discussed in finalising this dissertation, but certainly at this stage the contention is that its inclusion in this tomb is totally appropriate, as is its siting.

12.3.4(f) THE SHRINE

Much more carefully prepared than some of the other walls of the main chamber, the ceiling was richly ornamented with highly coloured but smaller squares similar to the main chamber, again with an inscription on a beam painted to resemble wood. All the painting is finely executed, the surfaces well-prepared and the hieroglyphs and figures well drawn.

It is not intended to detail the various walls which are concerned with offerings and various priestly rites. The interest lies in the East wall, facing the entrance where an extremely large figure of Amenemhat, seated on a throne, and carved out of the solid rock, once dominated the shrine. Flanked on the right by a statue of his wife, and on the left by a statue of his mother, Amenemhat sat accompanied by the two people who, as daughters of *ḥa-princes*, supported his status. Neither, however, claimed to be the daughter of an *erpa* (hereditary) prince.

Texts below the figures state that Amenemhat was,

"worthy towards *Ptah-Sokar*, lord of heaven", followed by the *erpa* and *ḥa-prince* titles and qualified by "favoured by worthy towards *Horus* within Hebnu, Ameni, justified possessing the reward of worth".

His wife is "Devoted towards *Osiris*, worthy towards *Hathor*, towards *Pakht* towards *Hathor* in Arit..."

His mother is given the same attributes.

A prayer is offered to *Anubis* for a good burial together with a brief tabulated resume of twenty-two offerings. Ameni is also said to be devoted towards *Anubis*.

The fact that these texts, or similar, are repeated in many ancient Egyptian tombs, far from reducing them to imitative mediocrity, point positively towards what appears to be the objective incorporated in many of the murals during this period, an affirmation of worth.

Although Amenemhat chose to be seated between wife and mother, each a daughter of a *ḥa-prince*, he left no family tree to confirm his ancestry or status of his progeny. He seems to have been the last nomarch of the Oryx nome. Khnemhotep II, who followed him, although a prince, does not appear to have been accorded the title of nomarch.

Footnotes

[1] Gardiner (1957:562) shows R16 as "fetish of the Upper Egyptian town Cusae. The personal name has been spelt *ukh*.

[2] Blackman (MEIR II:12,13) discusses the use of blind musicians in Egyptian *harims*, also the use of blind *muezzin*.

[3] The weights are counterpoise and in relation to the weight of the collar. Presumably four such weights would suggest a particularly heavy, and extravagant, collar. The ancient Egyptians seldom included such additions without a purpose and this would seem to be a logical conclusion.

[4] Blackman quotes the *Pap. Harris* and *Pap. Turin* in respect of Mnevis and his harem, also the possibility that the *Apis* bull had a herd of sacred cows (MEIR II:25-27).

[5] Newberry's note in BH II:14 says that the list as given was arranged alphabetically and not according to rank, and that of the various duties of officers and servants little is known other than from inscriptions accompanying the figures.

Such as they are, these definitions of duties provide an interesting view of the administration of such a household as that of Amenemhat.

[6] *ma-kheru* (true of voice) became translated "justified" which in turn was taken to represent "deceased". The original probably implied "worthiness". It was not enough to say the tomb owner was deceased, he must be true, or justified to be accounted worthy of future life.

[7] Dating from personal accession to power was the prerogative of the monarch which Amenemhat has presumably usurped.

[8] Newberry translates this as Ethiopia, but Kush is the ancient land of Nubia.

[9] Possibly a reflection upon his own status.

[10] Similar papyrus texts in hieratic appear in Tomb 3 but in a different context.

[11] As shown in Tomb A2 Meir, (*Figs 151 and 152*).

CHAPTER 13

12TH DYNASTY TOMBS: AMENEMHET II - B4 MEIR, 3 BENI HASAN

They that stand high have many blasts to shake them;
And if they fall, they dash themselves to pieces,
Aye, and much more: but I was born so high
Richard III.iii

13.1 DATING OF THE TOMBS OF B4 MEIR AND 3 BENI HASAN

Tomb B4 at Meir belonged to yet another Uhk-hotp, possibly the grand-nephew of the owner of tomb B2. The date of construction of Ukh-hotp's tomb during the reign of Amenemhet II is confirmed by cartouches which are incorporated in the decoration above the statue recess. The family tree is difficult to follow due to early deaths and second marriages, but Blackman, referring to the tombs of both Ukh-hotp's father and uncle comments upon their similarity in "both style and poverty", speculating that Uhk-hotep of B4 may have been responsible for them. He suggests Ukh-hotp's desire to perpetuate the memories of father and uncle (who held office for only a short time) would have been "at no great cost to himself" (MEIR I:12). This is pure speculation of course, and certainly Ukh-hotp spared nothing on his own tomb which is more elaborate in its construction than the tomb chapels of any of his 12th dynasty predecessors.

Tomb 3 at Beni Hasan, the last of the large tombs to be completed there, belonged to Khnemhotep, grandson of the nomarch of the same name in tomb 14. Occasionally one sees Khnemhotep of tomb 3 referred to as Khnemhotep III. Newberry, however, who gives a genealogical tree for this family refers to him as Khnemhotep II and this will be adhered to. There is little doubt about the dating of this tomb as it contains not only an extended biography of Khnemhotep's grandfather and his appointment under Amenemhet I, but also a record of Khenmhotep II's appointment by Amenemhet II in the Great Inscription (BH i 61, Lines 76-79).

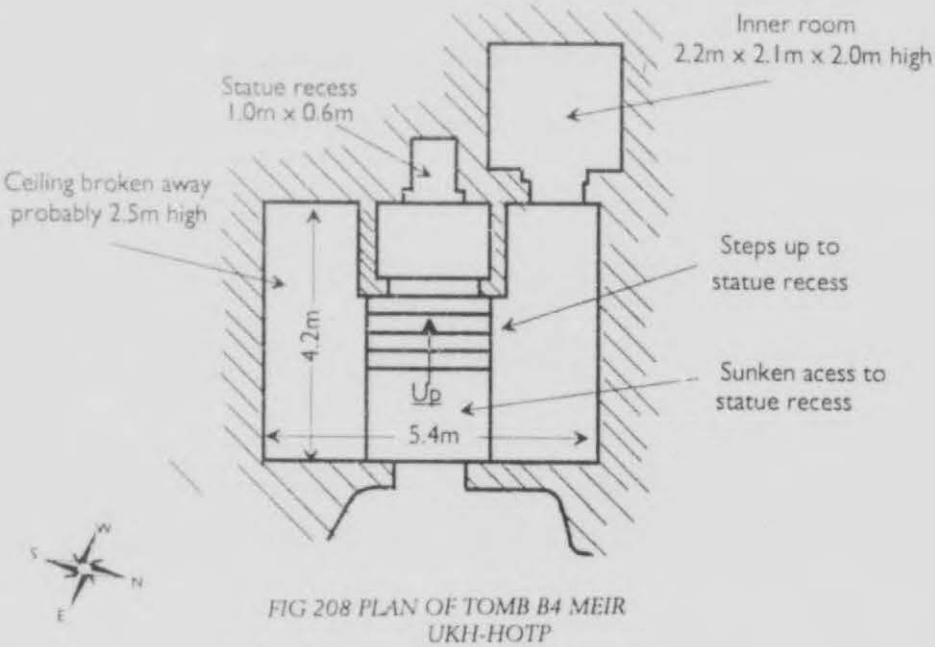


FIG 208 PLAN OF TOMB B4 MEIR UKH-HOTP

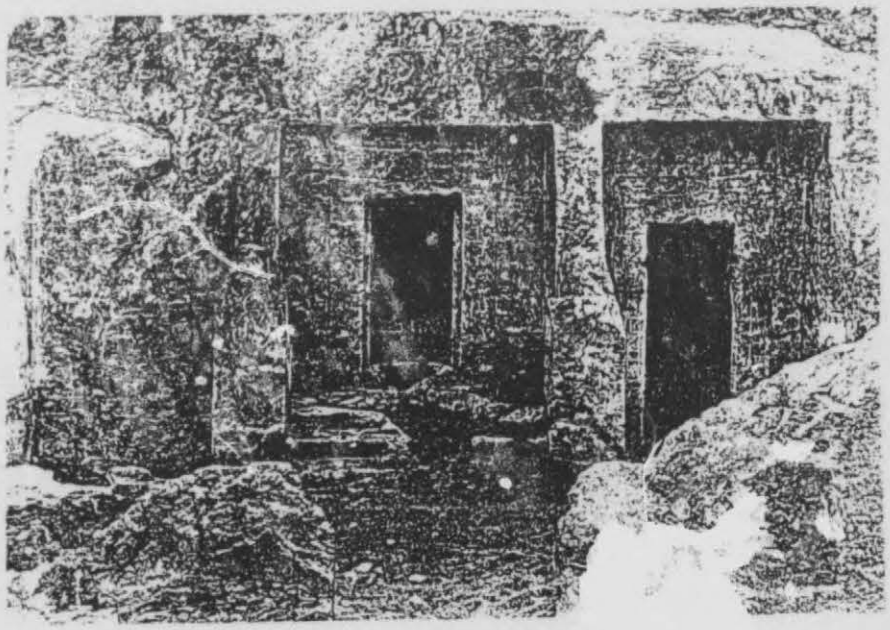


Fig 209 Tomb B4 showing steps, platform sis-i recess, second room. Niche for stela on outer wall.

13.2 TOMB B4: MEIR UKH-HOTP SON OF UKH-HOTP AND MERSI (MEIR III Pl I = *Fig 208)*

13.2.1 THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE TOMB

As can be seen on the plan, this tomb has two rooms as well as a statue recess to which there is an elaborate approach. A sunken pathway almost two metres long and one and a half metres wide,ends in a flight of steps leading to a platform with closed sides. In the photograph, taken in March 1913 (MEIR III Pl XXXIII = *Fig 209*), the entrance, steps up to the platform before the shrine and the position of the shrine, even in its ruined state, can be clearly seen. A stela niche, now empty, can be seen to the right of the entrance on the outer wall. The shrine was closed with double doors but the room on the right shows no allowance for a closure. The ends of the north and south walls of the inner porch rest on a mastaba-type pedestal, the sides having a distinct batter. Apart from the position of the statue recess opposite the main door, there is a distinctly different interior design from the tomb of Khnemhotep of the same period. The entrance has none of the majesty of both tombs 2 and 3 at Beni Hasan, which have columned porticos, neither does it have the coloured columns which grace the inner chambers.

Attention is drawn to this in support of the contention that it is not possible to discern a generally accepted tomb design. Even in such tombs as those at Beni Hasan where the initial design was almost certainly determined by the site itself, innovations such as the outer court, columned porticos and supporting roof columns were introduced, presumably at the wish of the owner. In Meir too, where the family tombs are linked by relationship and proximity, innovations are introduced without any perceptible reason, and certainly nothing that reflects a religious objective.

13.2.2 THE TITLES AND STATUS OF UKH-HOTP SON OF UKH-HOTP AND MERSI

Ukh-hotp could claim to be both an *erpa*-prince and a *ḥa*-prince; he also held the familiar titles of "Treasurer and Confidential Friend". However, whereas previously the religious titles have been given a secondary place, following the civil titles, here, the list of religious titles far exceeds the civil although this is partly due to the multiplication and/or variation of some of the titles. Apart from being "Superintendent of Priests", he is "Superintendent of the Priests of *Hathor*", "Superintendent of the Priests of *Hathor* Mistress of Cusae", "Superintendent of the Priests of the Mistress of Heaven". He is also a Sem priest, a Lector and a "Scribe of the God's Book". Altogether there are twelve titles.

Other titles are: "Chief of the Notables of Upper Egypt", "He who is over the Secrets of that which the One sees", "He who is over the Mysteries of Uto and Nekhbet", "Furbisher of the Diadem and Valiant Director (of Public Works) to the King", whom he praises in the daily

affairs of every day. He does not claim the two legal titles held by various other princes. His attributes are varied. He is Honoured of both (the *Lord* of) *Busiris* and *Hathor*, Justified in the presence of *Anubis*, Satisfying the King in all his conduct, Favourite of *Horus* Lord of the Two Lands, Making smooth the way of him who established him, Beloved of the God, Pleasing the God in the matter of what he desired (possibly both refer to the king) and Ready of Tongue. These are copied in detail here in order to draw attention to the difference between them and those which will be given later, in Tomb 3 Beni Hasan. Satisfying, Favourite, Beloved, Pleasing, Ready, are not in any way epithets referring to positions held, but attributes of excellence and preferment, presented as reasons for acceptance into the netherworld. In addition to seeking the approbation of the various deities, the approval of the monarch is also sought by reason of his being a god.

The third king of the 12th dynasty, Amenemhet II, almost certainly reigned during Ukh-hotp's lifetime. This being so, and the monarchy having been re-established, the nobles would again, in some measure, have been under the influence of the royal court. Ukh-Hotp's titles and attributes would suggest this.

Ukh-hotp names his father, mother, wife Thut-hotp, three sons, a daughter, five brothers and a sister. A total of thirty-two priests, officials and servants are listed, many of whose names are recorded.

Divinities included are *Osiris*, *Isis*, *Anubis*, *Thoth*, *Ptah-Sokar*, *Hathor*, *Sekhet*, Southern Itrꜥ, Northern itrꜥ, The Great Ennead of Gods which is in Heliopolis, The God of Edfu, Uto and Nekhbet (i.e. the crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt), The Great Magician (the Pharaonic diadem), and *Sekhmet*. Reference is also made to seven festivals or feasts (MEIR III:1-8).

13.2.3 THEMATIC MURALS

There is a considerable difference betwen the murals in this tomb and those in tombs B1 and B2. In B4 they are executed to a large extent in plaster, forming what Blackman believes is a connecting link between the sculptures in stone in Senbi's chapel and that of his immediate successor, and the frescoes in C1[1] which are thought to date from the Senwosret II and III period (MEIR III:10). However, while the technique is perfect, with the minutest details put in by either brush or chisel, the murals lack the liveliness and vigour that distinguished the work of the Cusite craftsmen of the earlier part of the 12th dynasty. Blackman says that all the old naturalism has vanished. He finds them ordinary but still the finest of the 12th dynasty, and similar in execution to some of those in the tombs of the nobles of the Hare nome at el-Bersha. The suggestion is that possibly Ukh-hotp was allowed to utilise the services of the royal court artists. That the work itself is suggestive of court influence may be substantiated by the fact that the cartouches of the monarch, in this instance Amenemhet II, occur in no other Meir tomb. Some of the titles and attributes such as "He who is over the mysteries of Uto and Nekhbet" and

"Furbisher of the diadem" point to a closer connection between the nomarch of Cusae and the reigning sovereign than pertained in the time of Ukh-hotp's grandfather and great grandfather. The titles in question connect the nomarch with the guardianship and cult of the Pharaonic diadems (MEIR III:10 note 2).

13.2.3(a) OUTER ROOM

From *Fig 209* can be seen the damage done to the outer room by quarrymen[2] at the time of its excavation by Blackman. The roof, with the exception of two small pieces, one in the north-west corner and the other just above the platform in front of the statue recess, has been totally destroyed. The remaining pieces, however, indicate that the ceiling of the approach to the statue recess, as in the recess itself, was coloured deep blue and studded with yellow stars outlined in red (MEIR III:10 Fig 1 = *Fig 210*).

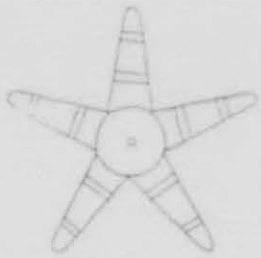


Fig 210 Tomb B4 Meir Example of star on ceiling of statue recess and approach. Blue sky. Yellow star edged with red.

Too little remained of the walls in their entirety to trace them in full, but in the main a general idea of the themes incorporated on them can be gauged. On all four walls of the outer room below the reliefs was a salmon-pink dado with a border of red and yellow bands edged in black.

13.2.3(b) NORTH WALL

(i) Upper Registers, West end: Only two small fragments remained of the scenes on the upper part, from which Ukh-hotp seated on a chair and a group of musicians could be discerned. Above Ukh-hotp were listed titles and attributes.

(ii) Lower Registers: A large figure of Ukh-hotp seated in a chair under a canopy, the floor covered by a chequered carpet or mat. He is shown wearing a highly colored necklace and bracelets and holding a *mꜣ* emblem in his right hand[3], a cloth in his left hand. In general the scene represents inspection of cattle (MEIR III Pl III). Blackman discerned the outlines of several Beja herdsmen, also a priest of *Sekhmet* and one of Ukh-hotp's sons, carrying a parchment roll.

(iii) Upper Registers Centre and East end: The little that is left suggests Ukh-hotp fowling in the swamps. Of immediate interest is the register showing a group of hippos in the marsh scene (MEIR III Pl IV = *Fig 211*).

Fig 211 Tomb B4 Meir, Ukh-hotp.
Hippos in marsh, excerpt from North wall.

They lack something of the animation shown in a similar mural in tomb B1, when Cusite art was flourishing (11.3.3(b): Fig 183b).

In the register below the hippos a calf-birthing and sleeping herdsman scene is reproduced almost exactly as found in tomb B1 *(Fig 186)*.

13.2.3(c) EAST WALL

(i) North of Entrance: A hunting scene, of which almost nothing remains, probably occupied this wall. Although the murals in these later Meir tombs are thought to have lost the exuberance and naturalism of the early 12th dynasty Cusite art, there does seem to have been an attempt to retain or copy some motifs. In addition to the cattle birthing and sleeping herdsman figures mentioned above, we have again the raised foot in the hunting phase of Ukh-hotp, similar to that found on the East wall of tomb of Senbi B1 *(Fig 185)* although nothing remains which would indicate the entire stance. In the bottom register men present various wild animals to the nomarch "for thy *ka*".

(ii) South of Entrance: This was once a scene of Ukh-hotp spearing fish, the traditional two species and part of the spear still remain. He was accompanied by his wife, daughter and son, and various other male figures. Two fishermen in a small skiff fish with net and line just under the prow of Ukh-hotp's boat. Such as can be seen of the reeds, is conventional, with birds, nests and ichneumon climbing up a papyrus stem. A clapnet scene once occupied the top register in the Eastern half of the wall,with a drag-net fishing scene in the bottom register. Fish, hippos,

waterfowl and a crocodile, help to complete the usual bottom register, the only unusual addition being a turtle.

13.2.3(d) WEST WALL NORTH OF APPROACH TO STATUE RECESS

Entrance to small chamber. The doorway occupies most of the wall, with all the space beside the jambs and above the architrave covered with an unusual painted spiral design (MEIR III:15, Pl IX = *Fig 212*, Pl XXVIII = *Fig 212a)*.

Apart from the details of the design, this clearly defined hieroglyphic text is interesting for some of the glyphs it incorporates. The architrave contains the usual mortuary prayer in five lines inorporating *Osiris*, *Anubis*, *Thot*, the northern and southern *Ir'ti*,[4] the Great Ennead of Gods that is in Heliopolis, and all the gods...for the *ka* of him who is honoured by *Hathor* Mistress of Cusae, followed by various attributes.

The attributes mentioned previously such as Satisfying the King in all his conduct, Valiant Director (of public works) of the King, together with various others appear on the northern jamb in two vertical lines above a seated figure of Ukh-hotp. Lists of Ukh-hotp's titles and a similar list and figure appears on the southern jamb. On either side of the doorway the hieroglyphs have been copied very clearly and the sign of Cusae - a man holding two long-necked leopards, and the *ukh* sign atached to the hotp of Ukh-hotp's name are clearly visible. The two cobras seated on baskets at the bottom of the left hand inner vertical register possibly represent Uto[5] and Nekhbet (the crowns of upper and lower Egypt, cf. footnote 4). These titles in general, as Blackman suggests, show a marked inclination towards the monarchy not present in the earlier 12th dynasty tombs under review *(Fig 212b)*.

13.2.3(e) WEST WALL SOUTH OF APPROACH TO STATUE RECESS

The mural on this wall conforms to no conventional tomb theme, being entirely occupied by a list of Ukh-hotp's predecessors in the nomarchy together with their wives (MEIR III Pl XI = *Fig 213)*.

It consists of six double registers,[6] the upper row in each being the nomarchs, the lower one their wives, one to every nomarch. Each nomarch sits upon an ebony chair.[7] The wives sit on green rush mats and carry, alternately, either a lotus or a cloth.

Paintings found in the third dynasty mastaba of Hesire at Saqqara, show a complete set of furniture, and discussing these Killen says that the patterns rendered on the pieces of furniture suggest that they were made of "or veneered with" timbers such as ebony (Killen 1994: 28, 29 Figs 34-36, 39, Fig 48d = *Fig 214*).

Fig 212a Name and titles of Ukh-hotp the sign of Cusae and the "two ladies".

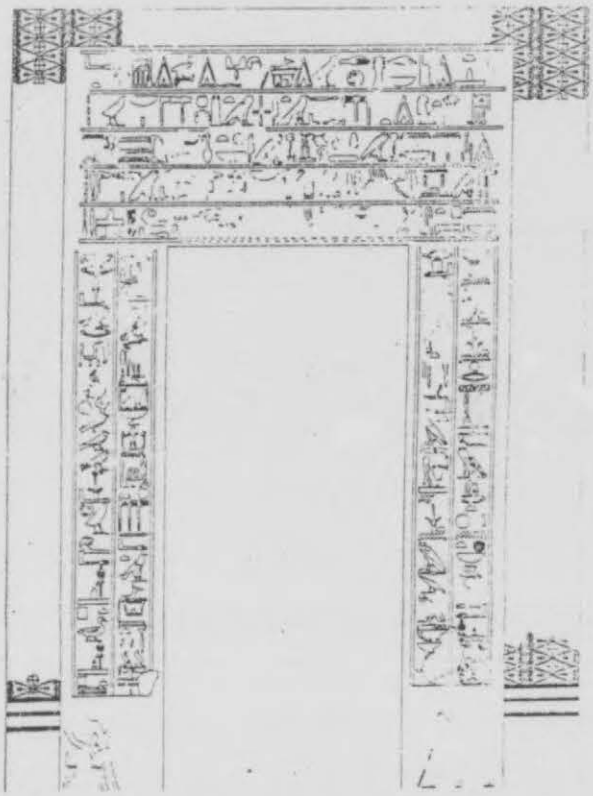


Fig 212 Tomb B4 Meir, Ukh-hotp. Entrance to inner room.

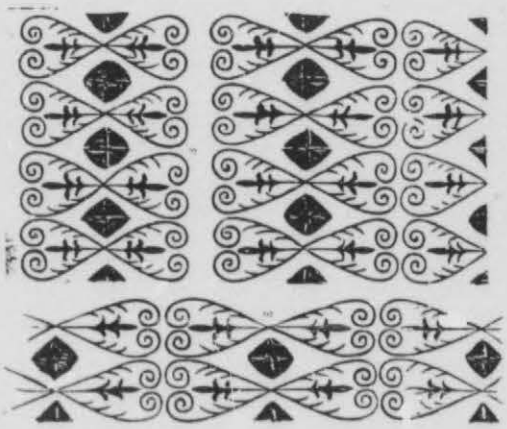


Fig 212a Pattern of decoration around entrance to inner room

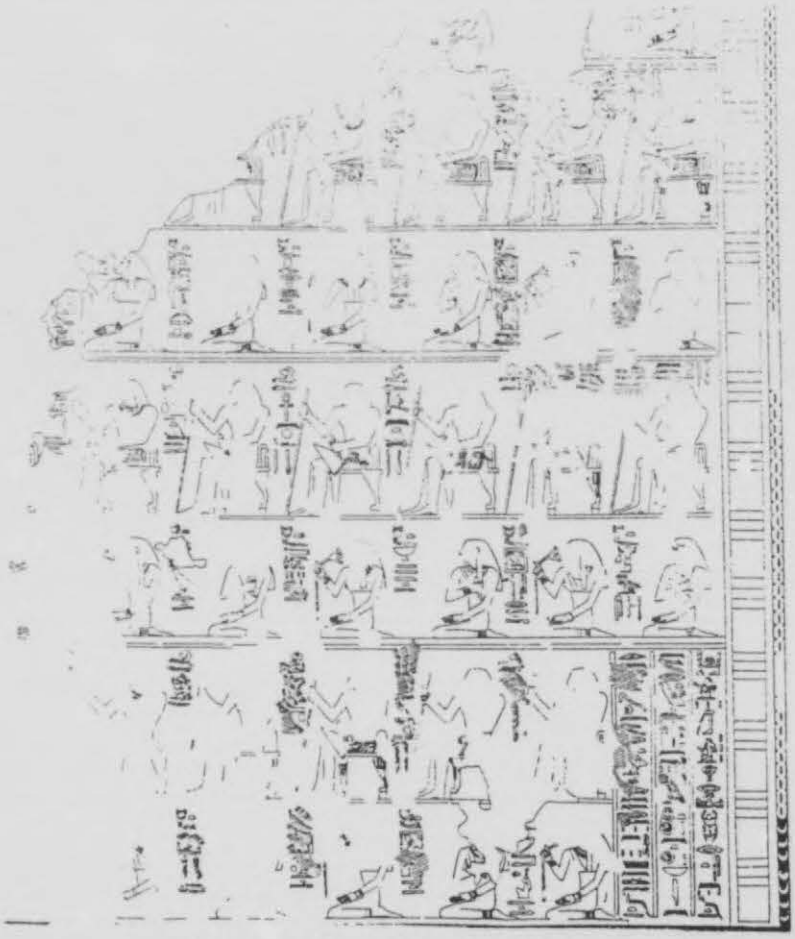


Fig 213 Tomb B4 Meir, Ukh-hotp. West wall south of approach to statue recess. Lists of Ukh-hotp's predecessors in the nomarchy with their wives.

Fig 214
Middle Kingdom chair depicted as ebony from stela in Egyptian Antiquities Museum, Cairo

The second figure from the right in the fourth register from the bottom (*Fig 213*) sits on such a chair, one leg of which is painted to denote ebony as is the first chair in the 6th register from the bottom on the same side. Doubtless the others were originally the same.

This may seem an irrelevant diversion but the whole concept of the ebony ch[illegible]int with, it is suggested, a desire to present his ancestral predecessors in as opulent a[illegible]ious a manner as possible. It is an unprecedented statement of primogeniture much in the mould of the 19th dynasty Sethos list confirming accession to the monarchy (cf.Ch 4: *Fig 36*).[8] However, while Sethos relied on the skills of the scribe to repeat a series of cartouches, Ukh-Hotp has augmented the names of his ancestors by an iconographic presentation of each one, a perfect example of the extension of biographic textual detail to the iconographic art. As such this is not a biography but a biographical confirmation of the existence of various named ancestors. One might point to the names attached to family figures, officials, or servants in numerous tomb murals, but this would seem to be a positive privilege accorded to a particular individual on the premise that by being named, one lived. This was done by presenting the various officials in iconographic form, the name/description following in textual form. The list in Ukh-Hotp's tomb is there to present the names (and status) primarily, and the figures augment or illustrate the statement. This list of ancient nomarchs is not there to give them life by naming, as part of the funeral rites of Ukh-hotp, but is almost certainly a declaration of Ukh-hotp having been "born so high".

Not a basic historical statement for the sake of record, nevertheless it has its roots in a biographic background. In the context in which it appears, it would seem to be a statement of worth, or confirmation of Ukh-hotp's right to his exalted position. We learn that in the 12th dynasty, the nomarchs were replaced by lesser officials, crown servants directly responsible to the king (Aldred 1987:131). This change seems to have been completed during the reign of Senwosret III. Is it not possible that Ukh-hotp, aware of the trends developing within the monarchy, is seeking to confirm his own position and that of his family, while substantiating his worthiness and status before the divinities of the underworld?

Lacunae exist in the list where contemporary records would have enabled an estimation of the historical value and accuracy of the record, but this in no way detracts from the presence and form of the mural itself.

13.2.3(f) REMAINDER OF MAIN CHAMBER AND STATUE RECESS

There is little to be gained by detailing the other murals in the main chamber. They are fragmentary at best although it is possible to determine their nature which is that of typical funerary scenes and offerings around the entrance to the statue recess. Of interest are two figures of Ukh-hotp north and south of the statue recess, where he is shown wrapped in a long blanket of green stripes.

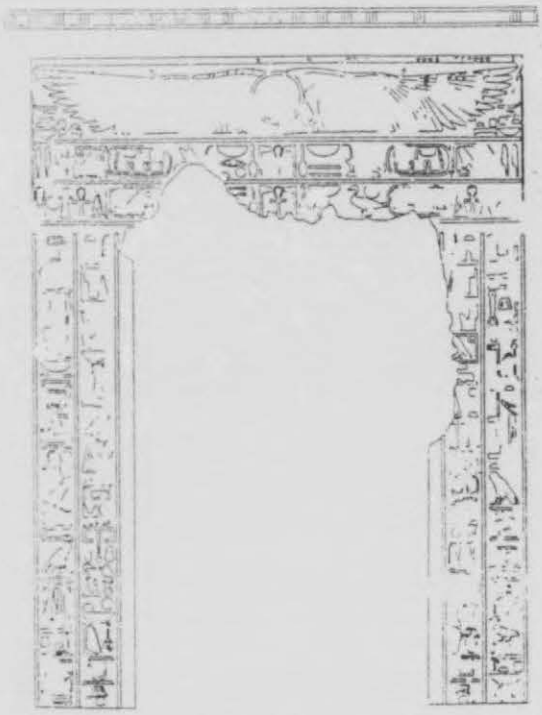


Fig 215 Tomb B4 Meir, Ukh-hotp. Statue recess. architrave and north and south jambs.

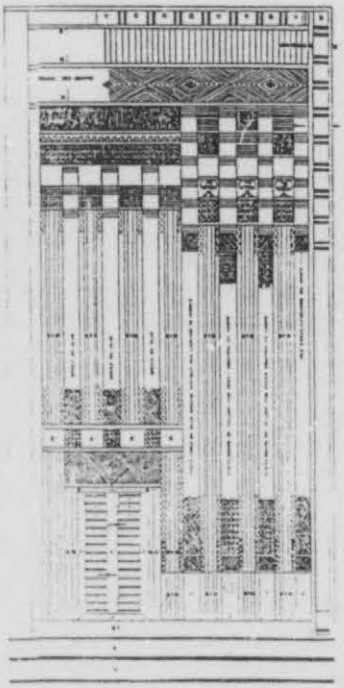


Fig 216 Tomb B4 Meir, Ukh-'hotp. Statue recess west wall. The north and south walls were similar with a slightly different colour scheme in the central panel.

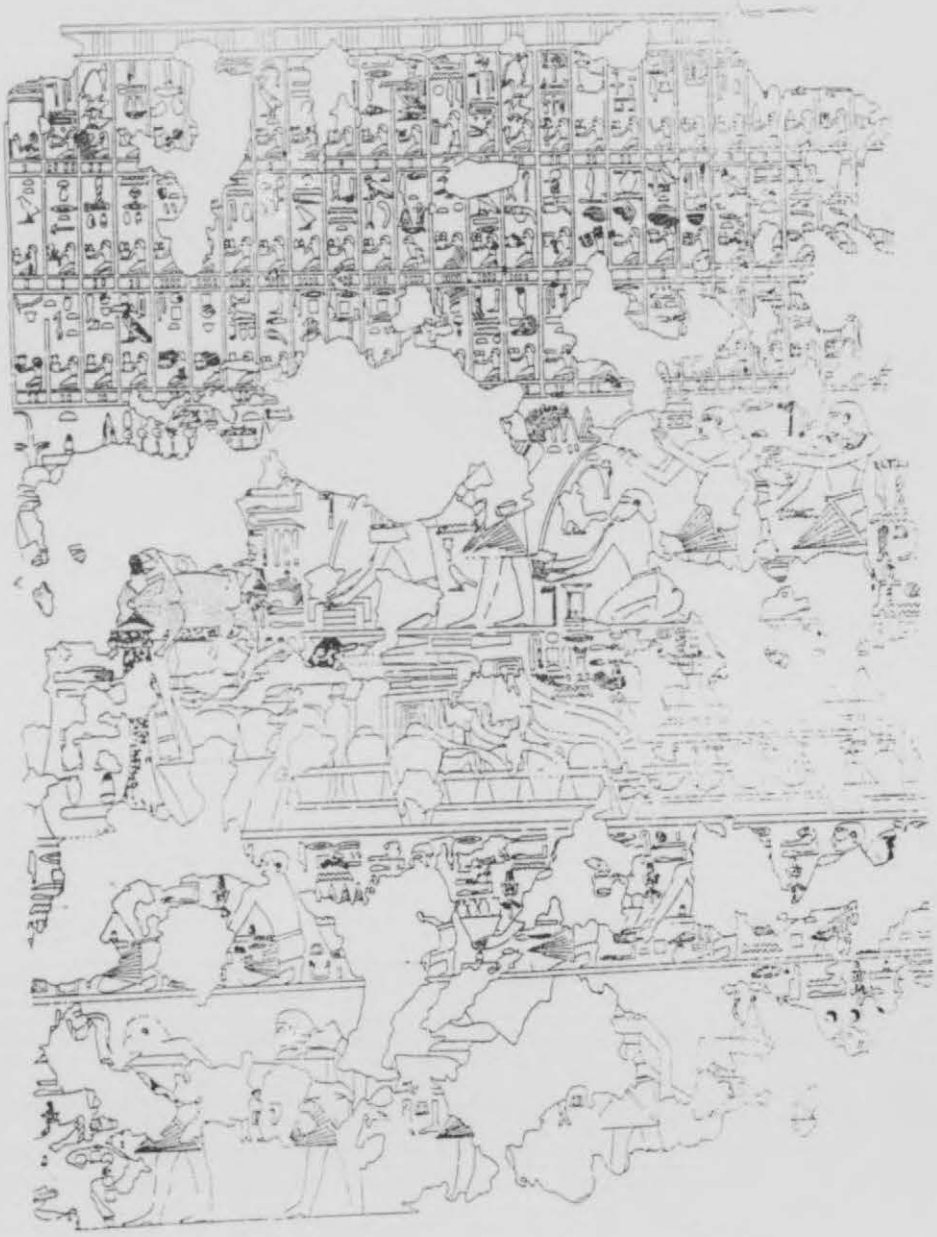


Fig 217 Tomb B4 Meir, Ukh-hotp. Inner room north wall.

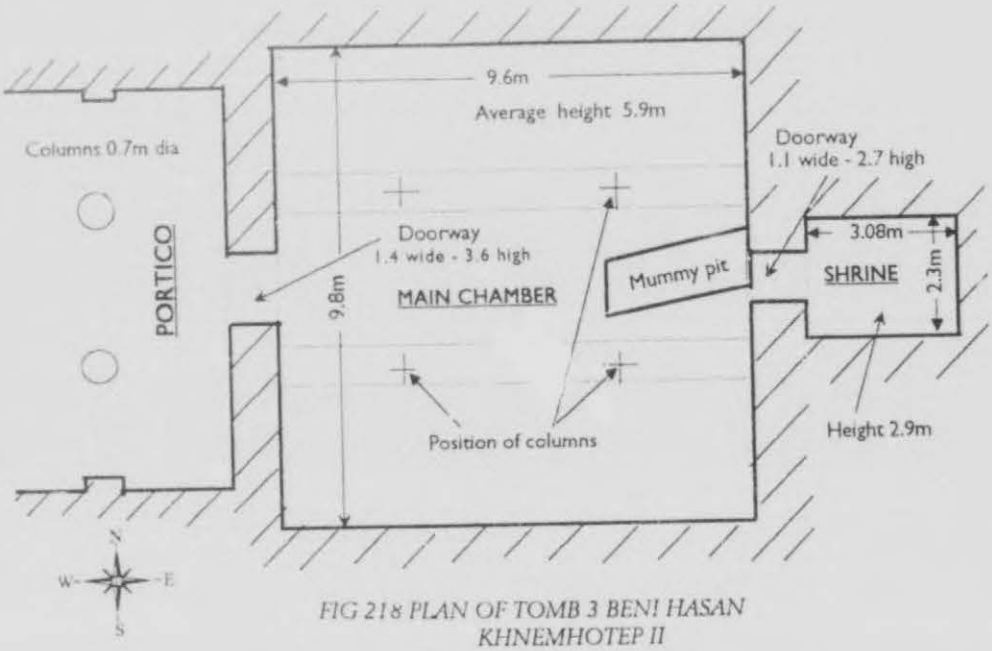


FIG 218 PLAN OF TOMB 3 BENI HASAN KHNEMHOTEP II

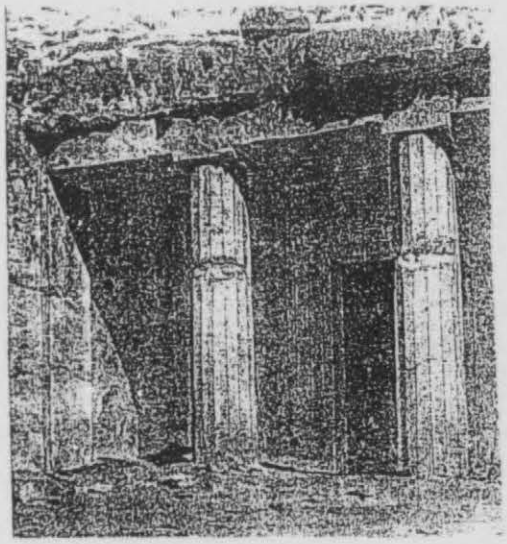


Fig 218a Tomb 3 portico

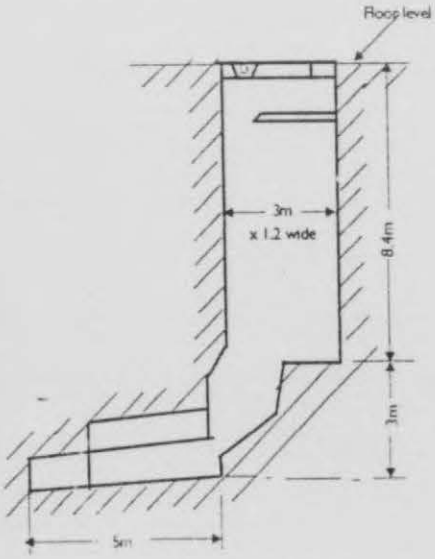


Fig 218b Tomb 3 elevation of mummy pit

The stippled paint is thickly applied at the upper edge of the stripe and fades to white at the bottom. This concession to the cold, is something of an innovation, since the majority of the figures in tombs, while wearing clothing applicable to their office are seldom portrayed as muffled in such a garment. Ukh-hotp is described on the northern side as "Sem priest, Master of every kilt, Director of every divine office"... (MEIR III.25). On the southern wall he is merely "Superintendent of the Priests". Although the garment resembles the one on the northern side, traces of a frilled edge at the top suggest that it was possibly made of linen. He has a staff in one hand and in the other a stick to which three fox-skins are fastened.

The statue recess itself, once closed by double doors, has a decorated architrave on which under a winged disk, are the cartouches and attributes of Amenemhet II (MEIR III Pl XIX = *Fig 215*).

This single instance of 12th dynasty cartouches at Meir enabled the dating of the other Middle Kingdom tomb chapels on the site. The interior of the statue recess was decorated in a colourful palace facade design in blue, green yellow and red (MEIR III Pl XX = *Fig* 216). The ceiling was blue studded with yellow stars (*Fig 210*).

The inclusion of the palace facade design may well indicate the assistance of royal artists. Cusite art, it would appear, was concerned with the natural interpretation of human beings, animals and vegetation rather than draughtsmanlike designs.

13.2.3(g) SMALL INNER ROOM

This room contains a false door in the west wall, carved in stone, but the rest of the walls are executed in stucco. The ceiling was salmon pink (imitation granite) but lacked the usual dark red and blue spots. The scenes which cover the walls are all of funerary origin, containing food offerings, slaughtering and kitchen scenes brought for Ukh-hotp. The illustration of the west end of the north wall MEIR III Pl XXI = *Fig 217)* gives some idea of the fine work involved and also the damage the wall has sustained.

The murals on the other walls are far more fragmentary but sufficient material remains to confirm their funerary themes.

13.3 TOMB 3 BENI HASAN: KHNEMHOTEP II *(Figs 218,218a,218b)*

13.3.1 THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE TOMB

Khnemhotep had an imposing portico-fronted tomb with two large columns with circular bases and a wall dividing it from the main chamber almost a metre thick. The threshold of the latter is slightly raised and the doorposts, lintel and jambs, which are flat contain an inscription giving festal days on which funeral offerings are to be made, also the usual prayer to visitors to give these offerings. The names and titles of Khnemhotep are also recorded. The entrance must

have been quite spectacular being painted pink and splashed with black, dark red and green in imitation of rose granite. The hieroglyphs were picked out in green.

The main chamber is almost symmetrical, lit only from the doorway, and once had a door from the portico. Only a pivot hole now remains. Four columns two on each side ran parallel to the axis of the tomb, dividing the chamber into three areas of nearly equal width. A small piece of one of the columns was recovered, and it was sufficient to show that they were polygonal and slightly fluted. Three tombs at Beni Hasan have matting-pattern decorated ceilings, tomb 3 being the simplest, where a series of small red and yellow squares containing quatrefoils of black and blue are divided by black lines.

This tomb gives indications of having been completed since the floor, which is sunk 12cm below the open outer court, was well finished. At the eastern end of the chamber the shrine was excavated deep into the rock. It had an approach step 12cm high and double doors opening inwards. This doorway also had a flat lintel and doorposts on which hieroglyphic texts were incised. At the eastern end of the shrine was a large figure of Khnemhotep seated on a throne. The entire statue had been cut away and only a portion of the throne remained when Newberry recorded it (BH I:53).[9] Evidence remaining in the tomb suggests that there were more statues but nothing of them now exists.

The tomb contained a very large mummy pit shown on the tomb plan.

13.3.2 THE TITLES AND STATUS OF KHNEMHOTEP II

While Khnemhotep claims both hereditary and appointed princely titles, *erpa*-prince and *ḥa*-prince, he is not called Great Chief and his rank is given as Administrator of the Eastern Desert and *ḥa*-prince of Menat-Khufu.[10] He does not seem to have been appointed Nomarch.[11]

Khnemhotep held twelve, possibly thirteen, civil titles most of which are standard. Apart from his association with the town of Menat Khufu he is Chief of all princes, He who belongs to the double house (?) of *Geb*.

He had ten religious titles and these are of interest since there is a strong leaning towards the local goddess *Pakht*. He was a "Superintendent of the priests, Priest of *Horus*, *Anubis*, *Udeb*-priest of *Horus*, *Udeb*-priest of *Pakht*, Chief of the offices in the temple of *Pakht*, Chief in bringing the goddess in the house of *Pakht*, Chief of the divine secrets", in addition to the usual "*Sem*-priest" and "Lector".

As can be seen from the genealogical table[12] Khnemhotep II was grandson of Khnemhotep I through his mother, who claimed to be an hereditary princess. His father Nehera was *ḥa*-prince of the New Towns.[13] No titles are listed for his grandfather, Sebek-ankh. The proximity of these tombs and the strong family line has made it possible to show a fairly comprehensive

genealogical table, Khnemhotep claiming his inheritance, as was usual in ancient Egypt, through the female line (Murray 1951:321-325). His first wife, Khety, daughter of an unnamed prince of the adjacent Jackal (17th) nome, was a priestess of both *Hathor* and *Pakht*. Before she became Khnemhotep's second wife *Ḏat* (Tchat) was probably a concubine. She was called "the acquaintance of her lord" but held no religious titles. In Khnemhotep's tomb she is not called *nbt pr* "Lady of the House", although on the lintel of the unfinished tomb 4, next to that of Khnemhotep there is one short text which says "The hereditary noble, Count, Khnumhotep, born to the Lady of the House Tcha(t)". There is a lacuna where the last "t" should have been.

Tchat is depicted on the west, east and south walls of the main chamber of Tomb 3, and in the north-west corner of the shrine. A small boy and a girl (Khnemhotep and Sat-ip) are shown with Tchat on the south (offering) wall. They stand behind the daughters of the first wife, who is seated at an offering table. Below and to the left of this scene are four sons of Khnemhotep each called "the son of a Count of his body", whose mother is identified as Khety. Behind them stands the "Son of a Count, Neheri, born to the Treasurer Tchat". The son Neheri, who seems to have been the firstborn of Khnemhotep and Tchat was accorded the "son of a Count" status, without the "son of his body" epithet, this probably being the prerogative of the earlier sons born to the first wife, an hereditary princess. A stela found in tomb 360 on the lower part of the necropolis says "Neheri, born to Tchat". However, these are very modest tombs and there is nothing to connect this burial with the Neheri, son of a Count, shown on the wall of Khnemhotep's tomb. Names were so frequently repeated that it would be unwise to jump to conclusions.[14] One certainty here, however, is that family members and their status has clearly been depicted on the offering wall. While the figures are stylised and stand in line, they serve no purpose in the offering ritual, apart from their attendance, since none of the family members is shown carrying an offering, nor taking part in the ritual.

On the west wall, there is a discrepancy in showing Tchat and the first wife taking part in the funeral journey of Khnemhotep to Abydos. This implies that Khnemhotep died before his first wife. Ward (1984:51) refers to this scene as representing "the fictional journey to Abydos". As part of these funerary ceremonies the presence of the two women is undoubtedly as fictional as the rest of the motif.

There is no representation of any divinity, the deities named in inscriptions being *Osiris Lord of Busiris*, *Anubis*, *Horus*, *Pakht*, *Geb*, and *Sekhet* who is called "Mistress of Sport" by Newberry (BH I:45).[15]

Khnemhotep includes and textually identifies by name or office, well over a hundred individuals (BH I:45-51). He seems to have included almost all the household and estate staff from a valet, food provider, five scribes (undefined as to duties), a scribe of the table, scribe of barter, and two royal scribes, to gardeners and fishermen. He also recorded the presence of nine priests.

Among officials listed are two Captains of the host, Khnemhotep's son Nefer, and a man named *Iw*, Au (BH I Pls XXIX, XXX)

13.3.3 INSCRIPTIONS

There is a wide range of textual inscription in this tomb.

13.3.3(a) THE DOORPOSTS AND LINTEL OF THE MAIN CHAMBER (BH I:53,54)

On these two areas are recorded no less than twenty-three feasts on which funeral offerings are to be performed. On the north doorpost the titles of Khemhotep are listed. On the south doorpost, in addition to the usual *ḥtp di nswt* formula and titles he is called the "Administrator of the eastern desert, *udeb*-priest *of both Horus* and *Pakht*, Nehera's son Khnemhotep born of Baqt".

13.3.3(b) THE JAMBS OF THE MAIN DOORWAY THE LINTEL AND THE TWO ARCHITRAVES OF THE MAIN CHAMBER (BH I:55,56)

These also have inscriptions relative to the usual invocation offerings, the hieroglyphs being incised and green on walls painted to resemble rose granite. The appeals are to *Anubis*, *Horus*, and *Pakht* and the reiteration here of Khnemhotep's title of "Administrator of the eastern desert" accords with *Pakht's* association with desert areas.

13.3.3(c) THE GREAT INSCRIPTION (BH I Pls XXV and XXVI = *Figs 218c and 218d*).

Comprising 222 vertical lines, this biographical inscription was written on the dado running around the walls of the main chamber, immediately below the paintings. Again simulated rose granite formed a background to green hieroglyphs. In view of the magnitude of the work, the cutting and painting was fairly rough. Newberry says that the inscription contained many scribal "blunders", being difficult to understand from line 199 to 220. It suggests inferior labour, both scribal and artisan, and a limited degree of literacy on the part of the tomb owner or architect. Nevertheless, this is a most significant textual biography of its time and place.

Lines 1-13 set out quite specifically who made the tomb and why. Khnemhotep's titles of rank are followed immediately by the statement of birth "born of the daughter of a *ḥq*-prince... Baqt". His reasons for building the tomb are to adorn his city, to establish his name to eternity, with various provisos for it to endure forever, and then to establish the names of his staff, being arranged according to their rank, "the established ones, his household (officers) whom he promoted from among his serfs, every office he undertook, all craftsmen according to their several occupations". The latter Newberry translates, "as they happened" (BH I:57 note 3).

Lines 13-24 record how Amenemhet II appointed him administrator of the eastern desert, *udeb* priest of *Horus* and *Pakht*, and to the inheritance of the father of his mother in the town of Menat-Khufu.

Lines 24-53 then recount the appointment of his grandfather, Khnemhotep I in the princedom of Menat Khufu in the sub-nome of the Rock of *Horus* (lines 24-46) and later in the Oryx nome (lines 46-53) where the boundaries, to the south the Hare nome and to the north the Jackal nome, are recorded. It confirms that the king in question was Amenemhet I who established the various boundaries and "set right that which he found ruined (and) that which one city had taken from its sister city".[16]

Lines 54-62 recount the appointment of Nekht (I), son of Khnemhotep I, to the princedom of Menat Khufu. The ruling monarch who made the appointment was Senwosret I.

Khnemhotep II, claiming his inheritance and position through his mother, sister of Nekht, says in Lines 62-71, "I was a noble directly from my birth". He speaks of being raised by the king to inherit the princedom of the father of his mother, Menat Khufu, to which he was appointed as a *ḥa*-prince in the year 19. He does not, however, claim to be a great chief or nomarch.

In lines 79-99 Khnemhotep II speaks of having made Menat Khufu rich, establishing chapels for the *kas* of his father, and records all the various religious festivals to which he gave his attention.

He says that at the royal court praise for him was greater than for any other courtier and that the King promoted him from amongst his nobles. He expands upon his privileges, which he says were such as were never before granted to servants of the monarch. He then ennumerates the favours shown to his sons, Nekht (II) who was appointed a *kheqa*-prince[17] of the Jackal nome and his second son, Khnemhotep who excelled in oratory, and who was appointed the superintendent of the "gate of the foreign lands" or the frontier. The monarch who appointed Nekht II was Senwosret II.

Having extolled his virtues as prince and administrator of Menat Khufu, and detailed the royal favours bestowed on himself and his sons by the king, he stresses his filial piety, tells of his father's tomb in the city of Mernefert, amd speaks of following his example. His father's career is outlined (184-192). He explains that his father made his tomb in order "that his name might (be) living in the mouths of the Pat" (BH I:65).[18] He claims that his father "ruled his city when a babe" (BH I:65 Lines 185-6). He also says that the "King knew the place of his tongue, the littleness of his ambition" (BH I:65 Lines 189-90). Newberry draws attention to Line 114 where "he knew the place of my tongue", exactly the same phrase is used on behalf of Khnemhotep II himself. This text moves from third person, biography to first person autobiography. In this instance (line 114) the passage is in the first person.

Fig 218c Tomb 3 The Great Inscription Lines 1-120

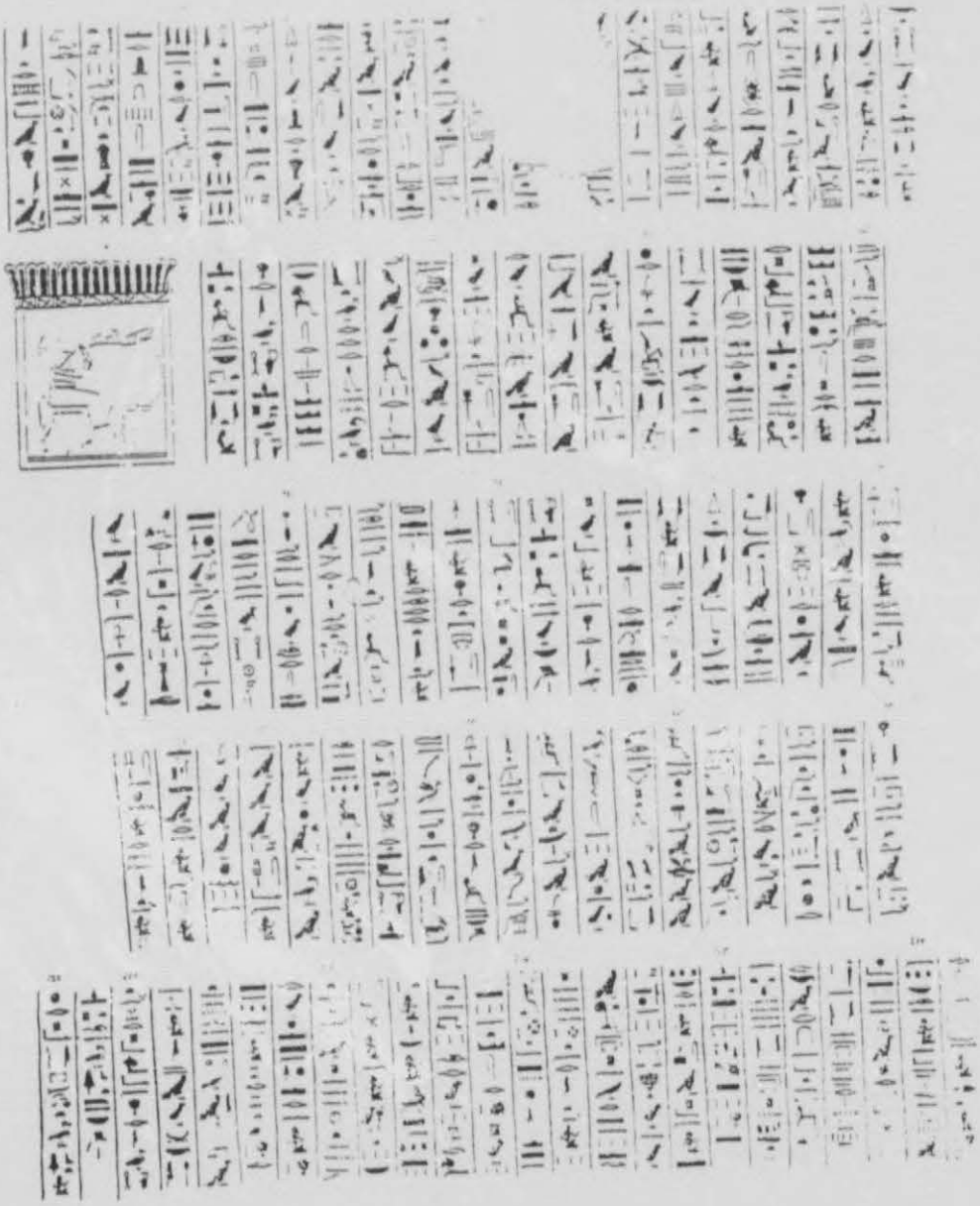


Fig 218d Tomb 3 The Great Inscription Lines 121 to end

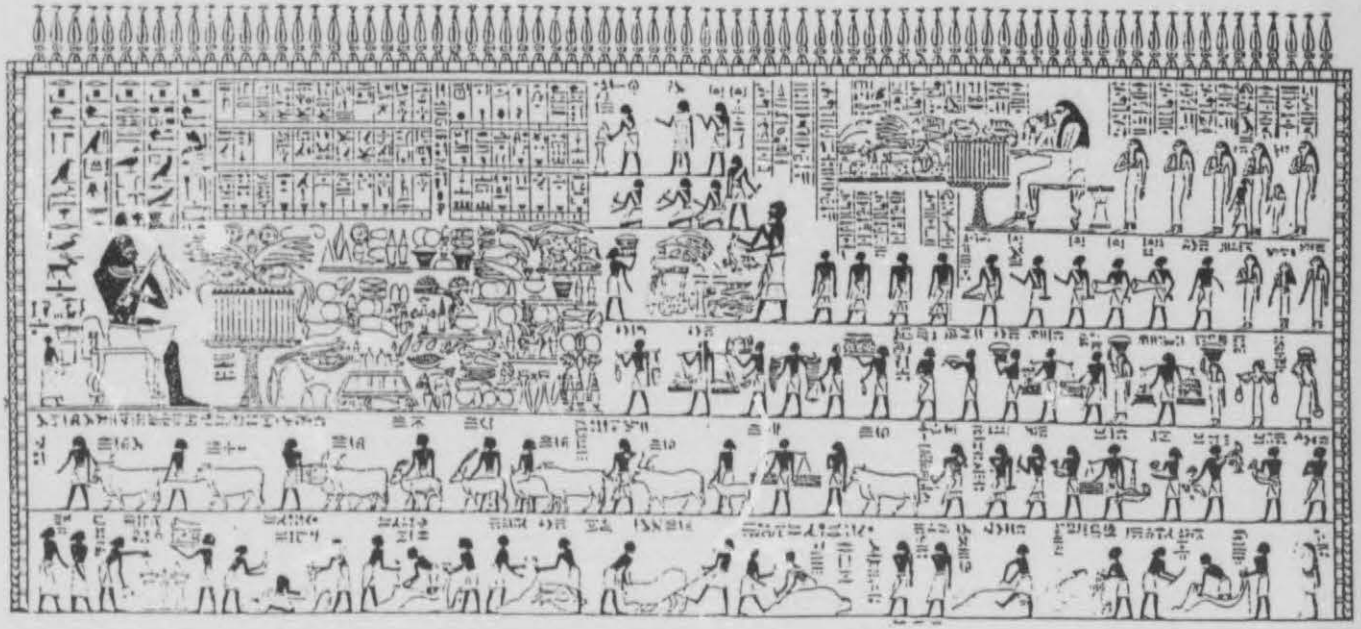


Fig 219 Tomb 3 Beni Hasan, Khnemhotep II. South wall.

Khnemhotep II refers to the monuments he has erected in his city and upon which he has placed his name, and goes on to describe his own tomb. He speaks of making a pool for the provision of a flower garden for the tomb, and confirms that he is more excellent in monuments than the ancestors. At the end of detailing numerous acts he has performed within the city he says "in order that my name might be noble upon every monument that I made...I entered thy boat white, O father..." concluding with his *erpa*-prince and *ḥa*-prince titles and his name, naming his father and "born of Baqt".

The name of the architect of the tomb is also recorded, as Baqt.[19]

13.3.4 THEMATIC MURALS

13.3.4(a) SOUTH WALL (BH I Pl XXXV = *Fig 219*)

This offering wall is well proportioned and covers the subject with a neat orderliness. There are no additional subjects, the figures fit neatly into all their apportioned spaces and the various aspects of the theme are clearly defined. The five vertical lines of hieroglyphs above Khnemhotep give his titles and above the altar the various offerings, fifty-three in all, are detailed. At top centre priests perform funerary services, the standing man behind the kneeling figures holding the long piece of cloth for the removal of their footprints. Officials and servants bring offerings, but the family members while in attendance, do not carry anything.

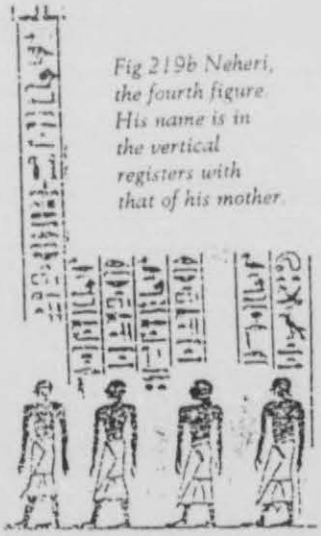


Fig 219b Neheri, the fourth figure. His name is in the vertical registers with that of his mother.

Fig 219a Tchat, her son and daughter. Her name is above her head, names of the two children in small hieroglyphs.

Khnemhotep's first wife has not been seated near her husband as is fairly usual but occupies her own section in the top right hand corner. She is seated on an ebony chair and is attended by her daughters and Tchat with her son (Khnemhotep) and daughter (Sat-ip) (*Fig 219a*). The other son, Neheri stands behind the sons of the first marriage in the next register (*Fig 219b*). The

precision with which this wall is designed, the copious explanatory captions, and great many names of the participants creates an impression of careful preparation and selection of material. The children of the two marriages are clearly identified and although this is a totally canonical mural, the personalised aspects cannot be overlooked.

Newberry does not record finding a false door and by the time he excavated it had undoubtedly disappeared. It seems to have been on the South wall. However Newberry, BH I:72 "Additions and Corrections, Great Inscription", quotes Hay, saying the dado is 48" (1,20m) high, the inscription occupies a depth of 28" (,70m) from the top and the false door reaches to the floor.[20]

13.3.4(b) WEST WALL (BH I Pl XXIX = *Fig 220)*

This wall would seem to be in direct relationship to the South (offering) wall. Whereas the latter is concerned with the rites and offerings to the deceased, the West wall is largely concerned with the provision of the necessary offerings and obligations to be undertaken on behalf of the deceased.

The upper register above the door is a short but fairly complete representation of the transport of a statue in a naos. In the register just above the door Khnemhotep (he is named) sits almost with his back towards the tomb chamber. He is attended by various officials bearing funeral furniture.

To the left of the door in the upper register, fullers prepare material and carpenters prepare furniture. Below this potters are at work, men are felling a tree and making a boat. In the register 3rd from top, we see two boats being used to transport the children and *harim* of Khnemhotep to Abydos. Newberry translates the text as "Coming to perform the ceremonies at Abydos *by* the *ḥa*-prince Khnemhotep".

This should probably read *for* the *ḥa*-prince and the mural, which is fairly standard represents a journey down stream to Busiris. The sails are down, the masts at rest across the cabin. The ships are using the current to travel towards the Delta. This theme, together with the journey to Abydos with the mummy, is a regular inclusion in tomb murals, and as previously discussed, may be representative rather than actual. The mistake would substantiate poor textual work, the hieroglyph for Abydos being used in both this and the mural to the right of the door which does show the journey to Abydos, with the sails correctly set. As pointed out earlier, in the *harim*/boat scene both Khety and Tchat are included.

Below the journeying boats are weavers (Chapter 10 *Fig 161)*, bakers, sculptors and the making of a shrine.

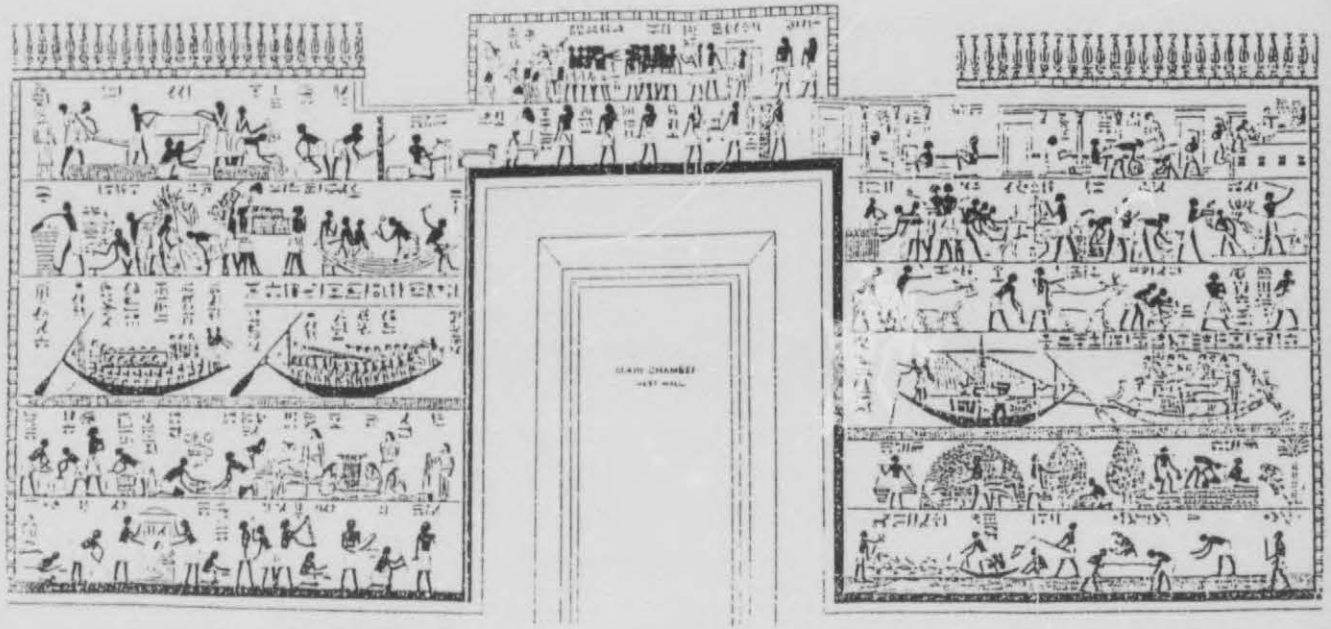


Fig 220 Tomb 3 Beni Hasan, Khnemhotep II.West wall.

Fig 220a Baboons in fig tree 2nd register from bottom right. Details

To the right of the doorway the top register shows the storage and registering of grain in granaries, harvesting, threshing and ploughing, all occupations necessary for the production of loaves.

The voyage of the mummy to Abydos follows, conventionally correct, the boat containing the deceased being towed by the boat with a hoisted sail.

The fruit picking and gardening scene[21] introduces some baboons in one of the trees, while the pickers gather figs (Cornelius 1939 Fig E44 = *Fig 220a)*. Below is a fish-catching and fording scene, not particularly well developed but possibly a fairly "obligatory" component to this type of mural. Note here the siting of the river half way up the wall on each side. Necessitated by the fishing scene which shows the river at the bottom, as is usual, the artist raised the level of the river for the boating scene in the right hand mural and presumably raised the river on the left hand side to complement the boating scene on the right. The level of the paintings does not exactly match.

The South wall was undeniably a conventional offering wall, with the addition of personal details of Khnemhotep's family relationships. The West wall, complements and is supportive of the South wall. While initially it gives an impression of being the workings of the estate and might be interpreted as a substitutional desire on the part of the tomb owner to repeat such activities in the nether-world, everything shown has a direct relation to the funeral, funeral furniture and/or offerings for the deceased. The concept that a mural such as this is merely a substitution for life in the future would seem to be unreasonable because in seeking eternity one does not make provision for a future funeral or journey to Abydos. This, it is suggested, is confirmation of all things having been done. In the case of the boat journeys, these pictorial representations will suffice and should anything else have been omitted, the manufacturing of the necessities of the burial would doubtless serve to make good any deficiencies. This is allied to "offerings" but has moved away from the after life and much of the wall is concerned with the actions in this life concomitant with the effective provision of necessities for the tomb and the world to come. They are not necessarily intended to be repeated in the after-world, as the food provided on the offering wall, is to suffice should the feast-day offerings fail to be observed.

13.3.4(c) EAST WALL (BH I Pls XXXII, XXXIII, XXXIV = *Fig 221)*

This wall, which surrounds the entrance to the shrine, is devoted to Khnemhotep with the traditional fowling scene on the left of the doorway, and spear-fishing on the right hand side (8.2.1, 8.2.2).

On the left he is accompanied in the boat by "his beloved wife, the Priestess of *Hathor*, daughter of a *ḥa*-prince, Lady of the house, Khety".

Fig 221 Tomb 3 Beni Hasan, Khnemhotep II.
East wall, entrance to shrine.

Behind him but just above the boat is a female figure captioned "Treasurer, Keeper of the property of her Lord, Tchat, born to Neteru". Beneath both murals on each side of the door is a secondary scene, net fishing on the left under the direction of the superintendent of the fishers, Mentuhotep, and on the right a scene which appears to have followed the fighting boatmen concept but failed to complete it. Such scenes, which may have started as natural fighting scenes appear to have developed into a form of jousting. The tomb of an artist Niankhptah (c 2450) shows him enjoying a meal in a canoe while boatmen fight or joust alongside (Aldred 1980:87 Fig 47 = *Fig 222*).

Fig 222 Fighting boatmen from tomb of Niankhptah Sakkara c 2450

In the mural on the East wall, the familiar figure of the man falling overboard, and held by his companions has been included, but there is no evidence of fighting, which is usual with this "overboard" theme. Neither are there any dangerous animals shown in the lower scenes. On the left, fish occupy the water, on the right there is only foliage. The hippos, crocodiles and a snake(?) are shown in the scene where Khnemhotep is included.

While the catching of fish could be construed as supportive of the South and West walls, the captions accompanying the murals around the shrine entrance make no such suggestion. Seeking religious aspects of such murals, the duck-hunting and throw stick murals have been seen as the control of disorder (8.2.1), while the clapnet has been seen in the light of the fate of the enemies of the king. While such implications cannot be ignored, this wall would appear to be devoted to the prowess and pleasure of Khnemhotep himself. The duck-hunting scene has a short reference to his hunting, but mainly contains his titles. The right hand side is more expansive. Immediately under the frieze Khnemhotep is described as *great in fish, rich in wild fowl, loving the goddess of the chase*. The inscription accompanying the fishing scene says that he is canoeing in the papyrus beds and the pools of wild fowl, marshes and streams, that he is the chief canoer, capturing birds and fish. The lower caption also encompasses the scene above the door where, accompanied by his son Nekht, and the superintendent of the Treasurers, Baqt[22] he personally hunts with a clapnet.[23] The text explains that, hidden by the screen, he closes the great clapnet, and that spearing with the bident he transfixes thirty fish. The fish are the usual two shown in

such scenes (8.2.3), but they are obviously representative rather than actual and the whole design is basically conventional. The text also concludes, although the action is not shown, with the assertion that the day of hunting hippopotamus is delightful.

Although one calls this conventional, it must be acknowledged that the attention to detail in respect of the birds is worth noting. In the clapnet scene above the door, there are two sont (acacia) bushes on which birds are perched, inadequately illustrated in *Fig 221*. Fortunately, some careful and detailed coloured drawings were made of some of these birds.[24] When found, the hoopoe, heron and spoonbill could easily be identified among a variety of bird-life. The best figure in the whole collection was adjudged to be that of the red-backed shrike. Howard Carter commented that "even an ornithologist could criticise only details" (BH IV:2).

One of the most interesting creatures in the papyrus stems on the right hand side of the doorway is a cat (BH IV:2, Pl V) which sits on a stem of papyrus bent beneath it weight. The breed of cat has been questioned, the conclusion being that it represents a domestic variety possibly brought from far south.[25]

While one cannot determine a conventional set pattern for tomb murals on particular walls, tombs with statue recesses or niches, and those with shrines, would seem to group offering murals around such sections. Even in their damaged state, tombs B2 and B4, among others in Meir, have a tendency to surround the focal statue-point, at which the festal offerings would be given, with scenes applicable to these rites. In Old Kingdom tombs outdoor scenes such as the marsh, hunting and fishing murals were usually close to, or just inside, the entrance to the main chamber. One cannot dismiss the unorthodox placing of this mural as indifference or inadequacy on the part of the designer. It is therefore not unreasonable to question the reason for the placing of the Khnemhotep-orientated marsh scene, and its clearly defined stress on the attributes, skill and pleasure of the noble concerned. It is intended to discuss this later when assessing the development and intentions of murals in these tombs.

13.3.4(d) NORTH WALL (BH I Pl XXX = *Fig 223*)

At first glance a traditional "hunting" and "watching" wall, this mural incorporates material which falls into neither category. Divided into six main registers the top two are sub divided over part of their length expanding the available space to embody a greater number of animals in the hunting scene than is usually possible.

Khnemhotep, his figure spanning three registers, and clad in kilt and what appears to be an overskirt, is shown in hunting stance, accompanied by his eldest son Nekht, and Khnemhotep son of Tchat. They are clearly named (upper left corner) as is Khnemhotep "born of Baqt". On the South and West walls, Khnemhotep shows no animation. On the former he sits immobile, feet bare, facing the offering table.

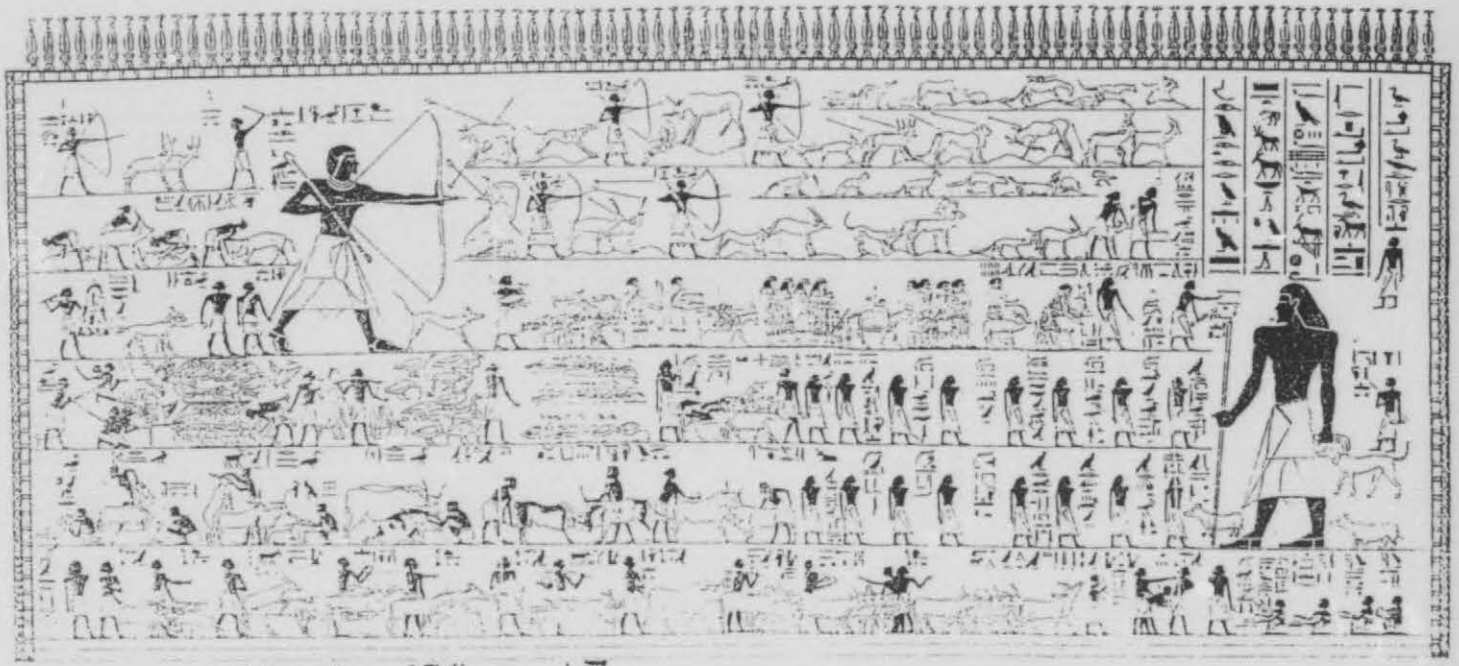


Fig 223 Tomb 3 Beni Hasan, Khnemhotep II. North wall.

Fig 223a The rolling ass, akin to Cusite art.

On the latter, he sits wrapped in a nondescript garment, head turned away from the viewer. In the hunting scene, however, he has an animated, if conventional stance, a detailed fastening to his kilt and wears sandals of which one thong passes through the toe. He is no longer "the deceased" but the epitome of a living man. He is accompanied by attendants and hunting dogs.

In the desert scene an attempt has been made to contour the ground level, but in general the figures are conservative and the motif of predator taking the new-born is frequently included in such murals. Wounded animals are depicted without emotion, the animals showing little terror. However, even the conventional attitude of the animals does not diminish the impression of activity in comparison, for instance, with the beasts led to slaughter on the South wall. The animals are a mixed selection, gazelles, ibex and oryx, but the real interest lies in the small game. The hunting scene, is in fact, divided into two parts. This has been skilfully done by the division of part of the two registers. While the two larger lower sections of each register are confined to hunted game, the two smaller sections above the hunting portions are confined entirely to the desert and its non-hunted beasts, like the mongoose, hedgehog and on the upper right of the top register a hare with trailing ears. The hare, according to Bonwick, was a sacred animal in many lands, including Egypt, while the hedgehog was sacred to *Sekhet*, as was the gazelle to *Horus*. The dog-like creatures may be intended as jackals.

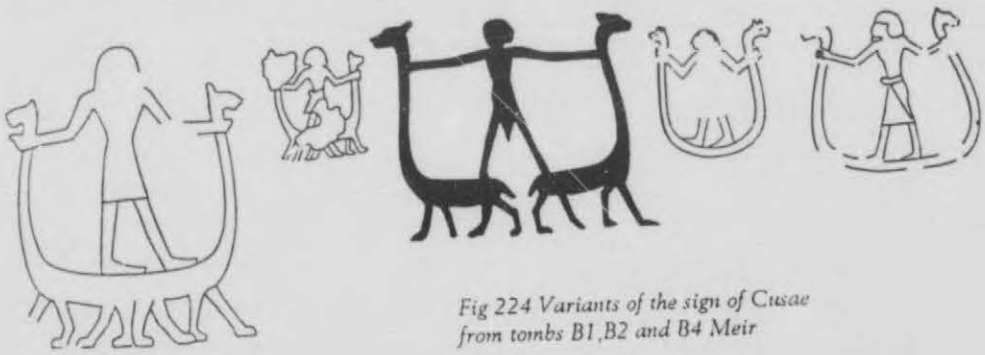


Fig 224 Variants of the sign of Cusae from tombs B1,B2 and B4 Meir

Bonwick (1956:225-238) in a chapter on animal worship, refers to the jackal being introduced at Beni Hasan with a wolf and other wild animals (231). He also speaks of symbolic monsters which occurred as early as the 12th dynasty. The Sedja had a serpent's head and lion's tail. The Sha was a quadruped with long square ears. The Sak had the forefeet of a lion, the hind ones of a horse, a straight tail, and many triangular *mamelles*. There was a winged oryx and human headed griffon (235). A long-necked beast on the upper register of the North wall does have a human face between a pair of wings on his back. At first glance this might appear to be a bird perched on the animal but close scrutiny definitely defines this as a human face. In the lower of the small registers the predator/newborn motif is repeated but the animal is free, not in captivity as the lower register. That these peculiar beasts were well established by the Middle Kingdom

would seem to be confirmed by the sign for Cusae, two long-necked leopards on either side of a male figure reproduced in a variety of ways. (MEIR II Pl XVII Detail = *Fig 224)*.

What we would seem to have in tomb 3, however, are the two faces of Khnemhotep's desert. Barrow, writing of the Kalahari, a desert area very similar to the desert regions of ancient Egypt, and where today the orvx and desert lion still roam free, says "survival means not only life but death. Every living thing depends on some other living thing for its existence" (1975:3). He is writing of the desert Khnemhotep knew. The predator/newborn motif repeated so many times in these desert scenes shows little anguish. Only someone acutely aware of the nature of these animals and prevailing conditions could repeat such an act in paint. This motif is not confimed to tomb 3, as already pointed out, but in its setting, where the predators and small animals, even the hedgehog and mongoose are depicted apart from the hunt, one must concede an attempt to convey something rather more than the hunt itself. Khnemhotep is the Administrator of the Eastern Desert. In showing the hunt, the artist has endeavoured to depict the desert, even to the extent of the mythical animals associated therewith.

Standing alone, the lion, is left untouched by the arrows. If one considers the anguished portrayals of hunted lions in Assyrian bas-reliefs, (Cornelius 1989:74-75 Figs 4a-b, Saggs 1962 Pls 43A, 43B), the difference in the Egyptian approach is marked. Little can compare with the dignity and power of the desert lions who survive against all odds, Early in their history the Egyptians equated this power with their monarch who was not averse to adding his face to the body of a lion, although always in a benign pose. The second creature from the left of the small lower register appears to be a cat similar to the one who graces the marsh mural.

This desert scene is informative rather than naturalistic. It shows the nature of the desert area, undulating, with scant foliage, the animals that were hunted, the animals that were not, the mythical beasts and, above all, Khnemhotep the huntsman on one side and the watcher on the other concerned with the rendering of the accounts.

If one considers the desert hunting scene from the North wall of Tomb 2, Beni Hasan *(Fig 204)*, the difference is marked. No small predators nor mythical animals are included. There is one animal which is probably intended to be a cheetah, and the lion is well out of proportion. This register is separated from the watching scene by a register concerned with the procession and transport of a statue and naos. Amenemhat shows no interest in the hunt whatsoever. In both tomb 2 (*Fig 204)* and tomb 15 Baqt (*Fig 162)*, the top registers show a marked resemblance except that mythical animals appear in the latter (*Fig 162a)*. Both are stereotyped although the animals in tomb 2 show little more animation than in tomb 15.

The men slaughtering game behind Khnemhotep have little significance other than to record the action and the official responsible.

The greater part of the third register between the figure of Khnemhotep the hunter and Khnemhotep the watcher is devoted to a group of people, arriving and being received by Khnemhotep (BH I Pl XXX Detail = *Fig 225*).

Fig 225 Tomb 3 Beni Hasan, Khnemhotep II.
North wall, arrival of Aamu.

This mural has been regarded as the oldest pictorial record we have of Asiatics entering Egypt. They are described in the mural as *Aamu* "foreigners" and since the Asiatic title would imply a far larger geographic area of origin than would be justified, the name recorded on the wall is possibly the better title. The papyrus roll held by the royal scribe Neferhotep records, "The year VI under the majesty of Horus the guide of the two lands, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, *Khu-kheperre* (Senwosret II), the number of Aamu brought by the son of the *ḥq*-prince Khnemhotep, on account of the mesdemt (eye-paint, stabium or khol) Aamu of Shu number amounting to 37" (BH I Pl XXXVIII = *Fig 226*). The Aamu are headed by a colourful personality Abisha(i) (BH I Pl XXX detail = *Fig 227*).

Shea (1981:219), believes this to have been one of the notable events of Khnemhotep's period of office, meriting inclusion in his tomb . Since Khnemhotep was not a nomarch, such a direct instruction from the king would possibly assume great importance. Shea identifies these people as Amorites.[26]

That there are on-going arguments as to the identity and intentions of these people, fails to detract from the reality of their portrayal, and no-one appears to have expressed doubt as to the actuality of the happening. This mural has moved entirely out of the realm of magic, substitution, power of the word and image, and funerary art in general. Not only is it a record of

biographical fact, an occurrence in the life of Khnemhotep, but the iconographic representation augments the note and adds informative material.

It is not within the scope of this dissertation to enter into interpretation of this section of the North wall, beyond its biographical nature, but Goedicke (1984:203) finds that a great many questions remain unanswered. His interpretation, adequately documented, that these people were in fact coming to Khnemhotep to work at the recovery of the eye-paint (1984: 205) has an extremely logical appeal.[27]

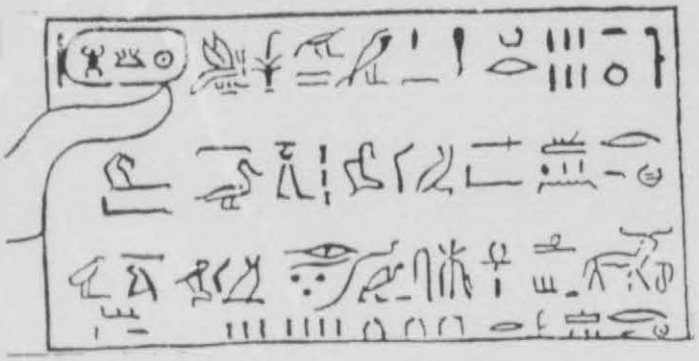


Fig 226 Tomb 3 Beni Hasan, Khnemhotep II. Papyrus roll recording arrival of Aamu.

Fig 227 Tomb 3 Beni Hasan, Khnemhotep II. North wall, Abisha(i) the leader of the Aamu.

The three lower registers comprise a watching and accounting mural. It should be noted that whereas in many similar tomb murals the tomb owner is separated from the action on the wall by a vertical register of hieroglyphs or a decorative frame (*Figs 162, 204*), neither of the figures of Khnemhotep is presented in this way. He stands within the area of the hunt in the top registers and joins the figures in the lower registers. He is accompanied by three dogs, of which the smaller two have blotched coats and are a breeding pair of short-legged hounds.[28] The other dog, pale in colour, is a Slughi hound. They all appear to be pets, as opposed to the hunting dogs in the top registers.[29] The scene is not agricultural, being concerned with animal husbandry and the keeping of ducks. Registers 4 and 5 have two lines of men facing Khnemhotep, named and designated as to duties, and it is interesting to note that they do not bear produce or funerary gifts. They appear to be there merely to record their existence as Khnemhotep states in his great inscription. A similar line of officials appears in the fifth register on the North wall of tomb 2, Amenemhat (*Fig 204*).

On the North wall of tomb 3, the figures in the fifth register are followed by men with cattle and fowls, both farmyard creatures, and wild ones caught in a net. At the far end of the fifth register (left) men are force-feeding animals. Whether the force-feeding was for human consumption or the preparation of prize animals for the religious festivals cannot be determined. If the latter, however, it would accord with the long list of festivals for which Khnemhotep claims acknowledgement. The attitude of the man endeavouring to force an oryx to lie down is unusual, certainly not according to any canonical rules although the stance appears to be accurate (BH I Pl XXVII).[30] At the end of the row a man is force-feeding a goose. The cattle in this mural bear little or no relation to the standard docile beasts awaiting slaughter on the South wall. The bulls meet head-on but there is no religious connotation so far as can be seen and the various mixed flocks and herds of small animals on the lower register jostle one another in typical fashion. The rolling ass is drawn in a natural manner.[31] Many of the drawings on this wall suggest a possible influence from the naturalistic art of Cusae.

The animals are numbered in thousands, but one supposes these figures are largely representative rather than actual. The nature of the land available for keeping such beasts would negate over-large flocks and herds. At the bottom (right) numerous scribes keep the accounts. Above Khnemhotep's head are the usual titles, and confirmation that he is *maa*, "seeing" the cattle which are being brought before him. The Oryx nome sign is at the bottom of the third vertical register. Khnemhotep again wears his sandals but the front of the kilt differs from that in the hunting picture indicating a certain amount of individuality in the design of this wall. It is a careful mixture of the conventional and personal. There is no suggestion of the repetitive "*for thy kas*" such as is to be found on the West wall of the tomb of Ukh-hotp, B2 Meir (*Fig 196*). Other than the Aamu, there are no women present in this mural, and the only butchering is of the wild animals caught in the hunt. Even this is minimal. There are no priestly officials or altar

and we can suppose that the meat preparation is merely a conclusion to the hunting. There is only the one clapnet scene, no fishing nets or fishing of any kind is included. This all leads to the conclusion that this wall was not an "assembled" piece of work as one suspects of other murals where scenes are introduced without any apparent relation to the rest of the theme. Again tomb Meir B2 is an example where bulls are introduced in the lower register of the West wall, having no connection with domestic cattle (12.2.3).

While several of the Beni Hasan tombs contain both wrestlers and military scenes, neither appear in this tomb, even although one of Khnemhotep's sons was named Captain of the host. The ancient Egyptians were greatly partial to titles and it may be that it was all that remained of the "military", since we cannot tell whether a group of soldiers was stationed at Beni Hasan at that time. Khnemhotep, one may be sure, would have included a mention of them in his tomb had they been of any personal significance.

13.3.4(e) THE SHRINE

While the entrance to Khnemhotep's shrine was somewhat unconventional (13.3.4(c)), the interior conformed totally to what would have been expected. The ceiling was ornamented with small red and yellow squares containing black quatrefoils in red squares and blue quatrefoils in yellow squares. The frieze was the usual *kheker* pattern[32] painted in red, blue and green. Beneath this and at the sides of the walls was a border of yellow, red, blue and green rectangles, separated by black lines enclosing a white line. The dado was elaborately decorated. In contrast with the main chamber where the dado was occupied by the inscription, the shrine dado was in colour only. On a narrow base painted to resemble red granite, is an elaborate palace facade pattern in yellow and red panelling with vertical stripes of very small green and yellow squares. Eight colourful horizontal lines filled with various patterns on a light-grey background were set above the palace facade design.

The figure of Khnemhotep in the centre of the East wall was carved out of the solid rock (13.3.1). Flanking this, on the left hand side, was an incised and painted portrait of Khety, the first wife and on the right, incised and painted portraits of two other women, one of whom was his mother, Bakt.

The murals are all orientated towards the figure of Khnemhotep. Three daughters approach the statue on the North wall. On the north side of the West wall, is a standing figure of Tchat and a much defaced offering scene (BH I Pl XXXVI = *Fig 228*), and on the South wall (BH I Pl XXXVII = *Fig 229*) are five of the sons of Khnemhotep. Behind the sons are officers and a lector.

The commitment to conformity in the shrine would negate any suggestion that this tomb was unorthodox. The whole approach to the decoration of tomb 3 appears to have been well

planned and controlled. While the textual work may have been indifferent, this in no way reflects upon the iconography since the scribe and artist were not necessarily complementary.

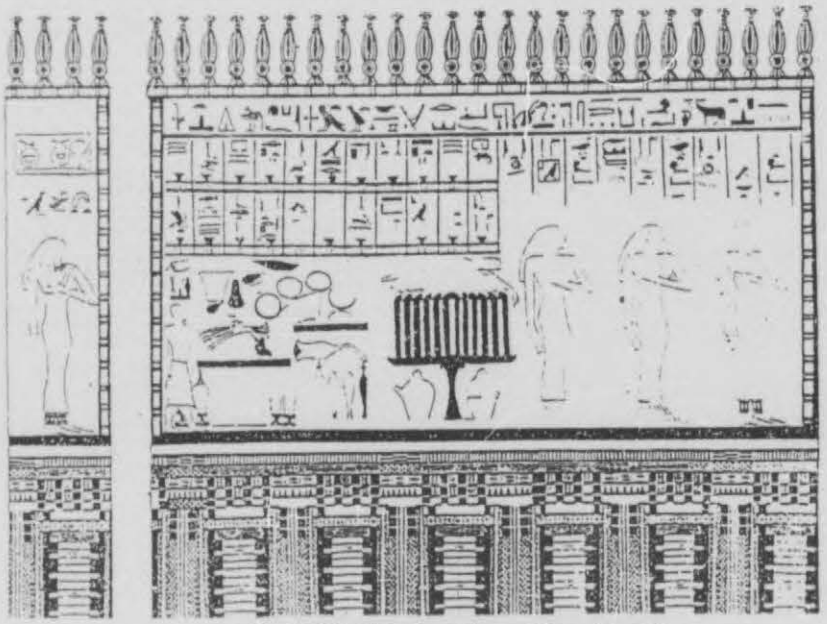


Fig 228 Tomb 3 Beni Hasan, Khnemhotep II.
Shrine north side of west wall.
Tchat and (defaced) offering scene.

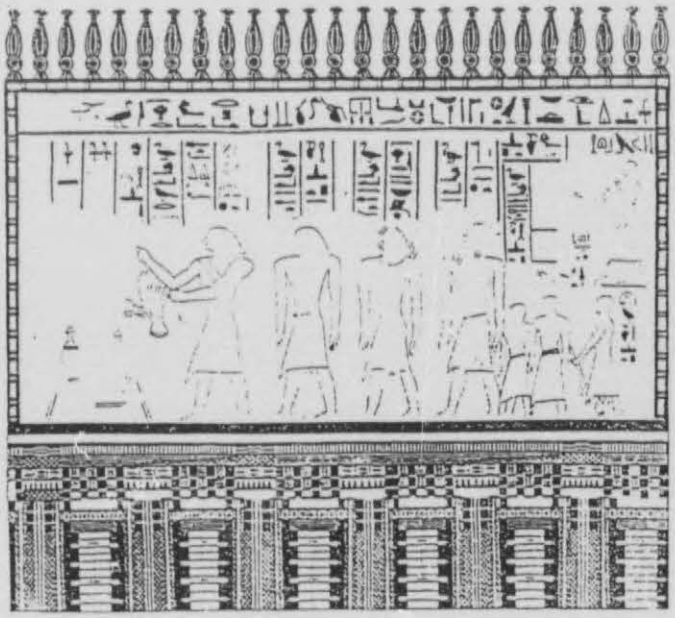


Fig 229 Tomb 3 Beni Hasan, Khnemhotep II.
Shrine south wall, the five sons of Khnemhotep.

This is the last of the Beni Hasan tombs to be discussed. A further two tombs, one from Meir and one from el-Bersha form the subject of the next chapter, largely because they contain matter so individual in content that they form a compatible link with the trend towards personal biography in the Beni Hasan group.

Footnotes

[1] To be discussed in the next chapter.

[2] Blackman comments that this chapel (B4) has suffered more damage than any of the others, the walls of the outer room being terribly shattered (MEIR I:9).

The murals in his tomb, (discovered in 1899), having survived the quarryment were further damaged by exposure to tearing blasts of sand-laden winds which blow strongly across the desolate area of the necropolis. Tracings which have survived were procured with great difficulty in spite of this wind which constantly destroyed both murals and tracings (MEIR III: 10,11).

[3] Gardiner (1957:465 F31), three foxes' skins tied together

[4] Gardiner 1957:476 gives I12 as *i'rt*, uraeus. The cobra on basket I13 he gives as the determinative for goddesses. This is particularly associated with *Edjo* the cobra goddess of the royal title "Two Ladies". Usually the royal title is shown as a cobra on one basket and a vulture on the other.

[5] Uto is the form used by Blackman. Gardiner gives *Wad(y)t* 'Edjo' (1957:476 I13).

[6] Blackman speculates that there cannot have been more than these twelve rows unless (which is unlikely) the room was higher here than on the north side of the approach to the satue recess (MEIR III:16 note 10).

[7] Killen, discussing woods in use in ancient Egypt says that ebony would have been shipped from regions south of Egypt, such as Nubia. During the earliest dynasties he says that only small supplies appear to have been available. In the New Kingdom, the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri shows Egyptians cutting branches from ebony trees in Punt for transport back to Egypt. Ebony, being hard to work, Killen says it was valued highly throughout the east Mediterranean region and gifts of ebony furniture were made by the later kings of Egypt to the rulers of other countries (1994:8,9).

[8] The family history and genealogies of the Princes of Cusae is discussed by Blackman in MEIR I:9-13.

[9] Although Newberry uses the word "throne", there seems to be nothing to define this in terms of design. As early as the 2nd dynasty a stela shows Prince Nisu-heqet seated on a high-backed chair which Killen assumes "might represent an early throne" (1994:27). Two thrones were found in the tomb of

Tutankhamun. One, high-backed with arms, on the back of which he is depicted with his wife (Desroches-Noblecourt 1963:42 Pl X), and an ornate one with a curved seat but without arms captioned an "ecclesiastical throne" (1963:52 Pl XII). There is a tendency to attribute monarchial ambitions to some of the nomarchs, and it may well be true, but it would be unwise to speculate on this from the object on which Khnemhotep was seated, since it is not sufficiently identified or determined.

[10] Although pronounced in the same way as the menat necklace the latter is *mnit* with the determinative S 18, the name of the town is *mn't* with the determinatives D 27 and B5 (Gardiner 1957:568). The name of the town is usually translated "nursing place of Khufu". The derivation is unknown.

[11] It is interesting to note that while Cusae is constantly mentioned at Meir, it is usually with reference to *Hathor*, not the status of a noble.

[12] See Appendix

[13] This title appears in the biography BH I:60 line 69. For comment on the title see footnote 2 on page 60.

[14] Ward (1984:51-59) discusses Tchat and her sons at some length and believes tomb 360 to have been that of Neheri her eldest son, born prior to her marriage to Khnemhotep. In the offering scene on the south wall, however it is Neheri who is named son of a Count, standing behind the sons of Khety. Even if Neheri did die young, having been given the title son of a Count there would seem little reason to have buried him in so modest a tomb unless his birth prior to his parent's marriage precluded a more opulent burial. The iconography of the wall appears to be correct, showing Neheri the eldest of Khnemhotep's and Tchat's sons.

[15] In a well known marsh scene of the New Kingdom (Thutmosis IV) from the tomb of Nebamun, the text refers to "trapping birds as a work of *Sekhet*, whom Baines and Malek (1980:206-207) refer to as "the marsh goddess." In BH I:45 where she is listed, the goddess is represented by a woman with a wild bird in one hand and a throw-stick in the other. The "marsh" title, therefore, is probably more accurate than "sport" in general.

[16] This passage is repeated word for word in lines 133-134, which describe the appointment of Khnemhotep s eldest son, Nekht (II). It was almost certainly copied from the text in lines 39-40, which applied to Khnemhotep's grandfather. While the description of pacifying and reorganising the land and its boundaries would have applied in the period of Amenemhet I/ Khnemhotep I, it is unlikely to have been applicable at the time of Nekht II's appointment.

[17] This is not the familiar *ha*-prince title (*haty* Faulkner 1991:162) used by the nomarchs and governors. The word *kheqa* is used for a local or foreign ruler as shown on the north wall of tomb 3 where the title is given to Abishai, the leader of the group of foreigners.

[18] See Ch.6 for discussion on the meaning and significance of the Pat.

[19] Men and women frequently bore the same names.

[20] Hay, see BH I:40 which lists scholars who formerly worked on the tomb, including Champollion and Burton. Hay worked there in 1828 AD.

[21] Lines 205-6 the great inscription, Khnemhotep tells of making a garden tank in connection with his tomb.

[22] Newberry says this is the architect or decorator of the tomb (BH I:70).

[23] This is particularly unusual. Khnemhotep, seated on a chair, is using the clapnet without assistance. Normally this is the task for a number of men. Here it is shown as a sport in which Khnemhotep is participating.

[24] Beni Hasan Part IV "Zoological and other Details" includes descriptions of birds and animals in the Beni Hasan tombs and contains facsimiles by Howard Carter, M.W.Blackden, Percy Brown and Percy Buckman. The coloured drawings can be found: Birds in acacia, BH IV Plate I Frontispiece.

Cat on papyrus BH IV Pl V.

Hoopoe in sont-bush BH IV Pl VI.

Shrike in sont-bush BH IV Pl VII

Heron on papyrus stem BH IV Pl VIII.

Sacred Ibis on papyrus BH IV Pl IX

Spoonbill BH IV Pl X.

Cormorant on papyrus BH IV Pl XI

Wild Duck BH IV Pl XII.

[25] The Beni Hasan cat shows no signs of having been trained to catch birds, as occurs in New Kingdom murals. Quirke & Spencer (1992:21) say the cat only seems to have been a pet from the New Kingdom and not domesticated on a large scale until the Late period. Identification of the Beni Hasan cat (*maniculata)* depended on the type of tail, long and tapering. The Egyptian wild cat has a broad tail although the thin tailed animals are believed to be the cats from which our domestic breeds have been derived. Its inclusion in the Tomb 3 mural reflects the attention to detail prevalent in Cusae art some time previously. The cat on papyrus (BH IV Pl V).

[26] Shea is mainly concerned with the artistic balance in the painting pointing out the grouping around a central figure, with canonical rules observed in a non-canonical subject.

[27] Goedicke finds the presence of officials attached to the royal administration has all the earmarks of an authoritative occurrence far removed from a visit of an ordinary group of traders.

[28] The bitch is clearly defined as such, her teats enlarged to suggest she is feeding puppies.

[29] Note the absence of dwarfs.

[30] Many of these illustrations are coloured reproductions which it is not possible to copy.

[31] Harpur (1987) provides copious lists of figures found in Old Kingdom tombs, but I have been unable to find a similar figure to the rolling donkey in tomb 3.

[32] I have not mentioned this pattern which by the 12th dynasty was almost standard on tomb murals, but it is visible in all the illustrations where the full wall appears.

CHAPTER 14

12TH DYNASTY TOMBS: AMENEMHET II - SENWOSRET III

2 EL-BERSHA AND C1 MEIR

Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass...
T.S.Eliot

14.1 DATING OF THE TOMBS 2 EL-BERSHA AND C1 MEIR

Tomb 2 at el-Bersha, of the nomarch or Great Chief of the Hare nome Tehuti-hetep, is the most conspicuous and, Newberry believes, possibly the finest ever excavated there. Over the years it has been extensively damaged due largely to an ancient earthquake bringing down the ceiling of the outer chamber, the architrave and portico columns. The inscriptions are not expansive as are those of Khnemhotep of tomb 3 Beni Hasan but other tombs from the same necropolis did throw some light on the earlier history of his family. Four inscriptions on the jambs of the facade appear to give the main events in Tehuti-hetep's life. As Khnemhotep, he says he was "a child of the king" under Amenemhet II. This is assumed to mean that he was educated at the palace with the royal children. Two further inscriptions refer to Senwosret II while a fourth inscription names Senwosret III. Tehuti-hetep probably died during the latter reign but co-regency dating can be confusing and it is possible that he lived into the reign of Amenemhet III.

The tomb of Ukh-hotpe, C1 Meir, cannot be dated with certainty other than that it belongs to the latter part of the 12th dynasty. Various assumptions have been made concerning his parentage and wives, but these cannot be confirmed. He would seem to have had five wives and seven concubines, although only one child, a daughter, Nebthuet-heneut-sen.

These tombs have been selected to conclude the list in this dissertation, because they are, so far as one can tell, contemporary, and show positively, the trend towards individual material incorporated in tombs of the period.

14.2 TOMB 2 EL-BERSHA TEHUTI-HETEP GREAT CHIEF OF THE HARE NOME (EB I Pl II = *Fig 230*)

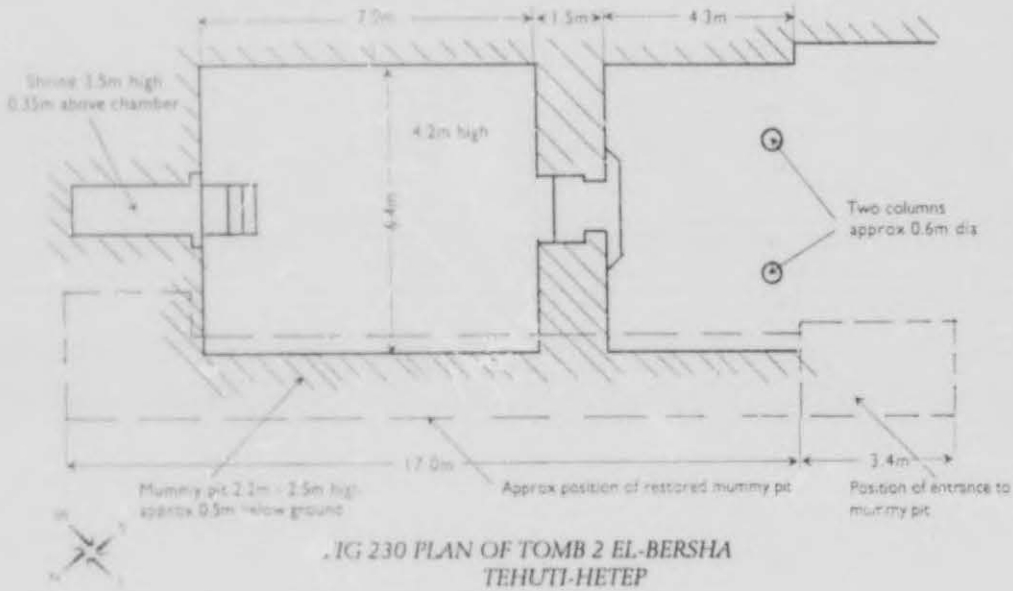


FIG 230 PLAN OF TOMB 2 EL-BERSHA TEHUTI-HETEP

14.2.1 THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE TOMB

The tomb comprised a 4,3m deep portico supported by two circular columns with palm-leaf capitals (*Fig 161*). The area before the entrance to the main chamber being unusually large, it has been called the outer chamber. The portico or outer chamber led to a main chamber which contained a small shrine. The shrine, in contrast to the massive entrance and outer and main chambers, was only 1,2m in width, its depth and height alike being 2,5m. It was closed by double doors and entered by three low steps. An unusual feature of the shrine was the absence of a statue such as those found at Beni Hasan.

In the main the decoration was very similar to that found in the Beni Hasan tombs. The jambs and lintel of the facade were painted to resemble rose granite and, as in tombs 2 and 3 at Beni Hasan, the hieroglyphs were incised and painted green.

Of all the tombs in Meir which have been discussed only one, that of Ukh-hotp tomb B4 included cartouches of Amenemhet II in the decoration above the statue recess (13.1).

In Beni Hasan the names of the monarchs who appointed the various nobles appear in the tombs of Khnemhotep I (tomb 14), Amenemhat (tomb 2) and Khnemhotep II (tomb 3). Each supports the appointment of the occupant and in this context, appears as part of the inscriptions and biographical text.

In the tomb of Tehuti-hetep (tomb 2 el-Bersha), the names of Amenemhet II, Senwosret II and Senwosret III appear on the columns on the jambs of the facade. Newberry describes these as being "curiously dovetailed", the *ka* name, separated from its cartouche on the top of the column surmounted by the hawk, with the cartouche name lower down immediately preceding the title and name of Tehuti-hetep (EB I Pl V = *Fig 231*).

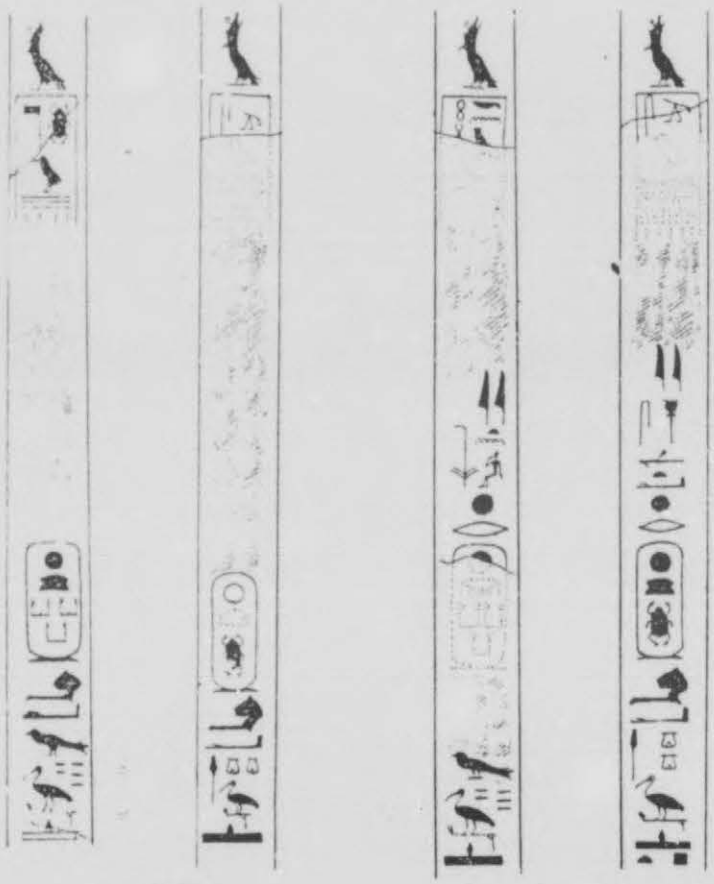


Fig 231 Tomb 2 el-Bersha, Tehuti-hetep.
The kings' names on jambs of facade

14.2.2 THE TITLES AND STATUS OF TEHUTI-HETEP

The four inscriptions on the jambs of the facade give only a concise summary of the main features of the life of Tehuti-hetep. Badly mutilated, they provide little detailed information. From such as has survived we learn he was "a child of the king, of his bringing up" (EB I:6), which (as in the case of Khnemhotep II), implies having been educated with the royal children of Amenemhet II, presumably in one of the king's palaces.[1] His titles are fully recorded in the tomb. He held twelve civil titles, among which are Great Chief of the Hare nome, and Gate of

every foreign country, which Newberry suggests meant that Tehuti-hetep had the right to give passports all over the frontiers of Egypt. In view of the geographical position of the territory governed by Tehuti-hetep, which control over the frontiers of the eastern desert is a distinct possibility, the granting of passports over all frontiers of Egypt seems unlikely, unless this was a privilege given to a number of officials.

Of his thirteen religious titles, "Regulator of the two thrones", and "Set over the mysteries of the god in sacred places" (EB I:7) are titles of the high priest of *Thoth* at Hermopolis.

Tehuti-hetep traced his ancestry to his paternal grandfather whose name was found only once on the inner wall of the shrine, although he appears to have been Great Chief of the Hare nome. Tehuti-hetep's father, Kay, was *ḥa-prince* of the city of the pyramid called *kha* of Senwosret.[2] The parentage of his mother Sat-Kheper-ka is not known. The inscription over her portrait has been lost. She was a Priestess of *Hathor*.

14.2.3 THEMATIC MURALS

With one exception, the murals are fairly orthodox. The ceiling of both the portico and inner chamber was richly painted with yellow quatrefoils upon a blue ground. The ceiling of the main chamber was divided by a yellow band painted longitudinally down the centre on which hieroglyphs were painted in blue. In the centre of the ceiling, as in tomb 2 Beni Hasan, a rectangular space was decorated with a different pattern. Originally, as discussed earlier, this undoubtedly represented the matting hung across the aperture in the ceiling of a house. The dado was black bordered by bands of red and yellow. A false door was originally built in the dado of the left hand wall, but was largely destroyed. In both this tomb and tomb 3 Beni Hasan, the false door had a fairly unobtrusive place within the dado, vastly different from some of the Old Kingdom tombs where the false door and a large figure dominated the offering area.

The painting was uniform and carefully executed, with the human figure drawn to the canonical standards prevailing at the time. As in tomb 3 Beni Hasan, the birds and fishes are of extremely fine quality. Even the hieroglyphs in the main chamber and shrine are elaborately drawn with much attention to detail.

14.2.3(a) OUTER CHAMBER

Many of these walls are too mutilated to be reproduced. On the right hand wall, is a hunting scene, the most interesting figure of which is that of Tehuti-hetep who is seeing the hunt, leaning on a staff and completely wrapped in a long blanket-like robe. Only his closely shaven head, hands and sandalled feet are visible (EB I Pl VII). Newberry says that this representation is probably unique, but it will be remembered that in tomb B4, of Ukh-hotp at Meir, the deceased is shown wrapped in such a garment in two murals, in one of which the robe resembles wool and the other, linen (13.2.3(f)). Newberry comments that it was evidently intended to protect him

against the cold breeze of the desert in the winter. The motif is thus automatically projected into the world of realism rather than idealism. Three sons of Tehuti-hetep are represented and named in the mural.

On an inner wall of the outer chamber is a conventional marsh scene. On the right, Tehuti-hetep, wearing a collar, a fillet round his head and a short tunic, is fowling with a throwstick. His wife, daughter and three sons accompany him in the boat. On the left, he spears fish (EB I Pls VI and VII). The bottom of the mural is greatly mutilated. However, this is far more orthodox in orientation than is the very fine fishing and fowling scene in tomb 3 Beni Hasan, since it occupies a position in the outer part of the tomb not far from the main door. The majority of the Old Kingdom marsh murals were so positioned.

14.2.3(b) THE INNER CHAMBER

On the right side of the outer wall, Tehuti-hetep is participating in a purification ceremony. He wears a wig, false beard, a broad necklace and a short pleated tunic. His feet are bare[3] (EB I Pl X = *Fig 232*). The mutilated remains of the murals show that accompanying these motifs were numerous descriptive inscriptions and reiteration of Tehuti-hetep's titles.

On the entire inner wall, comparable to the East wall in tomb 3 Beni Hasan, there is yet another clapnet and fishing scene (EB I Pl XX = *Fig 233*).

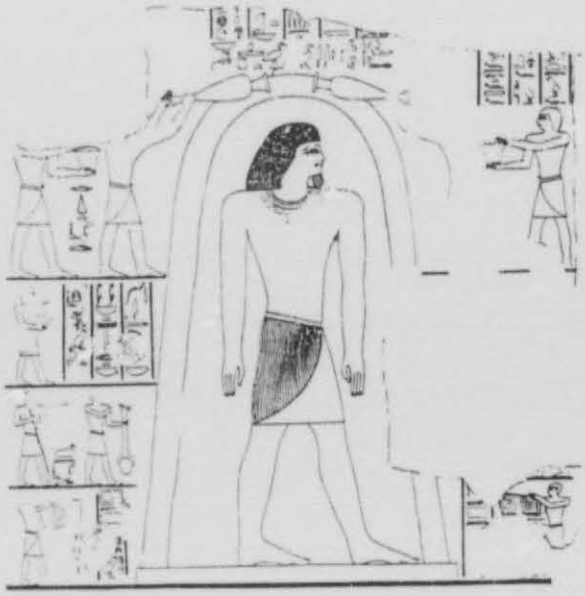


Fig 232 Tomb 2 el-Bersha, Tehuti-hetep. Inner chamber, ceremonial purification.

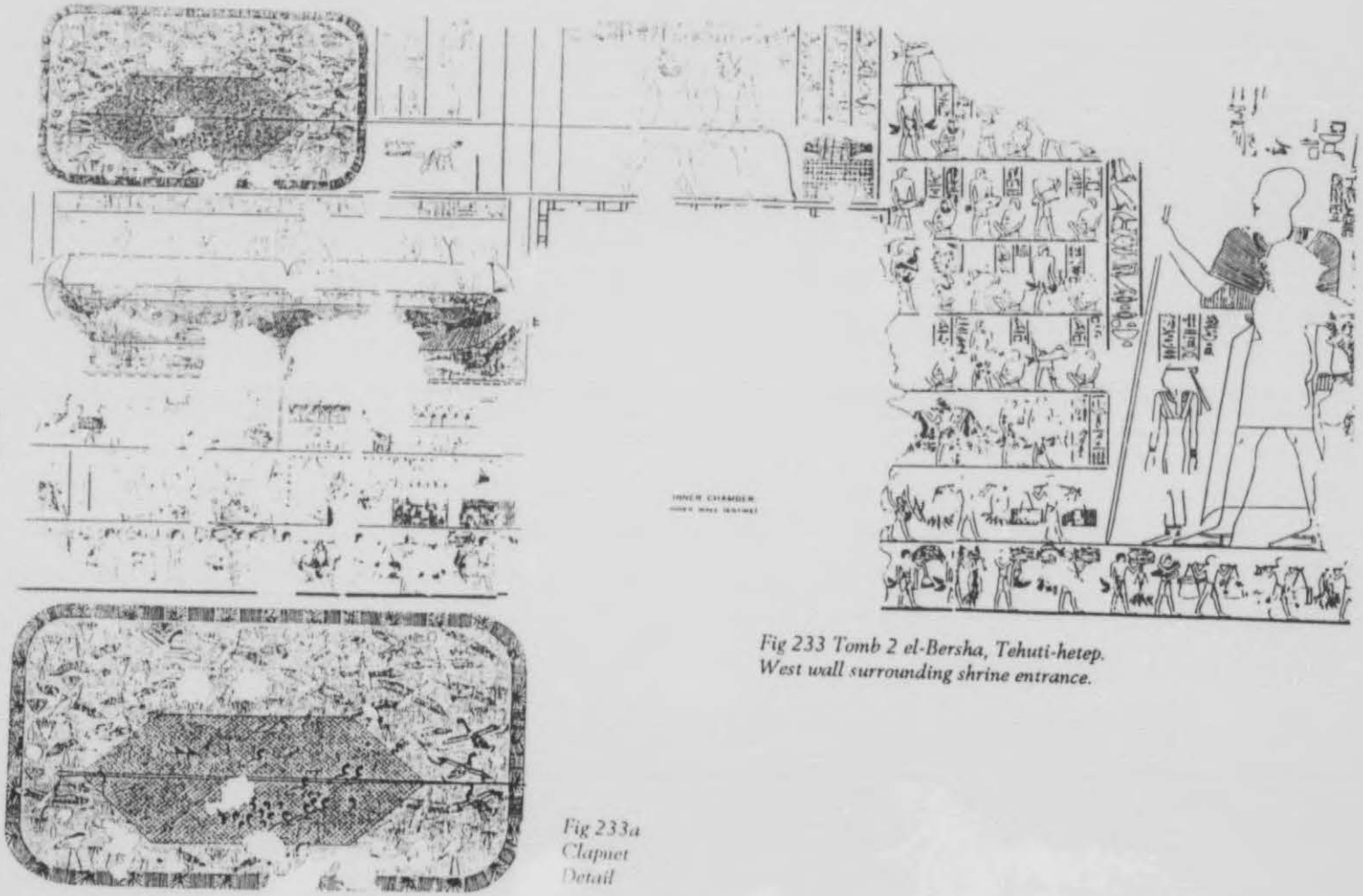


Fig 233 Tomb 2 el-Bersha, Tehuti-hetep.
West wall surrounding shrine entrance.

Fig 233a
Clapnet
Detail

Fig 233

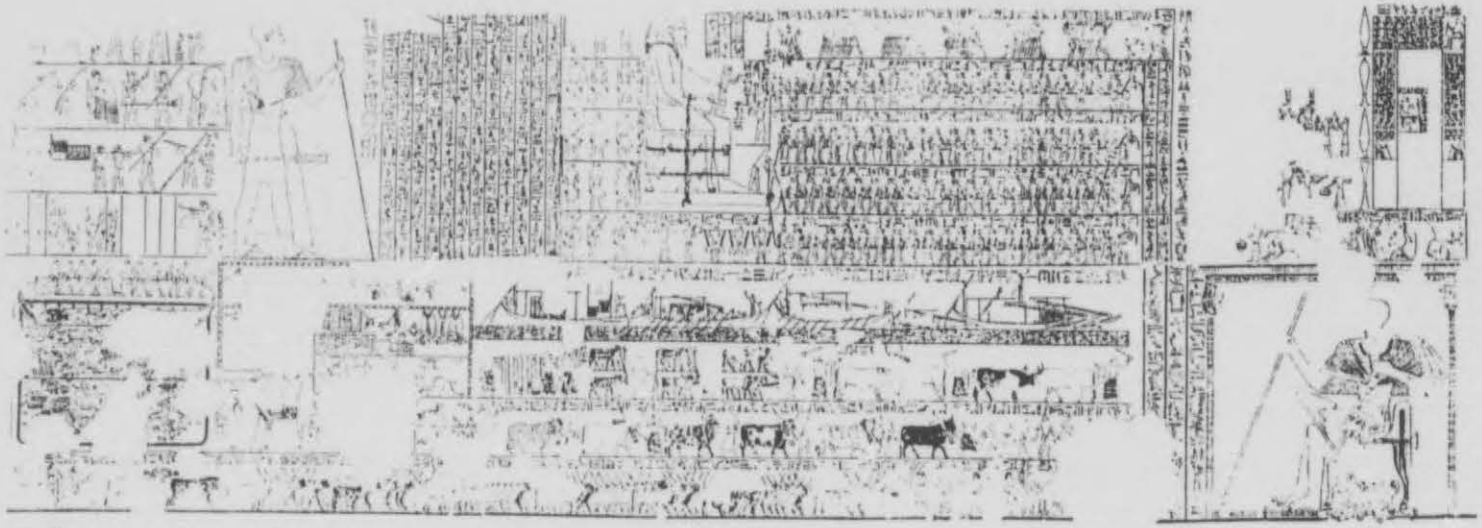


Fig 234 Tomb 2 el-Bersha, Tehuti-hetep. Dragging Colossus.

Fig 234a Colossus Detail

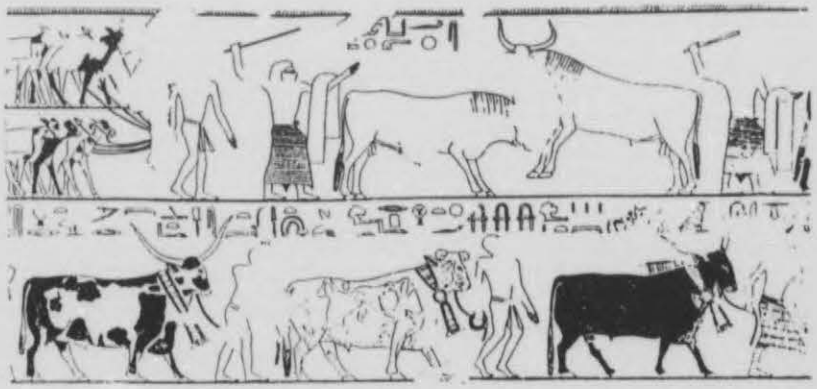


Fig 234b Ceremonial bulls

Figs 234, 234a, 234b

The two figures above the door pulling the rope of the clapnet are Tehuti-hetep and his eldest son. Tehuti's wife is also in the picture just in front of the clapnet. In the lower register just under the clapnet (badly mutilated), men haul on a fish net, cranes are being force-fed, fish gutted and various other wildfowl taken from cages. This wall bears no relation to the East wall of tomb 3 Beni Hasan. This one, at el-Bersha, is purely a traditional food offering scene. Unusual is the provision of fish, shown in quantity, gutted and drying, and placed whole in the vertical register before Tehuti-hetep. The hieroglyphs say that he is "seeing the making of a large capture of fish, greater than anything" (EB I:32). The female figure is his daughter Nub-unut. Several of his favourite servants stand behind him. Once again, there is nothing to suggest that the catching of the wildfowl represents anything else. Whatever connotation this may have been given in relation to the king's enemies, it is not apparent here.

The clapnet gives a fair idea of the well executed figures of the birds (*Fig 233a*).

The fragments from the various walls show that most of the usual estate occupations were originally included in this tomb but they are too incomplete for in depth comparison.

14.2.3(c) THE LEFT HAND WALL OF THE INNER CHAMBER

This wall contains possibly one of the most famous scenes from a tomb of the 12th dynasty. Nothing has ever been found to compare with it, and that it survived as well as it did in view of the destruction of this tomb is remarkable.

The entire wall is devoted to two great scenes. The uppermost shows the transporting of a colossus of Tehuti-hetep (EB I Pl XII = *Figs 234 & 234a*). The lower portion is concerned with the ceremonies in relation to the setting up of the statue (*Fig 234b*).

Newberry (EB I:25) discusses the possible destination but can only suggest the nomarch's palace or country residence or a chapel intended for his *ka* statues. There is no question of it having been intended for the tomb in which it is depicted. Statue processions, incorporating a naos and a seated or standing figure of the tomb owner, and accompanied by servants and dancing girls, are fairly commonplace, as seen at Beni Hasan. They are usually confined to one register and the naos and statue are not shown as particularly large. In the el-Bersha procession, the subject is in four parts. Tehuti-hetep with attendants follows the statue, the inscription of thirteen lines describes the scene, the colossus itself is dragged by rows of men, and the temple or building to which it was being taken completes the top mural. The sacrificial procession occupies the lower portion.

This appears to be an iconographic representation of an actual occurrence. The inscription of twelve lines would seem to be sufficient confirmation, always remembering that although stereotyped texts are not always reliable, this text appears to be purpose-made. Translated by

numerous early scholars (EB I 16) lacunae and a difficult text made interpretation difficult. However, the general theme is clear enough.

It commences by saying that the statue of over thirteen cubits in height (more than approx. 6m), was being dragged from the alabaster quarry at Hatnub.[4] Even Tehuti-hetep was impressed - "Behold, very wonderful was the road...to the minds of men was the dragging of valuable stone along it". The inscription goes on to describe the employment of troops of "goodly youths to make for it the road together with the guilds of tomb sculptors and foremen with them".

We then have the usual hyperbole about the townsmen all rejoicing. Not only youths appear to have been inspanned, "the aged one among them leaned upon the boy, the strong-armed was with the trembler (palsied) their arms became strong, each one of them displayed the force of a thousand men." It sounds as though all available labour was conscripted, regardless of age or abi'. It goes on to describe the use of the army, a fleet being equipped, suggesting transport by water at some stage.

In continuance we have the underlying reason for the whole operation, "Their speech was full of my praises, of my favours before the king, my children in splendour adorned after me. My country-folk shouted praises...The whole divine cycle(?) rejoiced, it was exceedingly beautiful to see more than anything that the *ḥa*-princes had done formerly." There is a query as to the translation, he either erected altars on the river bank or entertained city officials at the river bank. "Their hearts never devised these things that I did, in that I had made for myself [a sepulchre?], established forever and ever, after that this my tomb rested from its work of eternity".

It is not proposed here to discuss the enormous quantity of material incorporated in the mural. Arguments arose concerning the top of the head which is now missing but which, in an early photograph, appeared to have had a uraeus in front and a twisted cloth bound with a cord at the back, or whether the head-dress terminated in a variety of pigtail, an adornment of kings. The whole point of the argument was whether Tehuti-hetep was endeavouring to present himself as a monarch or whether the statue was in fact that of a king. In view of the presence of the cartouches which plainly name the ruling sovereigns *(Fig 231)*, it seems unlikely that Tehuti-Hotep would have declared himself a king. Alternatively had a king been the subject of the colossus, it is hardly likely that the fact would not have been recorded. So far as this work is concerned the relevant issue is that Tehuti-hetep "presented himself". It is probably one of the most positive pieces of recorded life-time activity which can be pinned down to a particular incident, standing alongside the positive visit of the *Aamu* to Khnemhotep II, although the two incidents have nothing in common other than the participation of the tomb owner in a life-time situation, and the reason for their inclusion in their respective tombs.

So far as the lower portion of the mural is concerned, the cattle are typical of such scenes, but ceremonial overtones are indicated by the somewhat elaborate collars on the necks of the sacrificial oxen in contrast with the beasts in the upper and lower registers (*Fig 234b*).

The registers around the entrance of the building to which the statue is being taken contain the names and titles of Tehuti-hetep. This mural alone invites detailed study, and has served to confirm how such large objects were moved without mechanical means. There is nothing idealistic about it, and although one must view the hyperbole of the text with reservation, the detailed iconographic depiction of the operation provides a wealth of detail not incorporated in the latter.

14.3 TOMB C1 MEIR UKH-HOTPE SON OF UKH-HOTPE AND HENY-HERY- IB (MEIR VI Pl IV = *Fig 235*).

14.3.1 ARCHITECTURE OF THE TOMB

All that is left of this tomb is part of a roughly-hewn and unfinished forecourt, and a single room surrounded on four sides by a cornice-shaped mastaba (or bench) 50cm high and 50cm in width (MEIR I Pl XXII 2 = *Fig 236*), covered with a thin layer of white stucco where it is painted pink. Large stela recesses were cut in the west end of the south and north walls (*Fig* 236). These were part of the original decoration, although this tomb suffered much alteration. Mutilation of some of the original decoration occurred, when, after the painting was completed, recesses were cut in the centre of both the north and south walls. A much cruder recess was also cut in the west wall. Below the paintings on all four walls were three bands of colour the outer ones blue, the inner dark red. Beneath the bands on the north south and east walls the dado was white. On the west wall the dado has a decoration resembling a fairly simple palace facade design.

Blackman describes the paintings on the walls of the room as "exquisite" although badly mutilated. It is speculated that some mutilation was ancient and intentional since Ukh[illegible]pe usurped several of the attributes of royalty. Although this tomb is dated to Senwosret II,[5] Blackman was of the opinion that the determination of Senwosret III t[illegible] the [illegible]ers an[illegible] privileges of the local princes may be responsible for some of the mutil[illegible]

The ceiling, more than half intact when Blackman examined it, was [illegible]ept for a broad band of blue hieroglyphs on a yellow ground and running from ea[illegible] The text refers to *Nut* spreading herself over the deceased and protecting him from his enemies.[8] This has nothing in common with the imitation matting ceilings of Beni Hasan. Blackman's comment is interesting.

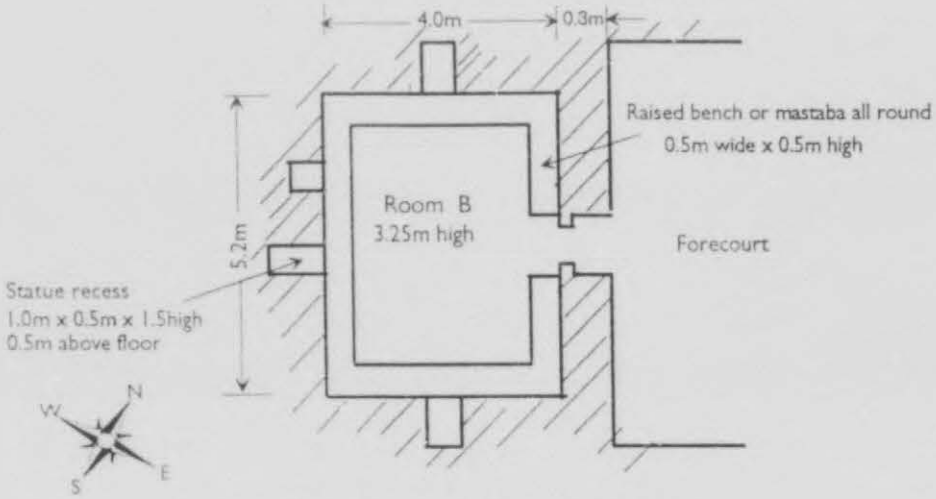


FIG 235 PLAN OF TOMB C1 MEIR UKH-HOTPE

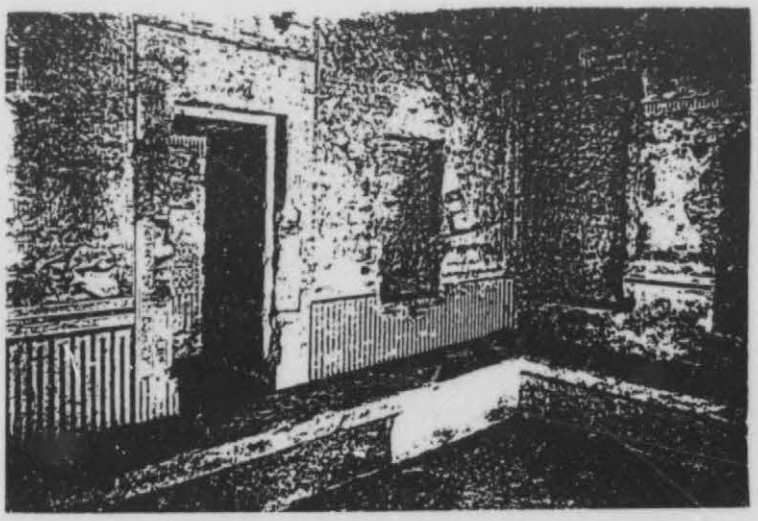


Fig 236 Tomb C1 interior of tomb West wall mastaba and statue recess

He says "We are convinced, however, that the painter was not a local artist... his employment of certain formulae and emblems and his knowledge of and skill in depicting subjects more appropriate to a royal funerary temple suggest that he had at some time or other been trained and employed at the Royal Residence" (MEIR I:15).

14.3.2 THE TITLES AND STATUS OF UKH-HOTPE

Only eight titles are given (MEIR VI:8), *erpa and ḥa-prince*, "Superintendent of Prophets, Priest of the Mistress of Heaven, Over the Mysteries, Sem-priest of the Mistress of the two lands, The One companion, Treasurer of the King of Lower Egypt". Among his various epithets is "Two Ladies", or "He of the Two Ladies". The hieroglyph is the familiar vulture and cobra seated on two baskets, usually one of the titles of the monarch. Others are, "A noble at the head of the subjects, Who appeases the gods, Who summons the Ennead so that they come". Possibly titles have been erased, but one would have expected the Two Ladies title to have been erased since that certainly has royal connotations.

Ukh-hotpe does not claim for his wives the "daughter of a *ḥa-prince*" title so proudly used in tomb 3 Beni Hasan. Two Ladies believed to have been concubines are called "a Governor's daughter", and one is called a townswoman.

The divinities are quite unusual. Along with *Nut, Geb, Osiris, Anubis*, and *Isis*, he names various personified deities, the *West, Ocean, Lower Egypt, Hat* (locality personified as a goddess), *Hotpet* (female personification of food offerings), *Fields of Cusae* (personified as a goddess) *Upper Egypt* (personified as a male divinity). Strangely enough he does not bear a *Hathor* title, nor are his wives priestesses of *Hathor*. However, the mutilation of the text may account for this. No sons are mentioned.

14.3.3 THEMATIC MURALS

This tomb is unique in that in all the murals, Ukh-hotpe's associates and attendants, even in sporting activities such as fishing and fowling, are all female. In some religious motifs women are also included. It is only on the north and south walls of the statue recess in the west wall of the main chamber, where the funerary liturgy is depicted that there are representations of male officiants, and even then female offerers follow in the wake of male lectors. Blackman offers two possible explanations, either than Ukh-hotpe was high priest of the temple of *Hathor* (although it is not stated) or he was exceptionally uxorious. Since the latter is applicable only to an excessive affection for one's wife, and the ladies in question could hardly all have been married to him, the former would seem likely, although even then the theme would appear to be somewhat over-presented.

A large figure of Ukh-hotpe stood beside a stela on the north wall. He is a colourful figure wrapped in a fairly large cloak covered with stippled green bars upon a white background. The hem is indicated by red, white and green lines, and another garment, visible below the cloak was painted grey, the legs painted darker red and showing through it, indicating its transparency. In the left hand he holds a staff of some kind, in the right he holds an *ankh*. Here again one has the introduction of a symbol which became extremely familiar in later tombs but which was not a feature of the tombs under review. Staves of office, and such-like are commonplace but the *ankh* symbol does not seem to have been a regular part of the tomb iconography at this time.

The mutilation to the murals being so extensive, it is only proposed to discuss those which it is possible to reproduce.

14.3.3(a) WEST WALL NORTH OF STATUE RECESS (MEIR VI Pl XIII = *Fig 237*)

The fowling scene on the upper part of this wall was originally a very fine painting of the papyrus swamp with a multiplicity of birds and small creatures including moth-like butterflies with red upper and yellow under-wings, and a dragonfly. It would seem to have been worthy of the old Cusite tradition.

The lower part of the mural depicts a stretch of water with reeds, and lotus flowers among which, large scaled fish abound in company with a hippopotamus, grasping the tail of a crocodile between its teeth. Ukh-hotpe's short kilt is moulded in stucco and incorporates the *ankh*, *was* sceptre, the *sa* (protection) emblem and the *djd* column. He wears a thin garment over the kilt. The belt was left unpainted but he wears a colourful bracelet and a blue and green necklace.

The pendant which once adorned his breast has disappeared. He has cropped hair or probably a wig, with an elaborate fillet which Blackman thinks may have been a piece of jewellery with a faience inlay, the bow being shaped like two lotus flowers (MEIR VI: 26). Behind his head can be seen the Two Ladies emblem.

Of the much mutilated text above and around Ukh-hotpe, the horizontal registers give titles and praise for various activities. In front the horizontal registers are concerned with his activities, with instruction for recitation. We learn that the Governor proceeds in order to view (every) pleasant pastime, the traversing of the swamp. Behind him emblems ensure stability, happiness and protection. Various ladies are named and described as "mistress of the house". In the horizontal register to the right of Ukh-hotpe the *wedjat* eyes have been introduced. It is in this scene and in a fishing scene that Ukh-hotpe has usurped attributes and formula which normally belonged only to the Pharaoh, *All protection, life, stability, and happiness, all health, all joy, Superintendent of the Priests, Ukh-hotpe, for ever!* (MEIR I:12). On each side of the *wedjat* eyes is a stand composed of three papyrus stems supporting a frog.

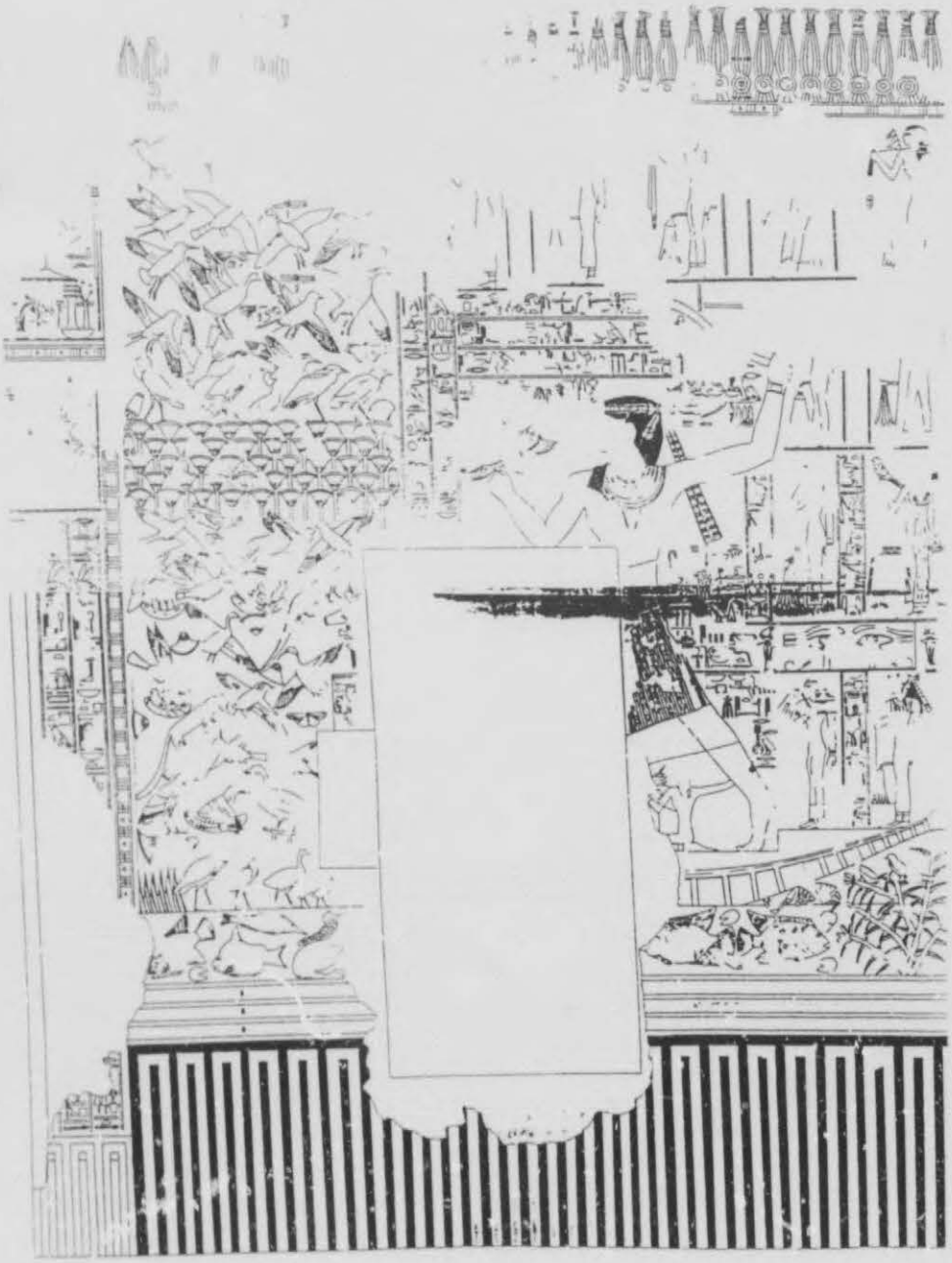


Fig 237 Tomb C1 Meir, Ukh-hotpe. West wall. Fowling with throw-stick. Note the bird and small frog on reeds at right of mural. All the attendants are fer...

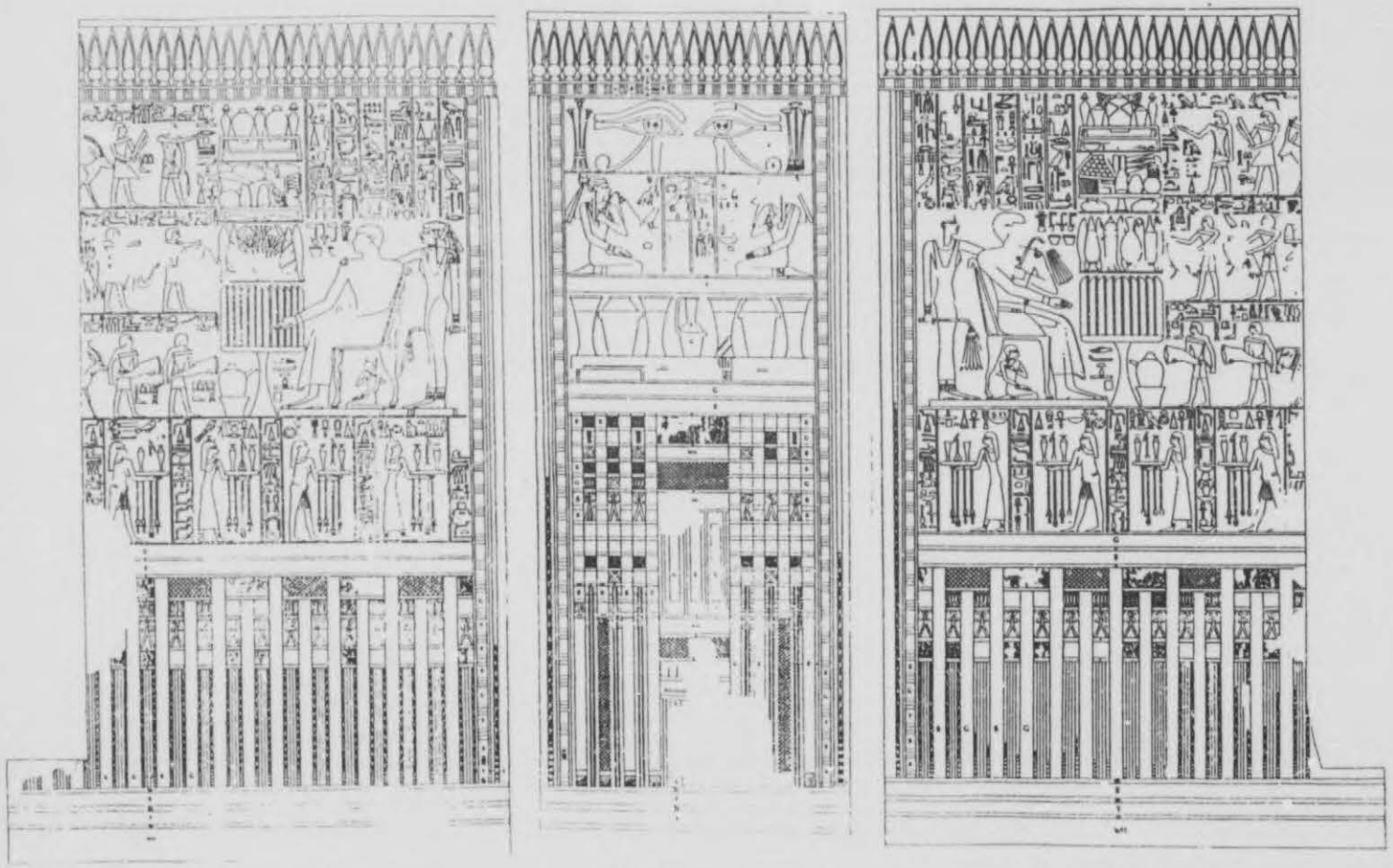


Fig 240 South wall

Fig 238 West wall stela

Fig 239 North wall

Tomb C1 Meir, Ukh-hotpe. Statue recess.

Sacred to the goddess *Heket*, wife of the god *Khnum*, the frog was, as previously indicated, (*Figs 47,48)*, a symbol of creation, fertility, birth and regeneration (Wilkinson 1992: 107). This motif appears in the fishing scene complementing the fowling scene which has sustained considerably more damage. Again, the attendants are female.

14.3.3(b) WEST WALL, STATUE RECESS (MEIR VI Pl XVI = *Fig 238)*

This recess has provided some of the most interesting murals in Ukh-hotpe's tomb. The murals are both religious and royal. The lower half of the stela (*Fig 238)* has a fairly ornate and colourful palace facade design, the upper portion being given over to symbolic objects or emblems, with the exception of the two wives, (Mistress of the house), Nub-k[illegible]ra Khnumhotep. The *Wedjat* eyes or eyes of *Horus* are flanked by two emblems representing Upper and Lower Egypt, in the form of clumps of lilies and papyrus (Wilkinson 1992:81). The jars standing on a wooden rack represent seven oils.

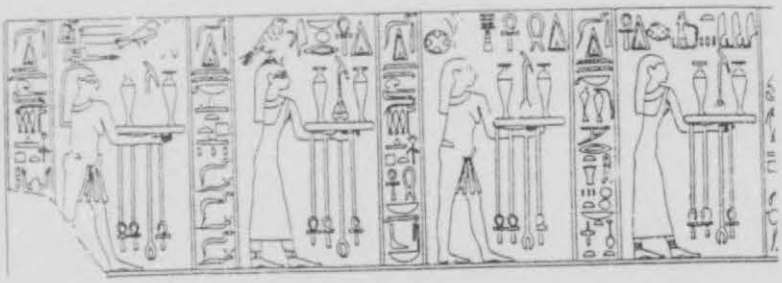
14.3.3(c) NORTH AND SOUTH WALLS, STATUE RECESS (MEIR VI Pls XVII = *Fig 239*, Pl XV = *Fig 240*).

There is nothing unusual about these offering scenes in which male attendants officiate. There is a slight variation in the offerings but in both, Ukh-hotpe is accompanied by a woman (wife?) behind his chair and a young girl, possibly his daughter, under the chair. As is usual, on the South and North walls Ukh-hotpe faces towards the door, the figures below face towards the inner wall of the shrine.

The interest lies in the eight figures, four in each mural, shown below the offering scene.

These are listed under divinities as personified goddesses or male divinities (MEIR VI:11) but Baines (1985:156) refers to them as fecundity figures. He says that they are the only surviving coloured fecundity figures from the Middle Kingdom. He suggests that the motifs in this tomb are taken over from earlier tomb-reliefs or from royal temples, the latter being the most likely. The sources, he believes, are Old or Middle Kingdom.

These personifications are named very simply by Baines (1985:156 Figs 95, 96 = *Fig 241)*. It should be noted that while Baines captions read from left to right, the illustrations read according to the orientation of the hieroglyphs and figures. The figure top register right which is captioned "field" is actually the fields of Cusae, the man and two leopards clearly visible. The second figure from the right has the emblem for Upper Egypt and the second from the left in the lower register represents Lower Egypt. The last figure is a representation of the Nile God *Hapi* as a fecundity figure (*Fig 58)*. The gifts are symbolic. Baines says that before the New Kingdom there are only isolated cases of figures carrying food offerings as well as symbolic gifts (1985:108).



South wall

North wall

1 S wall of recess				[5]
← 1 O	2 Δ	3 O	4 Δ	
sḫt	*šmʿw*	*jmntt*	*w3ḏ-wrj*ᵃ	
yellow(?)	red	yellow	green	
'field'	upper Egypt	west	'sea'	
2 N wall of recess				[5]
← 1 O	2 Δ	3 O	4 Δ	
ḥtpt	*t3-mḥʿw*	*ḥ3t*	*ḥʿpi*	
yellow	red	yellow	blue	
offering	lower Egypt		inundation	

Fig 241 Tomb C1 Meir, Ukh-hotpe.
Personifications or fecundity figures.

The symbols suspended from the arms of the bearers are *ankhs* and *sceptres*, and the centrepiece of each tray is the *was* sceptre, in itself a symbol of power. As Baines (1985:156) suggest, this design is probably taken over from a Royal temple.

14.3.3(d) NORTH WALL NEXT TO THE STELA

Ukh-hotpe stands in a kiosk, dressed in a long cloak (MEIR VI Pl XVIII = *Fig 242*). He is separated from the major portion of the mural by a niche cut at a later stage, but sufficient remains to show that this was an offering scene, being remarkable only in the use of women (MEIR VI Pl XVIII = *Fig 243*).

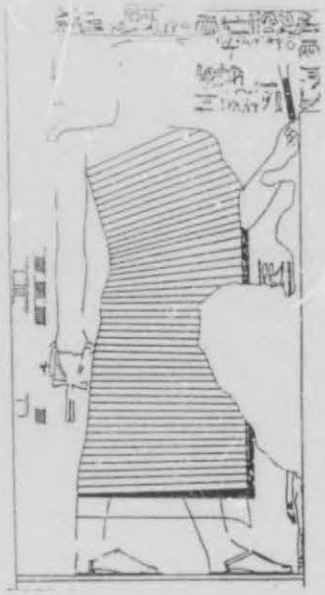


Fig 242 Tomb C1 Meir, Ukh-hotpe. Offering scene north wall, Ukh-hotpe in long cloak.

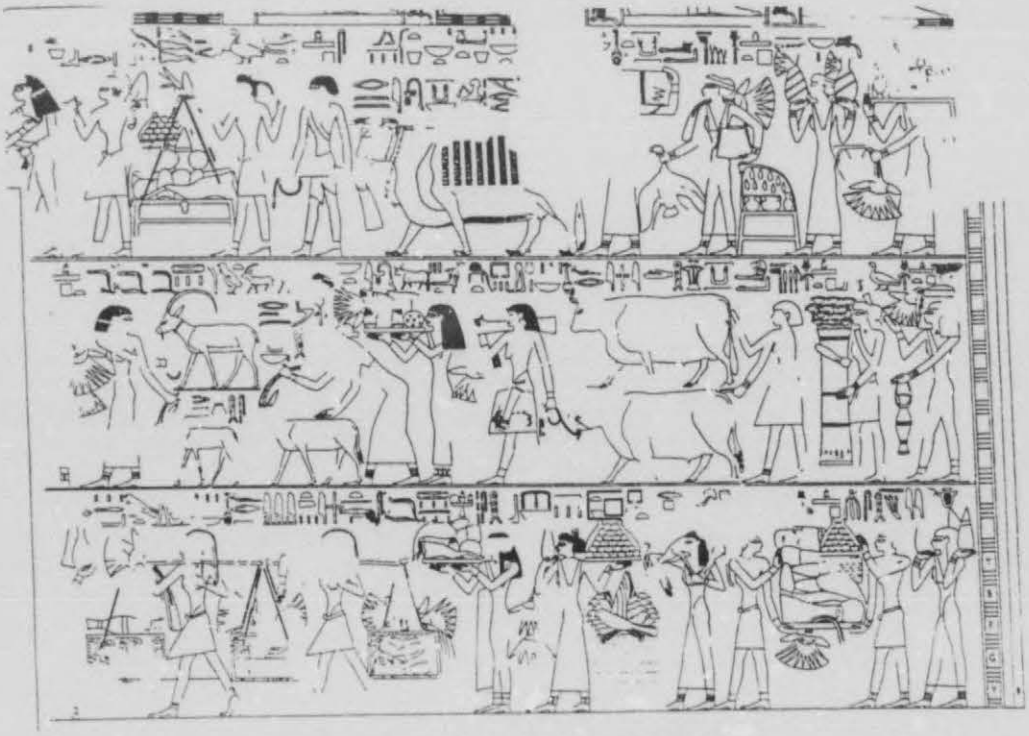


Fig 243 Tomb C1 Meir, Ukh-hotpe. Offering scene north wall. All attendants are female.

Some can be seen in the lower register with yokes upon their shoulders carrying lotus plants, provisions on trays, and one even carries a small ibex on her shoulders. Some wear female clothing, others are in the male kilt. A single line of text says: "very numerous (or great), all the goodly produce of the fields which are in the Delta, that we may furnish the food-tables and make festive the broad court, of the Count and Governor, Superintendent [of Prophets] Ukh-hotpe, born of Heny-hery-ib" (MEIR VI:19). This reference to the Delta is possibly an indication of the text having emanated from that area, possibly Memphis, or, as it is often interpreted, the whole tendency of this tomb is towards monarchy. This would be consistent with the symbols of Upper and Lower Egypt being incorporated in some of the murals.

Also on the North wall is a much damaged mural of what appears to have been a *Hathor* festival (MEIR VI Pl XIX = *Fig 244*).

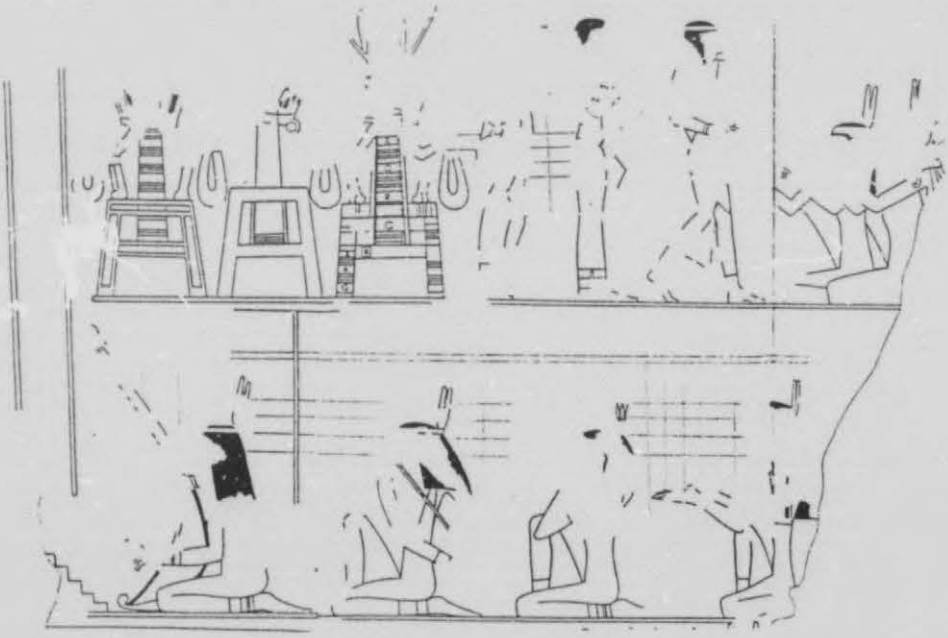


Fig 244 Tomb C1 Meir, Ukh-hotpe.
Hathor festival on North wall.

Female members of Ukh-hotpe's household are included in one part of the scene, and identified, "..his beloved, his darling, the Mistress of the House, Ita" (MEIR VI:22). Various others are named but not defined as Mistress of the House. The mural is too badly damaged to compare with the mural in tomb B2 Meir (*Fig 196*). In discussing the mural as he saw it, however, Blackman describes the three wooden stands (*Fig 244*) supporting emblems of the *Hathor* cult. On the outer tables he was able to recognise a *Hathor*-headed *sistrum*, with arms, a *menat* collar hanging from either hand. On the middle table he was able to discern another type of *sistrum*, a

pillar surmounted by a *Hathor* head with "the usual tress of hair hanging down on either side" (MEiR VI:21). The women in the top register are dancers and those clapping time; the lower squatting figures are members of Ukh-hotpe's household. Some of these objects such as the stands and the ends of the *menats* can be distinguished from the excerpt above (*Fig 244*), but even more damage appears to have been incurred prior to the mural having been copied. Many of these tomb interiors were exposed to the weather and a prevailing wind added greatly to the damage inflicted by quarrymen and vandals. Blackman describes at length the colours of the garments and ornaments worn by the women and not only this mural, but all the walls in the tomb were very highly coloured. An unusual feature of this mural is that, in spite of the damage a certain amount of hieroglyphic text remains, and it is almost all relative to the bringing of offerings *for the ka* of Ukh-hotpe, or epithets of affection for the various women of his household. It is possible that the destruction has obliterated them but one would have expected epithets such as *Hathor* Mistress of Cusae, to have recurred in this tomb but it is not so. Speculation that the artist was not local may have a bearing on this.

Nevertheless, even in its incomplete and damaged condition, it is possible to see that Ukh-hotpe introduced a large amount of personalised material into his tomb chamber. How far the marsh scenes represent *Hathor*-orientated activities is beyond the scope of this work. Certainly *Hathor* had a close relationship with the marsh area (Wilkinson 1992:59), as she did with heaven and the necropolis. Whether the marsh scenes are symbolic manifestations of the worship of *Hathor* in the 12th dynasty can only be a matter for speculation. The present temple of *Hathor* at Dendera is of Ptolemaic construction, built on the site of the original temple (Baines & Malek 1980:64,108). How much of the cult reflected there can be traced to the earlier period is doubtful. It is possible, therefore, that in these tombs at Meir we have some of the oldest ceremonies of *Hathor* ever recorded. There is no indication that they are intended to be taking place in the hereafter.

Footnotes

[1] In BH II:21 reference is made to *Thet-taui*, location unknown, mentioned in the Turin papyrus as the residence of Amenemhet I. Reference is also made to *Het-sehotep-ab-ra*, which may be another name for *Thet-taui* but which "may be some other royal residence". There is nothing to indicate where such royal patronage would have taken place, nor the nature of the instruction received. These were not necessarily scribal schools, and private tutelage and/or in association with the children of the *harim* is possible.

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[2] Which Senwosret is intended is not clear (EB I:7 note 5).

[3] cf. EB I:15 note 1 for comparison of scenes in both Old Kingdom and New Kingdom, (18th dynasty) tombs.

[4] Newberry discusses at some length the quarrying, transport and complications in transporting so large and delicate an (alabaster) statue (EB I:23-26). He says that (at the time of his report), there was no evidence to be found that so large a block of alabaster had ever again been quarried.

[5] Blackman refers to Sesostris III, but I have used Senwosret (Baines & Malek 1980:36).

[6] Blackman quotes earlier examples of this formula from the Pyramid texts and later examples, the concept being that the ceiling of the tomb represented the god less *Nut* (MEIR I:15).

CHAPTER 15

SUMMARY AND ULTIMATE CONCLUSION

One by one they appear in the darkness:...
a few with historical names. How late they
start to shine! they stand...the past lapping
them like a cloak of chaos

Thom Gunn

15 SUMMARY

15.1 MEIR, EL-BERSHA AND BENI HASAN

The foregoing sites were chosen for this dissertation because of their relative proximity to each other and apparently similar conditions in respect of their territories. It could be expected, therefore that some similarity would exist in their burial customs and tomb murals which would enable comparison.

It has been illustrated that since the early dynastic periods the development of the decorations in tombs was determined by religious factors, i.e., the need for sustenance via the *ka* manifesting itself in the offering murals. In time, the basic provision of this sustenance, was augmented by the fishing and marsh scenes which possibly emanated from royal mortuary temples, and can arguably be assigned to food provision or entertainment.

These motifs remained constant throughout the tomb building period of the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms. They acquired a life of their own, and were joined by the agricultural and workshop scenes. In turn, all these themes developed their own repertoire of motifs which can be recognised, although appearing in a variety of forms.

Until the disintegration of the monarchy at the end of the Old Kingdom, the mastaba tombs remained totally within the scope of the upper classes or nobility, linked to the royal court, with whose compliance they were erected. It is not possible to set a positive date for the diversion from tombs erected within the area of the royal sepulchre to those rock tombs erected by various chieftains in their own territories, since this appears to have occurred before the end of the 5th dynasty. For this reason the early tombs A1 and A2 at Meir were included. It is possible, however, to compare those erected, or excavated, at approximately the same periods. This has been attempted

Plans of the tombs, added to brief descriptions show that while the orientation was determined by the natural siting, and the excavation depended upon the nature of the rock itself, in the cases of those in which the architectural design seems to have been completed, there is no slavish attention to convention. The inclusion of niches, recesses, or shrines, where they occur, is uniform but not constrained by religious observation to a set piece. Harpur (1987) failed to find a definite orientation of murals in Old Kingdom tombs, although she made efforts to do so. Inclusions of shrines and recesses were a part of a tomb just as was the mummy pit. Where it has been possible to show them in any detailed form, mummy pits have been indicated on the architectural plans. These indicate no great effort towards making them identical. The majority of the pits were undecorated although some did have a few murals. No cognisance has been taken of these, because they are all uniformly offering murals and irrelevant to this dissertation.

The basically shared features of the murals in the rock-cut and mastaba type tombs are the inclusion of false doors, the palace facade and matting designs, offering murals, and marsh, workshop, and agricultural scenes.

The tombs at Meir, el-Bersha and Beni Hasan, however, share an element which in its presented form separates but also unites these three groups.

In each group there has emerged an individual element common only to the personality and/or group to which it applies. It is relevant to the situation of the personalities involved, and has no basic connection with the stereotyped Old Kingdom murals. The three groups are, therefore, joined in the presentation of iconographic mural material whose varied nature confirms its corporate existence, while presenting a personal expression beyond the scope of normal tomb iconography. This is the material which is considered to be *biographic*.

15.2 THE STIMULUS ENGENDERING THE INCLUSION OF BIOGRAPHY IN THE TOMBS UNDER REVIEW

15.2.1 THE EMOTIVE ENTITY

In Chapter 1.1 it was proposed that emotion was one facet of man's nature that could be shared by any or all societies, ancient or modern. The impetus generating the emotion and the response might differ, but the emotion remains the same. Another shared experience is our ability to create myth. Myth is, in the main, a human response to a situation which man can neither explain nor control, the myth being open to adaptation and change in relation to the human situation and the needs arriving therefrom. In primitive societies, although not confined to them, myth is frequently the daughter of fear. Early deities, evolved in response to man's inability to comprehend and/or contend with the environment or situation in which he found himself, tended to be worshipped or treated with great reservation and respect for fear of

reprisal (Gray 1969:17). It is more than likely, therefore, that in the early stages the deity had the greater ascendancy than the strong leader or chief.

One has only to study the historical progress of the ancient Near East to find, at intervals in the history of numerous tribes or countries, a power struggle between the priests, representing the god, and the monarch or chief, to acquire power over the people. Mesopotamian monarchs were not immune, nor were the Hebrews, whose history repeats this struggle for supremacy time and again. Ancient Egypt, whether by wisdom or accident, solved the problem early on when the king attached the hawk figure to the top of the *serekh* and joined the monarchy to the deity, developing the union from a state of protection by, to unity with the deity in a father/son relationship. The ultimate development assumed union with the deity in the afterlife.

This joined monarch and priests in a situation where each was dependent upon the other and although there are signs that it did not always remain so, in the initial stages it seems to have worked reasonably well.

For the poor, the Egyptian monarchy may or may not have given security, since a grassroots community, more likely to be aware of the vicissitudes of everyday living, tends to turn to primitive and often crude gods and goddesses to protect and sustain itself.

That the monarchy did provide initial security for the privileged hierarchy is probably undeniable, and manifested itself in their right to sleep their final sleep in the vicinity of the all powerful god/king, in the tomb authorised by him. The promise of eternal life, allied to the monarch, appears to have been sketchy in its interpretation of what that eternity would comprise. What does seem to have developed from an early stage was the myth of entitlement to the tomb and/or future life on the grounds of nobility of birth or acquired status. Early ancient Egyptian religion made no pretence of having a morally based canon of behaviour. To be included in a certain category of human being was sufficient, that category depending entirely upon the approbation of the king.

The kings of the 3rd and 4th dynasties, exalting the *Re* concept, reached the height of their demonstrative power with their sun temples and pyramids.

Security within a tomb lying in the shadow of a pyramid must have been the supreme accolade. The king in his pyramid with the mastabas at its foot was the epitome and visible entity of the myth of royal power, able to transport the privileged to eternal life.

15.2.2 THE DEMOCRATISATION OF THE PRIVILEGED FEW

The Old Kingdom hierarchy proudly included a tomb formula which said that the gift was from the king. Later, the gift became one of sustenance given, not to the tomb owner but to the god, who, it was hoped, would provide the food for the deceased. Even after the end of the Old

Kingdom, when the myth of the omnipotent monarch had become somewhat tarnished, the formula still found a place, even although the king had become an intermediary between the deceased and the god (cf Ch.9 Footnote 4).

The gradual change after the end of the 4th dynasty can only be surmised, but the process is believed to have been expedited by climatic problems causing the Nile to fail. Alongside the myth of the abilities of the king/god, grew the underlying myth of his power to ensure the abundance of the Nile flood. It is believed that the numbers of short-lived monarchs after the end of the 6th dynasty is symptomatic of kings who failed to live up to this expectation and were removed from office one way or another. In these circumstances, it is difficult to believe that the myth of the king born of the union of queen and god, could have been accepted without question. However, along with the making of myth, man has learned to accept those parts of the myth about which he has reservations, in the same spirit in which the myth was made. If it suited the priests and/or hierarchy to accept the royal god-birth then expediency would have enabled them to do so. The very fact that from time to time Egyptian monarchs were assassinated, and usurpers took their place, makes the whole birth concept somewhat suspect. However, the Egyptians were unwilling at any time to totally discard any of their myths, and this one apparently survived.

Osiris was making his presence felt in the royal tombs even before the end of the Old Kingdom. Once the monarchy had fallen, however, the religion of *Osiris* finally came into its own. This encouraged the chiefs and nobles to pursue a process of democratisation. They usurped royal privileges and built their own tombs, on the assumption that they would also become an *Osiris* at death.

15.2.3 THE RE-INTERPRETATION OF THE MYTH

The weak link was the myth of entry into the hereafter on the grounds of worth or status, via royal approval. This vital prop on which the building of tombs had largely been supported, was now gone.

With the expansion of the right to provide for their own future in the hereafter, those seeking to assume this privilege were made aware of the need to authenticate and justify such beneficence in the absence of royal approval. Certainly the well-established royal formula was always included in the offering prayers, but the old hierarchal system had changed and even with the restoration of the monarchy, the building of tombs was no longer exclusive. From the fourth dynasty a simple form of self-presentation, originating from inscriptions, occurred in some of the tombs. This developed into a distinct genre in the 5th and 6th dynasties. The object appears to have been to record the essential aspects of the tomb owner's life and person which he wished to perpetuate in the hereafter. It was not an appeal to be accepted into the hereafter, but was, in keeping with the offerings, orientated towards the retention of a good life in the hereafter. The

vicissitudes of ensuring continued priestly services at the tomb probably accounts for the prayers attached to the offering formula, which grew to encompass many wishes for abundance in the after-life, and eventually spread to include visitors who were also requested to pray on the deceased's behalf. However, it should again be stressed, that these requests were, in the main, concerned with the well-being of the deceased in the after-life and so certain was the tomb owner that he would enter into that estate, that in time promises were made by him, in spirit form, to bestow benefactions on those who heeded his requests (Lichtheim (1988:5, 6). From all of which it may be concluded that, although a desire to augment one's own welfare in the hereafter increased over the years, the monarch having approved the tomb, was sufficient confirmation of the myth of eternal life. While requesting "an abundant after-life" the tomb owner was not initially requesting assurance that he would enter into that after-life.

In time, as with the majority of tomb inscriptions and decoration, a stereotyped formula of self-representation evolved. Following on the career statement, in which royal appointments played a large part, the personality presentation was declaratory, rather than narrative, the impetus being on "I have"...or..."I spoke truly," and covering a wide range of activities such as giving bread and clothes to the poor and respecting one's mother and father. They were all positive, and Lichtheim remarks that, repeated from tomb to tomb or stela, their veracity might be doubted (1988:6).

The local rulers who rose to autonomy after the collapse of the royal administration continued with these autobiographies, the many titles of royal officials being dropped and the emphasis being placed on being good administrators and citizens of their towns.

In addition to the placing of stelae in their tombs, it became the custom of those able to do so, to erect such personal commendations at religious centres such as Abydos. In this context the inscriptions were expanded to include various afterlife wishes addressed to *Osiris*. The stelae of a man named Tjetji lists twelve after-life wishes, five of which derive from the Old Kingdom, with seven others among which are wishes to reach the "council of gods" (possibly a concept of judgement), and to arrive in the "lightland"[1] (the region where *Osiris* dwells). He also wants to be welcomed by the great of Abydos and to be admitted to the god's sacred barque (Lichtheim 1988:58). This is an advance on the wishes for "abundance" in the early Old Kingdom tombs. On Tjetji's stela, which has been dated to the 11th dynasty, there is an awareness of the need to ensure something more than "sustenance".

The initial reaction of a human being to wrong-doing is denial. *Mea culpa* has to be learned, it does not come naturally. At the above stage in the development of ancient Egyptian religious practice, it was the reaction of denial that was produced by the assumption of possible wrong-doing. There is no suggestion of a plea for forgiveness.

The formula known as the negative confession, which appeared on many of the stelae, contains such phrases as "I am a magnate who...knows his rank among the nobles",...I am one who loves good, hates evil, with whom none stayed angry overnight,...no falsehood came from my mouth,...no evil was done by my hands,...whom people loved throughout each day". Far from being negative, this should probably, more accurately be titled, "an affirmation of innocence".

The affirmation of a steward from the period of Senwosret I throws light on some of the day to day social problems and dishonesty of the time, when he speaks of caring for the widows, orphans, and the hungry. "I hindered no man at the ferry; I maligned no man to his superior; I paid no heed to calumny". He listens to justice, and "leans not to him who can pay"(Lichtheim 1988:104). It all sounds very familiar, but he does recount his various duties as a steward so in that respect it must be considered autobiographical and not only a stereotyped formula.

We know little about the thoughts of ordinary Egyptians during the Old Kingdom. In the Middle Kingdom they faced reality. The uncertainty and suffering of the anarchic years had left their mark and in scribal circles, men were writing of the reality of life rather than coining idealistic phrases for the dead.

From life to death, from perfection to chaos, men were writing the things that people were thinking. Even the exclusivity of the monarch had been invaded. Amenemhet I, the king who appointed Khnemhotep I at Beni Hasan, is the assumed writer of a teaching directed at his son. That the piece of writing was in fact probably composed during the reign of Senwosret I, does not detract from the nature of the work which Parkinson (1991:48) refers to as "The royal burden".

"Gather yourself against subjects...whose respect cannot be trusted; do not approach them when you are alone! Trust no brother; know no friend!" (Parkinson 1991:49). The work goes on to describe how an attack was made on the king's life while he slept, and it is generally believed that Amenemhet was assassinated, although his son Senwosret seems to have been able to keep the throne.[2] These are the thoughts of a human being, not a god/king (cf 6.4.2 Political power and aspirations).

A piece of writing believed to have emanated from the Herakleopolitan period deals with the fallibility of the king under the title "Teaching for Merikare" (Parkinson 1991:52). Such writings would have been unthinkable in the golden days of the Old Kingdom.

Pessimism was not confined to the monarch. Literature such as the "Lament of Ipur" (1991:60) and the "Dialogue of a Man with his Soul" (1991:132) tend to refute the image of prosperity and well-being projected in the tombs. On the other hand, these Middle Kingdom writings cast ordinary Egyptians in human situations we can well understand. Their security had largely gone and the future was problematical.

With the reinstallation of a king for both Upper and Lower Egypt, the power of the local nobles was slowly eroded. If status and fulfilled obligations, were to be the criterions for life after death, then the myth must be adapted and the responsibility to defend and justify himself must fall upon the tomb owner. The request in the tomb was no long merely for sustenance in the after-life, but confirmation or affirmation of the worthiness of the deceased by reason of his earthly deeds, to ensure entry into that life. It has been pointed out that in the Old Kingdom tombs, men had been including their status and aspirations in their inscriptions, in anticipation of preferment in the hereafter. The need in the period after the fall and reinstatement of the monarchy, was to proffer these attributes as articles of worth in order to enter into that realm of extended life.

15.3 THE OUTWARD VISIBLE SIGNS

15.3.1 THE ADAPTATION OF MURALS

The inward and invisible grace was difficult to convey. However, it was also not sufficient to constantly repeat the murals which had served in a different context and a different period.

If one looks at the agricultural scenes, detailing the various activities on the tomb owner's estate, which probably developed from a scene depicting the provision of necessary food, the image has subtly changed. What we have in these later tombs is the owner "seeing to" or supervising his estate, checking that the accounts are kept, that the animals multiply (copulation motifs), in other words we are being shown the outward signs of a man who has "done all things well". It may be argued that this is wishful thinking and that the tomb owner merely wants to recreate this in the after-life. How logical is it, however, to suppose that crippled herdsmen, probably famine victims, and tax defaulters being chastised, are required to be translated to that world to come? It is far more acceptable to interpret the crippled tribesmen as beneficiaries of the noble who has seen fit to give them employment, and the chastisement of the tax defaulters as confirmation of the fact that nothing is left undone in order to account for the royal taxes.

The workshop scenes are seen to be busy with men and women preparing for the demise of the owner, and the journeys to Busiris and Abydos have no relevance whatsoever in relation to the hereafter other than ensuring the right of the deceased to enter therein. In the 18th dynasty we see an extension of the boat journey translated into the hereafter but then the genre and treatment is totally different with the barque journeying through the underworld. The 12th dynasty tomb scenes showing the movement of the corpse, the funeral practices, the preparation of tomb furniture and linen, have no place at all in the hereafter. It is only when all these things have been done that the tomb becomes relevant. Even the manufacture of statues is pre-burial and only applicable to offerings after death which take place on earth. There would appear to be no need to hold offering services before statues in the afterlife. Re-birth does not envisage a

continuation of the birth-death cycle. Death is a contingency with which earthly man has to contend.

However, as a statement of affirmation, that everything that should have been done, has in fact been completed, then the murals make total sense. They then become the iconographic manifestation of the affirmation of merit found in the written tomb biographies and on stelae. The question arises, why was iconographic presentation necessary.

15.3.2 THE NEED FOR ICONOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION

As has been pointed out, literacy was at a premium. Even the great inscription in tomb 3 at Beni Hasan was completed at the cost of extremely poor work, such that some of it was almost unreadable. Time and again we find the same inscriptions and text repeated in the tombs, and texts introduced which do not relate to the images to which they are attached. The literacy of the tomb owner was always questionable and from the numbers of incorrect texts, one is justified in querying the ability of the majority of the tomb owners to read the work in their own tombs. In the case of tomb 3 Beni Hasan, we find part of a biographical text repeated in a context where it is not apparently applicable.[3]

This being the situation, for his affirmation of worth or merit, the tomb owner used the biographical texts largely for his titles, attributes and his service to the king, but for personal and individual situations which it would doubtless have been difficult to have described in textual form, he translated what he wanted to say by returning to iconography. Pictures could be understood by everyone. Nevertheless, while the intent behind the reality-activated, murals may have replaced the idealised concepts, they did not replace the familiar motifs incorporated in them. They are not necessarily biography and, as pointed out, the journeys to Abydos and Busiris, it is suspected, often did not take place. That the deceased did supervise the estate, in the interests of himself or the monarch, and that he may have made certain that the funeral activities were and would be carried out, is not beyond the bounds of possibility and these murals may be considered as reality in terms of what the tomb owner wishes to convey on his own behalf. Nevertheless, once the murals become stereotyped, one must look beyond these patterns if one is to find genuine biography.

15.4 BIOGRAPHY IN THE TOMBS AT MEIR, EL-BERSHA AND BENI HASAN

Biography can be determined on two levels, either as the lives of individual men or as a branch of literature (Fowler 1973). As literature one can discount the murals in the above tombs. As they reflect situations and incidents in the lives of the tomb owners, we are on more positive ground.

Scanty as is our knowledge about the end of the Old Kingdom and the developments of the early Middle Kingdom, most commentaries contain the information that some of the nomarchs

usurped the right to use the cartouche, with the suggestion that they had monarchial aspirations (Aldred 1987:127). In tombs A1 and A2 at Meir, father and son's names both appear in cartouches (*Figs 147, 149 150,151*). Their claim to monarchy, however, is questionable. While the hawk-topped *serekh* was associated directly with the king, the cartouche had no divine connotation and possibly became a royal prerogative as one of the attributes of the monarch. It appears to have stemmed from the *shen* sign (Gardiner 1957: V9), for which Wilkinson finds the meanings to be "eternity" and "protection" (1992:193).[4] At the time of the building of the above tombs, when the monarchy was losing or had lost its power, the cartouche may well have been used to signify the power and protection of the local lords over their own territory, of which they became virtual rulers. With the onset of a period of anarchy, when each man had to look to his own well-being, they appear to have usurped, or to have been compelled into taking, total local control, some of them proudly recording their care for their own people (Aldred 1987:121). However, this does not necessarily imply that they all shared an ambition to usurp the crowns of upper and lower Egypt. The Theban and Herakleopolitan groups each attempted to achieve this, and although the Thebans were the victors, it was only after protracted military operations. There is nothing in these tombs at Meir to suggest military activities, which would certainly have been essential had they really aspired to the double crown.

15.4.1 THE MEIR TOMBS

The tombs at Meir are essentially those of one particular family. Their tombs contain material which stresses their Cusae background and reflects, to a certain extent, the period in which they lived.

In 9.4 mention has been made of "personalised reality" as exemplified by *Fig 151* where Pepi'onkh (tomb A2) is shown being transported, possibly to "view" his cattle. It is quite clear that the emphasis is not only on *what* he is doing but *how* he is doing it. Transport by palanquin as elaborate as the one in the mural must surely indicate a very important personage indeed and this mural, quite apart from showing Pepi'onkh about his duties, also takes great care to emphasise the importance and status of the man. He sits on what was probably an ebony chair, as the lined drawing suggests, wearing a kilt the style of which was almost certainly restricted to a particular social class (Hall 1986:20). The whip of fox skins, is greatly enlarged. As pointed out previously, this is a mural in which Pepi'onkh's name appears in a cartouche.

The elaborate funeral processions in this tomb (*Figs 152, 152a*) spare no efforts to convey the detailed ceremonial arrangements accorded to Pepi'onkh. They are projected as the final guarantee to the great man's entry into his future life. There could be an idealised concept here, in that the ceremonies may be shown in far more elaborate detail than would actually have occurred, nevertheless, they are intended to convey an actual life-time ceremony not a wished-for happening in an idealised hereafter. They are also intended to apply personally to Pepi'onkh.

Pepi'onkh reflects something of the period when the country was in a parlous state and the local nobles were all-powerful. The rest of the tombs under review at Meir belong to a period when the 12th dynasty Theban kings had claimed and reinstated the united monarchy. They were endeavouring to established their own regime, and to recoup some of the country's losses from the anarchic and famine-stricken years. Meir tombs give an impression of an established local power structure in which one family, either in direct line, or through various inter-marriages, provided security not found to the same extent at Beni Hasan.

15.4.1(a) THE *HATHOR* TREND IN THE MEIR TOMBS

The focal point of the Meir overlordship appears to have been the temple of the great goddess *Hathor* at Cusae. While divinities are mentioned in both the el-Bersha and Beni Hasan tombs, neither group appears to have possessed a particularly important local cult, nor do they project devotion to any special divinity as do the Meir group. A temple such as that at Cusae, would have been a prosperous asset. The overlords of Cusae were priests and as such must have controlled the offerings, lands, and cattle accruing to the temple in addition to their own estates.

Priestly titles were held by the Beni Hasan overlords, but the tombs there in no way reflect the overpowering influence of the *Hathor* or any other cult as found at Meir. The presence of the temple, and the tomb building of the nomarchs may well have been the basis for the development of the art which emanated from Cusae. The existence and nature of the Cusite school is purely speculative but the distinctive art produced by these apparently local artists, is undeniable. This in itself introduced a personalised entity into the Meir tombs which in the main centred on the relationship between the priest/nomarchs and the *Hathor* cult. There is no attempt to introduce figures of *Hathor* into the tombs as was to happen in the 18th dynasty. Neither are the wives shown any great preference as priestesses of *Hathor*. The accent is quite clearly on the tomb owner and his relationship with the cult.

Tomb B1 Senbi, from the reign of Amenemhet I and B2 Ukh-hotp, from the reign of Amenemhet's son Senwosret I, have murals which are the epitome of Cusite art (11.2.3a) and the *Hathor* influence.

The upper part of the mural on the North wall of B1 (*Fig 183*) shows the *Hathor* ceremony, in which Senbi himself is included and to whom the large *menat* is being offered. There is a great difference here from the static walls where the tomb owner "sees" or "watches", immobile in the face of numerous activities. Here, in the placing of the man with the *menat*, we have no doubt that Senbi is participating in the ceremony. This ceremony has been discussed in 11.2.3(b). From the latter, it was seen that this was essentially a *Hathor* ceremony of gift-bestowal conducted during a person's lifetime. It is interesting to note that although female attendants of *Hathor* are present, male figures are prominent in the ceremony. *Hathor* herself is not depicted.

During the 18th dynasty *Hathor* did make her appearance in the underworld and was so depicted in the tombs from that time, usually as an accessory or assistant, often leading the deceased to *Osiris*. Her ceremony as depicted in Senbi's tomb was not represented. It has no place whatsoever in the hereafter, and we can only accept it as a form of affirmation of Senbi's right to eternal life. That he took part in such a ceremony, in his capacity as a *Hathor* priest is almost certain. In any case it is what he wants to convey.

One tends to associate biography with truth. This is not necessarily so. Biography, in the same manner as art, projects only that which the writer or artist wishes to convey as the truth. That modern biographies can differ markedly in projecting particular persons and their activities, whether true or not, in no way detracts from their definition as biographies.

Ukh-hotp in B2, as pointed out in 12.2.2, bore a name linked to *Hathor*. The sign *ukh* appears in a number of variants (*Fig 191*). He was also Superintendent of the Priests of the Mistress of Cusae. As can be seen from *Fig 192* the name of *Hathor* was augmented by various epithets which constituted titles.

Some of the most beautiful work of the Cusite craftsmen appears in this tomb. The scene from *Fig 193* incorporating Ukh-hotp's smiling wife, blind harpist and singer, Beja herdsmen, and at the bottom, although badly damaged, the very realistic portrayal of the papyrus gatherers. This scene has little in common with the canonically correct and conventional murals of the Old Kingdom tombs. The papyrus gatherers make an appearance again on the east end of the north wall. They are shown as fairly crude figures and the somewhat pathetic figure of the old man, no longer having any work to perform, endeavouring to be a part of the boat mooring process, is timeless. His aged legs are clearly indicated and the misshapen body speaks of age, not deprivation, as do the figures of the Beja tribesmen. This is certainly not an ideal or idealised society.

The artist was obviously a man who set great store by detail. In many of these tomb murals an assistant priest is shown with a cloth ready to remove all footprints before leaving the tomb. The picture showing the cloth has been reproduced *(Fig 195)* because the artist has taken great care to show just what it is. Much smaller cloths carried as personal towels are frequently shown; this cloth is plainly not intended for that purpose.

The very fine *Hathor* ceremony in this tomb accentuates the close association of all these Meir nomarchs with the cult at Cusae. The inclusion of the bulls and cow in this scene has been discussed in 12.2.3(d). In this mural Ukh-hotp already wears a very heavy *menat* necklace and it is the bread of *Hathor* that is being offered to him. He responds by holding up the traditional *Hathor* rattle, and there is no doubt at all of his participation. It is interesting to note the

somewhat simple rattles held by the male attendants in the upper register and the beautiful rattle, held by Ukh-hotp.

The tomb of yet another Ukh-hotp, B4, appears to have been decorated by an artist influenced by the royal rather than the Cusae school. Beautiful as the murals were, the influence of the established royal court resulted in the humanistic and natural work of the Cusite craftsmen giving way to finely executed but controlled paintings. Poor though the quality of the illustration is (*Fig 211*) the somewhat feint drawing of the hippos, while grouped in similar fashion to those in tomb B1 (*Fig 183b*), have been reduced to a faulty inanimate row. Also introduced into this tomb is some very fine decorative design (*Figs 212 and 212a*), around the entrance to the small chamber.

However, if the Cusae art was no longer extant, the inclination towards personal statement in a merger of hieroglyphs and iconography was achieved in probably the most personalised mural in all these Meir tombs. This is the list of Ukh-hotp's predecessors in the nomarchy, on the South wall (*Fig 213*). It makes no pretence to conform to any previous tomb mural, and stands out as (a) a record of Ukh-hotp's predecessors and (b) submission of Ukh-hotp's status and rights to the position of Great Chief or Nomarch. The relationships are questionable and the list cannot be checked since there are lacunae in essential portions, but the message is clear, and, bearing in mind the period and the uncertain tenure of the nomarchy at that time, the statement is highly relevant.

15.4.1(b) THE ZENITH OF THE *HATHOR* CULT IN THE MEIR TOMBS

The Ukh-hotpe of Tomb C1 possibly of the Senwosret III period may have been one of the last of the Nomarchs of the Meir tombs. His tomb which has been described in 14.3 was beautifully painted, possibly owed its decoration to an artist well-versed in royal structures, but shows a blatant disregard of convention, and projects a man essentially idiosyncratic, and prepared to express his personal preferences for all to see. The reason for usurpation of certain royal attributes is debatable, and some of the projections could be the work of the artist rather than the will of the owner, but in the absence of further information this cannot be determined. His eight titles show that in addition to being a prince, he was a Superintendent of Prophets, and held three other priestly titles directly associated with *Hathor*. His *Two Ladies* title is essentially royal, but Ukh-hotpe appears to have had such a penchant for the ladies that one is hesitant to relegate this to royal aspirations. His fecundity figures on *Figs 239* and *240*, have been discussed (14.3.3(c)). Unusual, and possibly with royal aspirations, as these may be, they fade into insignificance beside the fact that, with the exception of a few male figures associated with the funerary liturgy, all the attendants in the murals are female. Unfortunately the *Hathor* ceremonial scene is badly damaged (*Fig 244*) but even so it is sufficient to identify the nature of the mural. The other murals in which women perform tasks usually performed by men cannot

be explained other than to suggest that apart from his status and titles, Ukh-hotpe valued his priesthood in the service of *Hathor* above all other considerations, and that the offering and swamp scenes augment her celebrations. A biographer is not duty-bound to explain the activities of the personality about whom he writes. An auto-biographer may describe his own actions without giving a reason for them. They still remain biography. This whole association of Ukh-hotpe and the serving women and attendants, even to the extent of showing some of them clothed in male garments, stands completely outside the range of Old Kingdom and even 12th dynasty conventional tomb murals. These Meir tombs have been linked, apart from family relationships, in devotion to the Mistress of Cusae. They have included ceremonies in which the tomb owners participate, and it may be assumed they consider this service, and acceptance by *Hathor*, to be a part of their declaration of merit. That this last tomb goes even further beyond the *Hathor* worship of the others in no way detracts from that initial intent. Blackman details the colourful nature of the decorations in this and the other tombs (e.g. MEIR 6:24-26). The women wear extremely brightly coloured garments, bracelets and anklets, and their "busy" figures in the offering scene *(Fig 243)* speak of genuine activity. Whether this was the way Ukh-hotpe wished to be shown and remembered, or whether we are seeing a variation on *Hathor* worship, the personality of the deceased, who has elected to be buried surrounded by the female sex, is projected very strongly indeed. Such devotion to *Hathor* no matter what form it took, would undoubtedly be considered meritorious by the worshipper. Since in this case the tomb owner is a priest, these murals would seem to justify designation as biographical.

Meir exemplifies the rise of the power of the nomarchs, the development of the Cusae art, free from royal and priestly control for a short period, the importance accorded to the temple-worship of *Hathor*, the demonstration and participation in the *Hathor* ceremonies, and the all-important conformity with the myth of acceptance into life after death by reason of individual status and merit.

In these circumstances the *Hathor* material cannot just be considered an idiosyncrasy of a few men, but stands out as biography as a necessary adjunct to the conventional tomb murals, so far as the Meir princes were concerned. The fact that it is peculiar to Meir substantiates the biographical content even further.

15.5 EL-BERSHA

The ancestral family of Tehuti-hetep of tomb 2 can be traced back to the period of the 11th dynasty kings. The nobles of the Hare nome were powerful, their deity was *Thoth* and per-Tehuti, house of *Thoth*, their principal city, named by the Greeks Hermopolis. Their quarrying activities for alabaster at Het-nub were the source of great wealth and much of what is known of these overlords is from graffiti at the Het-nub quarries. There appears to have been a closer

royal relationship than is apparent in either Meir or Beni Hasan and this may well be due to the royal architects drawing their alabaster from the Het-nub quarries.

If any mural could identify with the power of these princes, the dragging of the colossus in tomb 2 leaves little to the imagination *(Figs 234, 234a, 234b)*. Quite apart from the technical details of such an undertaking and the text accompanying the mural which is unquestionably purpose made, we are left with no arguments that can possibly suggest this is anything other than an actual occurrence in the life of Tehuti-hetep. Newberry never queried it and the details are so well defined that, if there was no other piece of biographical iconography in any tomb, this would still have to be recognised as such (EB I:23-26). Arguments as to whether Tehuti-hetep aspired to being a king are irrelevant. The only question is whether this could be considered acceptable tomb material. There is no suggestion that the statue was intended for the tomb itself, the site of the latter being unreachable for such a large object. Newberry (EB I:21) refers to a place named Thereta, mentioned only once as the place to which the statue was being taken, and speculates whether it was near Tehuti-hetep's palace. Whether the king did approve the statue is not clear from the text. Even if he did, the fact that Tehuti-hetep was able to achieve the end result is a clear indication of the power wielded by the man and the command he had over the people needed to accomplish the task. While he ensures that the event will remain in the memory of those who assemble at the tomb for funeral rites, he supports his own achievement in relation to his responsibility towards the populace in general, by stressing their pleasure. A mural such as this can have no place in a tomb other than as a demonstration of status and power such as would entitle Tehuti-hetep to merit acceptance into eternity. This is not only iconographic biography, but it is biography which entirely concurs with the myth of affirmation of personal merit and as such is similar material to the *Hathor* ceremonies in the Meir tombs.

15.6 BENI HASAN

The Beni Hasan tombs epitomise the development of tomb-making during a difficult period through the re-establishment of the monarchy, and the diminution of the power of the local nobles. They are a small saga of the rise and fall of the lords of the 16th Oryx nome of upper Egypt during the 11th and 12th dynasties.

15.6.1 11TH DYNASTY TOMBS OF BENI HASAN

Baqt I (tomb 29), appears to have been a chief appointed in the 11th dynasty. The simplicity of this burial particularly in relation to the earlier A1 and A2 Meir tombs (10.2.2), is markedly obvious. Fairly poor or inexperienced construction, the stereotyped offering mural and simplified fishing and duck hunting scene on the North wall *(Fig 156)* suggests a dearth of labour and/or means to procure better labour in strong contrast to the Meir tombs. On the

south wall (*Fig 158*), a few wrestlers make their appearance. In general we find here numerous murals applicable to the meritorious administration of Baqt and his personal stature without concentration on any particular aspect or individual action or circumstance which could be considered biographical. It is the interim step of general merit without being specific iconographic biography.

Baqt III of tomb 15 (10.3.2), his ancestors unknown, is called a Great Chief, although there is no indication of how he acquired this title. There is a notable absence of priestly titles among these overlords of the Oryx nome, in strong contrast to those of Meir.

In 10.3.3 the exuberance of the highly decorated walls of tomb 15, with motif-packed murals has been discussed. Circumstances seem to have improved. perhaps the uncertainty of the early 11th dynasty has given way to greater stability, it is difficult to tell, but this tomb exhibits none of the parsimony of tomb 29 and the impression is one of some prosperity. Present too, is a sense of individuality, not necessarily influenced by the need for justification, but exemplified by the joyous animation of the girls at play and the delightful bird studies (*Figs 162, 162b, 163, 164*). To experience this tomb, even in its less than perfect state, is to feel the enthusiasm with which it was made. Even the bats, scourge of the rock tombs and temples to this day, are to be admired (*Fig 165*). The South wall with its detailed animals (*Figs 167, 167a, 167b*) is equally individual in approach.

Egyptian tombs can be extremely "dead" particularly those of the 18th dynasty where the figures are technically well produced, but the overpowering presence of the gods of the underworld tend to render all the murals lifeless. There can be little doubt that in tomb 15 we have retreated from the stereotyped motifs of the Old Kingdom, and entered into a world of actuality, equally as poignant as anything Meir can produce and in a totally different genre from the brash power-statement of Tehuti-hetep at el Bersha.

A local element is introduced by the mythical animals on the North wall (*Fig 162a*). A development of the Middle Kingdom, they are noticeably absent from Meir. The hierarchal priest/divinity relationship so evident in the adoration of *Hathor* may have kept such crudities out of the Meir tombs but this is not to suppose that they did not exist. What one can suggest is that the general tone of the Oryx nome overlords is somewhat simpler than the Meir group or the great lords of the Hare nome. The influence of the desert areas is not dominated by the alabaster quarries as at Het-nub, but by the vicissitudes of the terrain, the hunting, and wildlife. Although *Pakht*, traditional desert divinity of Beni Hasan does not appear in tomb 15, the primitive goddess *Heqt* is represented.

The motif of duties conscientiously pursued (*Figs 166, 166a*), is consistent with affirmation of merit and in this tomb is well emphasised. It reaches the height of its intent on the East wall (*Fig 168*) where the two hundred and more wrestlers are shown in juxtaposition to the military

undertaking in the bottom two registers, strong indication of military matters at Beni Hasan, and the suggestion that a troop of men was kept for that purpose. These have been discussed in 10.4 but the argument concerning the nature of the battle is irrelevant other than it shows an incident of sufficient importance to be included in the tomb. Textual work possibly being at a premium, there is no text accompanying the picture. We do know that the kings of the 11th and 12th dynasties fought to defend borders and to reclaim Nubian outposts (Aldred 1987:129-130) and assistance towards either operation would be considered of great merit.

This particular mural is completely apart from the "sustenance" tomb murals of the Old Kingdom. It can only be acceptable on the grounds of exhibiting an occurrence or situation in which the tomb owner was in some way involved and which he accounts to his merit. It is not yet biography because it does not define time, place or participants, but it is almost there. It is undoubtedly biographically orientated iconography.

The son of Baqt III, Khety of tomb 17, also a Great Chief, introduces the title of Captain (10.5.2). His tomb, however, is only a poor imitation of his father's. A personal idiosyncrasy, may be the rather strange hieroglyphs on the North wall *(Fig 177)* among which is the epithet "mayest thou love millions of groups of women", which brings to mind the C1 Meir tomb in which women figured so prominently.

The East wall which one might have associated with biographical description *(Fig 178)*, is patently copied from tomb 15. Nevertheless, in view of the fact that Khety is a captain of the host "in every difficult place" which sounds fairly legitimate, it would suggest that a military troop existed and that a certain amount of military service had been rendered. The work in this tomb being crude, it may well be that the artist was only capable of producing such a scene by copying it. However, if it merely indicates the presence in Beni Hasan of the troop of soldiers and their employment at some stage of Khety's career, copying the earlier mural would not have been at all untoward. Although it is not a newly introduced motif, as it is in tomb 15, it conforms to the category of a statement of personal worth or merit, particularly since the military title links Khety to the soldiers. It is not sufficiently defined to be categorised biography.

In discussing the South, or offering wall (*Fig 180)*, it was pointed out that various epithets such as "beloved of his townsmen, favoured of his country-people," are included in the list of titles below the frieze. That they are so included, and are not presented as odd texts, would suggest that this form of self-approbation was becoming or had become accepted as a part of the affirmation myth. It is similar to the statement by Tehuti-hetep of tomb 2 el-Bersha that he had pleased the populace (15.5).

15.6.2 12TH DYNASTY TOMBS OF BENI HASAN

15.6.2(a) THE TEXTUAL BIOGRAPHIES

With tomb 14 at Beni Hasan, we have the beginning of the textual biographies which are a prominent part of these 12th dynasty tombs, confirming their dates.

The previously discussed 11th dynasty tombs have given no indication as to the appointment of the tomb owners as Chief or Great Chief. The whole situation of local overlords must at one time have developed from a tribal situation, which although long lost, possibly left a tradition of a series of families whose forefathers had inhabited the same piece of land alongside the Nile for a considerable time. If the records in the tomb of Ukh-hotp B4 Meir (*Fig 213)* are only reasonably accurate, one can assume that in that area there had been a long line of acknowledged local rulers.

The Baqts of Beni Hasan provide no insight into their standing or appointment and possibly in the turbulent period at the end of the Old Kingdom and well into the 11th dynasty, Beni Hasan may have seen a succession of governors of indeterminate ancestry and dubious claim to their titles. Even the third Baqt (tomb 15) shows no family relationship to the other two[5] and it is only with the appointment of Khnemhotep I, of tomb 14 that we have confirmation of a royal appointment and a record of the stabilisation of a territory in disarray after the ravages of civil war.

Although the subject of this dissertation is iconography, it is not possible to ignore the biographical inscriptions in the Beni Hasan tombs, and paramount from the period of Amenemhet I, who appointed Khnemhotep as Great Chief of the Oryx nome, pride of such appointment takes precedence, alongside confirmation of family right of inheritance. Originally Khnemhotep I was appointed the *ḥa*-prince of Menat Khufu for services rendered to the king. His names appear in the usual fashion with the names of Amenemhet enclosed in cartouches. Unlike the tombs at Meir, in Beni Hasan the tombs do not contain the names of the tomb owners in cartouches.

At a time when tombs such as that of Senbi B1 at Meir could boast the very fine Cusae art and include *Hathor* ceremonies *(Fig 183)* Newberry found the paintings in tomb 14 boldly drawn, and reminiscent of the work in tomb 15. There is nothing whatever similar to the all pervading *Hathor* worship of the Meir tombs yet from the tombs such as 15, the Beni Hasan overlords introduced practical military murals and Khnemhotep I was no exception. Fragmentary as they are, the scenes of fighting men and foreigners (*Fig 189)* have survived to project a world completely outside the conventional offering, agricultural and workshop murals of the Old Kingdom. While they may not have the artistic integrity of Cusae art, the detailed and informative drawings of Beni Hasan project a vitality, shared by Cusae, that leaves little doubt that one is viewing reality. The Egyptians were not alone in the ancient world in being

historically unaware. Their creative talent was directed towards the present and the future. The past may have been recorded for example or substitutional purposes but not to provide historical records. The certainty is that their murals, whether stereotyped or inventive, were there to project a relevant message pertaining to their own contemporary society. The small excerpt from tomb 14 *(Fig 189)* may well represent the occasion on which Khnemhotep rendered service to the king. We cannot confirm this, but we can be sure that (a) it was relevant to Khnemhotep or it would not have been included, and (b) there is no possible way in which this scene can be associated with sustenance in the hereafter, nor can it possibly reflect an idealised future. Just as the textual biographical inscription records Khnemhotep's relationship with the king as a declaration of status, it would not be unreasonable to assign this to the same category. So much information has been lost due to the poor state of this tomb that one cannot say more than that it has all the indications of being iconography bordering on biographical narration.

15.6.2(b) THE GREAT CHIEFS OF BENI HASAN

Many of the nobles at Meir bore a name associated with *Hathor*. At el-Bersha, the owner of tomb 2 bore a variation of the name of the god *Thoth*, and at Beni Hasan Khnemhotep and his grandfather bore the name of the god *Khnum*. The kings of the 12th dynasty favoured the god *Amun* an old southern god, and incorporated his name in theirs. The owner of tomb 2 at Beni Hasan, Amenemhat, was the only one of the Beni Hasan nobles to bear the same name as that of the early 12th dynasty kings, Amenemhet I and II.

We do not know the direct succession to the title of Great Chief after the grandfather of Khnemhotep II. That family does not seem to have carried a title beyond the *ḥa*-prince of Menat Khufu. Amenemhat, who has no ancestral line, and proclaims no historical connection to Beni Hasan, appears to have been essentially a military leader, royally appointed. Although he names the king, and appears to set great value upon his royal appointment, he does not include the king's name in a cartouche, but neither does he use a cartouche for himself as did some of the Meir overlords.

Details of the tomb (2) and inscriptions have been given in 12.1-12.3.4. His was probably the most magnificent tomb at Beni Hasan. His attributes were many, he claimed to be literate, he usurped to himself royal attributes and dating and there can be little doubt that he projected himself as the most powerful of all the Beni Hasan nobles, his desire for "worth" being paramount (13.3.3(d)). He recounts the various expeditions in which he participated, and leaves little doubt as to the impression his tomb was meant to create. The wrestling and military scenes surrounding the door to the shrine, with the Abydos and Busiris journeys at the bottom of the two murals, is entirely in keeping with the supposition that the military operations for the king were of the utmost importance, and the funeral journeys at the bottom would be the final accolade of merit. Soldiers appear in attendance behind his figure on the North wall *(Fig 204)*.

The arrow making, could represent hunting but probably emphasises the military aspect of Amenemhat's overlordship.

The murals show that, in spite of their artwork which varies from excellent to fairly crude, they possess none of the beauty or exuberance of the Cusite art. The impression is of an artist working from the tradition of the royal school, producing conventional murals. The wrestling and fighting scene is becoming a set piece by this time, although, in view of Amenemhat's activities it cannot be denied that this is biographically based. The expeditions are not reproduced, but their textual recording is positive. An artist in the conventional tradition would probably not have been equipped to augment the iconography with texts. In spite of this, the overpowering sense of achievement and power comes across very strongly, although it does not elicit the same response as does the transport of the colossus of tomb 2 el-Bersha *(Fig 234)*. Perhaps this is due to the fact that while Amenemhat's power is proclaimed and could be largely hyperbolical, the colossus is visible and positive. There is no sense of Amenemhat being a caring local lord. His care is that he has done all things very well indeed. Not necessarily a usurper, since he claims to have been appointed, he had little compunction in raising "every valiant man of the Oryx nome" to accompany him on his expeditions and, assuming that he did undertake these himself, one is left wondering how well he administered the district and the areas of the eastern desert for which he was responsible. Officials represented in the tomb indicate a large administrative staff. The chastisement motifs which appear in tomb 15 Beni Hasan (*Fig 166a)*, have a counterpart here when Amenemhat says that "there were no arrears to me in any of his (the king's) offices" (13.3.3(d)).

There is no record of his son having succeeded him, nor of the installation of a Great Chief after his term of office. Perhaps the monarch considered military abilities and a penchant for raising large numbers of men were undesirable attributes.

This tomb, does not focus on any particular biographical incident for iconographic interpretation. Amenemhat's personal advancement under the king, the presence (in the mural) of military personnel, and his various expeditions, adequately recorded in text, call for no other confirmatory iconography. However, the tomb as a whole more than confirms the development and acceptance of the myth of personal responsibility.

15.6.2(c) KHNEMHOTEP II

With the appointment of Khnemhotep as *ḥa*-prince of Menat Khufu, the Oryx nome was once again governed by one of its local princes. His tomb ranks alongside that of Amenemhat (tomb 2) of Beni Hasan and Tehuti-hetep (tomb 2) of el-Bersha, having an imposing two-columned portico and a four-columned inner chamber. His names grace the former and his autobiography, the dado of the latter. Unlike Amenemhat he can record some of his ancestors and his intention in doing so is clear. In his extended biography of his grandfather, Khnemhotep I of tomb 14, he

substantiates his claim to the princedom through his mother, Khnemhotep's daughter. He is concerned for his father but does not cite him in relation to his own status since his father never achieved the title of Great Chief. Khnemhotep himself did not achieve the higher title either, and one would be insensitive indeed not to be keenly aware of the underlying tension in this tomb, where its owner, fiercely proud of his legitimate heritage, is striving to project this in spite of his family's apparent demotion. There is no suggestion that he sought to usurp royal prerogatives. He inserts the kings' names in cartouches, and makes no attempt to date according to his own term of office as did his predecessor in tomb 2. He is at once proud of his primogeniture and keenly aware of his royal appointments, even although the monarch failed to install him or his eldest son in the position which he undoubtedly thought should have been his.

At Meir in tomb B4, Ukh-hotp, whose tomb is of roughly the same period as Khnemhotep II, and whose security of tenure as one of a long line of great princes of Cusae appears to be without question, also saw fit to declare his legitimacy by means of an unprecedented genealogical mural *(Fig 213)*.

It is difficult to believe that this is entirely a coincidence. It could have been no secret that the king was tending to reduce the power of the nobles. In tomb 2 Beni Hasan, Amenemhat in his attributes speaks of "forwarding (travellers) up or down the river" (12.3.3). The potential danger of obstruction by one of these overlords cannot have escaped the monarchy. From the 11th dynasty, the newly-established monarchy had made use of any available troops both for border defence and reclamation of Nubian trade routes. This would have served to weaken the local potential power of the nobles and it would be understandable that the monarchy, once well established, would discourage the rebuilding of such power.

It is no surprise therefore to find that in Khnemhotep II's tomb there is no wrestlers/military mural. This is in great contrast to tomb 2 Beni Hasan where the provision of troops for the monarch is recorded in text and military attendants appear as Amenhemhet's retinue.

Conspicuous in tomb 3 is the concern of Khnemhotep for his family. His two wives are represented, the first wife having her own offering table. Tchat is frequently depicted as are her sons. Laudatory attributes and royal appointments of his sons are recorded. In none of the other tombs under review have such details been included, and one can see that Khnemhotep is endeavouring to maintain not only his own, but the status of his sons.

The practice of educating nobles' sons with the royal children does not necessarily imply a very close relationship with the king. It tended to take them away from home, they could be trained to serve in an administrative capacity and be swallowed up in the royal administration, negating the need to appoint them to their fathers' positions. This is what appears to have happened in the case of Khnemhotep's sons. That two at least were given royal commissions is recorded but they never, so far as we know, achieved their father's status. The tomb (4) of his son

Khnemhotep, next to that of his father, barely progressed beyond the portico with the name and birth recorded, before the work came to an end.

Khnemhotep II whether intentionally or not, would seem to have followed the example of Amenemhat of tomb 2, by including in his tomb, a large number of his administrative staff, attendants and servants, the majority of whom are noted by occupation and named. In 13.3.3(c) lines 1-13 of the great inscription, Khnemhotep makes particular reference to these officials having been chosen and elevated to their positions by himself. Does this reflect a return to local administrators after a possible situation where Amenemhat introduced his own alien staff when he took up his appointment of Great Chief? This is pure speculation but it would make sense of Khnemhotep's insistence on including all his followers and the comment that he had chosen them.

Khnemhotep II spared no efforts in the preparation of his tomb, but doubtless because of the length of time such a sepulchre would have taken to complete, the artistry varies and the textual work is in some parts fairly crude. Khnemhotep himself is shown participating in the fishing and hunting scenes, but is not projected as a leader of expeditions in the company of military personnel (tomb 2), or as the Meir overlords, priests in *Hathor's* ceremonies.

The goddess *Pakht* is recognised as a goddess worshipped at Beni Hasan, but not to the extent that *Hathor* was venerated at Cusae, and no ceremony associated with her is depicted in the tomb.

However, the inclusion of mythical figures, and worship of a desert goddess suggests a fairly primitive religious trend.

Models and fertility figures (*Fig 118*) and the nature of the coffin texts included in tombs of the period, suggest a simple crudity which negates the assumption of highly developed theological concepts, in spite of the elaborately decorated tombs of the nobles. Tomb art had developed in a reasonably sophisticated manner, even if the work was at times crudely executed, and the theological implications of the motifs, have tended to foster the supposition that the tomb owners themselves were theologically advanced. However, with literacy at a premium, a priesthood concerned with religious ritual as a profession, and a wide range of deities whose functions had, with time developed a variety of interpretations, there is no reason to suppose that the ancient Egyptian was in any way theologically mature. Response to the god-image, the myth of eternal life through *Osiris*, and the priestly-orientated conventions of burial, were undoubtedly understood and applied, but on a fairly simple level. Tomb murals in the Old Kingdom expressed, in a developing form, a means of avoiding permanent death by the provision of sustenance in the hereafter. In compliance with the assumed beliefs of the people, these

murals were translated into a formal mode of expression which negated almost entirely any personal identification.

In the early Middle Kingdom tombs, prior to the total ascendancy of the monarchy, we are privileged to glimpse something of the personalities of the tomb owners. In response to the myth of affirmation of worth, and when texts failed, they turned to iconography. The conventional murals of the Old Kingdom were gradually adapted to project the myth, to accord with the contemporary situation in which the great nobles of Egypt faced the diminution of their powers and their titles. When conventional murals were inadequate, we find the gradual introduction of murals of personal merit, outside the traditional frame.

Each, it would seem, introduced that facet of his own personality and/or life experience which he considered to be the most important or meritorious. In Meir, where the *Hathor* cult appears to have been the focal point of Cusae, the *Hathor* ceremonies are introduced but even these are not identical and are personalised by variation in the scenes of participation by the tomb owner.

In the early tombs of Beni Hasan, the movement towards positive biography was not yet complete but there is little doubt that the inclusion of wrestling and military scenes were as near as they were able to come to recording the participation of such nobles in the struggle for, and maintenance of power by the new monarchs. Details we do not have, but since they reflect so keenly the activities of the period we cannot deny the large measure of authenticity the murals carry.

In el-Bersha, although it has only been possible to discuss one tomb, the overwhelming mural of the transport of the colossus, leaves little doubt as to the importance Tehuti-hetep placed upon, not only the transport, but the erection of the statue itself.

Amenemhat of Beni Hasan who maintained he was able to read, ensured that none of his attributes would escape full textual acknowledgement. He includes the military mural theme without specification but accords it the prime site at the entrance to the shrine. He appears to be the outsider. He shows no previous affinity or connections to Beni Hasan and assuming this to be a royal appointment for services rendered and/or yet to be rendered, the need for self-presentation such as was felt by the local lords is not so pertinent. The fact that he goes to such lengths to textually proclaim his attributes, however, confirms that by this time, even the favour of the monarch no longer replaces the myth of personal responsibility. Khnemhotep conveyed his exalted position so well that he is, by reason of his tomb (there are no other records), a very great and important noble indeed. He probably was, although he was never granted the privilege of the Great Chief title. However, if one strips away the magnificence of the tomb itself, and endeavours to read between the lines of hyperbolic text, Khnemhotep is probably one of the saddest captains to have left his signature on Beni Hasan.

Taking into consideration the historical and social conditions of the period, one must recognise that in spite of the united monarchy, the times were far from ideal. Everything points to the first 12th dynasty king having been assassinated, while the hereditary nobles were being deprived of their powers. Men such as Khnemhotep, the Meir princes and the princes of the Hare nome would have been extraordinary indeed had they not been aware of the winds steadily blowing from the Delta where the new kings had settled at Itawy, not far from Memphis. The winds always had blown from the Delta. Usually they were a blessing. Now they were not only blowing the ships but blowing away the powers of the traditional provincial governors as well. At that stage the nobles could not have foreseen that their destruction would be accomplished. Each is presenting himself in as powerful and favourable light as possible. We would be asking the impossible to suppose that the *Hathor* blessings, and the erection of a colossus, would not have represented a measure of pride and self-aggrandisement, intended to show the greatness of the man not only to *Osiris* but to those who would enter the tombs to participate in the ceremonies. Most of the nobles specify the festivals that are to be celebrated in the tombs, Khnemhotep is no exception.

Imperceptibly the stereotyped idealised murals are making room for actuality murals, the personal extras which these great men wish to proclaim. Maybe they are over-extended. Perhaps the colossus was not so large, although that is unlikely, maybe there were fewer men employed, perhaps Amenemhat never did raise all those men for his expeditions and certainly it is impossible that he would have brought all of them back intact. But the basic biographic core is there.

Beni Hasan does not convey the impression that the Oryx nome was quite so important as its neighbours. The title of Great Chief appears to have been dropped at Beni Hasan while it still pertained at el-Bersha and possibly Meir. Each of the Great Chiefs of the latter were able to display their importance in no uncertain terms.

Khnemhotep was only able to include the visit of some foreigners by royal decree, as the highlight he wished to record for posterity *(Figs 225-227)*, because in the face of all the attributes and assertions that the monarch had appointed his sons and great preferment had been accorded his family, he received, with the foreigners, a communication from his king! *(Fig 226)*.

One is reminded of the famous letter of the child Pepi II who wrote to the explorer/trader, Harkhuf (c2350), in response to a letter written by the latter, reporting that he had acquired a dancing pigmy. The exuberant letter from the king with instructions for the safe delivery of the pigmy (Murray 1951:18, 19), was so important to Harkhuf that he had it engraved in his tomb at Aswan. One is also reminded of the foreigners included in the military scene in the tomb of Khnemhotep's grandfather (14) at Beni Hasan *(Fig 189)*.

Both elements appear in tomb 3, the royal communication and the arrival of the foreigners. The texts have been copied, one as part of the biography in Harkhuf's tomb, the other in its delivered hieratic form in the Khnemhotep mural. In the iconographic presentations, attention has been given to the foreigners' details such as clothes, hairstyles, and various other elements proclaiming their non-Egyptian origin.

Khnemhotep has included the incident on the wall on which he is shown participating in the hunt and viewing the animal husbandry on the estate. In the lower registers the animals are shown in thousands. If one considers the practicality of thousands of beasts kept on the narrow inundation-reliant fertile strips along the Nile, one can only conclude that originally such pictures originated from the Delta area, probably Memphis, where large herds would have been possible. The accent on an over abundance, would accord with duties performed well, and the special mission from the monarch would confirm the status of Khnemhotep.

While the arrival of the royal mission and the animal husbandry might at first seem to be incongruous appearing as they do in the same mural, if one accepts the reason for this particular wall, the affirmation of merit, then they automatically become compatible. On this premise the inclusion of actual biography is the final development in the presentation of the personal accolade.

15.7 ULTIMATE CONCLUSION

Egyptian tomb murals on the whole represent "idealised" art. Nevertheless, from the introduction of the marsh murals, we recognise that the contents in themselves are realistic. Unfortunately, the overall conformity in the tombs tends to conceal innovations and gradual changes which are not always readily obvious. It is understandable that with such a plethora of conventional tomb murals the few non-conformist murals encountered in the early Middle Kingdom rock tombs should be written off as the odd idiosyncrasy. With the exception of the colossus which speaks for itself, the intrusion of personalised motifs, often incorporated in conventional murals as the foreigners in the North wall of tomb 3 Beni Hasan, would scarcely seem to warrant importance. In fact it is proposed that these murals are the result of a gradually developing trend towards personal iconographic biography in the tombs of the period. Had they been allowed to continue they might have been an invaluable source of historical background to that period.

The unrestricted introduction of personal incidents in the lives of tomb owners would, in time, have weakened the hold of the priests on burial conventions. In the New Kingdom the priests introduced into the burial process, new concepts of the after-life, which we find reflected in the tomb murals and coffin texts. Personal responsibility acquired a new myth. The translation of *maat* the concept, to *maat* the personification, made visible as a divinity figure, accentuated the responsibility for keeping the equilibrium of the Egyptian universe. There is no moral

requirement, it is merely to ensure that no disruption of life occurs. *Maat* was then introduced into numbers of after-life situations. Gradually the responsibility for *maat* overshadows status in obtaining entry to the next world, and it is against the feather of *maat* that the human heart is finally weighed. The murals and coffin texts incorporating pictures of the judgement of the dead, and fearsome dangers to be met and overcome in the netherworld itself, negated the relevance of iconographic biography whose original intentions were not now of primary importance.

The profitable mass production of spells, extended and enlarged the distance between the living and the dead. The Middle Kingdom tombs did not accentuate this. There, the deceased passes from one realm to the other, one's deeds on earth justifying admittance to the nether world, while still in spiritual contact with the living. The extension and development of the magical spell, in addition to filling the coffers of the priests, transported the deceased into an unreal and alien world, where dangers, if the correct spells were not forthcoming, were overwhelming.[6]

The Middle Kingdom, with all its turbulence, and for all its crudity, comprised a much less apprehensive society in the matter of its after-life expectations, in comparison with the later morbid, and terrifying concepts of the trials and tribulations of eternity, encouraged by the priestly hierarchy.

The Middle Kingdom scribes, in the uninhibited recording of thoughts and feelings of the Middle Kingdom bring us for the first, and perhaps only time, into the presence of people we feel we can comprehend. They share our emotions and, in many cases, our reactions. The few early 12th dynasty tombs of which intact murals remain, also, in their efforts to confirm the worth of their owners, inadvertently opened to us some personal doors. The Beni Hasan complex exemplifies the movement towards, and culmination of biography in iconographic form, introduced into the tombs of the nobles of Beni Hasan, Meir and el-Bersha, during the early part of the 12th dynasty of the Middle Kingdom.

In assessing this biography we still see through a glass darkly, but what one can discern is material which we can understand and to which we can well relate.

Footnotes

[1] This suggests that estate murals had ceased or were ceasing to represent an anticipated life in the tomb or in a similar environment to that in everyday life.

[2] It was this assassination that was the basis for the Story of Sinuhe.

[3] The Great Inscription (13.3.3c).

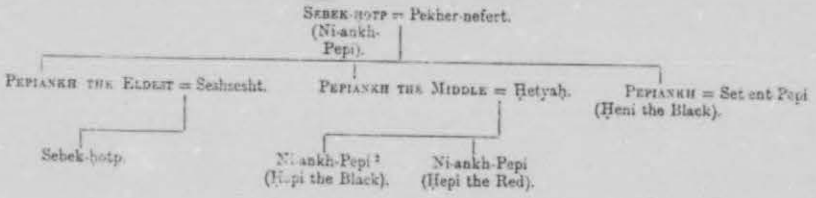
[4] Development of the *shen* shown in Appendix.

[5] Baqt I had a son Baqt II, but his tomb was not sufficiently preserved to warrant inclusion.

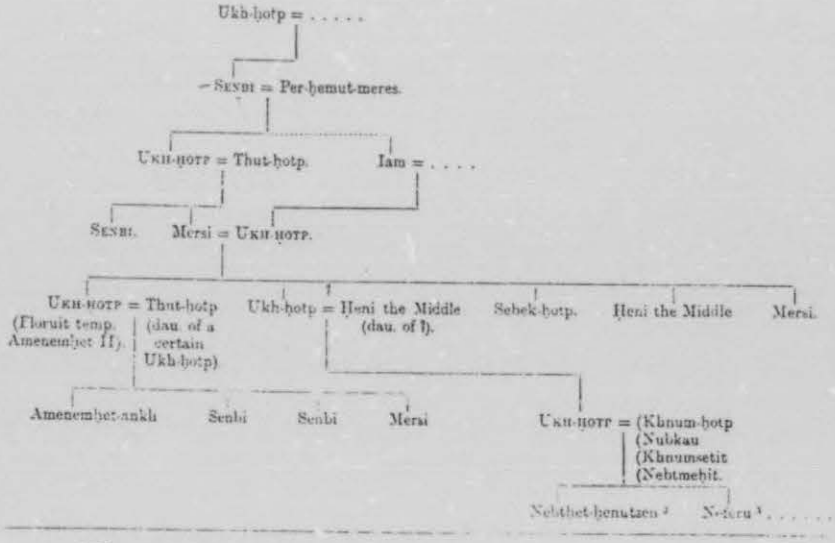
[6] Faulkner (1993) gives many spells with titles such as "spell to become a goose" (spell 95), "spell for escaping from the catcher of fish" (spell 153b), "spell for being transformed into a snake" (spell 87) etc. in addition to many enabling the deceased to pass through the various gates en route to the eternal heaven.

APPENDIX

GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE PRINCES OF CUSAE IN THE VI DYNASTY AT MEIR



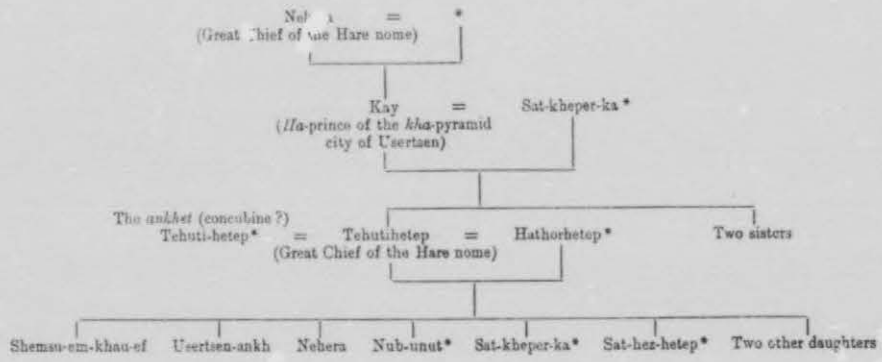
GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE PRINCES OF CUSAE IN THE XIITH DYNASTY AT MEIR



[1] The names of nomarchs are in capital letters.
[2] Perhaps a nomarch and the owner (see pp. 10 and 11) of A, No. 41.
[3] A daughter.

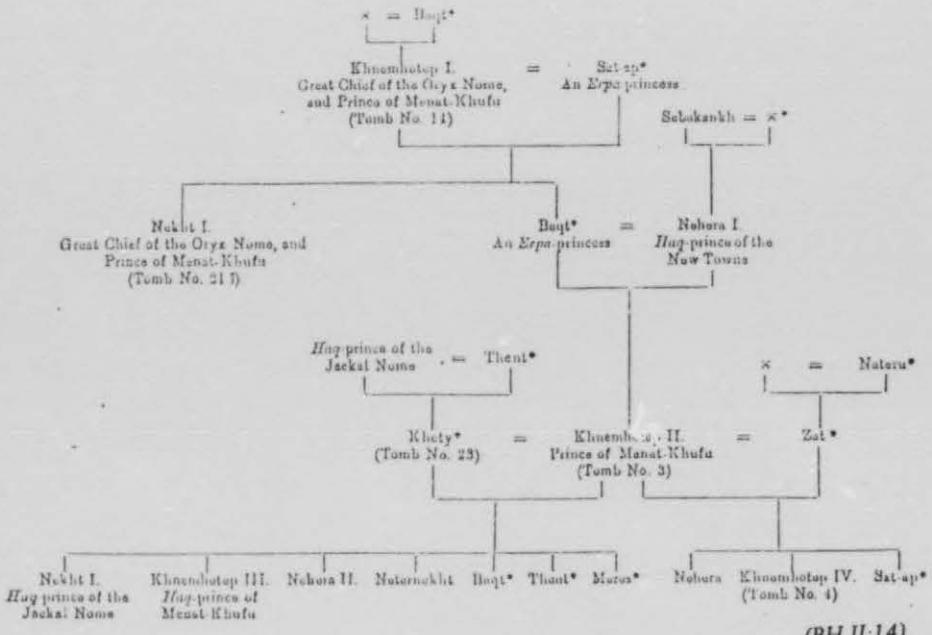
(MEIR I:13)

GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE FAMILY OF TEHUTI-HETEP AT EL-BERSHA



(EB I:8)

GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE FAMILY OF KHNEMHOTEP I AND II AT BENI HASAN



(BH II:14)

THE ART OF CUSAE FROM TOMBS B 1 AND B2 MEIR
(MEIR II Pls XIX, XX)

1 Beja herdsman

2 Beja man

3 Beja herdsman

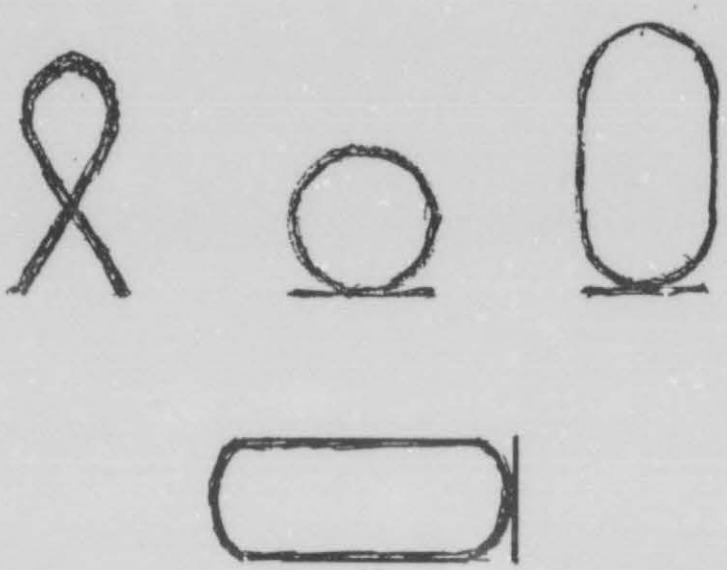
1 Sleeping herdsman

2 Face of blind harpist

4 Deformed Beja herdsman.

3 Herdsman delivering cow

The development from the shen to the cartouche



EXCURSUS I: CHOICE OF TOMBS

In selecting the tombs discussed in this dissertation, the main objective was kept to the fore, i.e. biography presented in an iconographic form *in tombs belonging to a particular social class, at a certain stage in the historical and religious development of Ancient Egypt*. In fact, the societal considerations, historical period and religious considerations, might well have been placed first, since the combined interaction of these is, it is proposed, directly responsible for the appearance of the iconographic biography in the tombs.

In comparison with the numbers of Old and New Kingdom tombs which have been excavated, the tombs of the nobles of the 11th and 12th dynasties are relatively few in number, and in the main, badly damaged. Even so, it was considered advisable, bearing in mind the fluctuating fortunes of the various communities over the large area from Aswan to the Delta during the anarchic period and beyond, to endeavour to include only those groups which by reason of their geographical proximity would seem to have shared a common historical past and to be sufficiently alike to bear comparison. Such tombs at Meir, el-Bersha and Beni Hasan, adjoining nomes of Middle Egypt, together with *fairly comprehensive original reports on their excavation*, appeared to fulfil these requirements and to be the most likely groups for such a study. Several can be positively dated from the names of kings recorded in them, others, although undated, can be approximately placed by reason of contents and/or family relationships.

Rock tombs such as these, are frequently found adjacent to or part of an area open for quarrying. The resultant destruction at Meir and el-Bersha bears witness to the damage caused by these operations, and by treasure seekers, prior to the days of fairly organised archaeology.

The Meir tombs consist of a long chain of cemeteries which form the necropolis of the ancient city of Cusae. The site of the latter is no longer known. Meir itself, a village from which the tombs now take their name, lies some 40 to 50 kms to the north of Asyut. The tombs occupy the lower desert, and much of a steep rocky slope which terminates on the high desert plateau. There are five cemeteries containing tombs of nomarchs, their wealthy retainers and graves of ordinary citizens.

The el-Bersha group of tombs contain 10 inscribed tombs, of which the tomb of Tehuti-hetep (2) discussed in this dissertation is considered to be by far the finest and most interesting. The occupant, was a prince of the nome of Hermopolis, whose main city, Khemenu was some distance from the west bank of the Nile, and a considerable way from its necropolis on the east bank, on the north side of a rocky valley in the hills. The age of the tomb is positive, as indicated by the cartouches of three kings, and the biographical entity is contained in the large mural of the transportation of a statue. The whole area has sustained massive damage due to an

earthquake which took place in ancient times. Quarrying again took its toll and the road to the tombs is not easy of access.

The tombs of Beni Hasan, are situated within easy sight of the Nile and open to the tourist. Similar to those selected at Meir, they are part of a large necropolis, which once served the inhabitants of Menat Khufu, in the Oryx nome of Ancient Egypt. Of the many tombs Newberry specifically recorded 39. They stretch along a ridge in the escarpment facing the river and are accessible, the climb being fairly easy, if steep.

The quality of the artistic-work in the tombs has not been the focus of discussion. In each case the period and presence of personalised material, or biography, outside the framework of the artistic canon, has been the determining factor.

EXCURSUS III: DO THE WRESTLER SCENES CONSTITUTE A SEPARATE THEME?

The themes detailed in the tombs were largely compiled from works on the Old Kingdom, in particular that of Harpur (1987) and were *all canonical*.

It may be thought that the detailed embalmment, burial scenes and Hathor ceremonies at Meir, the statue-dragging from el Bersha, together with the wrestlers, which appear in some private tombs from the 11th and 12th dynasty, should have been included in the list of themes. These were not listed, however, because they were *outside the canon* and their particular interest was to be found in just this fact. The scenes of Hathor ceremonies which appear in the Meir tombs show every sign of being of individual concern to the lords of Cusae but neither the Hathor ceremonies nor the wrestlers survived to become canonical. The funeral scenes, in some part, frequently appeared from early times, but always in registers containing a range of other material, usually the visits to Abusir and Abydos. The large individual scenes such as those at Meir do not seem to have been repeated. In fact most of our knowledge of the funeral/embalmment processions comes entirely from the latter.

In the 18th dynasty themes such as the weighing of the heart, the opening of the mouth ceremony and numerous underworld scenes incorporating journeys to the hereafter in the company of gods and goddesses did develop and seem to have become canonical. The themes as quoted and discussed in this dissertation, however, were from the early dynastic tombs which, although somewhat extended and embellished during the Old Kingdom, remained canonically restricted until the 11th and 12th dynasties when the unorthodox and biographical material made its appearance. It is against the backdrop of the old canonical murals that one sets the unorthodox murals when identifying the intent behind their inclusion.

It could be argued that the appearance of the Hathor ceremonies and wrestlers, since they appeared more than once, should be included in the theme category. However these must of necessity remain outside such listing, primarily because they are *individually orientated* and not applicable to all or any tomb, such as were the offering, fishing, fowling and workshop scenes. The statue-dragging scene in el-Bersha is perhaps the closest one can come to a canonical theme. Certainly in many workshop scenes, a statue in a naos appears, either in the process of manufacture or being dragged in procession. These motifs, however, are never shown independently but are always part of a composite selection of motifs within a particular register. In the el-Bersha tomb of Tehuti-hetep, the personalised nature of the statue-dragging mural and the accompanying text is unique and cannot be placed in a list of *canonical themes* normally open to regular reproduction.

The wrestlers, which appear in such quantity (220 sets of figures) on the walls of tombs 15 and 17 Beni Hasan, are to be found in a variety of private tombs *of this period*. The Beni Hasan murals, while not unique in subject matter, are, so far as our knowledge is concerned, unique in their quantity and display. From the period of Nebhepetre Mentuhotpe (2061-2010) wrestling and war scenes appear in non-royal tombs. One of the earliest, that of General Intef, has wrestlers on the side of a pillar alongside scenes of marsh pursuits, harpooning, fowling, and offering bearers. On another pillar, but with no apparent connection to the wrestlers, scenes depict a variety of warfare pursuits with Egyptian fighters supported by Nubian archers. The opponents appear to be Asiatics. In one of the registers in which the Egyptian victors lead off captives, the dominating figure of Intef himself is shown armed with bow and arrows apparently engaged in the battle. Gaballa (1970:38-40), says this is the first example of a non-royal leader participating in such an operation. He discusses these scenes in some detail, and includes the war scenes in tombs 15, 17, 14 and 2 at Beni Hasan. He comments that in the main the four scenes are almost identical with the wrestlers above and besieged fortress on the left. That this war mural was becoming a usual feature may be assumed from the fact that a definite style of fort drawing, showing elevation is used, as opposed to those in the Old Kingdom where a basic plan sufficed.

While the Intef murals definitely show an Asiatic/Egyptian confrontation, in the scenes in Beni Hasan, with the exception of the Libyans in tomb 14, the opponents are all Egyptian. In the absence of captions or text Gaballa suggests the depiction of events in the war between North and South in the middle years of the 11th Dynasty, or possibly different battles between the nomarchs of the Oryx and other nomes. He remarks upon the "localism" in these scenes and suggests they show little vigour in comparison with the Intef murals, and says "In fact, the fighters at Beni Hasan are seen almost as if they are playing: - as if the events they are performing are a mere extension of the play of the wrestlers in the registers above" (1970:40).

He links the wrestlers to the military images and in general these figures are seen as potential fighters, either at play or engaged in wrestling as a fitness exercise. The Nubians, who appear as allies in some of the war-murals, however, do not take part in any of the wrestling activities at Beni Hasan, neither are the wrestling scenes projected as being tests of skill between serious opponents. They almost appear to be a series of movements to exhibit the positions and skills of the wrestlers.

It is not proposed that wrestling was a science developed at Beni Hasan. It was well-known in Egypt, particularly to the South of the country (Upper Egypt) and even into Nubia. Whether the skills acquired by the Egyptians stem from the latter cannot be defined but there is no positive indication of this in the tombs under review. The owners of the tombs in which the wrestlers appear give no indication of their intent other than, in the large scenes, grouping them above the war scenes. That the sport was prevalent among young fighters is not to be doubted

but beyond that it is difficult to go. Certainly had the artist, or tomb owner wished to convey some connection with the Nubians or Nubia there would have been a positive way of doing so. The Egyptians favoured symbolism in a variety of forms, particularly hieroglyphic. However, none of these wrestlers can be associated with a determinative glyph. Canonical tomb murals incorporate hieroglyphic signs within the movements of people and the presentation of objects, but there is no canonical representation within the wrestlers so far as can be ascertained. In addition to glyphs, the headdress or clothing was a certain indication of identification in Egyptian art. Nubians are easily identified by their distinctive hairstyle and dress but this is not present in the wrestling scenes at Beni Hasan.

The fact that tomb 17, although of poorer quality in execution, has major portions of identical murals to those in tomb 15, may have historical significance but would suggest that a particular "school" or group of artists worked at Beni Hasan and as the Egyptians frequently did, they indulged in unrestrained copying. If one considers the autobiographical text in tomb 14, it is clear that portions of it are copied in the autobiographical text of tomb 3, although the situations it describes are not applicable.

In tomb 2 at Beni Hasan, the owner being essentially a military leader, figures of both soldiers and wrestlers are shown but there is little or nothing to suggest an involvement with Nubia other than recording various expeditions for the king. The records of Amenemhat's expeditions detailed in the text, do not, however, enlarge upon the wrestling scenes and the scenes themselves can offer little more information than we already have.

That the tomb owners may have fought or supplied men to fight for the king in Nubia is quite possible. Certainly the inclusion of fighting scenes on these walls appears to be there to proclaim the *successful involvement of the tomb owner in some such activities* but in the absence of positive identification or text, one can only assign these motifs as biographical background, not sufficiently positive to be classed as pure biography.

There seems to be no clearly presented reason, to suppose that the wrestling scenes played a particular role such as providing a close connection between the tomb owners and Nubia, although possibly an in-depth study would prove to be rewarding. Unfortunately it is outside the scope of this dissertation.

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