The Metropolitan Museum of Art has on display in its Egyptian galleries 365 colored facsimiles of ancient Egyptian wall paintings that were copied mostly from tombs during the first third of this century by the Graphic Section of its Egyptian Expedition. As the last surviving member of the Expedition and as one who made many of those copies, I have been invited to write about them from the standpoint of my personal knowledge and experience. It is my intention to recount here why and how we copied the original paintings, what we discovered in the process about the Egyptian artist's methods and materials, and what his pictures tell us so vividly and in such detail about everyday life in the civilization that flourished along the Nile 4,000 years ago. I therefore leave to others such matters as the analyzing of stylistic differences in Egyptian art by dynastic periods.

I joined the Egyptian Expedition of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1920, working in and among the desert foothills and tomb-riddled cliffs of the Theban necropolis on the west bank of the Nile opposite Luxor (see maps, pages 52-53). This was two years before the famous discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun at Thebes by Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon. Carnarvon's concession to excavate in the Valley of the Kings and ours in the Asasif valley, leading to the temples at Deir el Bahri, were adjacent to one another, and the close working relationship between the two expeditions is well known. While I was not personally involved, as were some members of our staff, in assisting within that tomb, there is no denying that I was caught up in the excitement generated by its discovery.

The Museum's Curator of Egyptian art in those days was Albert M. Lythgoe, who, in 1906, had created the department and inaugurated the expedition to Egypt (Figure

CHARLES K. WILKINSON

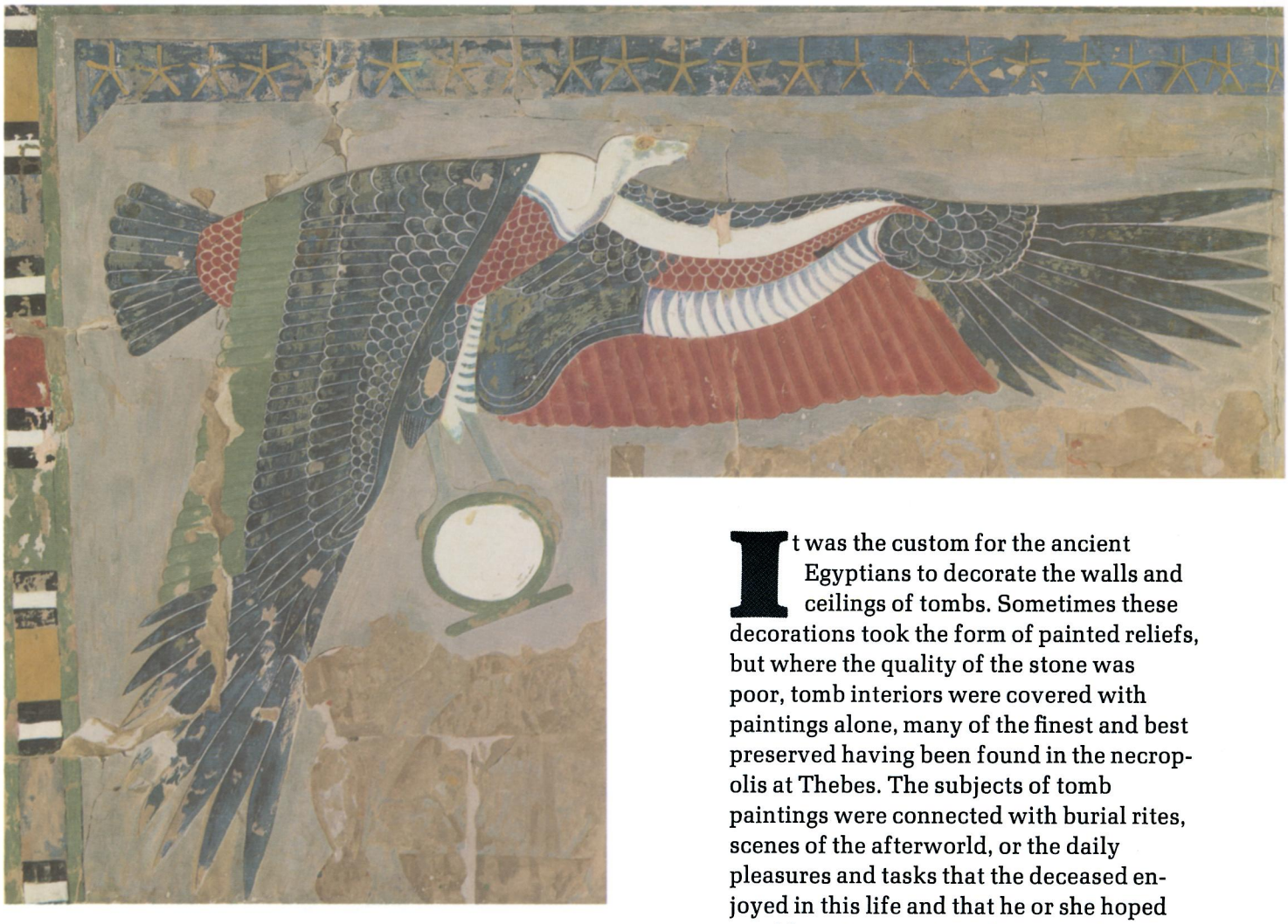
EGYPTIAN WALL PAINTINGS:

The Metropolitan Museum's Collection of Facsimiles

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Bulletin

Spring 1979



The vulture goddess Nekhbet, patron deity of Upper Egypt and a protectress of the king, holding the *shen* sign of eternity. Here, the majestic bird is painted in vivid hues for decorative purposes; its true colors are black and white. About 1490 B.C. Anubis Chapel, Temple of Hatshepsut, Deir el Bahri. 30.4.138

Cover: The sun god Ra in the form of a cat raises a knife to cut off the head of the serpent Apophis, god of darkness and chaos. About 1300 B.C. This detail is from a painting in the tomb of Sennedjem (see Figure 16)

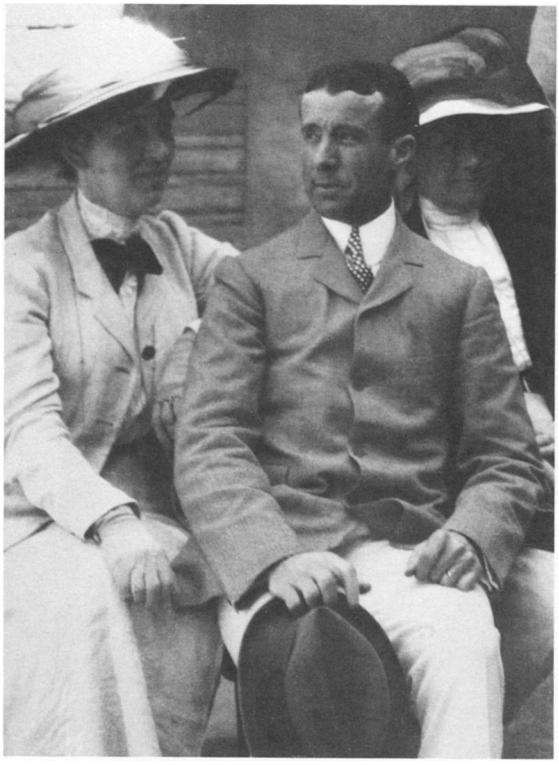
It was the custom for the ancient Egyptians to decorate the walls and ceilings of tombs. Sometimes these decorations took the form of painted reliefs, but where the quality of the stone was poor, tomb interiors were covered with paintings alone, many of the finest and best preserved having been found in the necropolis at Thebes. The subjects of tomb paintings were connected with burial rites, scenes of the afterworld, or the daily pleasures and tasks that the deceased enjoyed in this life and that he or she hoped would continue on into the next. Thus they include a great variety of activities—domestic duties, agricultural pursuits, hunting, fishing, sports—and even humorous vignettes. Based on extraordinary observation and sensitive in detail, these pictures have provided invaluable insights into Egyptian life and have supplied critical information concerning the use or purpose of an excavated utensil or tool. Because an archive of illustrations of the paintings would naturally complement our Egyptian collections, and because it was evident, as early as the beginning of this century, that deterioration and vandalism were inevitable, the Metropolitan Museum decided to undertake a program to copy these and other remaining examples, including some of quite a different character, in Coptic churches, tombs, and monasteries.

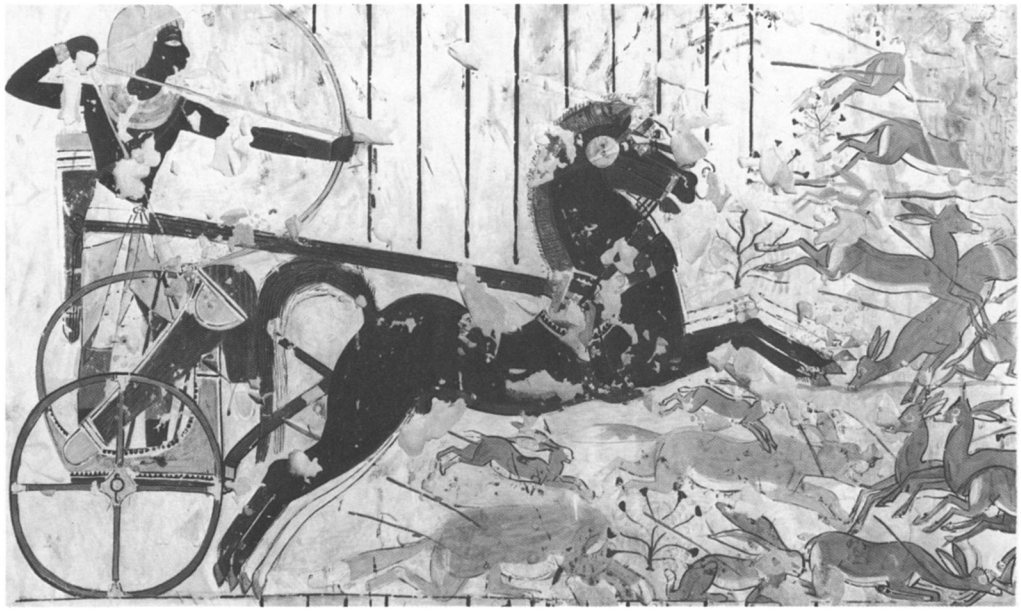
2). Arthur C. Mace, a distinguished English archaeologist, was his senior assistant. After beginning at Lisht and in the Kharga Oasis, Lythgoe sought a third exploration site. In 1910 the Museum was granted a concession at Thebes, and Herbert E. Winlock, once a student of Lythgoe's at Harvard, became the field director. Heading the Graphic Section there was Norman de Garis Davies, the man responsible for my joining the Expedition. It was the task of the Graphic Section to record and copy Egyptian wall paintings, the great majority of which are in tombs of the Theban necropolis.

In 1920, when Davies needed a new assistant skilled in the fine arts, he inquired at the Slade School, University College, London, whence he had previously obtained assistants and where his wife, Nina, had studied. I had just finished my training there, and Henry Tonks, the renowned director of the school at that time, recommended me to Davies. Tonks thought he could help both parties. He knew I needed a job, that active service in World War I had left me none too strong physically, and he felt that the climate of Egypt during the winter seasons, when expeditions are in the field, would benefit my health. Davies, in turn, would be getting a fully qualified assistant experienced in painting in tem-

1 Geese from the tomb of Itet at Meidum. This early masterpiece of Egyptian painting, executed on fine plaster covering a brick wall, dates from about 2600 B.C. The original is now in the Cairo Museum. 31.6.8

2 Albert M. Lythgoe and his wife, Lucy, photographed at the Kharga Oasis in 1908. Two years earlier, Lythgoe became the Museum's first Curator of Egyptian art, and organized its Egyptian Expedition





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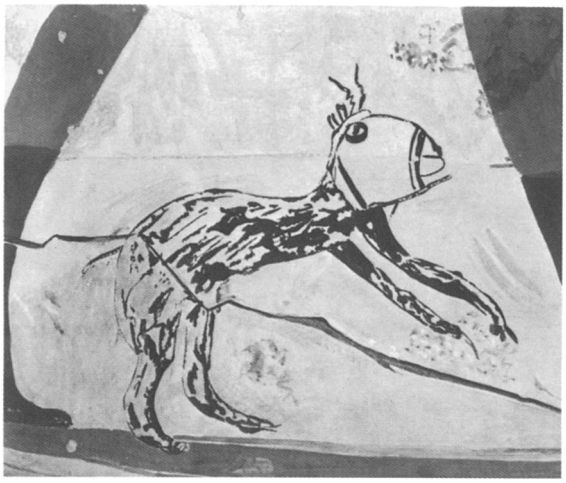
3, 4 Userhat, a royal scribe, hunts gazelles, hares, and other desert animals from a chariot drawn by two horses, one red, one white. Chariots and horses were not used in Egypt until about 1700 B.C., when they were probably introduced by invaders known as the Hyksos. This scene dates from about 1450 B.C. At the right is a Coptic monk's version of the red horse, painted some two millennia later on the same wall. Tomb of Userhat (T 56), Sheikh abd el Qurna. 30.4.42, 222

pera, an accomplishment that was essential to the job. It was the beginning of my professional association of twelve years with Davies in Egypt and of a friendship brought to a close only by his death in 1941. The Metropolitan Museum's collection of copies of Egyptian wall paintings by Davies and his associates is unexcelled in size and quality because of his unflagging enthusiasm and high standards, and should be considered in large part his achievement.

One might wonder why the Museum, in its golden age of discovering and acquiring ancient Egyptian objects, was also committed to making copies of wall paintings. The individual responsible for that policy was Lythgoe, a man whose modesty concealed rare administrative ability and a passion for thoroughness. Lythgoe was a staunch advocate of the scientific approach to field archaeology as initiated by Sir Flinders Petrie: a systematic, accurate recording of all finds in excavations, for what might seem at first to be of no intrinsic value could yield information of enormous significance after further examination and study. Lythgoe was also deeply influenced by a perceptive statement by the philologist F. Llewellyn Griffith that, for a fraction of the cost of an excavation, a great deal about Egypt's past could be learned by accurately copying wall inscriptions in tombs that were already accessible. Lythgoe expanded upon Griffith's idea to include all mural paintings, inscribed or not, and by the winter of 1907/08, during the second season of the Expedition's field work, he had created the Graphic Section under the leadership of Davies to make facsimile copies. Photography was also used to record the tomb interiors, but it is to be remembered that this was still the age of black-and-white prints made from fragile glass plates. Furthermore, even if color film had existed, its transparent, transient qualities would not have met Lythgoe's standards. What Lythgoe wanted were permanent, accurate copies of the originals, exact in line, color, and, when possible, in full scale, for study and exhibition at the Museum and for publication.

Both Lythgoe and Davies were only too well aware that since ancient times wall paintings had been subject to vandalism, some of it perpetrated by the Egyptians themselves. During the reign of Amenhotpe IV, who took the name of Akhenaton and attempted to establish the supremacy of the god Aten, his followers entered the tombs and systematically deleted parts of inscriptions and sometimes even whole figures, such as those of the *setem* priests (see Figure 30). Again, when his successor Tutankhamun ascended the throne, and the god



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Amun was restored to his primary place among Egyptian deities, more deletions were made. Still other disfigurements and effacements were the result of political rivalries, whether royal or not.

With the advent of Christian monasticism in the third century of our era, further damage ensued when the monks took over funerary temples and tombs for monasteries. Deir el Bahri, for example, meaning "the northern monastery," is the Arabic name for Queen Hatshepsut's temple, built against and into the cliffs at the end of the Asasif valley, where in the nineteenth century the ruins of a Coptic structure stood in its uppermost courtyard. The monks used the tombs in the surrounding area for living quarters and for meditation, and when they found things in the wall paintings they considered evil or tempting, such as female figures, they often scratched them out. Sometimes they defaced the walls with little sketches, as happened in the tomb of Userhat. Among the ancient Egyptian paintings in this tomb is one in which a pair of fine horses is depicted with great verve and spirit (Figure 3). Some two millennia later a monk tried his hand at copying the principal horse on the same wall in the chamber (Figure 4), an effort that Davies aptly described as a very triumph of failure.

For centuries, too—even into my time—many tombs were occupied by the local people, who lived in them very cozily with their animals (Figure 5). Their fires, usually made close to the walls, affected the colors of the paintings seriously, the smoke imparting a yellowish cast to cool bluish gray backgrounds, and the heat turning blues and greens to a slaty gray. Only in a few tombs—for example, that of Minnakht—do the colors appear to have survived undiminished (Figure 6). The people also did some deliberate damage to the paintings, including knocking out eyes to avert evil, but on the whole the abuse they inflicted stemmed from an attitude of indifference.

5 Forecourt of the Theban tomb of Neferhotep (T 49) as it looked in 1920, when the tomb was inhabited by a family with a cow, eight sheep, four goats, a dog, a cat, and poultry. Over the years many of the painted tombs have been protected from intruders by gates installed by the Egyptian Antiquities Service

6 Funeral ceremony in a temple garden for Minnakht, overseer of granaries. His catafalque is being transported across a pool to steps leading up to the temple. The pylons and walls of the temple are seen from above, while the entrances are at right angles to them, as if lying down. Cakes and breads are piled between the trees, and jars of beer and wine are shaded by greenery. The original painting, although much damaged, is among the few with exceptionally well preserved colors. About 1475 B.C. Tomb of Minnakht (T 87), Sheikh abd el Qurna. 30.4.56

The most serious damage to the paintings was effected in an entirely different way. After Napoleon's campaign in Egypt in 1798/99, the attention of the Western world was focused on this ancient land, attracting to it throughout most of the nineteenth century both the best and the worst of visitors. In Egypt one could satisfy either an intellectual thirst for knowledge of an older civilization or a lust for material riches.

The abundance of antiquities aroused predatory instincts to a very high degree, and a surge of interest in Egyptian paintings gave rise to an unscrupulous traffic in pieces hacked from the walls. Great chunks were carried away, and many paintings were irretrievably ruined in the process. By the beginning of this century thefts had become so numerous and damage so severe that the director general of the Egyptian Antiquities Service, Sir Gaston Maspero, authorized Howard Carter, then his chief inspector in Upper Egypt, to install gates with iron bars at Theban tomb entrances and to employ guards. (In addition, wire netting was stretched over the gates to keep bats from living in the tombs.) The project was pursued vigorously by Carter's successor as chief inspector, Arthur Weigall, who sought the assistance of the gifted Egyptologist Alan Gardiner. This security system was a major step in curbing the nefarious trade in pieces of wall paintings, although such trade has never entirely ceased.

Among the commendable travelers attracted to Egypt in the early nineteenth century, two who recorded Egyptian wall paintings before so many were vandalized and whose careful drawings and notes were of value to our endeavors were Sir John Gardner Wilkinson and Robert Hay—and while I am no relation to Sir John, I am honored to have helped in a minor way to further his pioneering efforts. From 1821 to 1833, almost a century before our Expedition arrived, Wilkinson lived in the Theban hillsides, clearing and examining accessible tombs. He was the first to undertake the methodical and accurate copying of tomb paintings with a view to understanding Egyptian life. Hundreds of his line drawings and a few plates in color illustrate his crowning achievement, *The Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* (1837–1841). Wilkinson's meticulous copies, together with his notebooks, were exhibited in 1978 by the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University, and although they are too small to be considered facsimiles, their significance as reliable, irreplaceable source material has finally been given due public recognition.

Hay traveled in Egypt and Nubia, sometimes with other artists, between 1828 and

1838, and produced an excellent book, *Illustrations in Cairo* (1840). Much of his work, however, including his drawings of Theban tomb paintings, has not been published and is in the manuscript collections of The British Library, London. Although Hay made tracings in a day when artists had to devise their own form of tracing paper, his drawings are of a quality that has never been surpassed. They were used by Davies and at times by myself to restore in our copies missing parts of the original paintings that had been cut out of the walls during the century after Hay recorded them.

When I arrived at Thebes in 1920, the *modus operandi* of the Graphic Section was well established. Davies was assisted by one copyist who worked full time for the Museum, a job I held for the next twelve years. My chief predecessors were Francis Unwin, Norman Hardy, and Hugh Hopgood. Davies's wife, Nina, was also an assistant. A copyist of great facility, she devoted half her time to making facsimiles for the Metropolitan Museum and half to making facsimiles for private collectors, primarily Alan Gardiner. It was largely through Gardiner's munificence that a selection of her copies may be found today in museums and art institutions other than the Metropolitan.

Of English-Scottish heritage, Nina de Garis Davies (née Cummings) was born in Greece but educated in England, and met her husband-to-be while visiting friends in Alexandria. They were married in 1907, the year Davies was retained by the Metropolitan, and they settled into a house in the Asasif valley on the fringe of the necropolis, a short distance from where the Museum subsequently built its staff house and headquarters (Figure 7). Nina de Garis Davies's professional dedication to the copying of Egyptian paintings began at that time. I worked with her frequently and remember her as a very pleasant associate and an extremely conscientious individual. She was so conscientious that if occasional luncheon guests unwittingly threatened to disrupt her schedule, she would politely excuse herself by saying, "I am sorry, but I must go to my tomb now." And go she did.

Norman de Garis Davies's role was more comprehensive, encompassing both the copying and the interpreting of Egyptian paintings, a task for which he was eminently well suited (Figure 8). The son of a clergyman, he was educated at Glasgow and Marburg universities, and became for a brief period a practicing clergyman himself. But his interest in Egyptology was such that by 1898 he was an assistant to Petrie in the field, and by the turn of this century was fully launched on his life's work of recording and analyzing Egyptian paintings as one means of broadening our knowledge of the civilization that produced them. He was thus the true successor to Sir John Gardner Wilkinson.

Endowed with much intellectual curiosity, Davies considered no project routine. As a result of his vast experience as a copyist, he was able to reconstruct figures in badly damaged scenes with a high probability of accuracy. Although not by nature a patient man, he tackled each project with dogged determination, offset by a droll sense of humor. This last trait he occasionally found in the work of Egyptian artists, and such discoveries so refreshed him that his commentaries on Egyptian paintings, many of which appeared in the *Bulletin,* are as delightful to read as they are informative. He did not confine his work for the Museum to paintings at Thebes, but labored intermittently for years at the Kharga Oasis, where I often joined him, and he was always willing to make the trek, or else send an assistant, to almost any location in Egypt to copy a painting that he considered essential to the Museum's collection.

8 Norman de Garis Davies, left, and Harry Burton in 1919 at Thebes. Davies, a scholar, copyist, and interpreter of Egyptian paintings, headed the Graphic Section of the Egyptian Expedition for thirty years. Burton was responsible for all of its photography

7 View from Sheikh abd el Qurna in the Theban necropolis about 1925, looking east to the Nile valley. At the left is the house where the Davieses lived. The domed building in the middle distance is the Metropolitan Museum House. The valley in front of the house, extending along the base of the hills rising to the north, is the Asasif, which continues westward to the temples of Hatshepsut and Mentuhotpe (see map, page 53)

Davies had considerable knowledge of the ancient Egyptian language, enabling him to treat picture and hieroglyphic inscription as a whole, in accordance with the original Egyptian practice. Much of the information he so expertly gleaned and analyzed is to be found in the texts of several volumes of facsimile copies to which he and his associates contributed, notably the Metropolitan Museum's splendid Robb de Peyster Tytus Memorial series (1917–1927). While his colored facsimiles are less numerous than those by his wife, he was no mean copyist himself and did well in capturing the appear-

ance of solid surface, although in speed and in attaining exact character of line it was she who excelled.

The photographic record of tomb and temple interiors was made by Harry Burton, another English member of the Museum's Expedition (see Figure 8). Best known today as the official photographer of the tomb of Tutankhamun, Burton contributed significantly to our work both before and after he was lent to Carter and Carnarvon in their hour of triumph. His black-and-white photographs of wall paintings *in situ* were always detailed, free from distortion, and remarkable for evenness of lighting.

Burton was the most amiable of men and considerate of others even under stress. Once at dinner during a Christmas season when he and two other Expedition members were on a difficult assignment, they were served plum pudding ablaze with kerosene because there was no brandy in the camp; it was Burton who ate the pudding so as not to hurt the feelings of the Egyptian cook.

Although fifty years have brought many changes to Thebes (through excavation and restoration), the general topography and geological conditions remain the same. From the west bank of the Nile one passes

9 This scene probably represents twice-widowed Henunefret mourning before the mummies of her husbands, the sculptors Nebamun and Ipuki, during final rites in front of their tomb. The men died at different times, but the artist, with true economy, shows the rites for both in one picture. Henunefret as a young girl caresses the feet of Ipuki; as an older woman, casting dust upon her head, she bewails Nebamun. About 1380 B.C. Tomb of Nebamun and Ipuki (T 181), El Khokha. 30.4.108

through densely cultivated fields of sugar cane and cotton in the river valley to the desert beyond, where low foothills blend into high cliffs of weathered limestone. The funerary temples are mostly along the edge of the desert near the cultivation or slightly farther back against the cliffs of the Asasif, where they could be reached conveniently for religious ceremonies. The necropolis stretches for some three miles among the foothills and along these cliffs. Its tombs are man-made caves hewn into the limestone or the greenish shale beneath, so that the whole area is honeycombed with holes and depressions between mounds of stone chips excavated by the ancient Egyptians and newer piles made by modern diggers (see Figure 7). By night, half a century ago, the necropolis looked for all the world like the lunar landscapes we have only recently come to know, except for the presence of a myriad of whirling bats, whose wings, when seen against a full moon, gleamed like silver.

The well-to-do Egyptian conceived of the afterworld as a place where he would continue to enjoy the same privileges he had known on earth, and during his lifetime he helped to prepare for this happy state by investing in a private tomb and seeing to its decoration as a reflection of his earthly environment. Egyptian tombs were originally far more imposing than they are today, their entrances now so often in ruins or their limestone fronts turned yellowish brown after thousands of years of exposure to the sun. The tombs—and the temples as well—were once bright with white paint and lively with color, as we know from the wall paintings themselves. The more pretentious tombs were sometimes adorned with

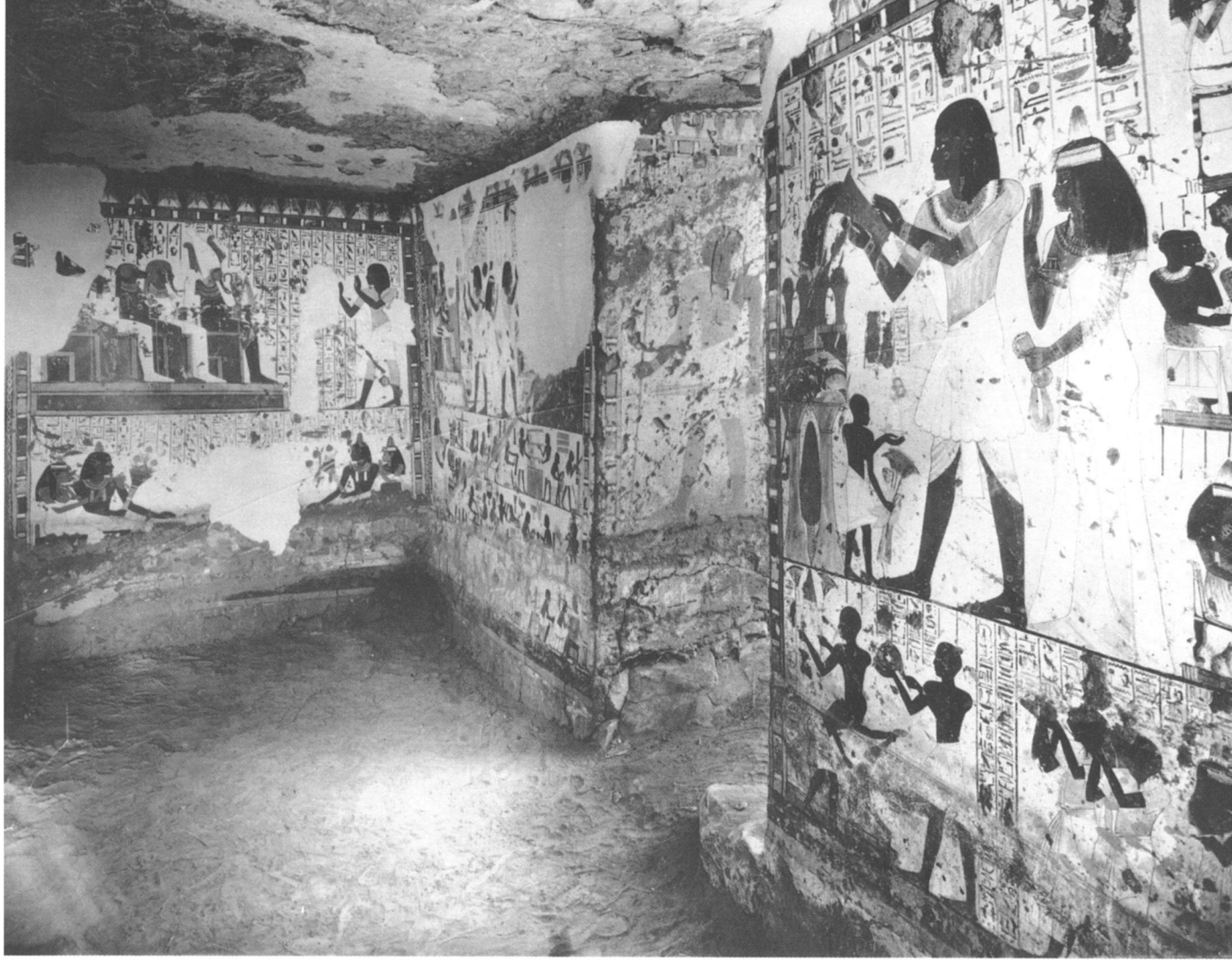
10 Rows of terra-cotta cones set in mortar above the ruined entrance to a Theban tomb, as discovered in an excavation by the Museum. The base ends of the cones are stamped with names of the deceased. In the painting at the left, they are shown as a frieze of pink circles on the white façade of the tomb

painted sculptured figures of the deceased (Figure 11), while others, whose original appearance can be determined only from paintings, had a simple frieze of pink circles above the door (Figure 9). Excavations by the Museum confirmed that such circles were the base ends of terra-cotta cones impressed with the names of the deceased, and that the cones were inset in horizontal rows above tomb entrances (Figure 10). By our century there were cones scattered all over the necropolis, and Davies made a sizable collection of them; today the Museum owns 350. They seem to have been peculiar to Thebes and form a veritable "Who's Who" of the perished ancient city.

11 Façade of the tomb of Paser (T 106), dating from about 1300 B.C. Paser was governor of Thebes and vizier. There are nine niches with statues of the deceased, and three with representations of Osiris, god of the afterworld and eternal life. The dry wall above is modern

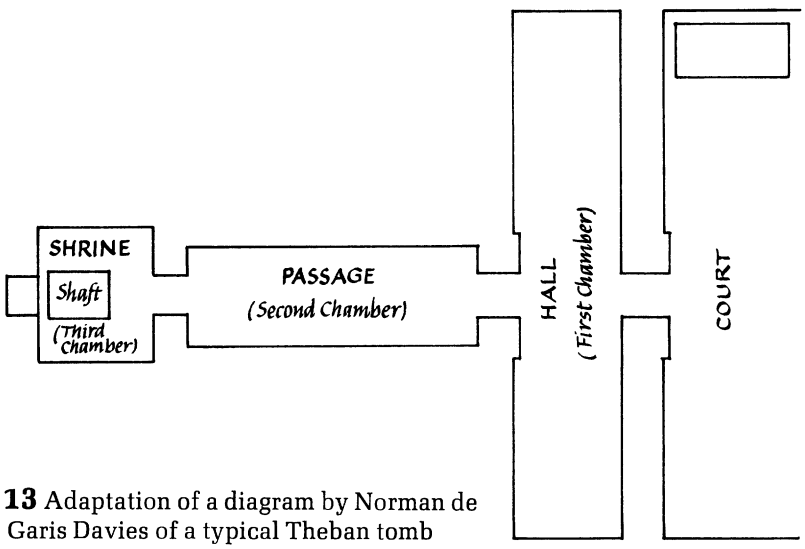
The tombs vary tremendously in plan and size, depending upon the affluence and status of their respective owners. The standard Theban tomb, however, has an open forecourt made by cutting back the rock slope of a hillside to form a more or less vertical façade (Figure 11). The entrance in the center of the façade was cut straight into the rock to a distance of three or more feet. Directly beyond this, on the same level, the stonecutters hewed out two narrow chambers, the first parallel to the façade (Figure 12), and the second at right angles to it and in line with the main entrance. Often a third chamber was added. A shaft was then sunk from the last chamber, and a burial vault made. The vault and the shaft were left undecorated, while the chambers above were adorned with wall paintings.

Tomb interiors are very dark except near the entrance, and some chambers are in total darkness. Obviously, both the Egyptian artist and the copyist needed some form of



12 First chamber in the tomb of Nebamun and Ipuki (T 181). In plan and size it is typical of many Theban tombs. The doorway at right leads to the forecourt. At the upper left on the far wall are Osiris and the gods of burial (see Figure 14)

supplementary light by which to work. The usual way we succeeded in getting enough light for copying was by reflecting sunlight into the tomb with the help of a large mirror or two. A workman outside the entrance adjusted the principal mirror in accordance with the sun's position, throwing a beam of light into the interior (Figure 15). To reach out-of-the-way places, the beam would be directed onto another large mirror within. A supplementary silver-papered reflector was sometimes used to diffuse the light. For very remote places, such as the deepest chamber in the tomb of Sennedjem, as many



13 Adaptation of a diagram by Norman de Garis Davies of a typical Theban tomb

14

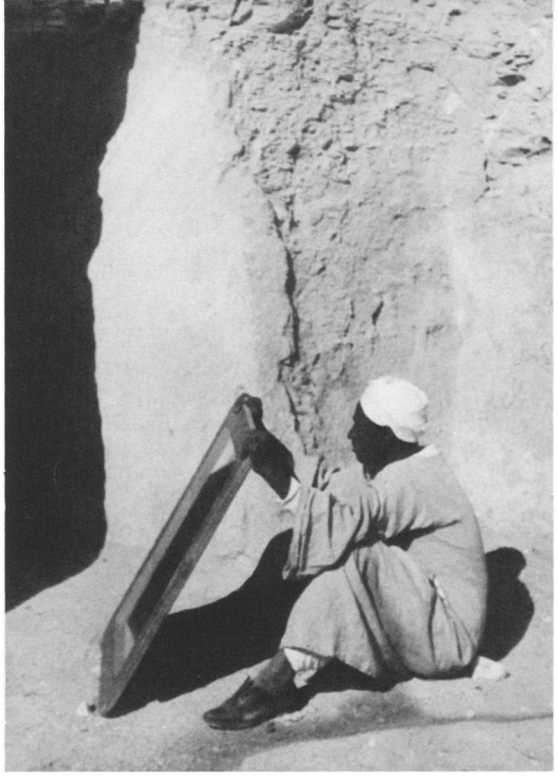
as three reflectors were used (Figure 16). So dependent were we upon reflected sunlight that any breakdown in the system, whether caused by man or nature, made for disgruntled copyists. Once, however, on emerging from "my tomb" (we were all, like Nina de Garis Davies, very possessive of the tombs in which we worked) to see what was interfering with the light, I discovered the sun was almost totally obscured by the wings of hundreds of storks flying in slow circles as they paused on their migration between Europe and the Sudan, and the beauty of the sight more than compensated for my initial annoyance.

The Egyptian artist did not use mirrors. Those of his time were small, made of metal, and were mainly for toilet purposes. Egyp-

14 The god Osiris (right), symbol of eternal life, with three of the four guardian gods of burial: human-headed Imseti, ape-headed Hapi, and hawk-headed Kebehsenuef. The green coloring of Osiris reveals his original role as a god of vegetation. About 1380 B.C. Tomb of Nebamun and Ipuki (T 181), El Khokha. 30.4.157

15 Workman reflecting light into a tomb with a mirror. To reach the darkest and most out-of-the-way places, the beam would be directed to another mirror within. Supplementary silver-papered boards were sometimes used to diffuse the light

16 This painting of the cat as a deity (see cover) adorns a doorjamb of the subterranean burial chamber in the tomb of Sennedjem. To obtain enough light to make the facsimile copy, three reflectors were required. About 1300 B.C. Tomb of Sennedjem (T 1), Deir el Medina. 30.4.1



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tian oil lamps, on the other hand, although tiny and inefficient by our standards and giving no more light than a candle, were available to him, and I am convinced that these were all he required to illuminate a dark tomb chamber. It must be remembered that only in the last hundred years have we demanded more and more light by which to live and work. Readers familiar solely with strong electric light may find it hard to imagine, but I assure you that one can become used to doing even detailed work with very little light, especially when young, as those of us who recall the oil lamps and candles of our childhood well know. I unintentionally put this theory to a test in the tomb of Khety, where the painting I was assigned to copy was in a badly deteriorating chamber so oriented and constructed that reflected light could not reach it (Figure 17). I tried using a pressure lamp, but it exploded, so, in desperation, I finished the project by candlelight. My colored facsimile stood up to comparison when checked in daylight against a small section of the original painting that had fallen from the wall and been removed for inspection.

Comparison is necessary to determine the accuracy of a facsimile; it also points up the basic differences between the objectives and requirements of the copyist and the Egyptian artist. Under normal circumstances, the copyist needs more light because he is trying to match every tint and tone, and even texture of an existing paint-

ing. The Egyptian artist was not trying to match anything, or to make such fine distinctions as the copyist. He was conveying a message by picture and description, and the objectives of later artists, such as, for example, visual realism, were alien to him. He had a story to tell and knew how to tell it in a simple, direct, and efficient manner.

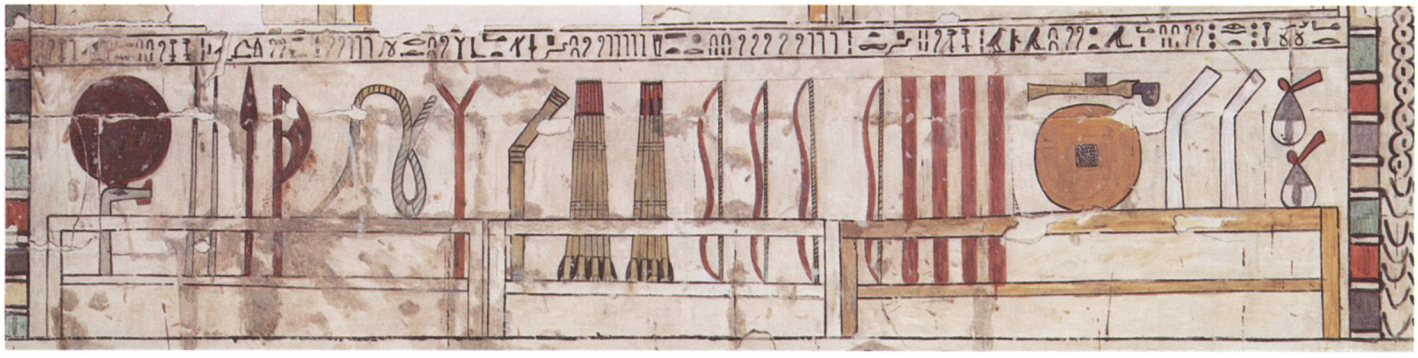
Interestingly enough, when the paintings were in darkness, we preferred to use candles as our source of illumination for tracing, which was the first step in copying. Yellow candlelight was more penetrating than the white beam of a flashlight and did not reflect off the tracing paper we overlaid on the wall. Once we had completed our outlines, we used graphite paper to transfer them onto watercolor or cotton-backed paper for painting. When inked, and then usually reduced photographically, the tracings were also made into black-and-white plates for publication.

Egyptian paints have a mat, opaque finish that early copyists failed to duplicate because they worked in pure watercolor, which is essentially transparent. Davies's first assistant, Unwin, who during the season of 1908/09 helped to copy one chamber of the tomb of Nakht in its entirety, made a contribution of the utmost importance: he demonstrated that tempera had the surface quality and delicacy needed for a true facsimile. Thereafter tempera was

the medium used for the Museum's copies. Indeed, if one took the time and trouble, it was possible to capture with tempera the feel and texture of the original paint, as well as the color and line. All copies were compared with the originals for accuracy by eyes other than those of the copyist.

The Egyptian artist's range of pigments was limited but adequate for his needs. His principal colors were earth colors: red and yellow ochers, both readily available, the red ocher in a variety of tones—that from the Kharga Oasis, for example, being almost purple. Another yellow was derived from orpiment, a sulfide of arsenic. This was applied over intense white and produced a far brighter yellow than ocher. White was primarily gypsum. Carbon, in the form of soot, served for black, but was not very satisfactory, sometimes disappearing and leaving a pinkish stain. Davies deduced that a very dark brown was sometimes achieved by painting black over dark red, producing a rather patchy effect.

Blue and green were of a different nature altogether, the blue being an artificial frit composed of silica, copper, and calcium that was finely ground. For wall painting green was usually made by adding yellow to the blue frit, although the use of ground malachite was not unknown to the Egyptians. Blue and green frits, because of their glassy, granular characteristics, required more binder than earth pigments to hold them to the wall, and it is mainly for this reason that age has not treated them well. Frits are also more subject to general and localized changes in tone than earth colors. If exposed to damp, as occasionally happened, both blue and green take on a rusty cast.



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17 Photograph of a chamber in the tomb of the chancellor Khety (T 311), taken in 1922. The excavated burial vault is beneath. The walls of the chamber are shale faced with limestone blocks. As no reflected light could reach this area, a pressure lamp was used. When the lamp exploded, the paintings were copied by candlelight

18 Detail depicting some of the possessions Khety considered necessary to his eternal well-being: a mirror; spears, a battle-ax, bows, arrows, and other weapons; an incense burner and a round bowl to hold the incense pellets; two rolls of linen; two bags of eye makeup. About 2050 B.C. Tomb of Khety (T 311), Deir el Bahri. 48.105.35

Pigments were painted one upon the other after the first had dried. All colors were applied flat with only rare exceptions, such as the heightening of red on a lady's cheek, an innovation that was not introduced until about 1300 B.C.

For wall painting the Egyptian had no need of the conventional palette used by most modern artists, as he kept his colors in separate bowls. His brushes, each reserved for a single color, were made not of animal hair but of rush, the fibers being suitably

treated and shaped. But the Egyptian artist was capable of drawing fine, even lines, as the full-scale facsimile copies clearly prove. Some of his brushes were bundles of fibers suitable only for stippling, a technique employed in the occasional dappling of red on the upper part of the white linen garments worn by ladies of high rank. An indispensable item was a cord dipped in red pigment; the artist could make a long straight line by pulling it taut and snapping it against the wall, as we know from the splatters that he did not always bother to clean away.

Where the limestone was of sufficiently good quality, as in the tomb of Puemra, flaws were filled with plaster and the wall scenes carved in low relief. The paint was applied onto the stone, presumably after it had been sized. More generally, the limestone was of a less satisfactory quality and the shale even worse, so that a complete plaster surface was prepared and primed. In some tombs the finished plaster was often smoothed over a preliminary layer of mud mixed with chopped straw. At times the priming was only a little thicker than a coat of paint. While this procedure worked well in those areas of the Theban necropolis high in the foothills and cliffs, the use of chopped straw led to disastrous results near the cultivation where the termite (white ant) flourishes, a condition found at, among other places, Tell el Amarna.

In 1925, the Egypt Exploration Society uncovered a small chamber in the north palace of Akhenaton at Tell el Amarna that was exquisitely decorated with a scene of birds flying about in a papyrus swamp (Figure 19). Collapse, rain, and termites had all contributed to the serious deterioration of the wall surface, and the paint remained only as a thin, cracked skin covering cavities made by the termites.

Since the society's architect-artist had sickened and died, immediate assistance was needed. I was sent on a rescue mission after promising Lythgoe, whose concern for members of his staff was always paramount, that to avoid infection I would live in a tent and not in the society's house. My work in the chamber, tracing what was left of the scenes, was a perilous task, so fragile was the surface of the walls. It had to be done with the lightest touch I could muster, and took a full week. The tracings were the basis for colored copies made by the Davieses, and although damp had dulled the green color, it is only from the facsimiles that we can get even a faint idea of the beauty of the original paintings. Attempts

19 Detail (right) of a facsimile copy of a now destroyed mural painting in the north palace of Akhenaton at Tell el Amarna. The scene depicts birds in a papyrus swamp. Here, a kingfisher dives for prey. Floating in the water are lotus blossoms, and flowering plants dot the black-mud edges. The rectangles represent wall niches. About 1360 B.C. 30.4.136

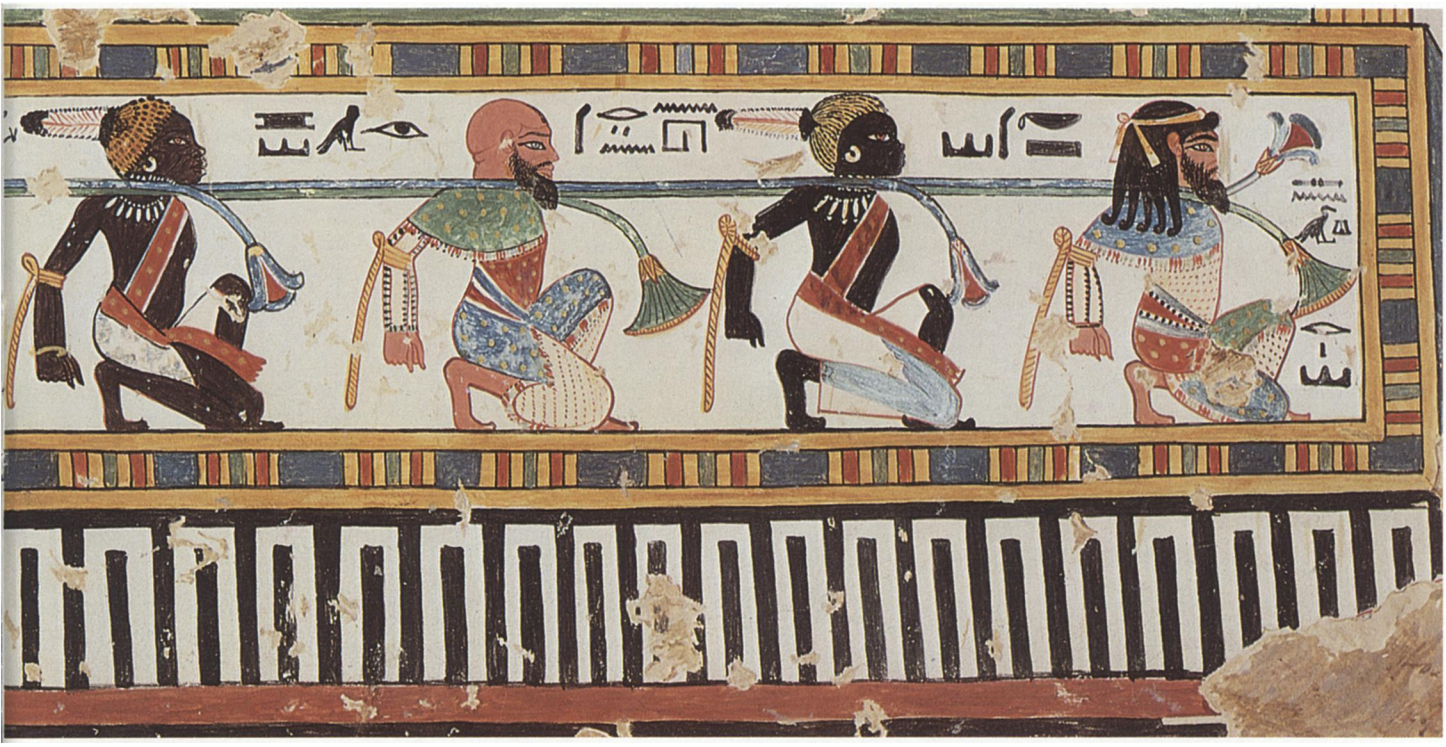
In a later painting at the left naturalistic palm trees appear against a yellow background. Detail from a picture in the tomb of Sennedjem (see Figure 64)

by the society to salvage some small sections might best be described as unfortunate, as the only piece to arrive safely in London was in miserable condition.

Whether the Egyptian artist worked on solid limestone or a plaster surface, he went about his task in an orderly way, planning his overall scheme in advance and executing it in stages. In tombs it was not uncommon for the decoration to be left unfinished (presumably, when owners died, the work ceased), and evidence of various stages are apparent in a number of Theban tombs. Preliminary drawings were occasionally done with great care, as is demonstrated by the figure of the seated king, Thutmose III, in the tomb of Amenmose (Figure 20). That the ancient Egyptian could be a sensitive artist is revealed here by the subtle changes of accent in his line—in marked contrast, I might add, to the thin, wirelike lines that have sometimes been in vogue among Egyptologists whose copies emasculate the virility of the originals.

In laying out his pictures, the artist divided the wall into various registers by horizontal lines. In some scenes he did not extend these lines the full length of the picture, thereby allowing him to use the height of two or more registers for important figures—especially the tomb owner, often with his wife or the gods (Figure 28). Sons and daughters might be shown in smaller scale, not because they were young children but to indicate their less significant station in life. The wall scenes were usually enclosed in ornamental borders consisting of blocks of color, those on top often being more elaborate and surmounted by knot-like forms known as *khekers,* or, in some cases, by designs derived from the lotus. All of the borders, despite repetition, were drawn freehand.

Usually the artist made his preliminary

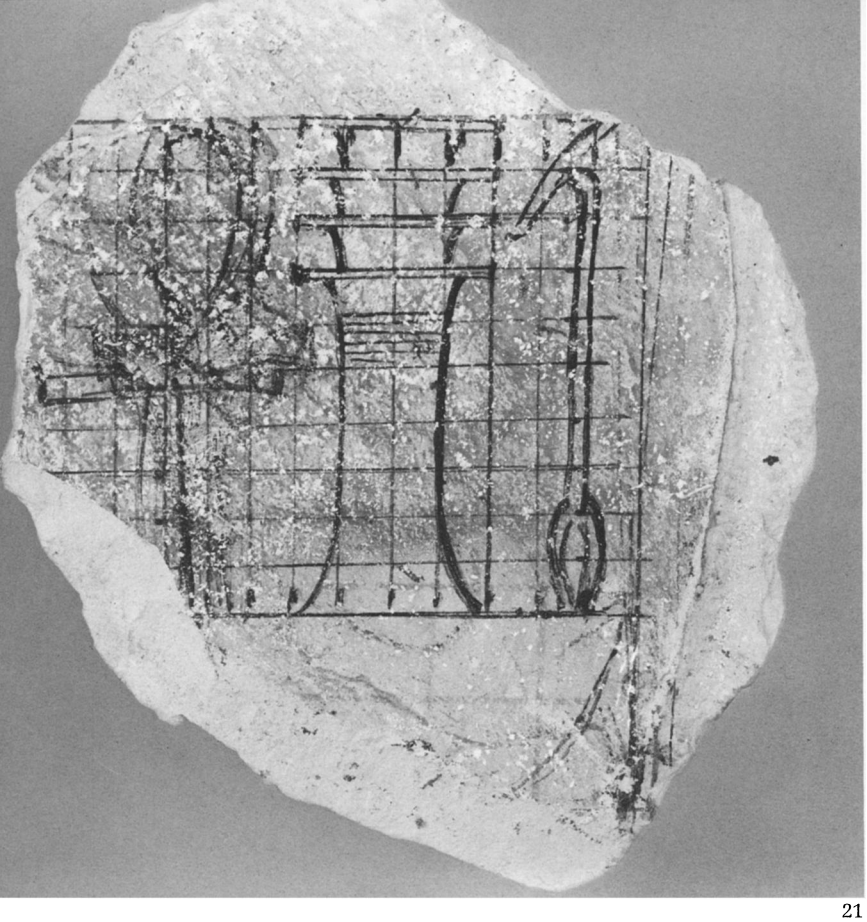


Foreigners (above) representing subject nations. Among them are Bedouins, Nubians, Libyans, Cretans, and Babylonians. The captives, each attired in native costume, kneel in suppliance, and are tied together by a papyrus stem symbolic of Egypt. This frieze adorns the dais of the thrones of Amenhotpe III and Queen Tiye in a much damaged painting in the tomb of the queen's brother. About 1380 B.C. Tomb of Anen (see Figure 31)

20

20 Preliminary drawing of Thutmose III in the Theban tomb of Amenmose (T 89) of about 1380 B.C. The deified king is seated in a shrine. This drawing, made more than fifty years after the king's death, is not a true portrait

drawings in red sketchlines that were intended to be covered by paint in the later stages of his work. Sometimes the drawings were squared up from sketches, in outline or in full color, done on *ostraca,* or limestone flakes, small enough to be held in the hand (Figures 21, 22). These flakes were abundant in the necropolis, and many were



21

22

23

21,22 The drawing on the limestone flake at the left was squared up so that the hieroglyphs could be redrawn accurately on a larger scale on a wall. The same carved and painted hieroglyphs (right)—the *neb, ankh, djed,* and *was* signs, meaning "all life, stability, and dominion"—were based on such a sketch. Flake and carving date from the reign of Queen Hatshepsut, 1503–1482 B.C. Deir el Bahri

found near Deir el Bahri in the Museum's excavations. The artist's next step was putting in the background, a thin wash of paint carried to the edges of his drawings. Backgrounds were almost always pale bluish gray or near white, until yellow became popular in the late dynasties. After all the colors were applied, the last stage was the addition of precise outlines. The artist's process from squaring up to final outlines is clearly shown in scenes in the tomb of Nakht (Figure 24).

In the course of copying wall paintings, we learned that the ancient Egyptians occasionally copied their own finished work. In a scene in the tomb of Kenamun, clearly visible red squares are drawn on top of some animals for this purpose (Figure 23).

Ceilings were an integral part of tomb decoration, and the Egyptian artist treated them in several ways, usually dividing the surface into panels of colorful geometric patterns with lines of inscription in between. The variety of patterns is extraordinary and well worth studying from both an artistic and an archaeological point of view (Figure 25). The prototype for this arrange-

24 This unfinished painting of Nakht and his wife reveals the Egyptian artist's procedure. Some of the red lines used in setting up the picture are visible on the plaster surface, as are parts of the preliminary drawing. The bluish gray background and large areas of other colors have been applied, but fine details have yet to be painted. Only when these were completed were the outlines added. About 1425 B.C. Tomb of Nakht (T 52), Sheikh abd el Qurna. 15.5.19f

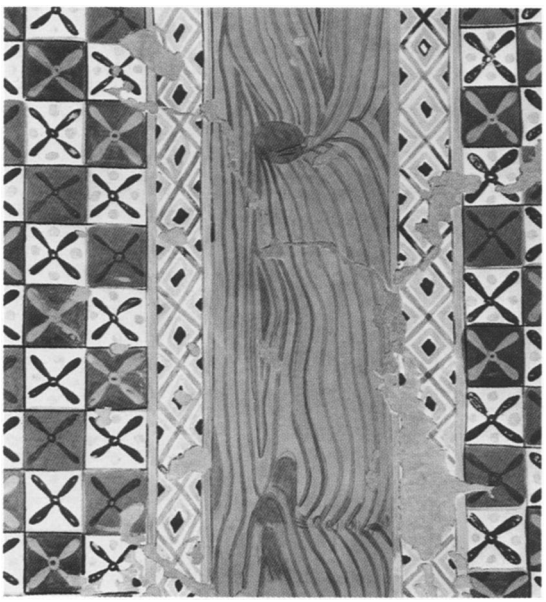
23 Fragment of a hunting scene in which an ibex is brought to bay by a hound. The picture must have been held in high regard by the Egyptians because it was squared up in red for copying purposes. The speckled areas of the background represent pebble-strewn courses between the desert rises. About 1425 B.C. Tomb of Kenamun (T 93), Sheikh abd el Qurna. 30.4.59

ment was probably a wood-framed, textile covering on the ceilings of dwellings of predynastic origin that in very early tombs was imitated in stone. The areas on which the inscriptions were painted represented beams, and the Egyptian artist was most adept at simulating wood grain (Figure 26). In one tomb chamber the artist converted a ceiling into a bower of grapevines. Another unusual ceiling appears in the tomb of Senmut, a high-ranking official under Queen Hatshepsut; here the design is a representation of the heavens (Figure 27).

Blemishes appear in a number of the paintings quite apart from the gaps where pieces are missing. When the Egyptian artist had finished, he usually left the painted surface untouched; but in several tombs of the XVIII Dynasty, including those of Kenamun and Nebamun, beeswax was applied to enhance the color, and this has turned into a grayish, almost opaque skin. The wax is easily peeled off and does no harm, but another substance employed for the same purpose has been most harmful. A resin, originally probably colorless and certainly transparent, was used especially to brighten yellow, perhaps to make it look more like gold. The resin also served as a varnish. With time it has often become dark

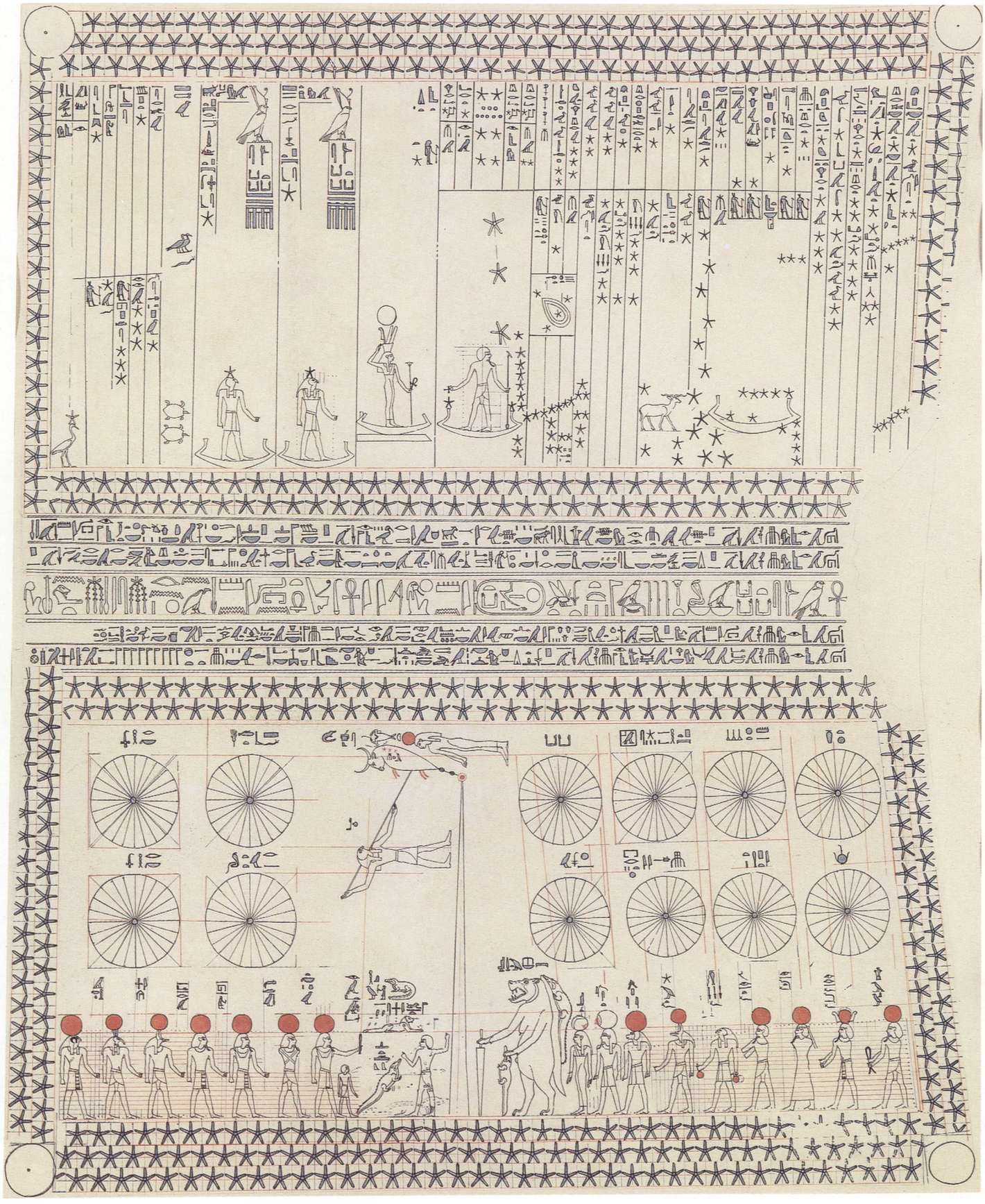
25 Geometric patterns copied from fragments of a painted ceiling. About 1380 B.C. Tomb of Nebamun and Ipuki (T 181), El Khokha. 30.4.102

25



26 Ceiling design with a center strip painted to simulate a wooden beam. About 1525 B.C. Tomb of Tetaky (T 15), Dra abu'l Naga. 30.4.4

27 Astronomical ceiling in the tomb of Senmut, beneath the lower courtyard of the temple of Queen Hatshepsut. The painting is unfinished, but the composition, based on a star clock, is beautifully drawn. Senmut was a favorite of the queen and architect of her temple, but he fell from power before plans for his tomb could be realized and was buried elsewhere. About 1500 B.C. Tomb of Senmut (T 353), Deir el Bahri. 40.105.52



brown and fissured. When the resin flakes off or is removed, it takes the paint with it. Several copies of scenes from the tombs of Kenamun, Huy, and Nakht show the unfortunate effects of these materials.

Other strange markings on Egyptian tomb paintings are due not to man but to the mason wasp, which has a nasty habit of boring into the plaster, covering it with a kind of adhesive, and then building little domelike structures of mud for its offspring. The damage on removal is slight, however, when compared to that of resin varnish.

In the paintings in the Museum's collection, all of these defects can be seen because the facsimiles are usually exact representations of the originals and their condition at the time they were copied. In a few instances where restoration was essential, the restored areas have been indicated in an obvious way, usually by a lighter tone or, occasionally, by a cautionary outline.

Decorated tombs were only for the affluent, and the Egyptian artist painted them for the everlasting benefit of the owner, who expected to live in the afterworld as he had lived on earth. The scenes therefore show him engaged in all the pursuits of his daily life, such as surveying his estate or overseeing the

28 Police captain Nebamun, seated on a folding stool, oversees the branding of his cattle and the recording of his herd by a scribe. The scene is from a painting showing many activities on his estate. About 1420 B.C. Tomb of Nebamun (T 90), Sheikh abd el Qurna. 30.4.57

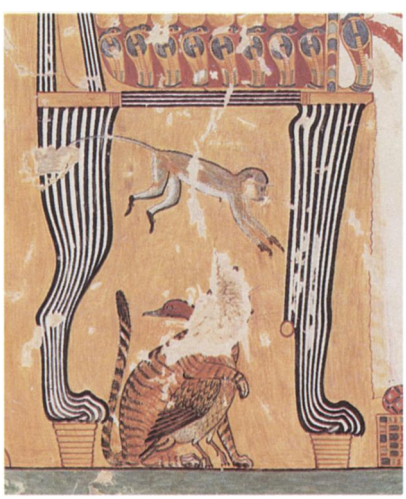
29 Funeral procession of the vizier Ramose. In this detail of an elaborate scene, servants carry furnishings to his tomb while female relatives of all ages express their uncontrollable grief. About 1375 B.C. Tomb of Ramose (T 55), Sheikh abd el Qurna. 30.4.37

branding of his cattle (Figure 28), and enjoying with his family all the good things of this world. As would be expected, tomb decorations also include scenes of the funerary rites of the deceased and his journey from this world to the next (Figure 29).

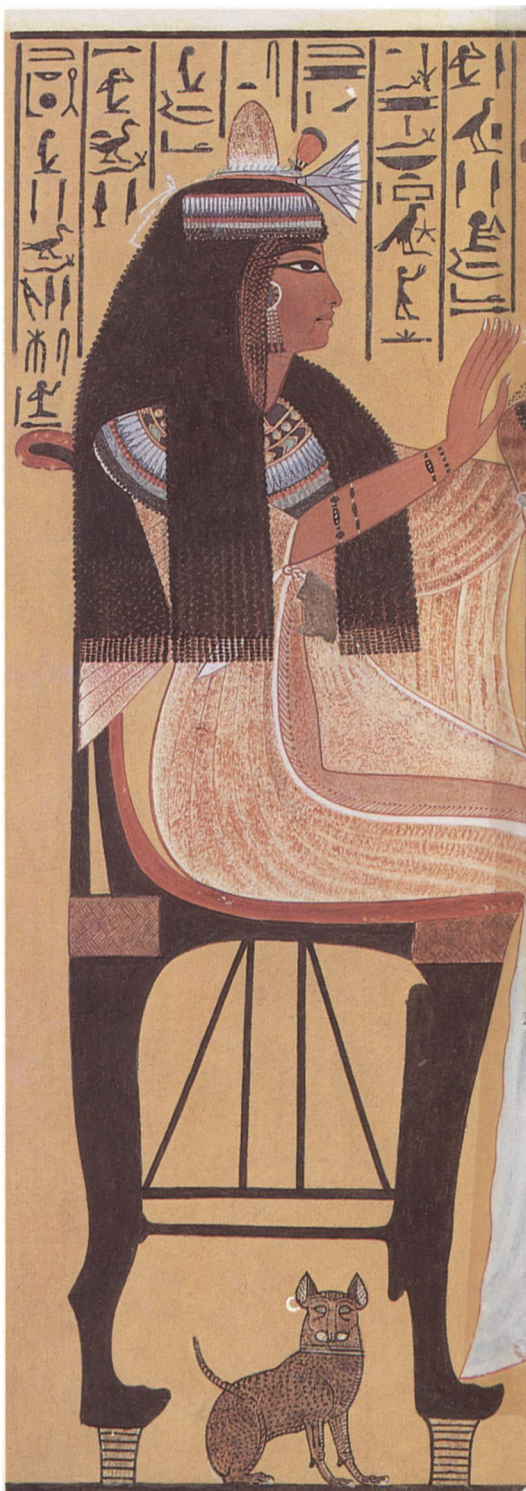
The Egyptian artist recorded these activities in detail, and he did so clearly and economically by employing artistic conventions that are easily understood. He portrayed his subject on a single flat plane without the use of perspective, light and shade, or other visual subtleties that concerned artists of later times. Each object is shown in its most characteristic or easily perceived form and from the most telling view, and these are assembled in a delightful yet orderly way to convey as much information as possible in the given space. Take, for example, food for the deceased (Figure 30). This was a subject of prime importance, and scenes of such offerings appear in almost every tomb in the necropolis. The table for the provisions is invariably shown in profile, but the items are arranged in vertical tiers above, with every item depicted in the way it is most easily recognized. By this convention the food could be shown clearly, and far more could be displayed than the table itself could bear. To make certain there was enough, the artist usually painted hieroglyphic signs

30 The vizier Rekhmira and his mother are seated before offerings of bread, meats, vegetables, and fruit piled in tiers on a table. Beneath it are hieroglyphs (long-stemmed lotuses) multiplying the offerings by thousands. The missing figure was a *setem* priest who officiated at the ceremony, and who was, according to custom, a son of the deceased. In Figure 32 another tomb owner's son wears the priest's ceremonial leopard-skin robe. About 1475 B.C. Tomb of Rekhmira (T 100), Sheikh abd el Qurna. 30.4.79

31 Beneath the chair of a queen, a cat holds a goose by the neck, while an excited monkey leaps over them. This detail is from a painting of Amenhotpe III and Queen Tiye enthroned, of which only the lower section survives. About 1380 B.C. Tomb of Anen (T 120), Sheikh abd el Qurna. 33.8.8



32 As offerings are being made to the sculptor Ipuy and his wife, a pampered cat sporting a collar and a silver earring poses beneath a chair. Her kitten, with the temerity of the young, is playing on Ipuy's lap. This copy, unlike all others in the collection, is a restoration of a badly damaged but very attractive picture and was painted to resemble the work in its original condition. About 1275 B.C. Tomb of Ipuy (T 217), Deir el Medina. 30.4.114



representing "thousands" beneath the table.

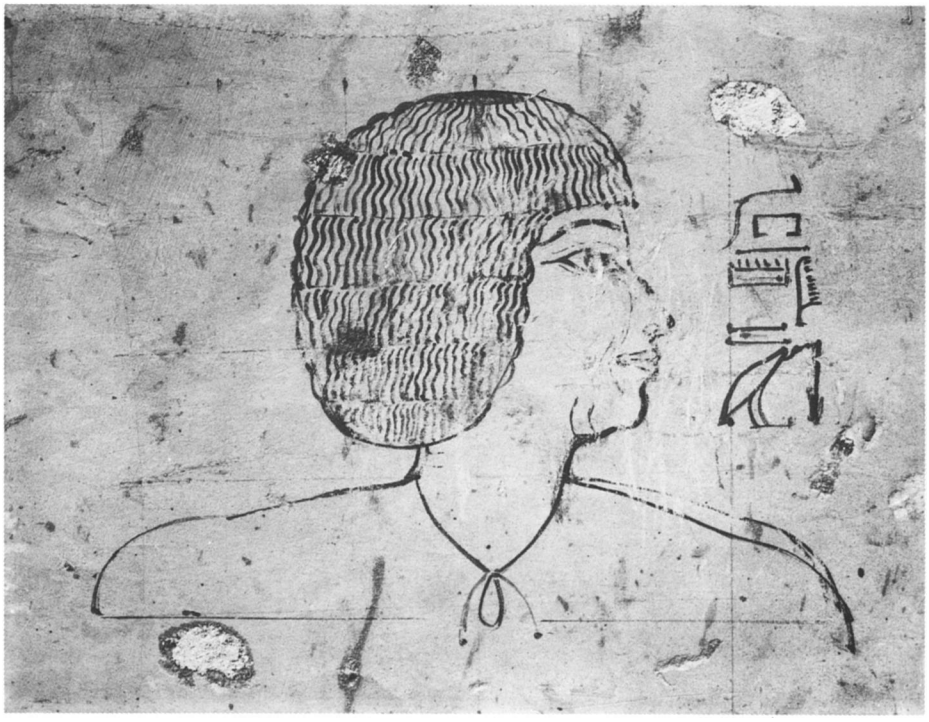
Often in these scenes, perhaps to ensure that the deceased would feel at home, the artist placed a favored pet, such as a dog or cat, beneath a chair. In one instance a stolid-looking cat stares out at us from beneath its mistress's chair, while a cheeky kitten plays on its master's knee (Figure 32). In other scenes a household cat might be shown eating a fish, or even "embracing" a goose, while a monkey leaps over their heads (Figure 31). The artist obviously took delight in including such engaging details, and he did so when decorum permitted, but never in a way that would detract from his main subject or lessen the dignity of his principal figures.

A fine illustration of the practicality and appeal of the Egyptian artist's mode of representation is found in his portrayal of a

33 In one of the best preserved scenes at Thebes of a royal workshop of artisans and craftsmen, a superintendent, who holds a stylized bouquet, oversees the labors of his staff and inspects the finished articles. In this detail at the upper left, at the superintendent's eye level, thick rings of gold are weighed on a balancing scale. The counterweight, shaped like a bull's head, is equivalent to ten rings of raw gold. Before the weighmaster, wood-carvers shape with adze and chisel the *djed,* symbol of stability, and the *sa* sign, meaning "protection," for use as decorative elements. These are passed on to the cabinetmakers, where a balding old master has the delicate task of fitting them into the

open panels of a catafalque. In the register below a pair hammer out gold and copper vases. Next come the craftsmen entrusted with fine details: one chisels the sacred asp on the head of a sphinx, another paints a vase, and two jewelers (one of whom holds a box) display and discuss their work. The finished products presented for approval include a collar and bracelets of inlay and gold. Because two sculptors, both of supervisory rank, shared the tomb in which this painting appears, the identity of the superintendent has not been determined. About 1380 B.C. Tomb of Nebamun and Ipuki (T 181), El Khokha. 30.4.103

34 Prodded by a foreman, workmen move cargo unloaded from boats. The great jars of wine and oil and bundles of papyrus are destined for warehouses of the temple of Amun at Karnak. The grouping in this scene is excellent, and the movements expressive of the hard labor involved. About 1450 B.C. Tomb of Rekhmira (T 100), Sheikh abd el Qurna. 30.4.151



35 This preliminary drawing was sketched in the corridor of Senmut's unfinished tomb beneath a courtyard of the temple of Hatshepsut (see Figure 27). The squares indicate that the drawing was an enlargement of a preparatory study. Many portraits of Senmut were found hidden behind folding doors in the temple of his royal mistress. The hieroglyphic inscription identifies him as the "steward of the house of Amun." About 1500 B.C. Tomb of Senmut (T 353), Deir el Bahri

garden pool and the trees around it. The pool is seen from above, with the water rendered in a zigzag pattern that could be conveniently interrupted to reveal simultaneously and with clarity lotus blossoms and waterfowl on the surface and fish swimming beneath (see Figure 38). The trees project at right angles to the edge of the pool so as not to obscure it, while their trunks and foliage are revealed in full (Figure 6).

Despite the tendency of the Egyptian artist to show people in a flat, friezelike procession, he could on occasion give an excellent impression of a cluster of busy men at work, as he did very successfully in a painting in the tomb of Rekhmira (Figure 34). In his portrayal of human figures he combined two points of view: almost always, heads and legs are in profile, shoulders in full frontal position. While it must be admitted that some of the representations of arms and shoulders of active figures seem awkward, we are rarely in doubt as to what is going on. In a wrestling match, as in Figure 36, it is easy to imagine the actual movements, and in dancing scenes the artist sometimes recorded such nuances as swinging hair. The rendering of the eye frontally when the head is in profile is a convention to which one soon gets accustomed, and it certainly does not prevent paintings and drawings of important officials such as Senmut from being recognizable (Figure 35).

The rites connected with the owner's interment were always elaborate, and the scenes are made more dramatic by inclusion of the bereaved (see Figure 29). The carrying to the tomb of all the material needs of everyday life considered necessary to a wealthy man's well-being in the next—his household furniture, clothes, jewelry, toilet

36 Singlestick fighting and wrestling in the precincts of the temple of Thutmose III. The wrestling match is shown in sequence: the opponents grapple, and the winner emerges with his arms raised in victory. Depicted in the shrine is a sacred barque. About 1315 B.C. Tomb of Amenmose (T 19), Dra abu'l Naga. 32.6.1

37 Above, the vizier Rekhmira's possessions are carried to his tomb in inlaid wooden boxes, but the objects within are represented as though they were on top. Among them, right to left, are three bags of eye paint; a mace, leather shields, and battle axes; unguents and a mirror; a jeweled collar; linen clothing; inlaid bracelets, and a headband with tassles; a scribal palette, writing tablet, and a copper knife; bows and arrows; a chair, baton, and a necklace. Two statuettes, each wearing the red crown of Lower Egypt, are carried separately. About 1475 B.C. Tomb of Rekhmira (T 100), Sheikh abd el Qurna. 30.4.80

38 In a canal among the marshes, fishermen have made a good catch in a net dragged between their boats. They have begun to draw in the net, and the captains shout directions as the crews manipulate the craft, which are made of short planks owing to the lack of more suitable timber in Egypt. In this lively and colorful scene, the artist has interrupted his zigzag ripples of water with lilies of two varieties, papyrus, fish of various sorts and sizes, and waterfowl. About 1275 B.C. Tomb of Ipuy (T 217), Deir el Medina. 30.4.120

articles, and other possessions—formed a part of the funeral procession (Figure 37). The personal belongings were usually transported in handsome chests, but the artist often displayed the objects within as though they were on top, thus enabling us to see far more in his painting than if we had been watching the actual procession.

In most instances the artist's message was probably strictly truthful, but in matters of color he exercised considerable license. To cite one of many examples, it was the practice to give Egyptian men a strong reddish complexion and women one of a clear yellowish cast. These tones were probably directly related to the ready availability to the artist of the pigments, and they in themselves were subject to variation. However, he had no qualms about changing the color of a person's skin, sometimes for aesthetic reasons or simply for variety. His love of diversity is particularly striking in a paint-

39 The high priest Userhat, his wife, and mother are entertained in a garden by the goddess of the sycamore fig tree. The goddess appears in human form with a diminutive tree on her head. Her guests are shown both as human beings and as small birdlike souls fluttering in the trees and drinking water from the small T-shaped pool. The whole is an exquisite tapestry of color and detail. The goddess wears a slim, beaded dress, and her guests the sheerest of linen with finely rendered pleating. The cones upon their heads are scented unguents. About 1320 B.C. Tomb of Userhat (T 51), Sheikh abd el Qurna. 30.4.33

ing where Nubian princes in a row are depicted with alternating skin tones of black and brown, curls alternately red and black, and sidelocks of bright blue (Figure 42). In this case it must be taken into account that the use of wigs was common in ancient Egypt.

In his treatment of supernatural beings, the Egyptian artist had far more scope than his much later counterpart in Europe, who was usually content to put wings on human beings to create angels. The ancient Egyptian, satisfying a more demanding religion, was adept at combining the heads of animals

40

40 Userhat kneels before the falcon-god Ra-Harakhty, who here symbolizes the setting sun, and a goddess of the west. Sacred baboons and jackal- and hawk-headed souls of prehistoric dynasties join him in the adoration. The yellowish pink color is typical of the hills in which the tombs are located. About 1320 B.C. Tomb of Userhat (T 51), Sheikh abd el Qurna. 30.4.31

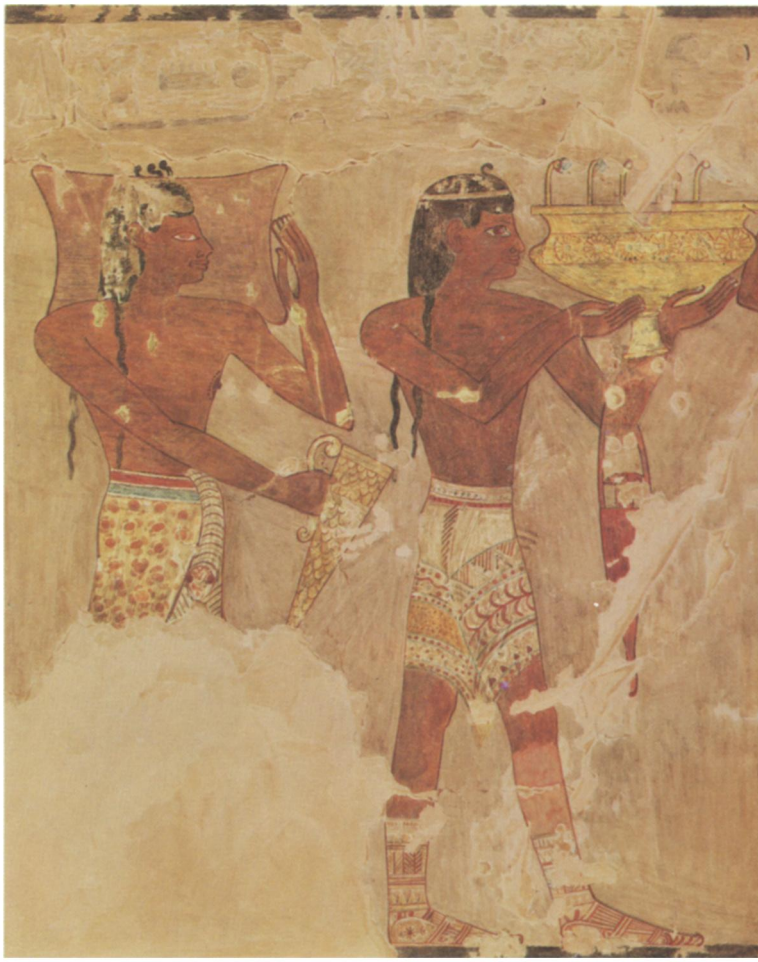
41 Two Cretans, with characteristic hairstyles, carry a copper ingot, conical cup, gold vase, and leather-sheathed dagger. One wears a woven kilt and elaborate shoes. About 1475 B.C. Tomb of Rekhmira (T 100), Sheikh abd el Qurna. 31.6.42

or birds with human bodies to create all sorts of divinities (see Figure 14). Even the meeting of the deceased with the gods and goddesses seldom seems awesome (Figure 40); in fact, it can be charming, as in the scene where Userhat, his wife, and his mother are entertained in a garden by the goddess of the sycamore fig tree (Figure 39).

For many of us, the Egyptian artist's revelations of life in this world are by far the most fascinating. Since the wall paintings depict in detail each tomb owner in his own earthly environment and occupations, the range of subjects is indeed comprehensive, covering almost every phase of ancient Egyptian life and the parts played by its people, from the highest official to the humblest servant.

In the tombs of the most politically powerful, there are scenes of foreigners bearing tribute—Syrians, Libyans, Nubians, Cretans, to name but a few (Figures 41, 42). The artist portrayed faithfully the costumes of each group and the products and crafts of their countries. Even trees are included among the gifts, reminding us that in those times, as now, man was not always content with the flora indigenous to his own country. As to fauna, there is almost no end to the

41



42 Part of a tribute scene in the tomb of Huy, viceroy of Nubia under Tutankhamun. At the upper right are northern Nubians of high rank, and a princess in an ox-drawn chariot. Walking behind are warriors, their submission made certain by the *sheyba* (taming stick) attached to their wrists and

necks. Women and children follow. Below are southern Nubians and their retainers. Among gifts to the king are rings of raw gold, a giraffe, and oxen, the latter with dummy heads of Nubians set between horns ending in hands. About 1360 B.C. Tomb of Huy (T 40), Qurnet Murai. 30.4.21

43

43 Bedouins of western Asia, in typical gaily colored costumes, are shown here with a gazelle and an ibex, possibly tribute to Khnumhotpe, overseer of the eastern desert. About 1890 B.C. Tomb of Khnumhotpe (T 3), Beni Hasan. 33.8.17

44

44 In a tribute procession a giraffe, led by two Nubians who hold its forelegs by ropes, has a little green monkey climbing its neck. The monkey's action might be construed as a humorous detail, but the artist has given an accurate portrayal: in Africa monkeys sometimes steal rides in this manner to get from one group of trees to another. About 1475 B.C. Tomb of Rekhmira (T 100), Sheikh abd el Qurna. 31.6.40

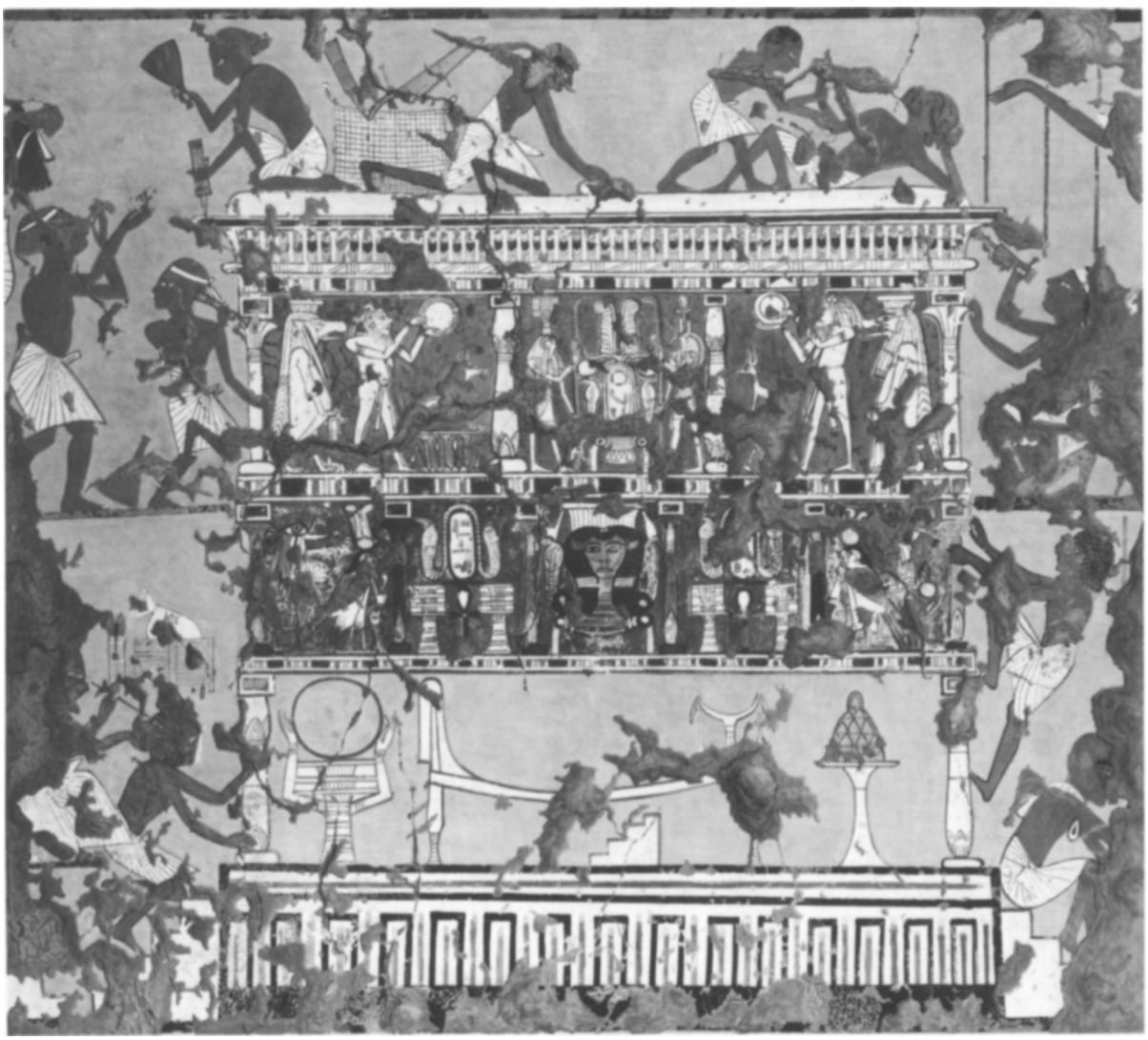
exotic creatures one sees, such as bears, elephants, monkeys, baboons, and giraffes. In one tribute scene in the tomb of Rekhmira, who was vizier of Upper Egypt under Thutmose III and Amenhotpe II, the artist appears to have indulged his sense of humor by showing a little green monkey climbing the neck of a giraffe (Figure 44). But Nina de Garis Davies learned from a gamekeeper in Africa that monkeys actually do steal rides in this manner to get from one group

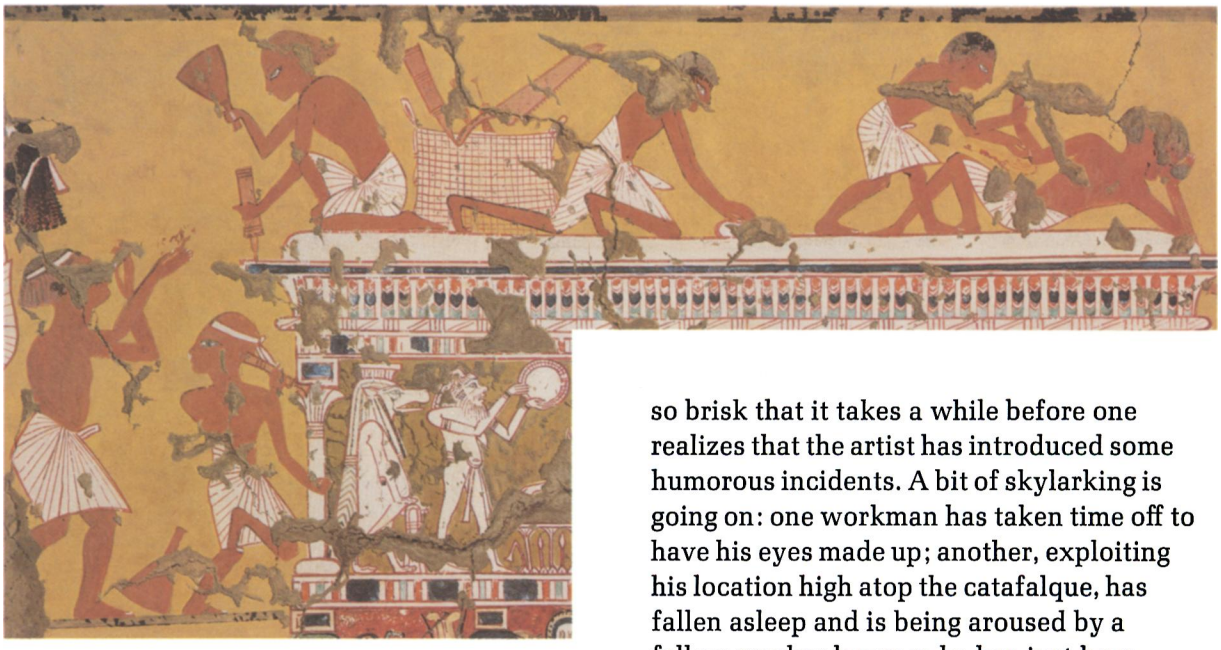
of trees to another. Thus the Egyptian artist accurately portrayed not only the animal but its habits as well.

Some scenes can have deeper implications, such as the tribute procession in the tomb of Huy, viceroy of Nubia under Tutankhamun (Figure 42). Here, approaching Huy and Tutankhamun himself, a Nubian princess rides in an elegant chariot of Egyptian design pulled not by fine horses but by oxen. She also lacks a personal servant to hold her parasol, so it has become part of her headdress. This surely emphasizes in a condescending way the provinciality of the Nubian princess. In the register beneath is a group of oxen with human heads between their horns, which terminate in hands. Even though these heads and hands would seem to be dummies, the oxen were being brought, perhaps for sacrifice, in Tutankhamun's honor. Submission as well as adoration are thus vividly expressed.

All of the crafts of ancient Egypt are carefully recorded in the tomb paintings. Since details from the finest examples are to be found in the Metropolitan Museum's facsimiles, we are provided with a veritable guide to the workshops of every trade (Figures 33, 53-62). Artisans of all kinds—sculptors, chariot makers, goldsmiths, carpenters, potters, and leather workers—may be seen at their daily tasks. In the tomb of Ipuy, a sculptor during the reign of Ramesses II, a marvelous scene shows artisans in the process of constructing an elaborate catafalque (Figure 45). Activity is

45 Almost a dozen men are involved in finishing the work on this elaborate catafalque. Inside is a bed for the deceased with a high footboard and curved headrest, steps, a mirror, and a table with some figs; above is a polychrome hanging of cloth or leather panels. At the lower left an artisan is having his eyes made up. (See detail on page 42.) About 1275 B.C. Tomb of Ipuy (T 217), Deir el Medina. 30.4.116





On the roof of a nearly completed catafalque, one artisan has fallen asleep, and is being aroused because the boss has spotted him. This amusing detail is from a painting in the tomb of Ipuy, a sculptor who helped decorate the royal tombs at Thebes. About 1275 B.C. (see Figure 45)

so brisk that it takes a while before one realizes that the artist has introduced some humorous incidents. A bit of skylarking is going on: one workman has taken time off to have his eyes made up; another, exploiting his location high atop the catafalque, has fallen asleep and is being aroused by a fellow worker because he has just been spotted by the boss (see detail above). Such incidents, although always taking place among the lower ranks, indicate that when the Egyptian artist was not inhibited by taboos associated with those of high

46 On an estate supervised by Menna, overseer of government lands, two surveyors measure the standing grain with a rope knotted at regular intervals. Scribes with palettes are on hand to record the results, attended by a helper who holds their equipment in a bag. Tenants on the estate include an old man with a staff, a couple greeting officials with gifts or refreshments, and a small boy carrying a baby goat; a donkey in front of the boy has been badly damaged. In the register below Menna, standing in a papyrus shelter, is offered two jars of wine. Behind him eight scribes record the harvest, as laborers measure the grain by bushels. One scribe, sitting on top of a grain pile, counts on his fingers. Nearby is a wooden box for writing materials. At the left Menna's chariot and horses, held by a groom, await his departure. About 1420 B.C. Tomb of Menna (T 69), Sheikh abd el Qurna. 30.4.44

46

rank, he endeavored to show life as it really was. We, in turn, are reminded that human nature has not changed in 4,000 years.

Scenes of a wealthy Egyptian tending to the affairs of his self-supporting country estate leave no doubt that all procedures were highly organized, as we see the measuring of standing crops and the careful recording of essential facts and figures by scribes (Figure 46). Overseers, farmhands, herdsmen, laborers of all sorts and ages go about their chores, often under the eye of their lord and master. The raising of wheat and barley is shown from plowing and sowing to harvesting and winnowing. Grapes are grown in well-ordered vineyards, picked, trodden, and wine stored in jars (Figure 47). As flax is essential to the making of linen, the standard material for Egyptian clothing, we are shown both the work in the flax fields and the entire process of weaving (Figure 50)—a process, incidentally, at which the ancient Egyptians were

47 Vineyards were usually depicted with grayish backgrounds until the Ramesside period, when yellow was used with pleasing results. This scene shows wine making, from the picking of grapes to the sealing of wine jars. About 1275 B.C. Tomb of Ipuy (T 217), Deir el Medina. 30.4.118

48

48 At the left a donkey, with saddle packs, is followed by his carefree attendant. The donkey was the patient beast of burden throughout dynastic Egypt and remains so to the present day. (The camel was not used in Egypt until late in the first millennium B.C.) This detail is from a photograph taken by Harry Burton in the tomb of Djar (T 366) in the Asasif. About 2030 B.C.

so adept that the finished fabric was semi-transparent. Animal husbandry is accorded the same thorough treatment. These scenes disclose the tending of cattle and their service to man, from birth to their slaughter for food and sacrifice. As would be expected in a country owing its very life to a river, fish were an important item of diet, and we discover they were caught in large numbers in nets dragged between boats (see Figure 38).

These themes recur in many tomb paintings, but just as no two estates were exactly alike, so also were the artist's portrayals of them varied. In the midst of the organized activity, so absorbing in itself, there are always the candid glimpses of his lesser characters, such as a happy-go-lucky lad and his donkey (Figure 48), or two gleaners having a spat in the fields (Figure 49). There are surprises as well. In a scene in the tomb of Sennedjem, the fields of wheat and flax have become the fields of Elysium, where the plowing and reaping are done not by the peasants for their lord and master but by Sennedjem and his wife, possibly for theirs (see below).

By great good fortune, the Museum's expedition at Thebes discovered early in 1920 a tiny chamber beneath the main corridor of the rock-cut tomb of Meketra, a high palace official who died about 2000 B.C.

49 During the harvest two gleaners have a spat; one is pulling the other's hair. A basket filled with ears of wheat has fallen on the ground between them. Below, another gleaner removes a thorn from a friend's foot. This detail is from a photograph taken by Harry Burton in the tomb of Menna (T 69), Sheikh abd el Qurna. About 1420 B.C.

The Egyptian concept of paradise included farming a plot on the estate of the god of the afterworld. Above, Sennedjem and his wife, attired in elegant clothing, harvest wheat in the fields of Osiris. This detail is from a well preserved painting in the tomb of Sennedjem, a craftsman who worked on the royal tombs. About 1300 B.C. (see Figure 64)

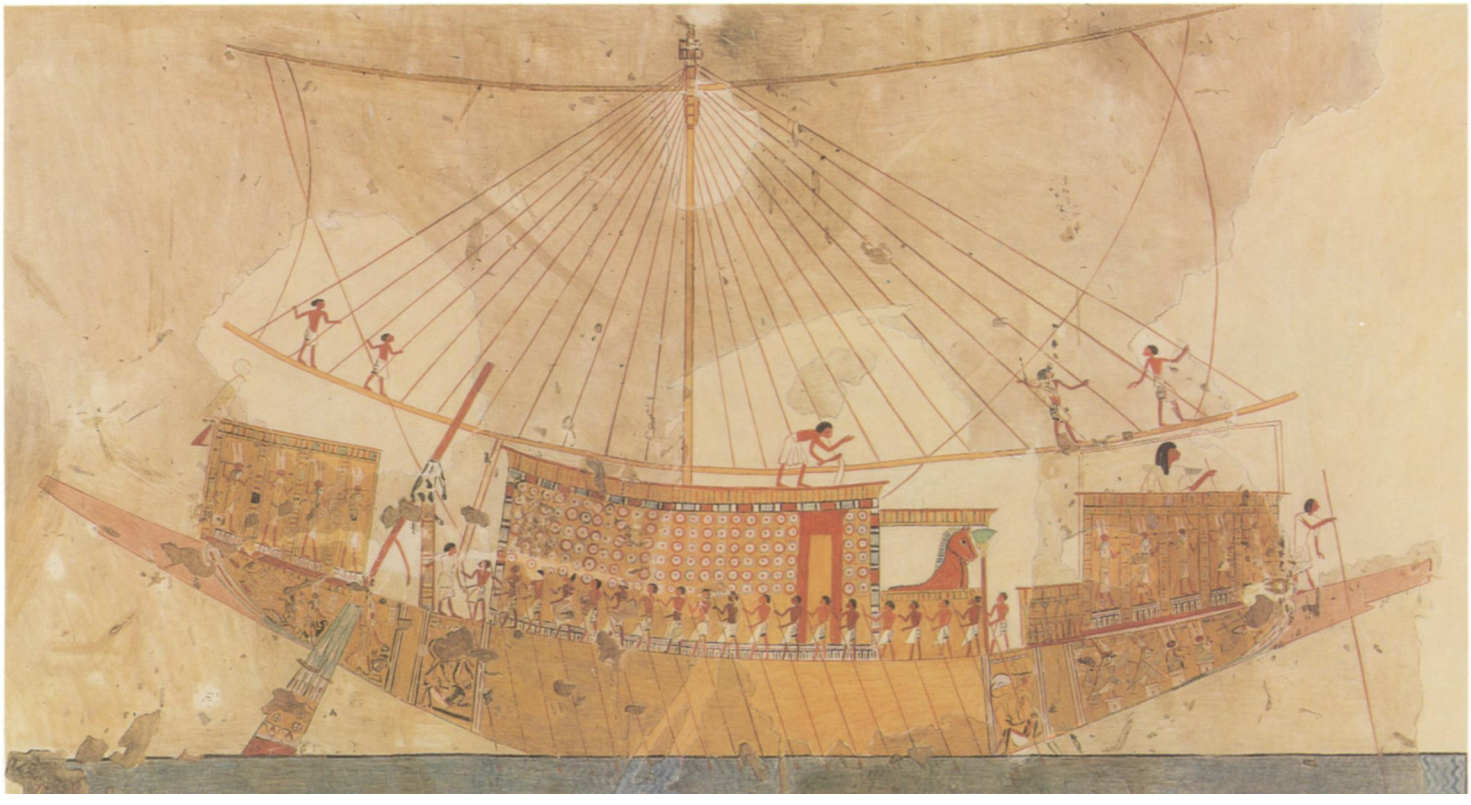
50 Women spinning and weaving linen. The spinner at the right uses two spindles. The weavers employ a horizontal loom (seen from above) typical of the Middle Kingdom. About 1890 B.C. Tomb of Khnumhotpe (T 3), Beni Hasan. 33.8.16

51 As the state ship of viceroy Huy gets ready to sail for Nubia, a pilot sounds the depth of the river at the prow; oarsmen take their posts; and sailors climb in the rigging fore and aft. Huy's horses are in their stall, and the viceroy himself is shown in the forward cabin. About 1360 B.C. Tomb of Huy (T 40), Qurnet Murai. 30.4.19

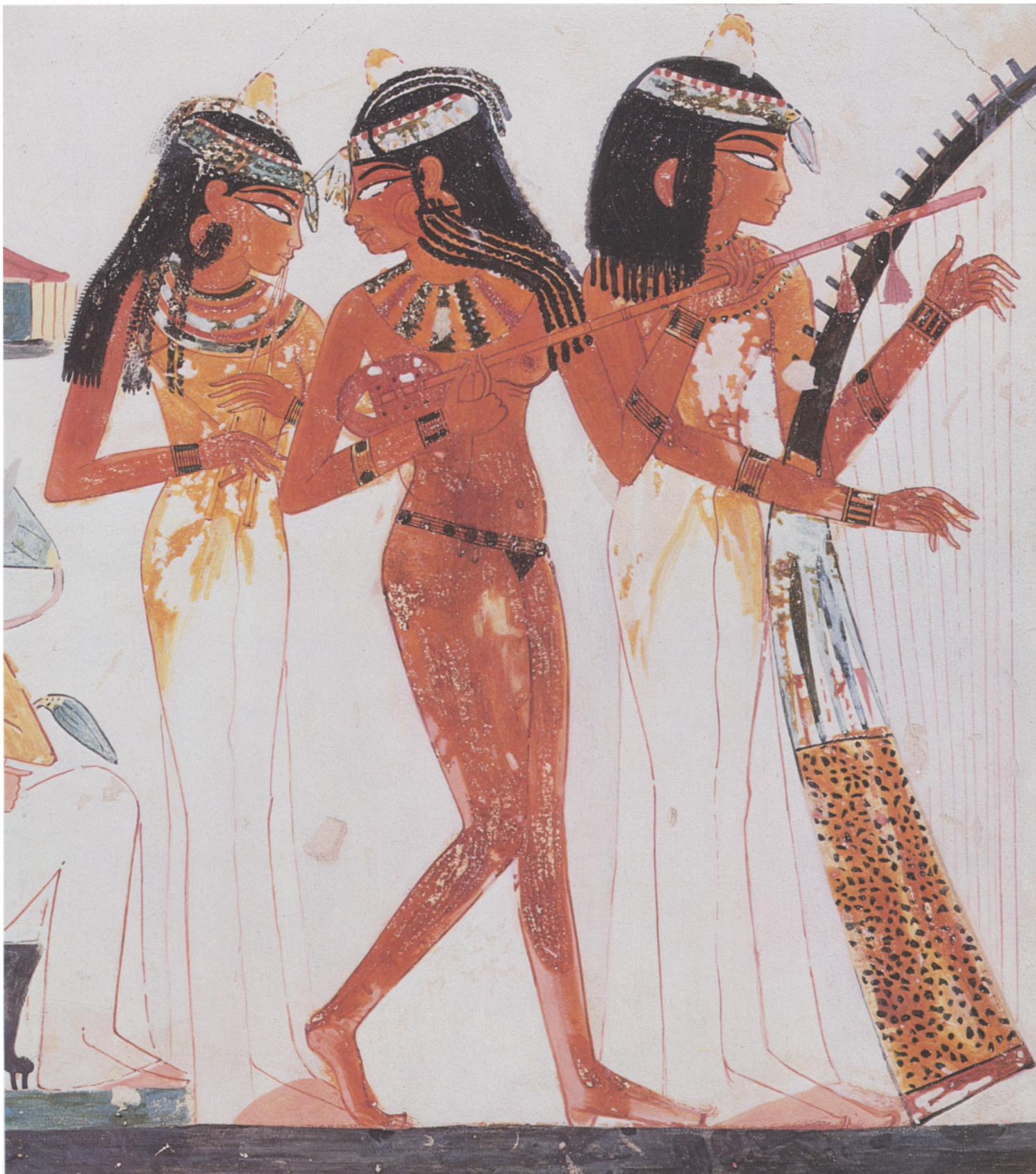
It was crammed with brightly painted models of boats and buildings essential to the operating of a country estate. All were peopled with little wooden servants, some even in linen garments, hard at work at their various jobs. A comparison of this collection with the estate scenes from the wall paintings can be most rewarding, as the models mirror in three dimensions many of the activities the Egyptian artist rendered so faithfully in two.

In their leisure time social entertainment obviously gave the Egyptians much joy. We are shown elegant parties where guests are presented with floral collars and lotus blossoms, served cakes, fruit, and wine, and entertained by musicians and dancing girls (Figure 52). These scenes are so charmingly

51



52 These musicians entertain at a feast in the home of the scribe Nakht. One plays a double flute, and another a standing harp with a soundbox covered by a leopard skin. The musician in the center, attired only in a jeweled belt and collar, is playing a long-necked stringed instrument that may be a lute. About 1425 B.C. Tomb of Nakht (T 52), Sheikh abd el Qurna. 15.5.19d



53

53-62 Craftsmen of Amun in the workshops of the temple at Karnak. These details are from scenes in the tomb of Rekhmira. (53) Smelters lift a crucible of molten metal off a fire. Below them men operate bellows with their feet to fan another fire. (54) A jeweler bores holes in stone beads with a bow drill, and another strings them. (55) A sculptor completes the head of a white limestone sphinx, while two workmen dress the surface of the stone—any flaws would be filled in with plaster. (56) Craftsmen on scaffolding finish a red-granite statue of Thutmose III. While three sculptors work on the front, a fourth chisels inscriptions on the back; the painter above him picks out the text in color. (57) Long leather thongs, made by cutting hide in continuous strips, are held fast at one end by a worker as they are twisted into rope to be used on ships. (58) A cabinetmaker fashioning an inlaid chest. Two essential tools, his adze and his carpenter's square, are shown at the right. (59) A smith holding tongs, used when soldering small objects, creates the necessary heat with a blowpipe. (60) A sandalmaker pierces the straps of a sandal. (61) Tanners and cutters prepare leather. One takes a hide from a jar where it has been soaking, another scrapes a hide with a stone, a third stretches a skin over a trestle, and two men cut leather on a sloping board. (62) To cast sections of bronze doors (shown above in plan), workers pour molten metal into a many vented mold. About 1475 B.C. Tomb of Rekhmira (T 100), Sheikh abd el Qurna. 31.6.11; 31.6.25; 31.6.10; 30.4.90; 33.8.2; 31.6.12,22,26; 35.101.2; 33.8.5

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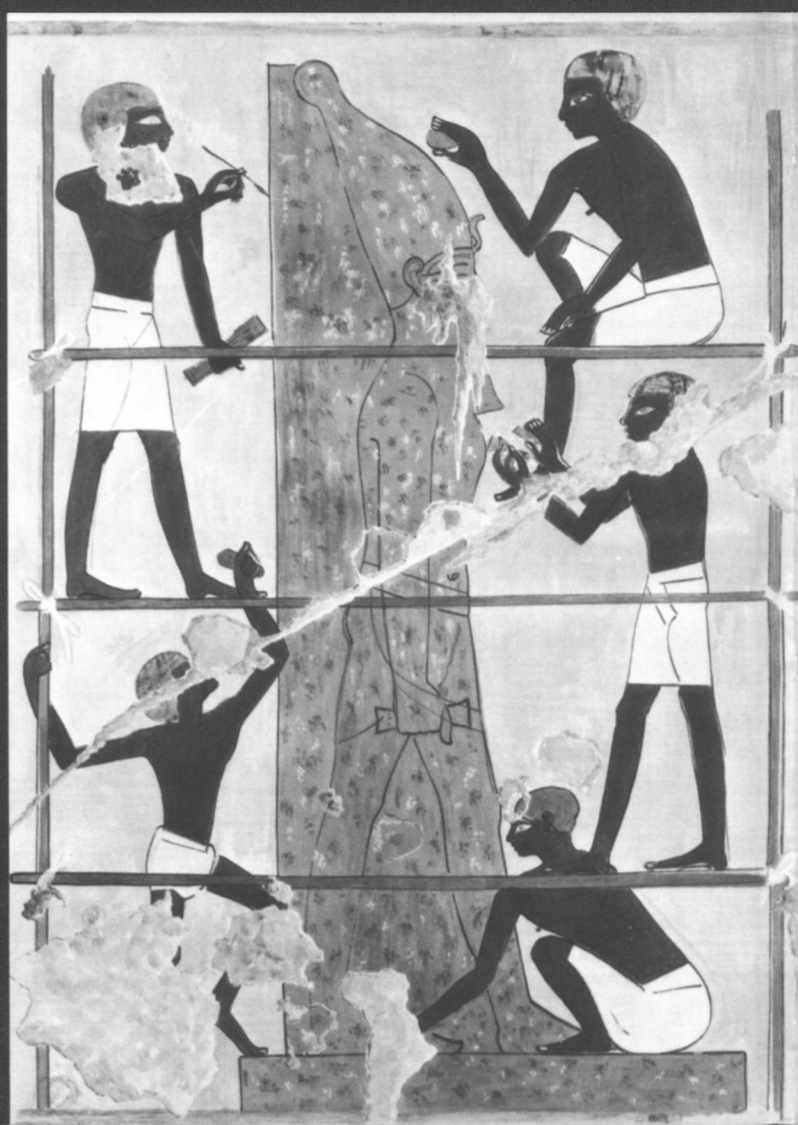

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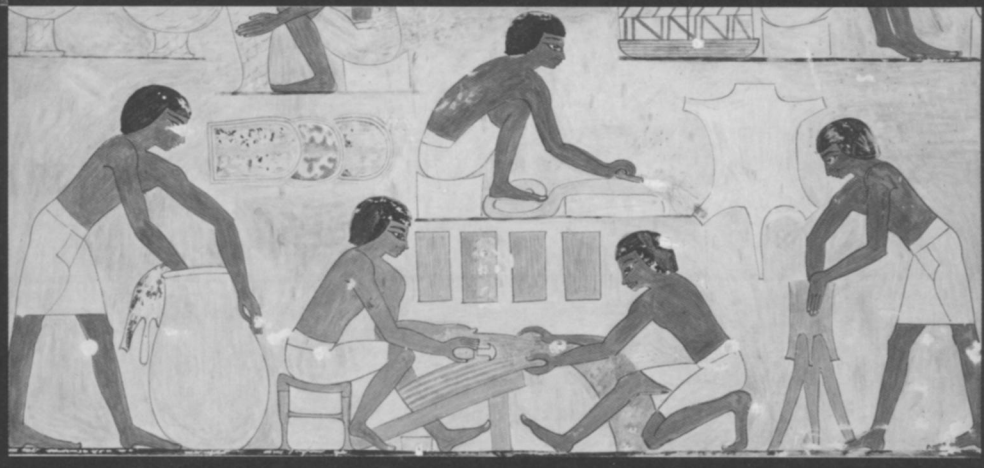

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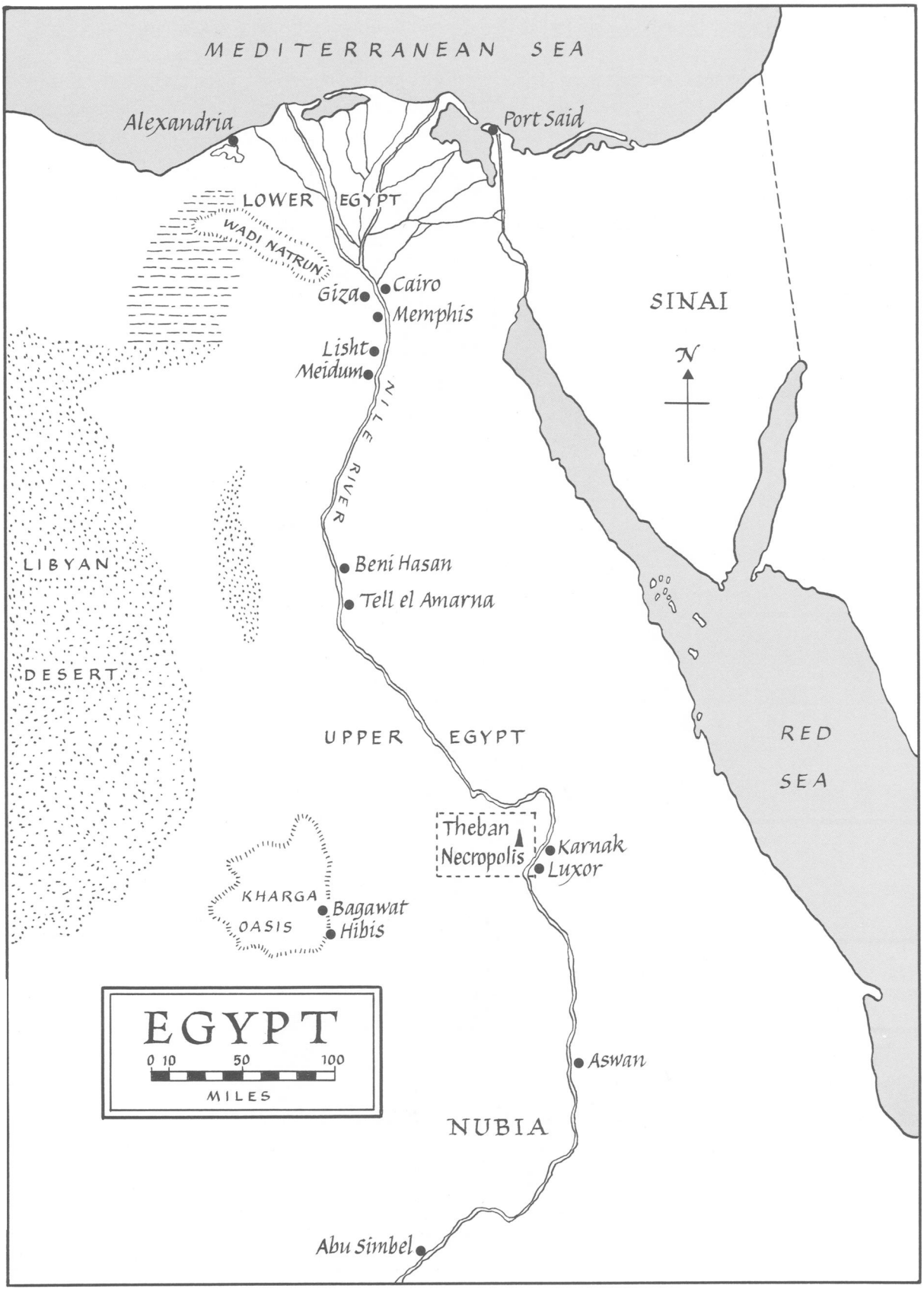
62

63 Attended by his family, Nakht enjoys sports in the marshes. At the left he hunts ducks with a throwing stick; at the right he spears fish—although the artist failed to include the spear. A goose once appeared on each papyrus skiff and a cat in the rushes, but they have been destroyed. About 1425 B.C. Tomb of Nakht (T 52), Sheikh abd el Qurna. 15.5.19e

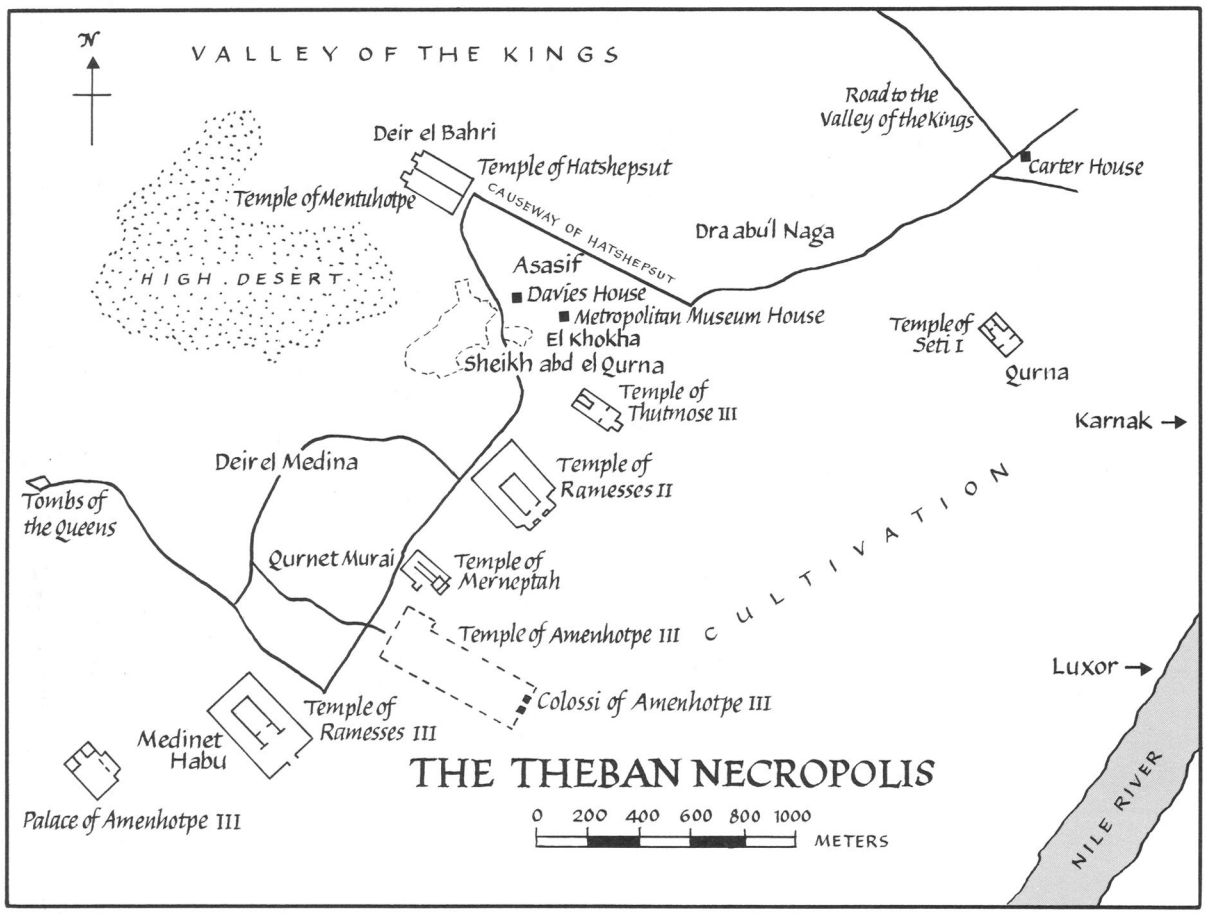
depicted that they convey a feeling of pleasure even today. For their outdoor recreation men hunted wild animals, such as hyenas and gazelles, from light horse-drawn chariots, shooting their prey with arrows. Fishing was done with spears, and

fowling with throwing sticks. Fishing and fowling in the marshes from a light papyrus skiff were often turned into a lively family outing (see below), where pretty young girls might wear nothing but jeweled belts and necklaces, and young boys nothing at all.

The Egyptian artist presented such scenes in a balanced pattern, but the formality of his design is enlivened by birds fluttering above the marshes and occasionally, as in the tomb of Menna, little animals climbing the papyrus stalks to steal birds' eggs.

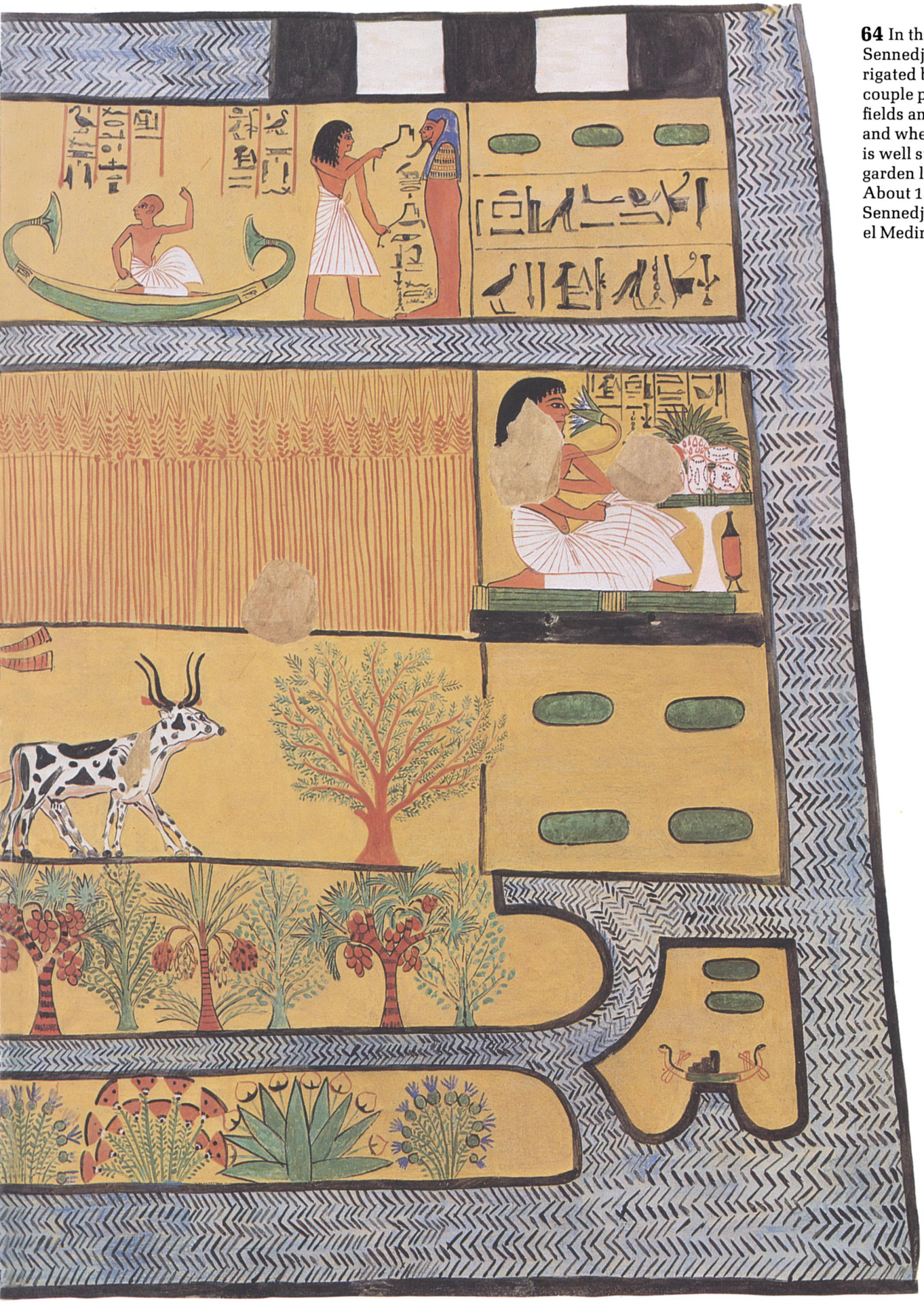

MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Alexandria
Port Said
LOWER EGYPT
WADI NATRUN
Giza
Cairo
Memphis
Lisht
Meidum
NILE RIVER
SINAI
N
LIBYAN
DESERT
Beni Hasan
Tell el Amarna
UPPER EGYPT
RED SEA
Theban Necropolis
Karnak
Luxor
KHARGA OASIS
Bagawat
Hibis
EGYPT
0 10 50 100
MILES
Aswan
NUBIA
Abu Simbel

The Museum's collection of copies of Egyptian wall paintings is so comprehensive that it gives us the opportunity to appreciate the skill of the Egyptian artist and to make all kinds of fruitful comparisons to an extent impossible in the tombs themselves. As I have endeavored to demonstrate, if given more than a cursory glance, the facsimiles provide a starting point for all kinds of intriguing investigations. One can follow various lines of thought and be rewarded by the pleasures of discovery. Nothing is easier than to get started on such ventures, for despite the remoteness of the time when the original scenes were painted, they disclose much in common between that world and our own. I trust the reader will discover—as did I—that the Egyptian artist who told his story for the happiness of the deceased long ago did it so well that today we can enjoy it, too. Such satisfactions are not restricted to professional Egyptologists; they await all who give this unique collection careful attention.



Theban tombs are located in the following areas:

Asasif	El Khokha
Deir el Bahri	Qurnet Murai
Deir el Medina	Sheikh abd el Qurna
Dra abu'l Naga	



64 In the paradise of Sennedjem, which is irrigated by canals, the couple plow and sow the fields and harvest flax and wheat. The orchard is well stocked, and the garden lush with flowers. About 1300 B.C. Tomb of Sennedjem (T 1), Deir el Medina. 30.4.2

Old Kingdom
(III-VI Dynasties): 2686-2181 B.C.

First Intermediate Period

Middle Kingdom
(XI-XIII Dynasties): 2133-1633 B.C.

Second Intermediate Period, including the Hyksos Period

New Kingdom
(XVIII-XX Dynasties): 1570-1085 B.C.

Opposite:

65 The spread of Christianity in Egypt, during the early centuries after Christ, brought with it an art markedly different in character, technique, and subject matter than the art of antiquity. This painting decorates the cupola of a mud-brick Coptic tomb at the Kharga Oasis. The figures, depicted against a background strewn with four-petaled roses, are all fair-haired, and are identified by Greek inscriptions. Both Biblical and allegorical subjects are illustrated, and are treated either as scenes or individual figures. Upon entering the tomb one is confronted with a representation of Daniel in the Lions' Den. He has a halo around his head and stands calmly between two very Persian looking lions that are snarling at his feet. To the left, in clockwise progression, are: Justice holding a cornucopia in one hand and her balancing scales in the other; a large figure in flowing robes, symbolizing Prayer; Jacob; Noah and his family in an ark, its roof supported by three columns, two with spiral fluting and pseudo-Corinthian capitals; two doves, one above the other, the lower dove carrying a twig from an olive branch to Noah, and the upper dove, representing the Holy Spirit, facing the next figure in the circle—Mary, who stands with hands raised in prayer at the moment of the Annunciation; Paul and Thecla, popular early saints in Egypt, seated on stools, as the apostle instructs his student; Adam and Eve with the serpent, who is coiled around a tree between them and is whispering in Eve's ear; Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac on an altar, with Sarah, her arm outstretched, to the left of Abraham, and behind him the Hand of God extending from above and the ram that was sacrificed in Isaac's place. The circle is completed by Irene (Peace), holding a scepter with a spearlike point in one hand and in the other the *ankh* sign of life, the sole symbol surviving from ancient Egyptian art and religion. Probably 5th or 6th century A.D. Tomb 238, Bagawat, Kharga Oasis. 30.4.228

COPYISTS

Lancelot Crane, figs. 24, 52; Nina de Garis Davies, pp. 20-21 and figs. 23, 29, 31, 33, 41, 44, 53-62; Norman de Garis Davies, figs. 25, 32, 39, 40, 43, 45, 50; Nina and Norman de Garis Davies, fig. 19; Hugh R. Hopgood, fig. 14; Francis S. Unwin, fig. 63; Charles K. Wilkinson, cover, frontispiece, figs. 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 16, 18, 26-28, 30, 34, 36-38, 42, 46, 47, 51, 64, and inside back cover

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Harry Burton, figs. 5, 7, 10-12, 17, 20-22, 35, 48, 49; Lindsley F. Hall, fig. 8; Walter Hauser, p. 1 and fig. 15; Herbert E. Winlock, fig. 2. All other photography by Lynton Gardiner of the Metropolitan Museum's Photograph Studio

Map and tomb diagram by Joseph P. Ascherl