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# NEWSLETTER

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xxi 2,1, etc(=Scharff, ZAS 57(1922), 51ff.).

7. The heading continues Chcw hr h3wt hr h3st tn hrw 30, "for the duration (of time) of the works in this desert for 30 days". The last indication is puzzling as it gives the impression that the following rations will be for the entire 30 days: yet a closer look at the list refutes this supposition. The inscription tells us that the scribe receives 30 loaves of bread and one unit of beer; now, it seems very unlikely that a scribe would obtain only one loaf of bread a day and 1/30 unit of beer. And of course the situation becomes absurd when one looks at the rations of such workers as the craftsmen (hmwy) who would then receive 0.6 loaf of bread a day and 1/60 unit of beer, or again, the ordinary workmen who would receive 1/3 loaf of bread and an incredibly small amount of beer daily. I think we may then safely assume that the rations are to be construed as daily.
8. A comparison of the units of beer distributed reveals a similar discrepancy: the Steward of the Great Magistrature (imv-r pr n d303t c3t) and the Steward of the Treasury (imv-r pr n pr-hd), who both receive two jugs of beer as rations, in bread distribution take the disproportionate amount of 50 units! (line 18). Compare this with the Peasant's 18.

\* \* \* \* \*

Reserve Heads: A Review of the Evidence for their Placement  
and Function in Old Kingdom Tombs

The intent of this discussion is to present the archaeological evidence for reserve heads in Old Kingdom mastaba tombs, in the hope that this approach may add some clarification to our understanding of these examples of early Egyptian art. While not likely to revolutionize our knowledge of Old Kingdom funerary practices, this data may help align the often contradictory statements concerning the placement of reserve heads in the tomb and be of some assistance in future reconstructions of Old Kingdom burial practices.

The thirty-one whole or fragmentary remains of reserve (portrait) heads known to us occur primarily in the Giza mastabas from the time of Cheops. Single heads were, however, found at Dashur and Abusir.<sup>2</sup> Two heads (G4430 and G4840) are fashioned in clay while the remaining twenty-nine utilize limestone. The heads, in the general range of 20-30 centimetres in

height, are cut away at the base of the neck, leaving a smooth, flat, pedestal-surface. All are unpainted and display either a low surface or incised line encircling the forehead, ears and the back of the neck.<sup>3</sup> Though several of the heads appear to show physical similarities,<sup>4</sup> the method of facial treatment varies. The ears may be omitted (Dashur), fashioned from the same block (G4140), or attached by pegs (G4340). In at least nine cases the ears have been broken off. There seems to have been a tendency to score the outer curve of the nostril by a sharp incision or with an "angular edge to the raised surface".<sup>5</sup> The noses of several heads have been broken off or otherwise damaged, but it is difficult to judge whether this was a deliberate mutilation. The eyebrows may be drawn in relief, carefully moulded (eleven cases) or omitted entirely (twelve examples).<sup>6</sup> Some portrait heads demonstrate a vertical scoring at the back, while others (G4940, G4350, G2110, Egyptian University) manifest traces of a plaster coating, presumably to mask defects in the cutting of the stone.

A certain degree of confusion has arisen over the actual placement of these heads in the tombs. It has been asserted that they are always found in association with the actual burial<sup>7</sup> or that they were set up in the space between the tomb shaft and the burial chamber.<sup>8</sup> An examination of the recorded findspots suggests that the former opinion is considerably dependent upon supposition, while the latter view contradicts what is known of the method of burial chamber masonry blocking. Only four heads were actually recovered from the burial chamber,<sup>9</sup> and two of these,<sup>10</sup> in the opinion of the excavator, had originally been placed in the shaft. Fifteen to sixteen reserve heads were found in the burial shaft,<sup>11</sup> three to four are of uncertain provenance<sup>12</sup> and eight provide no data as to their original placement.<sup>13</sup>

Junker<sup>14</sup> felt the reserve heads had been placed in the entrance to the burial chamber. In this reconstruction the head was situated upon a niche in the masonry blocking between the chamber entrance and the portcullis stone, gazing out into the shaft through a peephole in the portcullis. This argument assumes, as do those that advocate a ritual placement within the tomb, that the reserve head functioned as a 'second head' similar to "...the statues in the serdab and chapel above", acting as a secondary resting place for the soul of the deceased in the event that his body suffered destruction.<sup>15</sup> There are two difficulties with this interpretation. There is little evidence, as Smith admits, for the serdab statue itself being concealed. Those of Rahotep, Nofret and Hemyuwnw were concealed behind the walls of the serdab, but the general practice of dynasty IV at Giza, judging by evidence from the chapel of Prince Ka-wab, was to erect statues which were exposed in the chapel and not hidden from view.

The second barrier to accepting Junker's thesis involves the technique of burial chamber blocking. The mastabas from which data is forthcoming (G4140, G4340, G4440, G4540, G4650, G4430, G1203, and G2110) all exhibit masonry blocking with a portcullis stone, Reisner's blocking type Ib.<sup>16</sup> The construction involved the whole length of the connecting passage between shaft and chamber being filled with dressed stones set in plaster or sealed by a solid wall at either end of the passage which was filled with rubble.<sup>17</sup> The portcullis slab, usually set in grooves, was then put in place to block the passage leading to the burial chamber. Though all the blockings had been penetrated by tomb robbers, there is no evidence of there ever having been a recess or niche in the masonry blocking designed for the receipt of a reserve head.<sup>18</sup> This method of blocking was prevalent in the early part of dynasty IV and its rare occurrences toward the end of the dynasty are in the form of a portcullis with crude brick masonry, Reisner type Ia.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, there is little<sup>20</sup> to suggest a ritual placement of the reserve head within the connecting space between shaft and chamber. As for a funerary function within the burial chamber itself,<sup>21</sup> it must be remembered that only four heads were recovered here, two having possibly tumbled in from the shaft and only one (Egyptian University) possibly being associated with other funerary offerings. This latter tomb had, however, been disturbed by flooding. While a ritual usage as a 'second head' cannot be completely ruled out, there is scant data to corroborate such speculations.

A second and related purpose for the reserve head has been postulated by Smith:<sup>22</sup>

When the practice of placing reserve heads in the tomb fell into disuse, a practice which seems to have grown up to provide a more permanent substitute for the perishable modeling of the head in painted linen wrappings, its place seems to have been taken frequently by the covering of the actual face and body with modeled plaster. This would have been a less expensive mingling of the two methods which formerly seem to have existed side by side, the modeling of the face in linen and the limestone carving, and constituted a transition between the painted linen head and the separate cartonnage mask of the First Intermediate Period.

The simulation of the outer human form by padding with linen and moulding the facial features to resemble the deceased is an early development in Egyptian burials. Examples are known

from the archaic cemeteries at Saqqara<sup>23</sup> where the skeleton of a woman was discovered wrapped in linen, sixteen layers of which were still intact; by the mummified foot from Zoser's burial chamber<sup>24</sup>; at Medum in dynasty IV;<sup>25</sup> in the minor graves at Giza, G3041, G3030<sup>26</sup> and in G4340 where a reserve head was also found. The skeleton's head was, however, missing; so it cannot be demonstrated that the head had also been wrapped and moulded in linen. The occurrence of both reserve head and wrapped body in this tomb may negate the possibility that the former was a more expensive substitute<sup>27</sup> for the latter, but more evidence is needed. Similarly, as most of the known occurrences of plaster masks appear to postdate the reserve heads<sup>28</sup> at Giza, the possibility exists for their being a more economical replica of the deceased. At least two instances are known, however, at Giza (G1109, G4813A) of a plaster-coated body<sup>29</sup> in dynasty IV, and at Abusir a reserve head (Berlin 16455) and a plaster covered face (Weserkaf-ankh) were noted, both from dynasty V<sup>30</sup>. More data is therefore needed to verify Smith's hypothesis and demonstrate the exclusiveness of the two forms, even if we assume such a function for the portrait head.

A third possibility exists; that the reserve heads were sculptor's models.<sup>31</sup> Such use would not, of course, exclude a later ritual placement of the head in the tomb shaft or chamber. By this interpretation, the reserve head was a short-lived artistic device used by the stone workers designing tomb statues and tomb relief scenes. It might also be suggested that the head was used as a base for the plaster mould, then applied over the linen-moulded features of the deceased. Such an assumption cannot be verified without further examples of plaster moulds of a contemporary date with the reserve heads, but it might explain the vertical scoring at the back of several of the heads, incurred when the mould was removed from the limestone head for placement over the body's face.

The above mentioned possibilities, that of a 'second head' of a representation of the deceased, transitional between moulded linen and plaster modeling, and of an artist's model, can at this stage be only conjecture; subject to future information on Old Kingdom burial practices. The final placement of the reserve heads in the tomb of the deceased suggests some degree of ritual utilization, but the extent and nature are unknown. The occurrence of the great majority of heads in the burial shaft proper, can be interpreted in two fashions. Either all the heads were originally within the burial chamber and were removed to the shaft by the tomb's plunderers or, as is this writer's opinion, the great majority were originally deposited near the base of the tomb shaft after the chamber had been sealed, and were erected in conjunction with other

offerings, which at least included pottery vessels. Being reproductions of the deceased and thereby possibly the embodiments of some religious feeling and significance, this final function would not have precluded a more mundane purpose during the owner's lifetime.

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#### FOOTNOTES

1. Junker, Giza I, p. 205; Giza III, p. 22; Reisner, History of the Giza Necropolis I, p. 65; W.S. Smith, History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom, P. 25; Aldred, Old Kingdom Art in Ancient Egypt, p. 30, note to plates 18-22.
2. de Morgan, Fouilles a Dahchour, p. 9; Berlin 16455, Borchardt, Das Grabdenkmal des Konigs Ne-user-re; p. 133. The University College head (Petrie, "Egypt in Africa", Ancient Egypt I, p. 125) is of unknown provenance. Several heads are, additionally, ascribed to an earlier period (Dashur), to the time of Chephren (G4360, G4430 and possibly G4560, G4460), or later dynasty IV and V (G7560, Berlin 16455, University College).
3. W. S. Smith, op. cit., p. 23.
4. Reisner, ("Accessions to the Egyptian Department during 1914," Boston, Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin 12, p.32) saw a family resemblance evidenced in eight portrait heads and further suggested foreign qualities of design and actual features.
5. Ibid., p. 29.
6. In the opinion of Smith (op. cit., p. 28), G4340 represents a transition between the conventional drawing of the eye-brows in relief and the more impressionistic rendering obtained by the rounding of the upper edge of the eye-socket.
7. Ibid., p. 23; Scharff, "On the Statuary of the Old Kingdom", JEA 26, p. 46; Reisner, Giza Necropolis, p.65; Aldred, op. cit., p. 30; Dunham, The Egyptian Department and its Excavations, p. 44.
8. Junker, Giza I, p. 205; Giza III, p. 22.

9. G4140; G4560; Egyptian University.
10. G4560; G4650.
11. G4140; G4240; G4340; G4440(2); G4540; G4640; G5020; G4430; G4160; G4350; G4260; G4360; G4460; G1203; G2110.
12. G4940; G4260; Dashur; G4840.
13. G4660; G7560 (2); Cairo 47838; Cairo 37832; Berlin 16455; University College; G7650.
14. Giza I, p. 205, fig. 4, pl. X.
15. W. S. Smith, op. cit., p. 25.
16. The portcullis is found as early as dynasty I (Reisner, Development of the Egyptian Tomb, p. 185).
17. Reisner, Giza Necropolis, p. 169.
18. Junker's proposed niche should not be confused with the 'window' between the shaft and chamber noted by Reisner (op. cit., pp. 163-164, figs. 72, 73). This was a passage that had been cut through the rock wall above the entrance passage from the shaft to the north wall of the chamber. It was found in only 3.4% of the shafts at Giza, none of them corresponding to those containing reserve heads.
19. Cf. G1233, G1325A, G1206A, G3090C, G3000D (Ibid., p. 171).
20. No help is forthcoming from linguistic sources. For architectural representations of facial portraits in hieroglyphic form, see Mysliwiec, "A propos des signes hieroglyphique 'hr' et 'tp'," ZAS 98, pp. 94, 99.
21. On the religious aspect of all Egyptian statuary, cf. Scharff, op. cit., p. 41.
22. W. S. Smith, op. cit., p. 25.
23. G. E. Smith, "Egyptian Mummies", JEA 1, pl. XXXI.
24. Lauer, "Decouverte a Saqqarah d'une Partie de la Momie du Roi Zoser", ASAE 35, p. 25.
25. Petrie et al, Meydum and Memphis (III), p. 4, pl. XI; Petrie, Medum, pp. 17-18; G. E. Smith, op. cit.
26. Fischer, The Minor Cemetery at Giza, pp. 109-119, 127 ff.
27. W. S. Smith, History of Egyptian Sculpture, p. 25.

28. The majority occur in dynasties V and VI; G7491B, G20157, G2092A, G6014A, debris cast of G6012; G50400, G20330, G23471, G20370X, shafts 346, 466, 820, 493; W. S. Smith, op. cit., pp. 27-28.
29. Ibid., p. 24.
30. Borchardt, op. cit., p. 114.
31. The heads are primarily a feature of the western cemetery at Gize and may be the products of the royal workshop. Aldred (op. cit., p. 30, notes to plates 18-22) seems to suggest, however, that the reserve heads were an attempt to reproduce in a more permanent form, the plaster-moulded masks. Such an assumption would contradict Smith's thesis and posit an earlier date for the plaster masks.

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