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THE IDENTITY AND POSITIONS OF RELIEF FRAGMENTS IN MUSEUMS AND PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

Miscellaneous Reliefs from Saqqâra and Gîza

By YVONNE HARPUR

THIS is the first of a series of publications which will give the identity and/or positions of hitherto unidentified Old and Middle Kingdom blocks in museums and private collections. Many of these blocks have lain for years in museum storerooms and galleries, often unpublished or known only through rather murky photographs; other blocks have appeared as illustrations in well-known books and are familiar to us all. In the majority of cases, it is impossible to reconstruct the events which would explain why these reliefs were cut from tomb walls and how they came to lose their identity. It is nevertheless probable that some were removed by museum staff or archaeologists, whose failure to preserve the identity of each block was either due to confusion before the reliefs reached their destination, or to a breakdown in the system of coding used for identification. Certain blocks were no doubt taken from tombs illegally, or at some stage handled with scarcely any appreciation of their antiquity. These pieces have reached museums and private collections in a very sorry state, with edges jagged or flaking, and surfaces chipped, cracked, and stained. In this series of publications the basic aim is to trace the ownership of some of the blocks mentioned above, and, in doing so, to provide a more complete record of the scenes and inscriptions in private tombs of the Old and Middle Kingdoms.

The identification and positioning of fragments is not a matter of observation alone. If this were so, one would expect far more success in the subject, especially since many blocks have remained unidentified since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An eye for detail is certainly important, but there are other factors to consider, and this first publication is the most appropriate place in which to describe them.

1. *Shape of the block.* Although this is a significant aspect of relief identification, a few points must be borne in mind. The shape of a block may have changed through careless handling or deliberate cutting after its removal from a tomb, and the adjoining scenes *in situ* may have been damaged during the cutting procedure, so that parts of the original edge have dropped away. These possibilities mean that the edge

I should like to thank the members of the Board of Management of the Gerald Avery Wainwright Near Eastern Archaeological Fund (research expenses), and Mrs Marion Cox, Griffith Institute, Oxford (line-drawings, figs. 3-10).

of a block will not necessarily fit against the edge of the scene or inscription to which it belongs. In addition, if a block is published as a line-drawing, one can rarely tell whether the outline of the drawing represents the surface of the block or its general shape, which could include sections below the surface. Any doubts are dispelled if the block is also published as a photograph, or as a line-drawing with the under surfaces indicated by shading. So far, I have found that blocks with neatly cut edges often belong to the same tomb as similarly cut blocks in museums, or fit against reliefs *in situ*, which have the same neat edges. Evidently some of these fragments were to be reassembled in museums as tomb walls, whereas others were to be displayed as selected scenes.¹

2. *Quality of the relief.* Sometimes the reliefs in a tomb can vary in quality, but the workmanship shown in a fragment and in the scene to which it joins will probably be similar. For this reason, quality of relief can be an important factor in the process of identification. Equally important is the background of the relief, where the stone may be cut away completely, or cleared around the edges of figures, then graded back. Distinctive chisel marks on the background should also be noted.

3. *Colour traces remaining on the relief.* The occurrence of colour naturally depends upon the preservation of the relief fragment and the tomb from which it was taken. Since both will have received different treatment over the years, a brightly coloured relief could well come from a tomb with scarcely a trace of colour left. There is one colour, however, which tends to remain when others have disappeared, namely red brown. Different blocks show varying intensities of red brown on male figures, and these contrasting shades can be matched with reliefs *in situ*, in order to narrow down the tombs to which a fragment might belong.² A further consideration is the wash of colour which sometimes remains on the background of reliefs. This can range from pale grey to a light biscuit or pinkish hue.

4. *Style of the relief.* Certain stylistic differences may be detected between scenes at Gîza and Saqqâra. In general, figures in Gîza tombs tend to be relatively angular and muscular in appearance, whereas those in Saqqâra tombs have softer outlines and fairly rounded bodies. Of course, these characteristics do not always apply, but they are common enough to enable one to quickly select possibilities from which to attempt an identification. Stylistic contrasts within the same necropolis are more difficult to distinguish, yet they do occur. For example, the stocky, rather large-headed figures in the chapels of *Tii* and *Kʿi-m-rḥw* are very different from the tall, well-proportioned types in the tomb of *Mrrw-kʿi*, and the plump figures in the tomb of *Pth-ḥtp(w)* II have little in common with the broad-shouldered types in the tombs of *ḥnh-m-c-Ḥr* and *Nfr-sšm-Pth*.³ Saqqâra nobles are frequently buried in

¹ A number of relief fragments are neatly cut above or below the register lines so that parts of the upper or lower scenes are visible. Perhaps this was a precautionary measure to ensure that the chosen block was removed without damaging the hieroglyphic text above the scene, or the legs of figures or animals on the lower baseline.

² The various shades of brown are particularly noticeable on Old Kingdom relief fragments currently displayed in Rooms 32, 36, and 37 of the Cairo Museum. Some of the figures are almost chocolate-coloured, whereas others are a much brighter orange brown.

³ L. Épron and F. Daumas, *Le Tombeau de Ti*, I (Cairo, 1939); H. Wild, *Le Tombeau de Ti*, II, III (Cairo, 1953-66); M. Mogensen, *Le Mastaba égyptien de la Glyptothèque Ny Carlsberg* (Copenhagen, 1921); P. Duell

family groups of tombs which show similarities in the style of their chapel reliefs. This fact can provide a starting-point for the identification of blocks showing similar workmanship.

5. *Size of the figures and registers.* No tomb publications give the measurements of different registers and the sizes of figures therein. This means that the only accurate way of relating a fragment to a particular wall by size correspondences is to have direct access to the block and the tomb. Measuring can be a crucial aspect of block identification, but gaining access to the reliefs in order to take the necessary measurements is sometimes impossible.

6. *Faults, stains, and other blemishes on the relief.* Many of the surface blemishes on unidentified reliefs will have occurred after a block's removal from a tomb, but some reliefs bear marks which must continue on the adjoining surfaces: water stains, for example, or cracks or natural faults in the stone. The simplest way to distinguish significant markings is to examine their width, especially on the upper and lower edges of a block. If they do not taper away at this point, then the chances are that the marks will be present on the wall from which the block was taken.

7. *Type of stone.* Old Kingdom scenes were generally carved on limestone, with or without a surface of plaster. The plaster coating provides a better clue to the identity of a relief than the quality of the stone, because weathering and age have caused so much deterioration of the finer types of limestone. At present, I have identified only one relief on the basis of its stone type, but it comes from a temple rather than a private tomb. This block will be discussed in a later publication in the series.

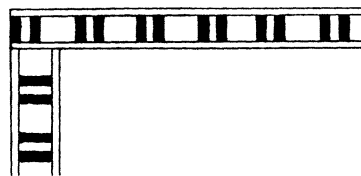


FIG. 1

8. *Marks on the relief showing the end of the wall or wall section.* These marks indicate the approximate position of a block within a composition. They occur as a plain line or as a pattern of coloured bars which sometimes decorates the upper edge of a composition as well as its sides (see fig. 1).

9. *Marks or colour traces on the relief indicating the lowest register.* The lowest register on a relief fragment is indicated by two lines forming a right angle at the end of a scene (L); the lower line continues horizontally, as the lowest baseline of the composition. If black, yellow, or red-brown colour bands are visible below this line the block must belong to the bottom of a wall, because these bands form the traditional wall base decoration. In decorated chapels of Old Kingdom date, the border of coloured bands illustrated in fig. 1 was never placed below scenes at the base of a wall; a relief with this pattern along its lower edge must come from a wall section above a niche or doorway, where the border has been used as a frame. One such block is now on display in the Cairo Museum.⁴

et al., *The Mastaba of Mereruka*, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1938); R. F. E. Paget and A. A. Pirie, *The Tomb of Ptah-hetep* (London, 1898); J. Capart, *Une Rue de tombeaux à Saqqarah*, 2 vols. (Brussels, 1907).

⁴ This is CG 1562, currently on display in Room 32 of the Museum: L. Borchardt, *Denkmäler des alten Reiches*, II (Cairo, 1964), 24-5, pl. 63.

10. *Remains of scenes or texts in the upper or lower registers.* Many unidentified blocks consist of a scene section in one register with broken edges of scenes above and below. Naturally our eyes are attracted to the scene most fully preserved, but, if a block is to be identified, the broken edges must be examined just as carefully. These fragments could be parts of scenes depicted elsewhere on the wall from which the block originated, or they could show the broken upper or lower sections of an inscription which may be matched with a broken text *in situ*. Detailed study of the broken registers and subsequent examination of tombs with similar register sequences form one of the most effective methods of identifying and positioning Old and Middle Kingdom blocks.

11. *The depiction of baselines on a relief.* A scene on a block and on the wall to which it belongs will show the same method of depicting register baselines. These vary in execution from an incised line (usually in poorer tombs) to a 'rolled' line raised well above the background. Between the two contrasting types there is a baseline defined by a pair of horizontally incised lines, and one indicated by a thick raised line flattened along the surface. The last baseline is the most common type, though there is considerable variation in the quality of workmanship and depth of cutting.

12. *Hieroglyphic inscriptions and palaeography.* A large number of unidentified blocks are decorated with hieroglyphs and major figures or hieroglyphs alone. Thus, many relief fragments are simply unfinished sentences or titles which may be matched through their meaning with other fragments, or with inscriptions *in situ*. If an activity is depicted on a fragment, the inscriptions on the horizontal edges of the surface may be the key to establishing the scenes that were once shown above or below; sometimes parts of signs can be matched, while on other occasions the text might be preserved well enough to read (cf. no. 10). In the present study, peculiarities in the depiction and position of individual hieroglyphs (i.e. aspects of palaeography) are not important methods of identification because most of the selected reliefs show scenes with fairly limited inscriptions. Once text fragments are included in the project, palaeography is certain to become a more significant method of identification.⁵

13. *Scene sequences and positions.* A knowledge of Old and Middle Kingdom scene sequences can be a useful aid when determining the types of composition to which a block belongs. If, for example, a relief shows donkeys loaded with grain, it will probably belong to a sequence of grain harvesting, transport of grain by donkeys, stacking of sheaves, and perhaps threshing and winnowing. This is because the scene of donkeys loaded with grain is rarely shown in isolation in Old and Middle Kingdom tombs. Grain harvesting, on the other hand, will not necessarily belong to a sequence because harvesting is frequently depicted by itself, above or below unrelated activities. A further example is the row of dancers which is normally associated with a banquet, near musicians and bearers. In this context, dancers are

⁵ Numerous text fragments are published as hand copies of the inscriptions with no indication as to the size and shape of the stone on which they were carved. This seriously reduces the number of methods one can use to match the fragments (e.g. aspects of palaeography, colour traces, quality of the relief, measurements, etc.).

rarely depicted in a register above family members or food offerings; their usual position is in a lower register, either level with, or below, the feet of the major figure. Butchery is another scene which tends to be shown at the bottom of a composition, usually with the meat-bearers oriented towards the false door on the west wall. This, however, could be an imitation of real life; for joints of meat were probably carried by bearers to the stone offering table which was set in front of the false door. It is inevitable that there will be exceptions to the rule in the sequence of scenes depicted on chapel walls. Even so, a researcher who has acquired a detailed knowledge of the known Old and Middle Kingdom compositions is a better equipped to develop a successful line of investigations on the basis of typical scene positions.

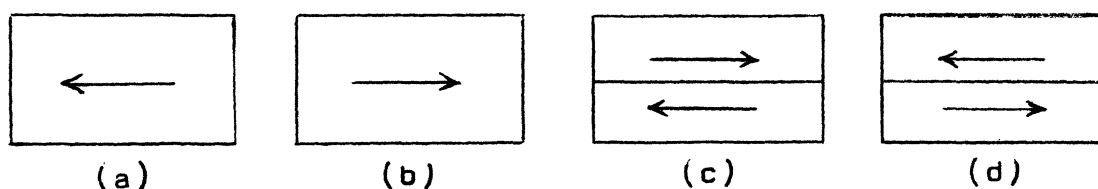


FIG. 2

14. *Orientation of figures and inscriptions in a relief.* The orientation of offering bearers depicted on a relief fragment will generally follow the orientation of the composition to which the fragment belongs, and the presence of a major figure in this composition may be deduced from the postures of the bearers. The orientation of daily life scenes, however, is more difficult to establish because the figures often face each other. Sometimes, left- or right-facing hieroglyphs in a damaged lower register, or feet, hooves, oar-tips, or punting poles in an upper register will reveal the general orientation of the composition, yet none of these is conclusive evidence if the wall scenes are divided into two horizontal sections. In this case, the figures in each section may be oriented in opposite directions, to face major figures or other important features on the same surface, or on an adjoining wall (see fig. 2).⁶

15. *Developments in the rendering of figures and scenes.* During the Old Kingdom, many new details were introduced into the repertory of tomb scenes: figure postures, activities, objects, clothing, wigs, and so on. After a lengthy study of these details I have provided many of them with a *terminus ante quem*, so that the date of a composition can be estimated by the presence of particular features; such data can be applied to unidentified relief fragments as well as wall scenes, in order to cut down the number of chapels to which these pieces might belong. This system is *not* intended as a precise method of dating as much as a flexible guide. As such, it has proved a useful means of tracing the identity of fragments depicting figures and activities, with or without texts.⁷

⁶ Good examples are: LD II, pl. 21 (*Mr-ib-i*); H. Junker, *Giza*, II (Vienna and Leipzig, 1934), fig. 20 (*K-i-ni-nswt*); A. M. Moussa and H. Altenmüller, *Das Grab des Nianchchnum und Chnumhotep* (Mainz, 1977), figs. 12–13 (*Ni-nh-Hnmw* and *Hnmw-htp(w)*).

⁷ Y. Harpur, *The Orientation and Development of Scenes and Figures in Old Kingdom Private Tombs* (Oxford, 1982), 155–335 (Unpublished D.Phil. dissertation in the Bodleian Library, Oxford).

16. *Descriptions of unpublished tombs.* A large number of Memphite tombs are known only through descriptions made at the time of their excavation or shortly afterwards. The most important of these were written by Auguste Mariette, towards the end of the nineteenth century, and George Reisner, just before the mid twentieth century.⁸ Mariette's notes on the decoration in Saqqâra mastabas are particularly valuable, because he included many texts as well as comments about unusual features in the scenes. Some of the compositions he described are now in the Cairo Museum, in the form of identified blocks; I believe that certain unidentified blocks in the same galleries could also come from his excavations, having been removed from the tombs before they were sanded up (cf. no. 2).

17. *Code numbers.* Occasionally the back of an unidentified fragment is of special interest because it may bear numbers referring to the tomb from which the piece was taken, or to a code used for reassembling purposes. These must not be confused with museum numbers which are generally written on an undecorated part of the surface. Often the numbers on the back of a block seem meaningless. Since noting them, however, I have discovered a group of identically marked fragments which bear such a striking resemblance to each other that they probably originate from the same tomb.⁹ Under the circumstances, it is advisable to examine both sides of any unindented block.

18. *Museum records.* Museum records form part of the 'detective' aspect of identifying relief fragments, because they often provide details as to when a relief was bought or discovered, its provenance, and, less commonly, the source from whom it was obtained. The *Journal d'entrée* in the Cairo Museum is a mine of information in this respect, to the extent that the original volumes are irreplaceable. Clues to the identity of reliefs are not only to be gathered from the descriptions in the *Journal*, but even from the styles of handwriting, and writing substances, used by people who have added later remarks beside the entries.

The selected reliefs below were identified after applying the above criteria in two different ways. Either (a) unidentified blocks were examined before an attempt was made to trace the tombs to which they belonged, or (b) scenes *in situ* were studied in order to trace fragments broken from the compositions. Some of the blocks are only tentatively assigned to particular walls. They are included to illustrate reasons why a positive identification cannot always be made.

*Museum number:*¹⁰ CG 1531. *Present location:* Cairo Museum. *Original location:* Saqqâra.

In a number of tombs dating from the reign of Izezi onwards there is a scene type which depicts the tomb owner viewing the arrival of freighters carrying produce from his estates. Many of the minor figures in these scenes have deferential postures, but some are shown

⁸ A. Mariette (ed. G. Maspero), *Les Mastabas de l'ancien empire* (Paris, 1889); G. A. Reisner, *A History of the Giza Necropolis*, 1 (Cambridge, Mass., 1942).

⁹ These blocks will form the subject of a later publication in the series.

¹⁰ Borchardt, op. cit. 1 (Berlin, 1937), 229-30, pl. 47; B. Porter and R. L. B. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Paintings*, 111², Memphis, Part 2, Saqqâra to Dahshûr (Oxford, 1981), 753 (Hereinafter *PM*).

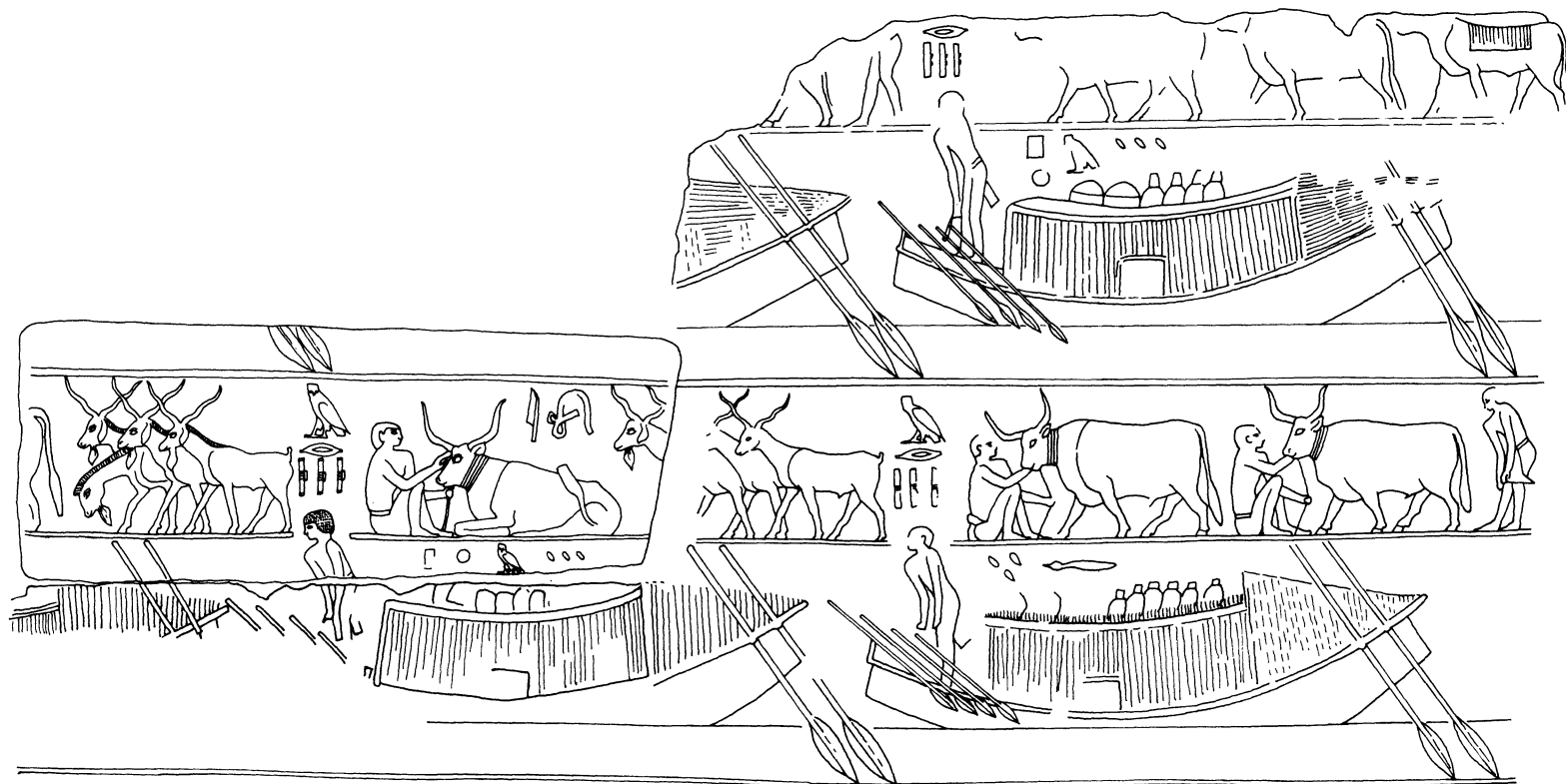


FIG. 3

tending animals on the boats or even force-feeding them.¹¹ In order to make a complete study of this scene type it was necessary to collect copies of all reliefs showing these features, and among the examples was an unidentified block from the Cairo Museum, known only as CG 1531 from Saqqâra (see fig. 3, upper left). This block shows the figure of a herdsman tending an ox, and, further left, a group of goats with corkscrew-like horns. The relief seemed to depict a field activity of some kind, but the slightly bowed head and shoulders of a man to the left of the ox provided a clue as to the relief's proper context. This figure extended above the baseline; therefore the herdsman and ox were probably in a sub-register of a much larger scene which included at least one bending male figure in a very wide register. The unidentified block was then matched against the large freighter scenes discussed above, and it was soon found to belong to a composition in the tomb of *Tii*, D22, at Saqqâra. CG 1531 fits in the second register of the freighter scene, thereby completing a bowing figure on one of the boats, and lengthening the sub-registers of animals forming part of the cargo.

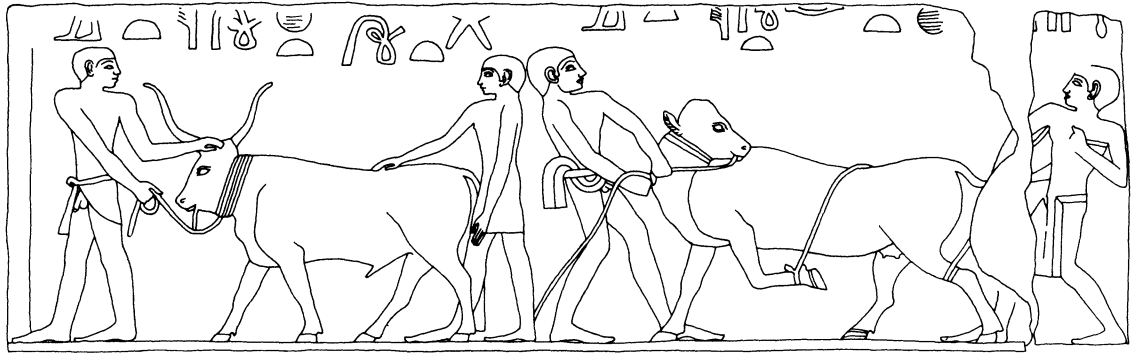


FIG. 4

*Museum number:*¹² CG 1560. *Present location:* Cairo Museum. *Original location:* Saqqâra.

The chapel of *Kʿi-m-rḥw*, D2, is now in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek, Copenhagen, and its scenes are described in Maria Mogensen's *Le Mastaba égyptien de la Glyptothèque Ny Carlsberg* (Copenhagen, 1921). In this publication the authoress mentions a fragment on the right (north) thickness of the entrance, depicting a man pulling a rope; she includes a line-drawing of the relief, but evidently the block itself is not in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek. The action of the man shows that he is restraining an animal, and in fact, part of the beast's tail can be seen behind the figure (see fig. 4, right). This line-drawing provided me with four clues regarding the appearance of the missing section: (a) the scene to which it belongs must be short, because the fragment is part of an entrance thickness; (b) the orientation must be inward (i.e. left facing), so that the minor figures seem to be entering the tomb; (c) the other figures (if any) could be fairly stocky with slightly over-large heads, like the man shown on the fragment; and (d) the missing section could show oxen entering the tomb, since this is a common entrance decoration.

With this information as a guide, the obvious place to begin a search for the missing relief

¹¹ The best examples of this scene type are: LD II, pls. 62-4, 103-4 (*Rc-šps, Pth-ḥtp(w)*); G. Steindorff, *Das Grab Des Ti* (Leipzig, 1913), pls. 20-2 (*Tii*); Épron and Daumas, op. cit. I, pls. xix, xxvi (*Tii*); C. M. Firth and B. Gunn, *Teti Pyramid Cemeteries*, II (Cairo, 1926), pl. 53, top (*Kʿ-gm-ni*).

¹² Borchardt, op. cit. II, 22-3, pl. 62; *PM* III², 2, 753.

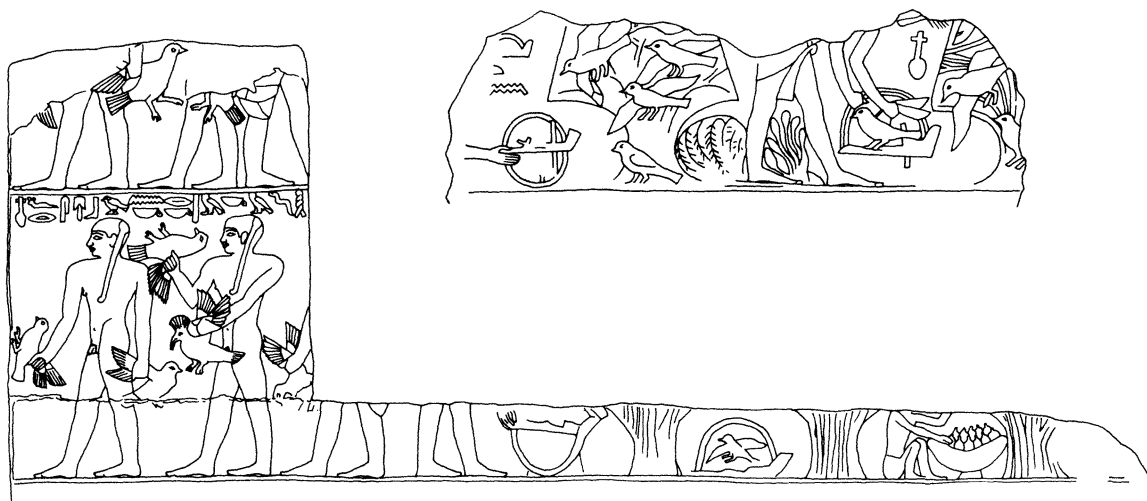


FIG. 5

was in the Cairo Museum, because two chapel reliefs belonging to *Kḥi-m-rḥw* were known to be on display there.¹³ The line of investigation was quite simple: if the blocks from the tomb were taken to the Cairo Museum before they were to be sent to Copenhagen, then perhaps certain reliefs not in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek were still in the Cairo Museum, unidentified. This reasoning proved to be correct, because CG 1560 was found to match the fragment published by Mogensen (see fig. 4). It depicts two animals led (into the tomb) by three men, and the leg of the second beast is tied with a rope which is being pulled by the man in Mogensen's fragment. The present whereabouts of this smaller block remains a mystery, even after a search for its entry in the *Journal d'entrée*. Its probable location, however, is in a store-room in the Cairo Museum.

*Museum number:*¹⁴ none. *Present location:* unknown. *Original location:* Saqqâra, near the Teti Pyramid.

In Firth's publication there is a small line-drawing of a bird trapping scene which shows men setting traps below two trees (see fig. 5, upper right). Firth mentions that this fragment was found near the Teti Pyramid at Saqqâra, but he does not indicate where it was taken subsequently. No photograph of the block is included in the publication, nor are there notes describing its size or quality of workmanship.

This may seem an insignificant fragment, but the scene it contains is extremely rare; for it only occurs twice in the Old Kingdom: on Firth's relief and in the tomb of *Mrrw-kḥi* near the Teti Pyramid. The location of the two reliefs and the rarity of the subject-matter make this too much of a coincidence; Firth's fragment must surely be part of the bird-trapping scene of *Mrrw-kḥi*, probably removed from the tomb at some stage and discarded nearby.

The trapping scene in the tomb is on the north wall of the pillared hall above the entrance to the chapel of the son of *Mrrw-kḥi*.¹⁵ Its lower register is broken in half, lengthwise, but above this there is a large gap where the fragment no doubt fits as part of an upper register

¹³ I should like to thank Dr M. Jørgensen (Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek) for the information he gave me concerning the reliefs of *Kḥi-m-rḥw* at Copenhagen. The agriculture and craft scenes on the east wall of the mastaba are plaster casts of the original blocks which are on display in the Cairo Museum (CG 1534).

¹⁴ Firth and Gunn, op. cit. I (Cairo, 1926), 6; *PM* III², 2, 546, bottom.

¹⁵ Duell *et al.*, op. cit. II, pls. 162-4; *PM* III², 2, 533[78].

(see fig. 5). Male figures carrying birds are shown to the left in both registers and their presence seems to indicate that the bird-trapping scene extended upwards as two registers above the section *in situ*. The trees, and methods of showing the hand traps opened and closed are similarly depicted in both reliefs, the only real difference being that Firth's fragment is wider and shows birds in the foliage. Until the original block is found and measured its identification must remain tentative. In the light of the evidence, however, its position in this tomb is unlikely to be incorrect.

*Museum number:*¹⁶ 22.83. *Present location:* Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore. *Original location:* Saqqâra.

A well-established scene in the Old Kingdom repertory depicts a banquet with the tomb-owner seated before food and entertained by dancers and musicians. Sometimes he is shown in a pavilion of matting, in which case his family may be depicted near him, as if they are sharing the feast; this variant is far more common at Gîza than it is at Saqqâra, where only two or three examples are preserved.¹⁷ Female dancers are rarely omitted from these scenes. In most cases they are dressed in plain kilts, often pointed at the front, and around their necks they wear broad or high collars. The dancers on the Baltimore fragment, 22.83, show one unusual feature: their kilts are striped as if to indicate pleating or panels (see fig. 6, lower). An examination of all published dancing scenes of Old Kingdom date has revealed only four parallels to these kilts, the closest being a line-drawing of a fragment from the chapel of *Hnmw-htp(w)*, D49, at Saqqâra.¹⁸

At the time of this discovery the east wall of this chapel was being reconstructed at Oxford, from drawings of the tomb reliefs published by Margaret Murray, and from other published reliefs. Once an unidentified block from Basle (Basle III 5219)¹⁹ was found to join a fragment from the tomb of *Hnmw-htp(w)*, now in the British Museum (B.M. 872) to form part of a pavilion scene, a sure link with Baltimore 22.83 was formed (see fig. 6, upper). The Basle block depicts a large female figure in kneeling posture, and, behind her, two sub-registers of smaller figures kneeling before offering tables. This relief is broken just above the baseline so that the leg of the large figure, the base of the offering table behind her, and the (kneeling) leg of a smaller female figure are missing. The British Museum block depicts two sub-registers, each with a small figure kneeling before an offering table. Here again the table base in the lower sub-register is missing, as well as the bottom half of the lower figure.

The association between these two fragments and Baltimore 22.83 is evident in the broken upper register on the Baltimore block. To the right is the base of an offering table which joins to the table in B.M. 872, and further left are the remains of a kneeling leg, a table base, then the toe, instep, anklet, and shin of a much larger figure. These join to the relief numbered Basle III 5219. The reconstruction of the east wall of the chapel of *Hnmw-htp(w)* (as far as it can be deduced) is published by Jaromir Malek.²⁰ Figure 6 here shows only the Baltimore fragment and the two blocks to which it joins.

¹⁶ Steindorff, *Catalogue of the Egyptian Sculpture in the Walters Art Gallery* (Baltimore, 1946), 78, pl. xliii, 264.

¹⁷ Épron and Dumas, op. cit. I, pls. lvi, lvii (*Tii*); LD II, pl. 61A (*Rt-šps*); H. F. Petrie and M. A. Murray, *Seven Memphite Tomb Chapels* (London, 1952), pl. xvii, 1 (*Hnmw-htp(w)*).

¹⁸ Ibid., pl. xvii, 10.

¹⁹ *Geschenk des Nils. Aegyptische Kunstwerke aus schweizer Besitz*. (Eine Ausstellung des Ägyptologischen Seminars der Universität Basel, 1978), no. 119 with pl. (Basle III 5219); T. G. H. James (Ed.), *Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae, etc., in the British Museum*, pt. i, 2nd edn. (London, 1961), 19, pl. xx, 1 (B.M. 872).

²⁰ J. Malek, in *Société d'Égyptologie, Genève* 6 (1983), 60–7. I should like to thank Dr Malek for discussing this project with me while it was in progress.

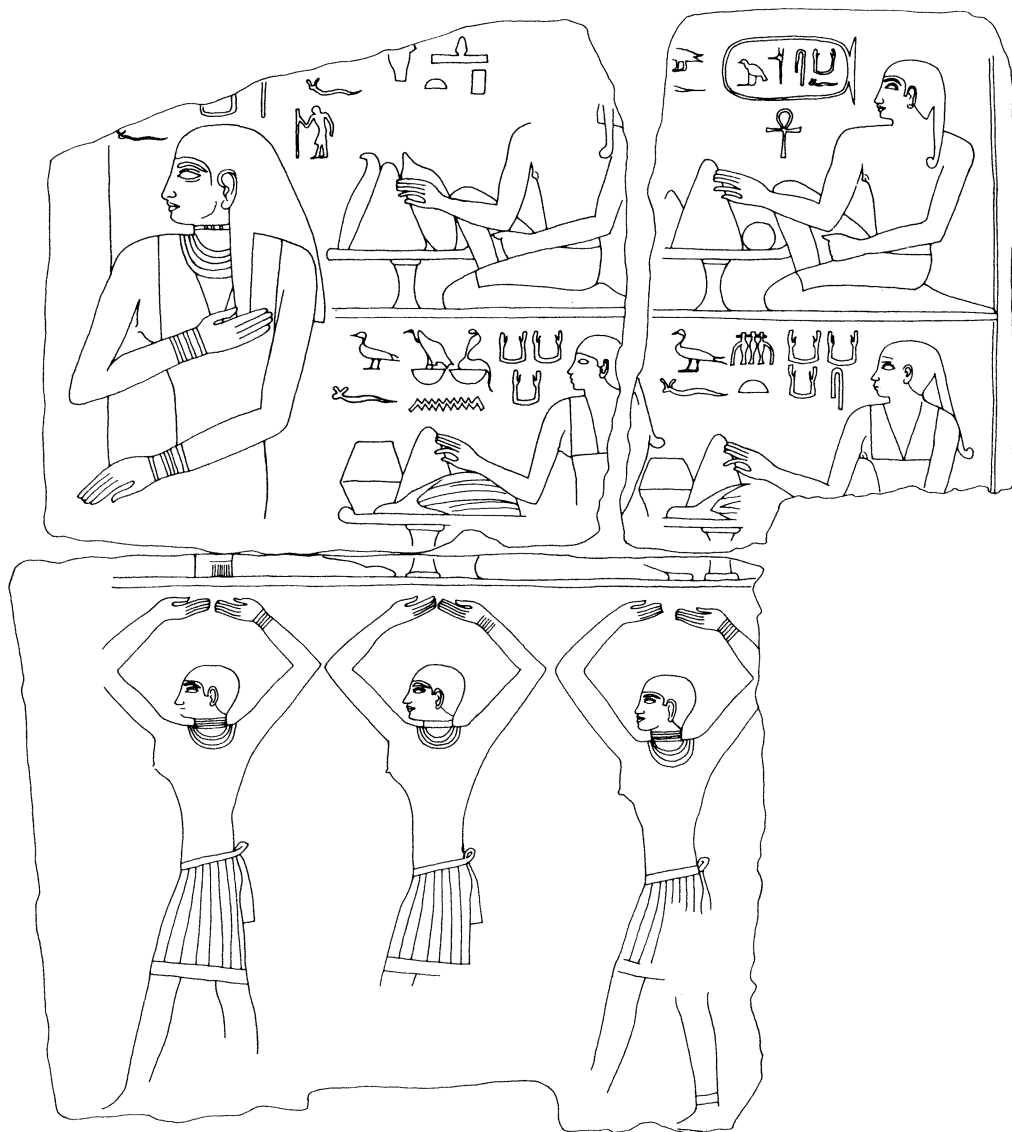


FIG. 6

*Museum number:*²¹ none. *Present location:* unknown. *Original location:* Saqqâra.

This relief, of papyrus gatherers, is mentioned by Margaret Murray immediately after her description of the reliefs in the chapel of *ḥti-ḥtp(w)*, E17, at Saqqâra, but she does not state where the scene comes from or where it was found (see fig. 7). It is not included with the reliefs of *ḥti-ḥtp(w)*, E7, described in the *Topographical Bibliography*, nor is it included anywhere else in the Saqqâra volume. A possible clue to the identity of the tomb to which the fragment belongs is in pl. viii of Murray's publication. Above the papyrus gatherers is the line-drawing of a hippopotamus which Murray describes as part of a scene in the chapel of *Pr-sn*, D45, at Saqqâra (cf. n. 21). This is one of the tombs recorded by Auguste Mariette, who mentions a lotus-gathering scene on the east wall.²² In particular, he notes the condition

²¹ Petrie and Murray, op. cit. 9, 20, pl. viii, lower.

²² Mariette, op. cit. 301.

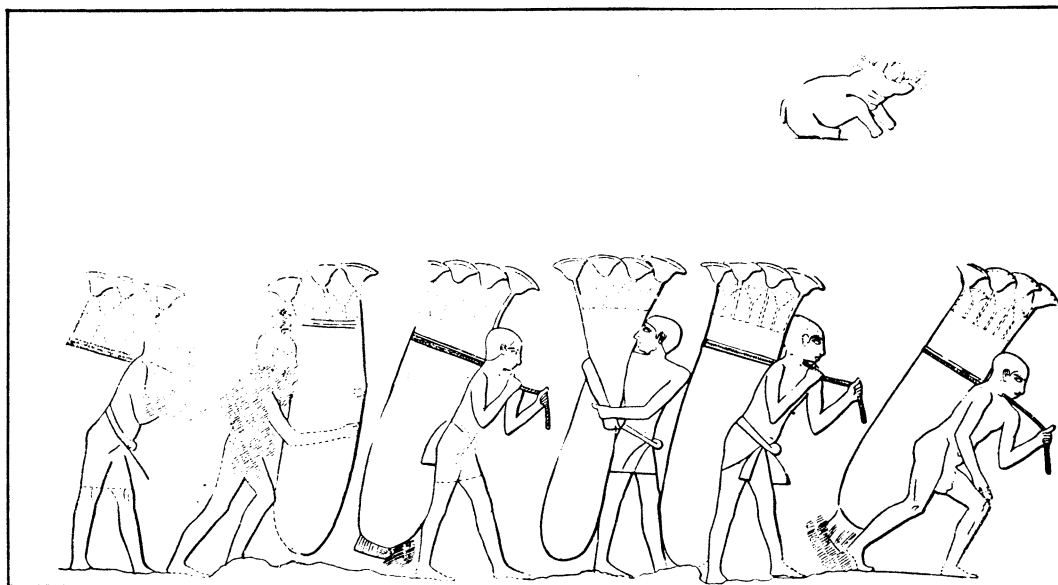


FIG. 7

of the first figure in this scene, who (translation) '... is afflicted with a disease which is still very common today ...' (i.e. in the late nineteenth century) '... in the marshy parts of northern Egypt'. The disease to which Mariette refers is probably bilharziasis, which can affect the navel and genital parts of human beings; people with this complaint are sometimes shown in tomb scenes dating from the second half of the Fifth Dynasty onwards at Saqqâra.²³ In the line-drawing published by Murray (see fig. 7) the first figure is certainly depicted with a genital defect, but the bundle he carries is papyrus, not lotuses. If it is accepted that the hippopotamus relief illustrated by Murray belongs to the same wall as the papyrus-gathering scene shown just below it (i.e. the east wall of the chapel of *Pr-sn*), then Mariette must mean papyrus gatherers. This activity would be well in keeping with the other subjects he describes on that wall—namely, a marsh-hunt scene (to which the hippopotamus no doubt belongs), and a scene of fighting boatmen. A further point to note is that the papyrus gatherers in Murray's line-drawing face right. If they belong to the east wall of D45, then they are oriented inwards, thus following the direction of the bearers and butchers in a table scene depicted on the adjacent south wall. The implied movement of all of these figures is towards the false door on the west wall.

*Museum number:*²⁴ no. 2. *Present location:* Barracco Collection, Rome. *Original location:* Saqqâra.

*Museum number:*²⁵ Aeg. 751. *Present location:* Dresden Albertinum. *Original location:* Perhaps Gîza.

Although these blocks are recorded as coming from different sites, the location of one of them is incorrect, because the reliefs join. Their identity is still unknown, but to judge by the

²³ P. Ghalioungui, 'Some Body Swellings illustrated in Two Tombs of the Ancient Empire', *ZÄS* 87 (1962), 108–14.

²⁴ G. T. C. Barracco, *Catalogo del Museo di Scultura Antica. Fondazione Barracco* (Rome, 1910), 13[2] with pl. facing p. 16; *PM* III², 2, 761.

²⁵ W. Wreszinski, *Atlas zur altägyptischen Kulturgeschichte*, I (Leipzig, 1923), pl. 394 (called Saqqâra); *PM* III², 1, 309.

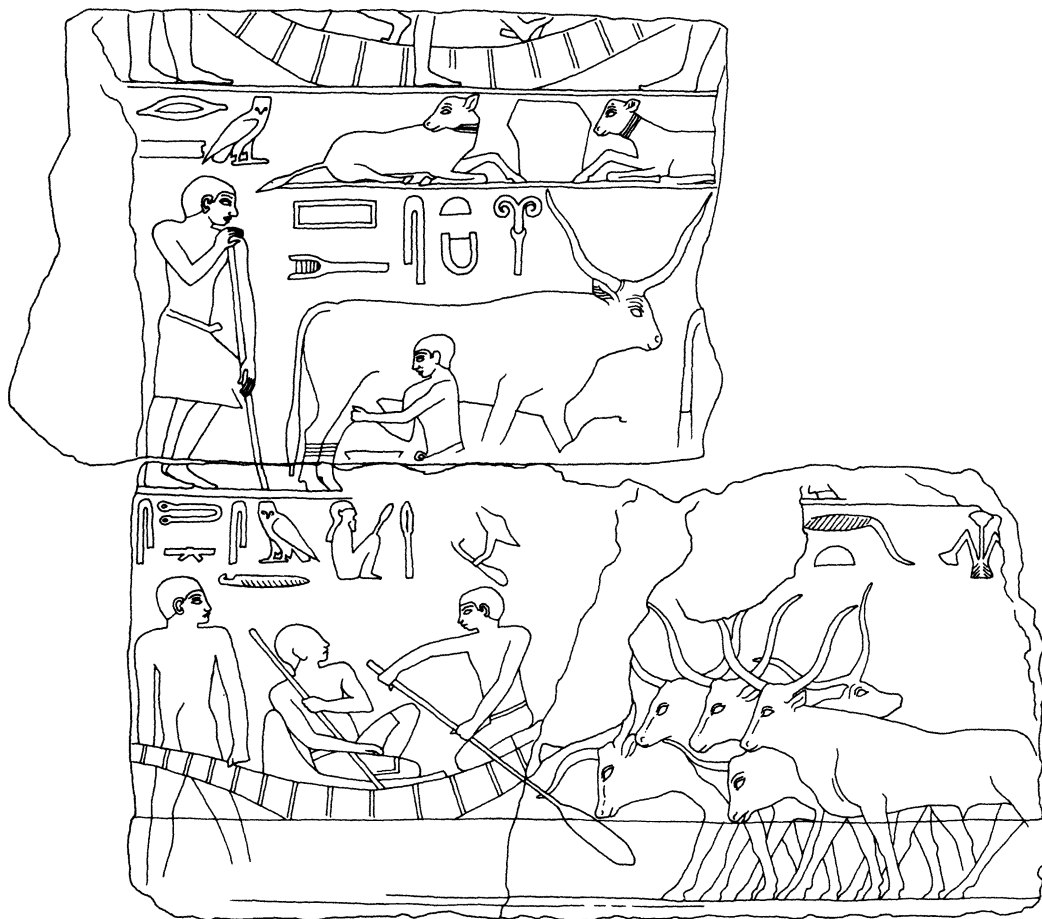


FIG. 8

style of the relief, they are most likely to come from a Saqqâra tomb dating to the Fifth Dynasty. The Barracco fragment, which is the upper block, shows an overseer facing right and leaning on his staff as he watches a man milking a cow; further along are the remains of a second cow which also faces right. The entire lower section of this block is broken away (see fig. 8, upper). The Dresden fragment shows a fording scene and, directly above it, traces of another register: to the left are two feet (one foot on the ground and the other raised), the slanted end of an object (a staff), and the tail tip and closely placed hooves of an animal facing right. Much further along there are traces of another hoof facing right (see fig. 8, lower). All of these details exactly match the detail on the Barracco fragment, but, because the blocks were probably hacked from the wall, their edges are too badly damaged to form a neat join.

*Museum number:*²⁶ CG 1561. *Present location:* Cairo Museum. *Original location:* Saqqâra.

In Room 32 of the Cairo Museum there is a relief fragment, CG 1561, which shows two registers of women, busily engaged in baking and brewing activities (see fig. 9). These registers evidently come from the left side of a composition because the left edge is defined

²⁶ Borchardt, *op. cit.* II, 23-4, pl. 63; *PM* III², 753.

by a vertical line.²⁷ Above the baking and brewing scenes there are traces of an upper register. Originally a boat was depicted here; for the tips of nine oars can be distinguished, each spaced equally apart.

The first step in attempting to identify CG 1561 was to find a similar register sequence. There were no parallels in the Old Kingdom volumes of the *Topographical Bibliography*, so then the search was transferred to the notes in Mariette's *Mastabas*. Here there was one wall description with a sequence resembling the one illustrated in CG 1561: the north wall of the chapel of *Nn-hft-kꜣi*, D47, at Saqqâra.²⁸ Mariette's notes read as follows (text details omitted):²⁹

'Paroi nord. Porteurs d'offrandes.

Abattage des bœufs avec ce titre général (text)

Plus bas, grande barque naviguant à la rame. Au dessus d'une, matelot étendant le bras (text). Au registre du bas, scènes d'intérieur (pl. x).'

It is unfortunate that no further details were included regarding the scènes d'intérieur, because pl. x was never published. Nevertheless, activities such as baking and brewing would no doubt be classified as interior (i.e. home) rather than exterior (i.e. field) pursuits, especially since the sub-registers in CG 1561 show loaves of bread on dishes which appear to be placed on shelves or stands.

If CG 1561 is compared with known reliefs from the tomb of *Nn-hft-kꜣi*—also on display in Room 32 of the Cairo Museum—stylistic similarities can be detected (*a*) in the depth of cutting, (*b*) in the quality of the relief, and (*c*) in the smoothness of the background. The distinctive elongation of some of the female figures depicted in CG 1561 is repeated in CG 1558 (a relief known to have come from the chapel of *Nn-hft-kꜣi*), and the tall female attendants carved on this block have the same closely cropped hair as the female bakers and brewers on CG 1561.³⁰ Finally, a link may be established through measurements. According to Mariette, the width of the north wall in the chapel of *Nn-hft-kꜣi* is 120 cm. In the Photographic Register of the Cairo Museum, CG 1561 is recorded as being 120 cm wide, and my own measurement of the relief is 119 cm. If we assume that CG 1561 extended the full width of a composition (cf. n. 27), it precisely fits the north wall in the chapel of *Nn-hft-kꜣi*, D47, at Saqqâra. Without further details about Mariette's 'pl. x', however, it is impossible positively to identify the tomb to which this block belongs.³¹

Museum number:³² none. *Present location*: unknown. *Original location*: Gîza, *Shm-kꜣ-Rꜣ*, LG 89.

In his publication of this tomb, Selim Hassan includes some miscellaneous blocks, four of which were found near the north wall of the outer room; when joined, these particular blocks show a group of men felling trees and lopping branches off a fallen trunk (see fig. 10, upper).

²⁷ There is no line defining the end of the wall on the right-hand side of the relief, but, to judge from the inward-facing positions of the figures here, this is the end of the scene and perhaps the end of the composition as well.

²⁸ Mariette, op. cit. 304–9; *PM* III², 2, 580–1 and plan lix.

²⁹ Ibid. 306, middle.

³⁰ Borchardt, op. cit. II, 19–21, pl. 62 (CG 1558), 23–4, pl. 63 (CG 1561).

³¹ There are two points which may be used as arguments against the identification of CG 1561 as a relief from the north wall of D47: (*a*) The oars in the upper register would belong to a vessel oriented away from the west wall, whereas one might expect the reverse orientation; and (*b*) the lowest baseline of CG 1561 may not be the lowest baseline of a composition. As counter-arguments it should be noted that (*a*), in some tombs, boats depicted on a wall (as opposed to a thickness) are occasionally oriented away from the west wall; and (*b*) Mariette does not state precisely how many registers were below the boating scene. His descriptions must not be taken too literally.

³² Selim Hassan, *Excavations at Giza*, IV (Cairo, 1943), 115, fig. 60; *PM* III², 1, 233–4, and plan xxxii (LG 89).

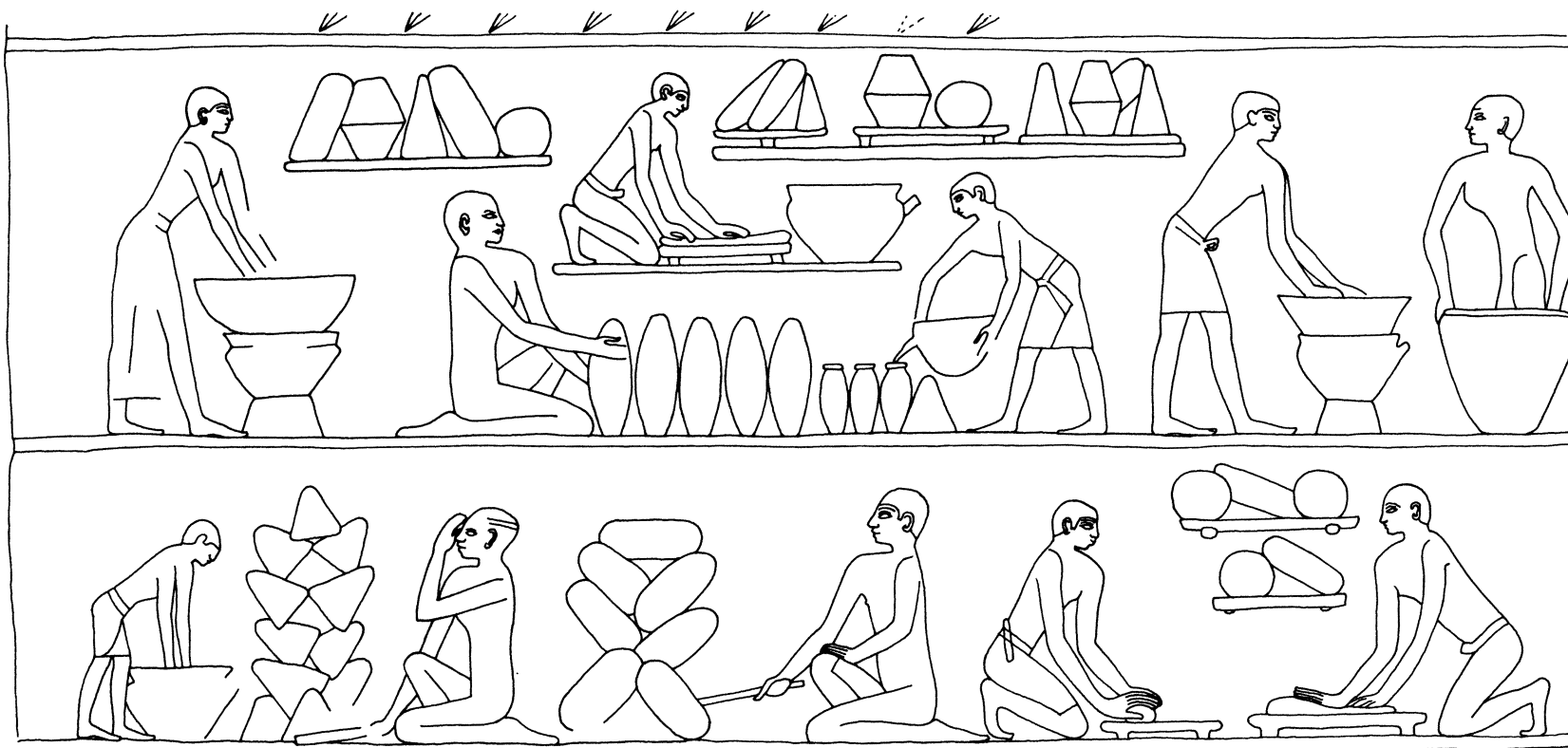


FIG. 9

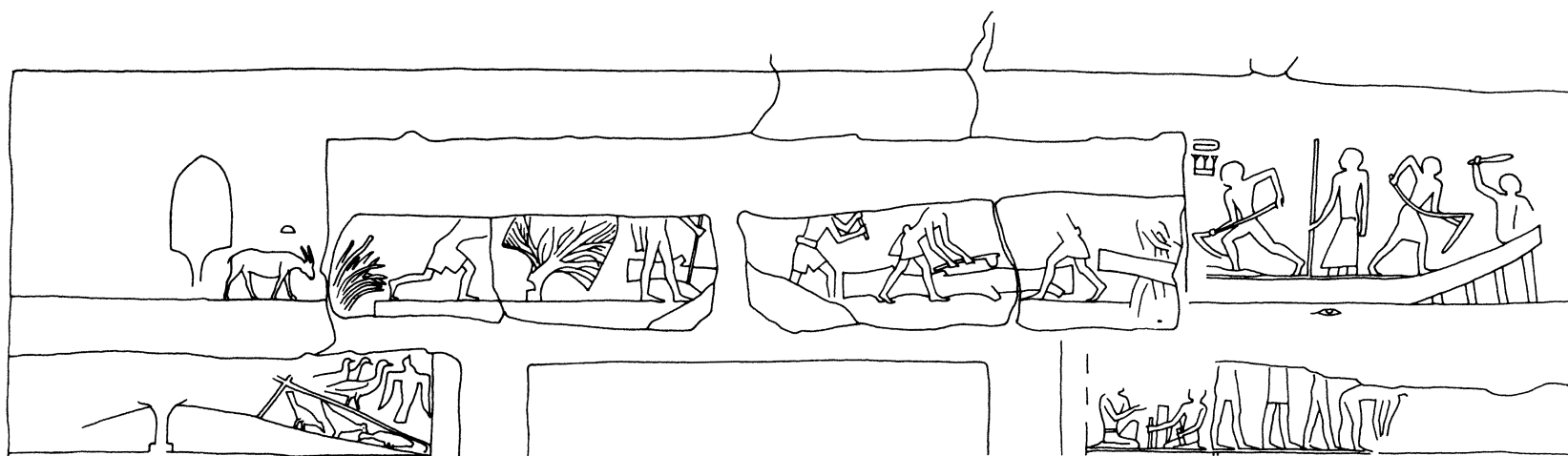


FIG. 10

Hassan presumed that the fragments belonged to a destroyed composition on the north wall, and this is the orientation recorded for them in the *Topographical Bibliography*.

Among the many scene sequences preserved in Old Kingdom private tombs there is one which illustrates the lengthy process of building wooden boats. To begin the sequence, men are shown knocking goats out of branches, then felling the trees; next to this is shown a newly trimmed log, sometimes carried by a gang of workmen; then finally there is a scene of boat builders working on the wooden hull of a vessel. One of the best sequences is in the tomb of *Ni-ṛnh-Hnmw* and *Hhmw-ḥtp(w)* at Saqqâra, while the tomb of *Nfr* and *Kꜣ-ḥꜣi* seems to contain the earliest known example in the Saqqâra necropolis.³³

At Gîza, high up on the left side of the south entrance wall in the chapel of *Shm-kꜣ-Rꜣ*, there is a small relief of a goat browsing by a tree. A large space to the right of this scene extends above the doorway, and further right of this is a scene depicting men shaping a wooden boat (see fig. 10, left and right sides above doorway).³⁴ There can be no doubt as to the whereabouts of the missing reliefs between these scenes. The fragments assigned by Hassan to the north wall of this tomb belong to the south entrance wall, where the progression of a browsing goat, tree-felling, log-trimming, and boat-building constitutes the earliest preserved example of a boat-building sequence in an Egyptian tomb.

³³ Moussa and Altenmüller, op. cit., figs. 8–10; id., *The Tomb of Nefer and Kahay* (Mainz, 1971), pls. 18–23.

³⁴ Hassan, op. cit. 110, fig. 57; *LD Ergänzungsband*, pl. xxxvi. J. Vandier, *Manuel d'archaéologie égyptienne*, v (Paris, 1969), 662, fig. 265 (partial reconstruction). The extant line-drawings of the south-wall decoration are too schematic to permit an exact reconstruction of the scenes above the entrance.