

**EGYPTIAN ART**  
IN THE AGE OF  
THE PYRAMIDS

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

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THE PYRAMIDS

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# EXCAVATING THE OLD KINGDOM

## The Giza Necropolis and Other Mastaba Fields

PETER DER MANUELIAN

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**T**he Giza necropolis, doubtless the most famous archaeological site in the world, has experienced two golden ages. The first took place in the Fourth Dynasty, when the pharaoh Khufu (Cheops) and two of his successors, Khafre (Chephren) and Menkaure (Mycerinus), chose the plateau on the desert's edge west of the Nile for their monumental pyramid complexes and the surrounding private, or nonroyal, cemeteries. The second dates some 4,500 years later, to the twentieth century C.E., when the first scientific archaeological investigators excavated the necropolis, revealing countless treasures and invaluable information about all aspects of Egyptian culture during the Old Kingdom. This second golden age continues to the present day, and, indeed, the spectacular discoveries at Giza show no signs of abating. These remarks will concentrate on the new golden age, the era of scholarly discovery at the Giza pyramids.

Giza (figs. 79, 80), Saqqara,<sup>1</sup> and Abusir were clearly the most important necropolises for Egyptian royalty and the upper echelons of officialdom during the Old Kingdom.<sup>2</sup> While the principal royal tombs at Giza, the three pyramids themselves, date to the Fourth Dynasty, the necropolis continued to function as a huge bureaucratic institution, serving both the living and the dead, right through the Sixth Dynasty, whose conclusion marked the end of the Old Kingdom. But between the Old Kingdom and our own century Giza saw relatively little use and change.<sup>3</sup>

In later antiquity, however, the site was never completely abandoned. Evidence of post-Old Kingdom activity at

Giza includes the New Kingdom temple of Amenhotep II (1427–1400 B.C.E.), built beside the Great Sphinx of the Fourth Dynasty; the so-called Dream Stela of Thutmose IV (1400–1390 B.C.E.), a colossal statue that may have been set up under Ramesses II (1279–1213? B.C.E.);<sup>4</sup> and the Saite Period (Twenty-sixth Dynasty, 672–525 B.C.E.) temple to Isis, mistress of the pyramids, east of the Great Pyramid of Khufu itself; along with various Late Period burials scattered throughout the site. But these later monuments are scanty indeed compared with the daunting amount of chronologically homogenous Old Kingdom material at Giza. In later centuries the site certainly attracted its share of tourists, historians (such as Herodotus during the fifth century B.C.E.), and pyramidologists (for example, astronomer Charles Piazzi Smyth [1819–1900]).<sup>5</sup> The only major event prior to the twentieth century C.E. that we will stop to mention here is the removal of many of the pyramids' exterior casing stones. These were reused in the construction of medieval Cairo in the eleventh and fourteenth centuries C.E.

Aside from some early clearance work by Auguste Mariette (1821–1881),<sup>6</sup> head of the first national service to monitor and safeguard Egyptian antiquities, the earliest activity at Giza resembling anything like modern scientific investigation took place in 1842–43. At this time a Prussian expedition led by Karl Richard Lepsius (1810–1884) cleared and numbered several private tombs, entered the Great Pyramid, and drew maps and plans of the site.<sup>7</sup> In December 1842 Lepsius excavated one particularly well-preserved painted and carved chapel, belonging to Mer-ib, an official of the early Fifth Dynasty, and in

Fig. 79. Aerial view of the Giza plateau, with the Great Pyramid of Khufu in the foreground and the pyramids of Khafre and Menkaure behind, looking southwest. The mastaba tombs of the Eastern and Western Cemeteries are visible on either side of the Great Pyramid, and the Great Sphinx appears at the center left edge of the image.



1845 he received permission to ship all the decorated blocks to Berlin. The first of five Giza tomb chapels that came to be exported to Europe, today it awaits reconstruction on Berlin's soon-to-be-restored museum island.<sup>8</sup>

In 1880 the pioneering British archaeologist W. M. F. Petrie (1853–1942) set out for Giza, responding to the various fantastic contentions of the day about the true significance of the dimensions of the Great Pyramid and their possible relation to the circumference of the earth. Using an elaborate series of triangulations over the entire site, in 1881 Petrie was able to provide the most accurate measurements of the ancient monuments produced up to that time.<sup>9</sup> He also investigated a few isolated private tombs in the Western Cemetery (fig. 81), and even lived at the site in an abandoned rock-cut tomb, frightening off unwanted tourists by unceremoniously appearing before them in his pink underwear.

By the end of the nineteenth century the bases of the three large pyramids had long since lain covered with sand and debris, the Great Sphinx was buried up to its neck, and the extensive cemeteries surrounding the Great Pyramid were visible only in barest outline. It was under these conditions that Giza's second golden age, the age of discovery, began. While a dozen or more scholars are primarily responsible for unlocking many of Giza's secrets in this enlightened period, the American George Reisner (1867–1942), the Germans Georg Steindorff (1861–1951) and Hermann Junker (1877–1962), and the Egyptian Selim Hassan (1886–1961) made the greatest

contributions to the field. Reisner led the largest and longest-running expedition of all, working almost uninterrupted on the Giza plateau (in addition to investigating twenty-two other Egyptian and Nubian sites) from 1902 until his death at Harvard Camp, just west of the pyramids (fig. 82).

After earning his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees at Harvard University, Reisner left the United States to study Semitics in Berlin, which at the close of the nineteenth century was the primary center for serious philological and historical learning. He found himself drawn away from his original interest in Assyrian and Babylonian texts and toward the realm of ancient Egypt. Studying under Egyptologists such as Kurt Sethe, Reisner was exposed to the meticulous analysis and thorough scholarship that were to become defining elements in his approach to academic problem solving.

In 1899, after returning to the United States and then proceeding to Cairo to assist with the Egyptian Museum's catalogue raisonné project, the Catalogue Général, Reisner received funding for archaeological fieldwork from Phoebe Apperson Hearst, mother of the well-known American newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst. The Hearst Expedition became affiliated with the University of California at Berkeley and first concentrated on the great cemeteries of Nag el-Deir, which date from the Predynastic era through the First Intermediate Period, and later the sites of Quft and Deir el-Ballas. Armed with a few years of digging experience



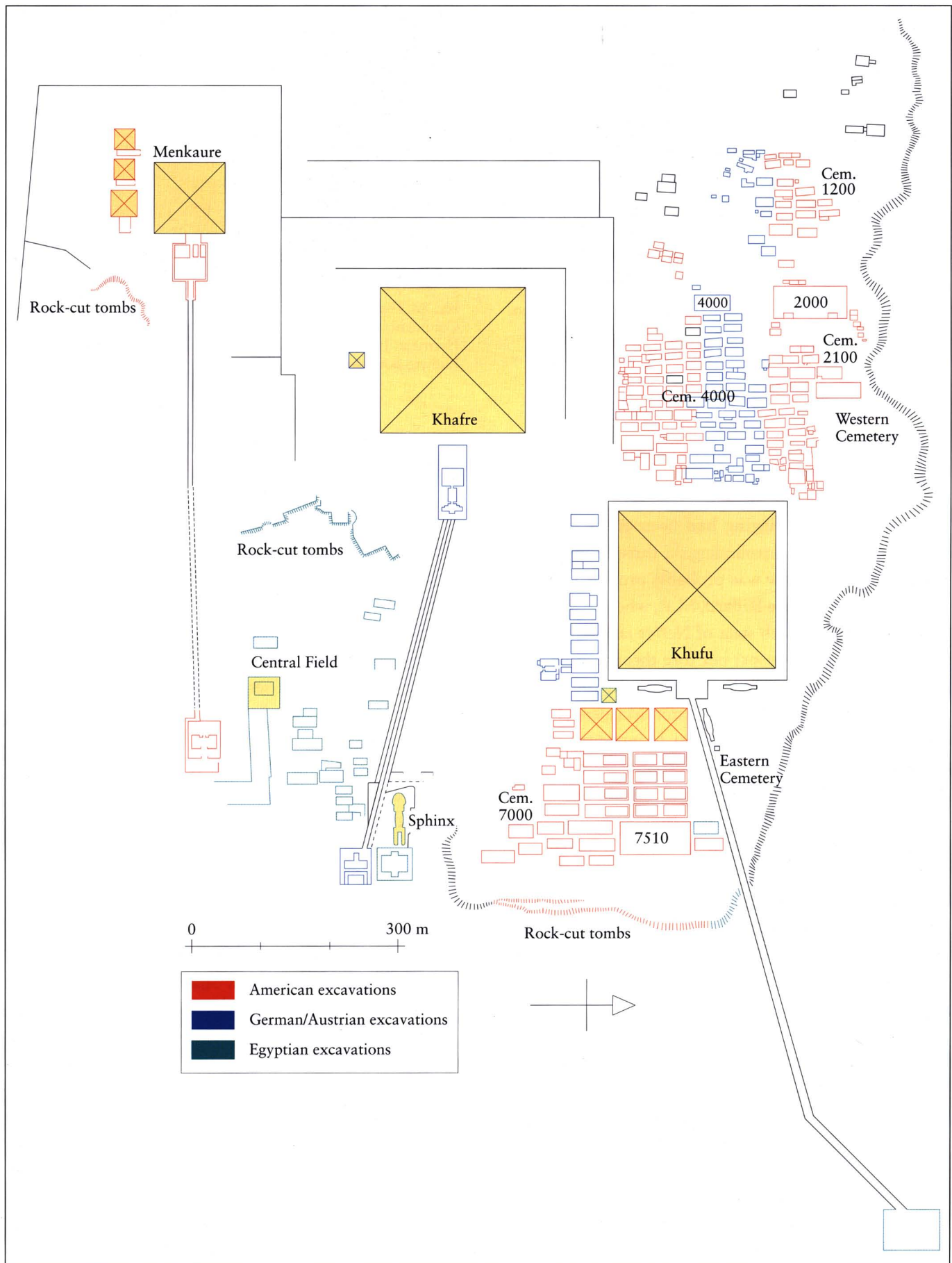


Fig. 8o. Overview map of the Giza necropolis, showing the excavation concessions of the major expeditions. Drawing by Liza Majerus, modified by Peter Der Manuelian



Fig. 81. View down a street of mastaba tombs in cemetery 4000, looking south toward the pyramid of Khafre



Fig. 82. Four giants of Egyptology meet in the garden of the Continental Hotel, Cairo, November 15, 1935. Left to right: Hermann Junker, George Reisner, James Henry Breasted, and Ludwig Borchardt.

and a clear methodological approach, in 1902 Reisner obtained the most important site concession of his career, at the Giza necropolis.

Too much illicit digging had been eroding the Old Kingdom cemeteries surrounding the three great pyramids of Giza. The last straw was probably provided unknowingly by one Montague Ballard, M.P., who discovered the beautifully painted slab stela of Nefret-iabet that is now in the Louvre (cat. no. 51) but tore through portions of the cemetery west of the Great Pyramid in 1901–2. Ballard's depredations prompted Gaston Maspero, Director of the Egyptian Antiquities Service, to invite trained professionals to excavate the site before more irreparable damage could be done. Maspero suddenly had a number of archaeologists eager to win the concession: an Italian team led by Ernesto Schiaparelli (1856–1928) of Turin, a German mission with Ludwig Borchardt (1863–1938) representing Steindorff of Leipzig, and Reisner standing for the American expedition. In Reisner's own words, from his unpublished autobiographical notes in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the site of the Giza pyramids was divided thus:

In December, 1902, the three concessionaires met on the veranda of the Mena House Hotel. Everybody wanted a portion of the great Western Cemetery. It was divided in three strips East-West. Three bits of paper were marked 1, 2, and 3 and put in a hat. Mrs. Reisner drew the papers and presented one to each of us. The southern strip fell to the Italians, the middle to the Germans and the northern strip to me. Then we proceeded to divide the pyramids. I perceived that the Italians were interested in the First Pyramid [Khufu's] and the Germans in the

Second [Khafre's]. I kept my mouth shut and let them wrangle. When they had adjusted the line between the First and Second Pyramid the Italians thinking that I might insist on a ballot resigned to me the northern part of the area east of the First Pyramid, if I would accept the Third Pyramid [Menkaure's]. I was perfectly willing to have the Third Pyramid but of course accepted his offer.<sup>10</sup>

The Italian mission set to work on both sides of the Great Pyramid in 1903–4 and investigated a number of important tombs.<sup>11</sup> But by 1905 Schiaparelli's talents were needed at other sites, and Giza became merely one of a number of famous necropolises this most energetic scholar helped to unearth. His concession was passed on to Reisner and the American team, which thus ended up with the lion's share of the necropolis (see map, fig. 83).<sup>12</sup> From 1902 to 1905 the Hearst Expedition made a solid beginning in the task of unraveling the development of the great Western Cemetery, which contains the tombs of Khufu's highest officials; during this period as well, thanks to the official division of finds, many fine examples of Egyptian relief and three-dimensional sculpture reached the Lowie Museum, Berkeley, now the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum, as well as the Egyptian Museum, Cairo. The standard tomb, or mastaba (after the Arabic word for the bench of similar form), usually consists of a large rectangular superstructure with sloping sides formed of limestone blocks surrounding a rubble core, a stela or chapel with a false door (cat. no. 155) serving as the offering place, and a burial shaft cut through the superstructure down into the underlying bedrock. At the bottom of the shaft is the burial chamber, housing a sarcophagus constructed of stone or wood (fig. 14).

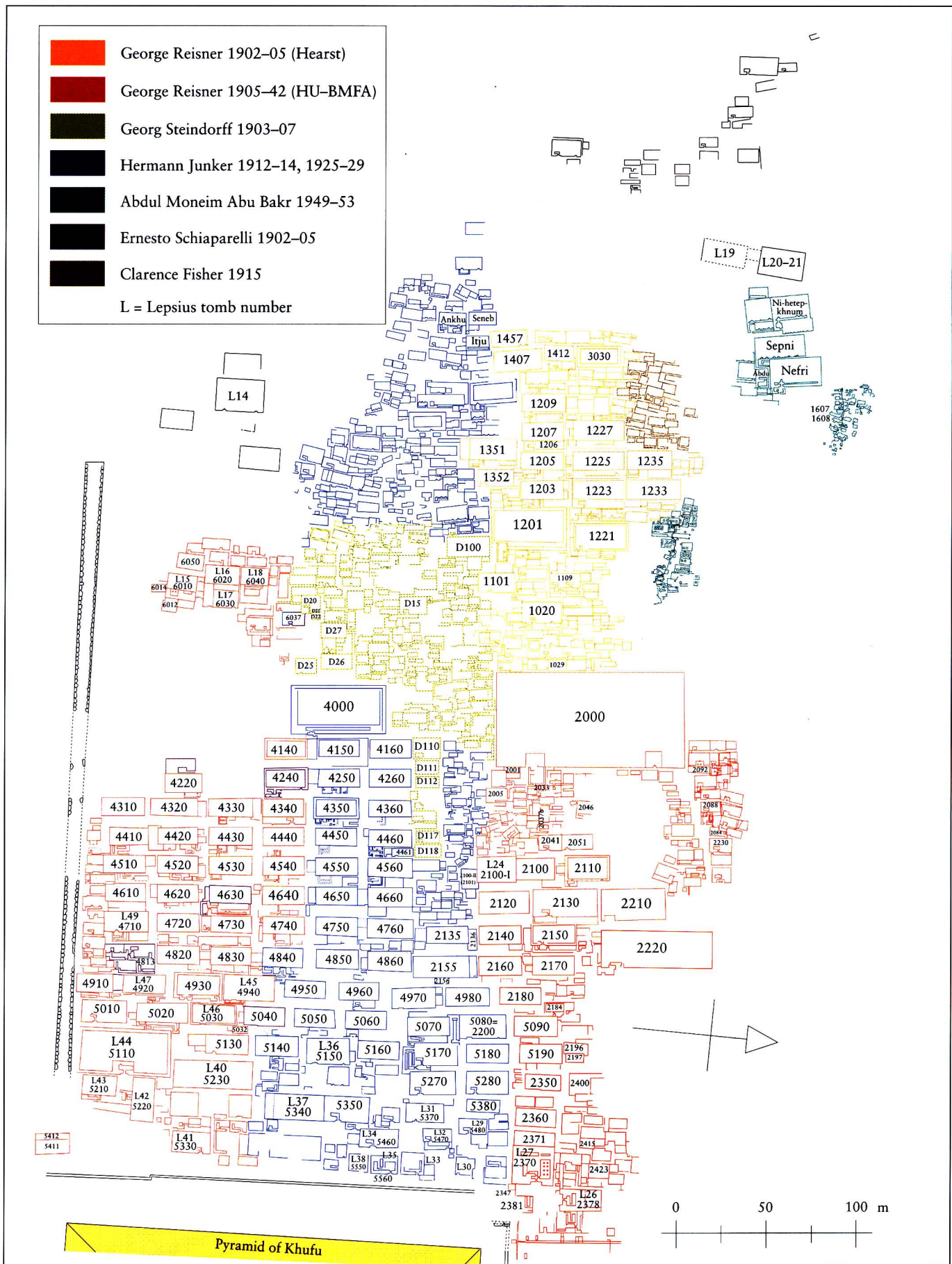


Fig. 83. Map of the Western Cemetery, detailing the excavation concessions of every expedition. Drawing by Peter Der Manuelian



Fig. 84. East half of the great Western Cemetery, December 1906, looking north from the pyramid of Khafre. At this early stage only portions of cemeteries 2000 and 2100 (far left, center) have been excavated by Reisner. The famous Mena House Hotel appears near the center of the image.

Reisner correctly surmised that construction in the great Western Cemetery had most likely begun in an area farthest from the Great Pyramid and in time had progressed eastward toward the pyramid's west face. The earliest mastaba tombs were laid out along a prearranged grid, giving the necropolis a regularity and rational organization absent from all earlier Egyptian cemeteries. Only later in the Old Kingdom did subsidiary burials and minor mastabas choke the symmetrical plan, turning Giza into a chronological jigsaw puzzle for the archaeologist. Reisner devised a numbering system for the hundreds of tombs located along what are best described as the streets and avenues of the necropolis, proceeding from the 1000s in the far west across the site to the 7000s east of the Great Pyramid. This numbering system is still used for Giza by Egyptologists today.

Among the more spectacular early discoveries in the far west of the Western Cemetery were a series of rectangular slab stelae. The slab stelae (cat. nos. 51–53), each of which was set into an emplacement in the exterior east face of a mastaba, were critical in helping to identify the owners of the monuments they embellished.

The decorative scheme that Khufu apparently introduced at Giza was so reduced, contrary to the practice of previous pharaohs, that the stelae represent the only ornamented or inscribed portion of these early Fourth Dynasty tombs. (For a somewhat different interpretation, see “The Tombs of Officials” by Peter Jánosi in this catalogue.) Clearly products of the highest quality from the royal workshops, they provide a primary source of information on early Old Kingdom funerary ritual, decoration, and artistic style.<sup>13</sup> Since they were often plastered over and effectively sealed when alterations to the mastabas' exteriors were carried out, several slab stelae even preserve much of their original polychromy, revealing hieroglyphs and figures in all their original colorful brilliance (see cat. nos. 51, 52).

By 1905 Mrs. Hearst was unable to continue supporting Reisner's work, and thus his expedition's American home base moved east to become the Joint Expedition of Harvard University and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The new arrangement called for objects of artistic value to be divided between the Boston and Cairo museums (as determined by the Egyptian antiquities



Fig. 85. The Harvard University–Museum of Fine Arts Expedition’s discovery of four triads of Menkaure, from the king’s valley temple, looking north, July 10, 1908. One of the triads is in the exhibition (cat. no. 68).

authorities), while the publication of the scientific results was made Harvard’s responsibility. Reisner became curator of the Boston Museum’s Egyptian Department soon thereafter.

In 1906–7, after clearing major portions of the Western Cemetery, both west and east of the great anonymous mastaba numbered G 2000 (fig. 84), Reisner turned his attention to the royal pyramid complex of Menkaure.<sup>14</sup> In addition to the pyramid itself, the smallest of the three king’s pyramids at Giza, this group included three subsidiary pyramids, the king’s pyramid temple and valley temple, which are connected by a long causeway, and even an associated cemetery of rock-cut tombs hewed into the adjacent quarry. The area yielded countless treasures of Fourth Dynasty royal sculpture, including calcite, or alabaster, colossi from the pyramid temple and numerous graywacke triads from the valley temple depicting Menkaure with the goddess Hathor and minor provincial deities (fig. 85; cat. no. 68).<sup>15</sup> Here too was found in a so-called robber’s hole the famous un-inscribed dyad, or pair statue, of Menkaure and his mother or one of his queens (cat. no. 67).<sup>16</sup> One of the greatest masterpieces ever discovered in Egypt, the dyad embodies the supreme confidence of a powerful, semidivine monarchy at the head of a prosperous nation. A series of unfinished seated statuettes of the king also unearthed in



Fig. 86. Statuettes of Menkaure in various stages of completion, as found in the king’s valley temple, July 14, 1908

the valley temple displays in frozen moments all the stages of the sculptor’s creative process, from the red outlining on a block of stone to the nearly finished and polished final product (fig. 86; cat. no. 73).

Reisner’s explorations of the site also uncovered post-Menkaure era finds, for the king’s valley temple area was occupied subsequent to his own reign. Originally built by Menkaure with limestone foundations and completed in mud brick by his successor, Shepseskaf, it later flooded and was restored during the Sixth Dynasty by Pepi II. The houses of the adjacent pyramid town eventually expanded into the temple precincts themselves, and thus Reisner’s stratigraphic excavations revealed thousands of ceramic and calcite vessels, implements of all sorts, and, ironically, invaluable evidence of domestic architecture despite the building’s funerary context.

Working on behalf of the University of Leipzig, Reisner’s German colleague Steindorff began clearing the western portion of the central strip of the Western Cemetery in 1903, supported in part by Hildesheim businessman and collector Wilhelm Pelizaeus (1851–1930).<sup>17</sup> The first student of the great philologist Adolf Erman (1854–1937) in Berlin, Steindorff enjoyed a full and varied career that encompassed seventy years of publications ranging from Coptic-language studies to art-historical treatises. He founded Leipzig’s Egyptological Institute, whose collections

came to include the fruits of his excavations. After immigrating to the United States during World War II, Steindorff assumed responsibility for the Egyptian holdings at the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore. His Giza concession focused on a still imperfectly understood area that is choked with mastabas smaller and later than those built under Khufu in the Fourth Dynasty. This area came to be known in the scholarly literature as the Steindorff cemetery.

After digging only a few seasons, through 1906–7, Steindorff decided to relocate his excavations south to ancient Nubia (modern Sudan). At the opening of the Roemer- und Pelizaeus-Museum in Hildesheim on July 29, 1911, Steindorff and his younger German colleague Hermann Junker agreed to trade concessions: Steindorff would take on part of Junker's Vienna Academy of Sciences concession at Aniba in the Sudan, between the Nile's first and second cataracts, and in return Junker would obtain Steindorff's Giza concession. This arrangement led to many years of German and Austrian productivity at Giza, as well as to official permission to transport three complete mastaba chapels to Europe.<sup>18</sup> All of Steindorff's excavation records were thought to have been lost in World War II; however, many have turned up in recent years, resurrecting basic information on 134 mastabas of the Western Cemetery.<sup>19</sup>

As for Steindorff's compatriot Junker, he originally hoped to join the Catholic priesthood but had a change of heart and trained in Berlin as a philologist. He eventually went to Austria, filling a recently vacated professorial post at the University of Vienna in 1907. This position in turn led him to take up fieldwork in Egypt and Nubia, which culminated in his assumption of Steindorff's Giza concession in 1912. Eight seasons were required to complete the Junker concession, but only three were concluded before the outbreak of World War I put a halt to all German activity at Giza in 1914. In fact, Junker was unable to resume his excavations until 1926, by which time his earlier finds must surely have suffered considerable loss due to exposure and deterioration. Nevertheless, he continued working at the site from 1926 through 1929, finishing the clearance of the central portion of the Western Cemetery, as well as that of the southern row of mastabas located just south of the Great Pyramid. It was a mere accident of archaeology that he barely missed two of Khufu's funerary boat pits squeezed in between these tombs and the pyramid itself; their discovery and the excavation of one boat would have to wait until the 1950s.<sup>20</sup>

Among Junker's many spectacular finds was the huge and exquisitely built tomb of the Overseer of All

Construction Projects, Hemiunu, nephew to Khufu and most likely the man responsible for supervising the erection of the Great Pyramid. Hemiunu's lifesize statue (cat. no. 44), depicting a corpulent and clearly successful bureaucrat seated and gazing into eternity, is, like the pair statue of Menkaure and his mother or queen, one of the greatest treasures of Old Kingdom sculpture in the round.<sup>21</sup> Another mastaba Junker discovered not far away belonged to a woman named Nen-sedjer-kai and is justly famous for its imitation of an Egyptian house, now converted into a stone mansion of eternity, complete with a courtyard, an enclosure with rounded walls, and a pillared portico.<sup>22</sup> In 1913 his efforts brought to light the superbly carved and painted mastaba chapel of Kani-nisut I, which was subsequently removed to the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.<sup>23</sup> Junker also excavated one of the earliest burial chambers decorated with paintings, in the tomb of a treasury official named Kai-em-ankh.<sup>24</sup>

One of the most enigmatic groups of objects unearthed at Giza, in both Reisner's and Junker's concessions, is a series of so-called reserve heads (see "Reserve Heads" by Catharine H. Roehrig in this catalogue), traditionally thought, for lack of a better explanation, to be substitute homes for the spirit provided in case any misfortune befell the mummy. Forty or so of these carved limestone heads have been discovered, most of them at Giza and all in an unclear context at or toward the bottom of burial shafts. Never part of complete statues, they often show plaster modeling and what appear to be scratches or incisions that scholars have interpreted in countless ways—calling them everything from simple sculptor's guidelines to ritual mutilations intended to magically damage the spirit of the deceased.<sup>25</sup> Although the last word on the precise function of the reserve heads is perhaps yet to be written, it is clear that in their depiction of individual likenesses they offer a striking departure from the stylized features represented in most two- and three-dimensional Egyptian works of art.

While Reisner concentrated on Menkaure's precinct, the third pyramid complex at Giza, and while generations of explorers focused their efforts on Khufu's Great Pyramid, other archaeologists have conducted their own explorations of the necropolis. Thus in 1909 the second pyramid complex, that of Khafre, was first systematically cleared and studied by German Egyptologist and architect Uvo Hölscher (1878–1963).<sup>26</sup> The Egyptian Antiquities Service cleared the Great Sphinx under the direction of Émile Baraize from 1925 to 1934 and again under Selim Hassan from 1936 to 1938.<sup>27</sup> And Herbert Ricke,

Mark Lehner, James Allen, and Zahi Hawass are among those who have studied, mapped, restored, and extended excavations around the Great Sphinx and its accompanying temples in recent years.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, various Egyptian archaeologists have worked at Giza as well as in the larger Memphite area (a subject discussed by Hawass in “Excavating the Old Kingdom” in this catalogue).

By the mid-1920s much of the great Western Cemetery had been cleared by the Reisner and Steindorff-Junker expeditions. Tons of debris had been removed by Decauville railway carts from the mastaba fields, and an ever clearer picture of the ancient evolution of the cemetery was emerging (fig. 87). Reisner’s recording and documentation system had become a well-oiled machine, consisting of photographers using large-format-plate cameras, draftsmen, excavation diaries, object registers, and countless numbering systems. And so in 1924 Reisner relocated his expedition to the cemetery east of the Great Pyramid (fig. 88). This area houses mastabas originally built as individual tombs that were later joined together in pairs

to form great double mastabas for members of Khufu’s immediate family and for high officials. The Eastern Cemetery also contains numerous rock-cut tombs at the eastern edge of the plateau and a host of Late Period burials peppering the Old Kingdom necropolis. Thus this field boasts tombs both older and more recent than those in the Western Cemetery, with some dating as early as 2500 B.C.E. and others as late as 600 B.C.E.

As tantalizing clues to the complicated history and possibly tumultuous succession of the Fourth Dynasty royal family came to light in the course of Reisner’s explorations, numerous artistic masterpieces also surfaced in the Eastern Cemetery. These included a bust displaying the arresting facial features of Khafre’s vizier, Ankh-haf,<sup>29</sup> whose mastaba is the largest at Giza after the anonymous tomb G 2000; the vibrant painted reliefs and engaged statues from the rock-cut chapel of Queen Mer-si-ankh III, granddaughter of Khufu (fig. 89); and the subterranean chapels of the Sixth Dynasty officials Qar and Idu (cat. nos. 195, 196).

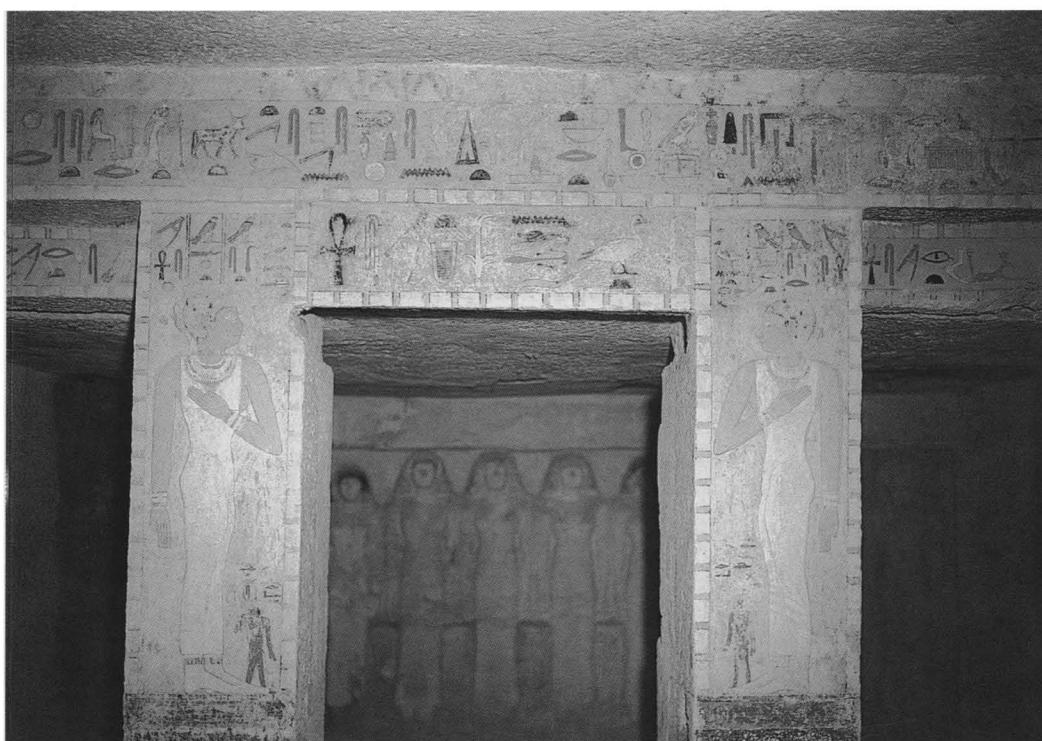


Fig. 87. General view of the Giza necropolis, showing (far to near) the pyramids of Khufu (right) and Khafre (left), the Central Field mastabas excavated by Selim Hassan, the pyramid tomb of Queen Khent-kawes, the causeway and mud-brick houses from the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties, the valley temple of Menkaure, and a modern cemetery in the foreground, looking northwest, August 22, 1937

Fig. 88. The Harvard University–Museum of Fine Arts Expedition removes a sarcophagus from the burial shaft of the mastaba of Nefer-maat (G 7060B), Eastern Cemetery, looking northwest, October 26, 1929. The Great Pyramid of Khufu and satellite pyramid GI-c are in the background.



Fig. 89. Painted architrave, pillars, and engaged statues in the Fourth Dynasty rock-cut tomb of Queen Mer-si-anekh III, Eastern Cemetery, looking north



Perhaps the greatest Eastern Cemetery discovery, however, was made in 1925, during one of Reisner's rare stays in the United States. This was the accidental find of the tomb of Queen Hetep-heres I, wife of Snefru and probable mother of Khufu. Built twenty-seven meters (almost ninety feet) below the surface, her unmarked tomb was placed twenty-eight meters to the south of the queen's satellite pyramid as the result of a change in that monument's plans, and whether it represents a preliminary burial or a reburial remains unclear. It is certain,

however, that Hetep-heres' shaft tomb, discovered three years after the opening of the tomb of Tutankhamun at Thebes by Howard Carter, is the most intact royal burial of the Old Kingdom yet encountered. Intricate jewelry (cat. nos. 31, 32) and some of the earliest examples of furniture from the ancient world (cat. no. 33) were recovered from the jumbled mass on the burial-chamber floor, documented, and reconstructed; even the canopic vessels bearing the queen's internal organs still bore their contents in liquid state, over four thousand years after the





Fig. 90. The Great Sphinx, with the restoration scaffolding of Émile Baraize, looking northwest, December 26, 1925. The pyramids of Khufu (right) and Khafre (left) are in the background.

last Egyptians ascended from her resting place.<sup>30</sup> The find consumed 280 days of excavations and was recorded in 1,057 photographs and 1,701 pages of notebook listings.

Material archaeological remains have their own powerful way of speaking to us (fig. 90). But the inscriptions on the tomb walls at Giza, with their ritual, biographical, and legal texts, communicate even more directly than the cemetery's artifacts and architecture the aspirations of the Egyptians who constructed this great city of the dead. Among the more interesting texts from the Western Cemetery are legal decrees, such as that of one Pen-meru, Overseer of Mortuary Priests, designating individuals and institutions to service his mortuary cult and restricting interference with it.<sup>31</sup> The biographical texts offer all manner of information. Those of Nekhebu (tomb G 2381), for example, describe this man's years of loyalty and promotion in the architectural service of the pharaoh.<sup>32</sup> Copies of royal letters written to Senedjem-ib Inti (tomb G 2370) tell how pleased the king was with his

services as chief architect. Senedjem-ib Inti's son Mehi (tomb G 2378) completed his father's tomb, in which he included an extremely rare example of an inscription that states how long the construction process took (fifteen months in this case).<sup>33</sup> And another official, named Ra-wer, proudly recounts how the king accidentally struck him with his staff during a ceremony and then interceded on his subject's behalf.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, these inscriptions are just a few of the thousands of texts at Giza that provide revealing glimpses into administrative, legal, religious, and historical aspects of Egyptian society of the third millennium B.C.E.

The above remarks have touched upon some of the major figures who excavated in the Giza necropolis during the twentieth century. It should be noted, however, that many other individuals also made significant contributions to our understanding of the site, among them not only Selim Hassan,<sup>35</sup> who has been mentioned, but Abdel Moneim Abu Bakr,<sup>36</sup> Karl Kromer,<sup>37</sup> Clarence

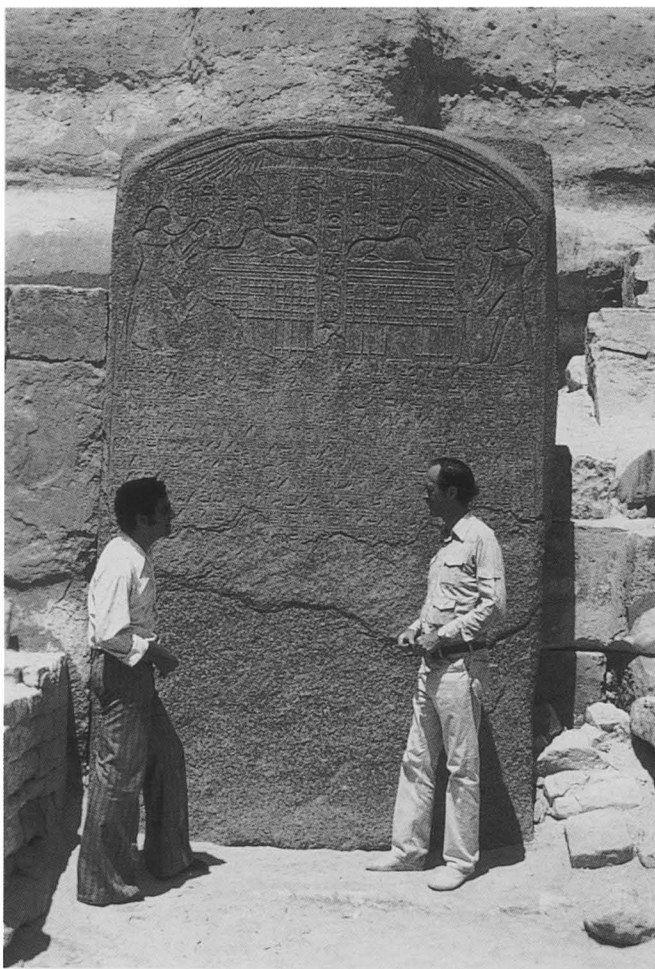


Fig. 91. William Kelly Simpson (right) with Zahi Hawass in front of the Dream Stela of Thutmose IV, situated between the paws of the Great Sphinx, August 1977

Fisher,<sup>38</sup> Ahmed Fakhry,<sup>39</sup> and Alexander Badawy as well.<sup>40</sup> The primary-source publications produced by these scholars have spawned a host of Egyptological dissertations and treatises about Giza concerning topics as various as the evolution of tomb architecture and decoration, religious ritual, ancient textiles and costume, hieroglyphic grammatical constructions, and mummification in the Old Kingdom.

Since the 1970s those who have followed Reisner at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, most notably William Kelly Simpson (fig. 91), have initiated the tomb-by-tomb mastaba publication series originally envisaged by Reisner and his successor as curator at the museum, William Stevenson Smith (1907–1969). To date Simpson and colleagues Dows Dunham (1890–1984), Kent R. Weeks, and Ann Macy Roth have produced six volumes of the Giza Mastabas Series, and additional volumes are in preparation (fig. 92).<sup>41</sup> Moreover, new excavations at Giza have revealed much that was missed by the original archaeologists and have also investigated previously



Fig. 92. The Harvard University–Museum of Fine Arts Expedition's discovery of Fifth Dynasty statues of Raramu and his family in the serdab of mastaba tomb 2099, looking east, January 21, 1939. From Roth 1995

unexplored regions of the necropolis. In this vein we have already mentioned the famous Khufu funerary boat just barely overlooked by Junker south of the Great Pyramid and discovered in 1954. Additional boat pits, belonging to both Khufu and Menkaure, await further excavation.<sup>42</sup>

In recent years Hawass's excavations in the far west of the Western Cemetery have revealed a number of tombs unknown to Reisner, specifically the beautifully painted chapel of an official named Kai and the tomb of the dwarf Per-ni-ankhu (see cat. no. 88), as well as other burials in a small cemetery. And in the Eastern Cemetery, clearance work near the southeast corner of the Great Pyramid uncovered the so-called satellite or cult pyramid of Khufu, overlooked by Reisner, raising the number of pyramids found at Giza to a total of eleven.

Newly discovered areas include the region of South Giza, where a vast cemetery of late Old Kingdom burials at the desert's edge has yielded all manner of unusual architectural forms. The individuals buried here were both workers and foremen associated with the construction

of the royal pyramid complexes, as is shown by their administrative titles, their statuary, and the occasional physical injuries associated with heavy lifting displayed by their skeletal remains. In meticulous interdisciplinary excavations in this same area, an American expedition directed by Lehner has unearthed evidence of large-scale institutions of types that could have serviced the community engaged in pyramid construction. At this writing the dig has documented bakeries, fish-processing works, and a variety of other food-production establishments, as well as pigment-grinding and copper-working facilities, all of them royal and some accompanied by sealings that name King Menkaure. And finally, in conjunction with various development and sewage projects, survey and salvage explorations of the area east of the Giza plateau have delineated the original location of Khufu's valley temple beneath the modern suburb of Nazlet es-Samman, where archaeologists have also found a number of other Old Kingdom structures.

Thanks to the work of such scholars as Hawass, Lehner, and Michael Jones, it can now be postulated that during the Old Kingdom the Memphite region was not so much a series of towns and cemeteries punctuating the area as it was a continuous development along the desert's edge. And we should remember that Giza and Saqqara are surrounded by additional sites that continue to yield their own spectacular discoveries. Thus Meidum<sup>43</sup> and Dahshur, both south of Saqqara, provide key links between the Archaic Period cemeteries of the earliest dynasties and the established mortuary canon from the Fourth Dynasty onward found at Giza and elsewhere. Excavated for many years by Rainer Stadelmann and his colleagues from the German Archaeological Institute,<sup>44</sup> Dahshur is home to two of Snefru's three pyramids (his first being at Meidum), as well as a few organized rows of mastaba tombs that foreshadow the cemeteries east and west of the Great Pyramid at Giza. At Abusir, to the north of Saqqara, the Czech expedition under Miroslav Verner has for several decades been expanding on original excavations by Borchardt<sup>45</sup> and investigating the Fifth Dynasty pyramid complexes of King Neferefre, Neferirkare (the south side), and Queen Khent-kawes II, as well as the massive mastaba of King Niuserre's vizier, Ptahshepses (see "The Tombs of Officials" by Peter Jánosi in this catalogue, pp. 34–36), and other tombs from subsequent periods.<sup>46</sup> Inscribed papyrus documents from the pyramids of Neferefre, Neferirkare, and Khent-kawes have given us a wealth of information on the administration of Old Kingdom royal mortuary complexes, including their personnel schedules, inventories, and accounts.<sup>47</sup> And

additional Old Kingdom cemetery sites such as Abu Rawash, where Khufu's son and successor Djedefre constructed his pyramid complex, continue to broaden our overview of the Memphite cemetery in its widest definition.<sup>48</sup>

New technologies are now revealing more and more about the Giza necropolis and surrounding cemeteries, helping Egyptologists document and preserve the monuments with greater speed and accuracy in the face of accelerating deterioration.<sup>49</sup> Rising water tables, crystallization of salts on decorated wall surfaces, vandalism, and increased tourist activity have taken a heavy toll on the age-old monuments all along the Nile. Egyptologists, archaeologists, and conservators are engaged in a desperate race to preserve Egypt's ancient heritage. But this race against time actually serves to increase the value of the archaeological work carried out earlier in the twentieth century, whose scientific investigation and meticulous recording have preserved Old Kingdom data that have long since disappeared from the sites themselves. For example, Reisner's archive of large-format glass negatives, produced between 1902 and 1942, includes tens of thousands of views of ancient Giza monuments, many of which either no longer survive or retain merely a portion of their original information, whether it be relief carving, inscriptions, mud-brick architecture, or stone casing blocks; moreover, new technologies are helping at last to reassemble this material, as well as many other elements gathered during the earlier archaeological process, and reconstructions, often made with the aid of computers, are reviving the ancient sites as never before.

As the twentieth century draws to a close, Old Kingdom archaeology holds as much promise as it did for Reisner and his colleagues over a hundred years ago. Certainly the methods have changed: expedition teams of ten or twenty have replaced armies of one or two hundred; computers, remote sensing, and careful stratigraphic procedures are replacing the massive clearance projects of the past; and the search now focuses on ancient cultural patterns instead of museum-quality treasures, although extraordinary artifacts still emerge from the desert sands in abundance. Today's finds, and the knowledge to be gained from them, will continue to fascinate and educate us about life in the Pyramid Age for generations to come.

1. For a general overview of this site, see Lauer 1976.
2. This essay will hardly do justice to Saqqara and other fascinating Old Kingdom cemeteries such as Meidum, Dahshur, Abu Rawash, Abusir, and the oases. However, a few words on these sites will appear at the end of the text; see also "Excavating the Old Kingdom: The Egyptian Archaeologists" by Zahi Hawass

- and “Excavating the Old Kingdom: From Khafre’s Valley Temple to the Governor’s City at Balat” by Nicolas Grimal in this catalogue. For popular overviews of the Old Kingdom, pyramids, and tombs and temples, see Roberts 1995; Stadelmann 1995a; Der Manuelian 1997; Hawass 1997c; and Lehner 1997.
3. For valuable collections of material relating to Giza in the New Kingdom and the Late Period, see Zivie 1976 and Zivie-Coche 1991.
  4. On the colossal statue of Ramesses II (?) accompanied by a deity, recently discovered by Hawass adjacent to the pyramid of Menkaure, see Hawass 1997a, pp. 289–93; and Hawass 1997d, p. 20.
  5. A small selection of early explorers at Giza might include: Caliph al-Mamun (736–833), the first to break his way into the Great Pyramid in 820; Napoleon Bonaparte, whose military campaign of 1798 included savants who measured the interior of the Great Pyramid and produced views of the Great Sphinx and the site; Giovanni Battista Caviglia (1770–1845), the first to attempt to dig out the Great Sphinx and the discoverer of the Dream Stela of Thutmose IV between its paws; Giovanni Battista Belzoni (1778–1823), who first penetrated the upper entrance of Khafre’s pyramid; and Richard William Howard Vyse (1784–1853) and John Shae Perring (1813–1869), who in 1837 removed the sarcophagus from Menkaure’s pyramid for transport to England (it was later lost at sea) and entered the five relieving chambers in the Great Pyramid, but unfortunately were not averse to blasting their way into passages and burial chambers. For recent summaries of these and other explorers’ exploits, see Lehner 1997.
  6. For more on this subject, see “Excavating the Old Kingdom” by Grimal in this catalogue; and Mariette and Maspero 1889, pp. 488–571. Mariette discovered the valley temple of Khafre in the 1850s, a find that included the king’s famous seated statue with the protective Horus falcon, now in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (fig. 28) and certainly one of the greatest works of three-dimensional sculpture from any Egyptian site or period; see Saleh and Sourouzian 1987, no. 31.
  7. For a highly readable and well-illustrated account of the Lepsius expedition, see Freier and Grunert 1984, esp. pp. 13–43. The results of the expedition were published by Naville in Lepsius’s monumental series *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien* (1897–1913).
  8. A painted-plaster replica of the four walls of Mer-ib’s chapel (G 2100-I) was prepared in the 1980s. The other four mastabas, in the order they were found, are those of Ii-nefret, now in Karlsruhe (Menkaure cemetery; discovered sometime prior to 1897, the year of accession by Karlsruhe; on display in Karlsruhe 1911); Wehem-ka, now in Hildesheim (D 117; discovered in 1906; 1925 in Hildesheim); Seshem-nefer III in Tübingen (G 5170; discovered in 1910 with the support of the Ernst von Sieglin Expedition; 1911 in Tübingen); and Ka-ni-nisut I, now in Vienna (G 2155; discovered in 1913; 1914 in Vienna). See Kayser 1964; Schürmann 1983; and Priese 1984; along with Schmitz 1986, pp. 46–49; Brunner-Traut 1995; and Gamer-Wallert 1998. Many other private tomb chapels from Saqqara were sent to museums in Boston, Brussels, Chicago, Copenhagen, Leiden, New York, Paris, and Philadelphia.
  9. See Petrie 1883, revised and updated by Hawass in 1990.
  10. Reisner, unpublished diary (n.d.), stored in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. I am grateful to Rita E. Freed, Norma-Jean Calderwood Curator, Department of Egyptian, Nubian, and Ancient Near Eastern Art, Museum of Fine Arts, for permission to quote from Reisner’s notes.
  11. These Eastern and Western Cemetery tombs were eventually published by Silvio Curto in 1903.
  12. Appearing the year of his death, Reisner’s monumental *A History of the Giza Necropolis*, vol. I (1942) was perhaps the greatest testament to his decades of meticulous excavations on the Giza plateau. He attempted to summarize the evolution of private tombs prior to the Fourth Dynasty in *The Development of the Egyptian Tomb down to the Accession of Cheops* (1936).
  13. On the Giza slab stelae, see Der Manuelian 1998a. For remarks on Fourth Dynasty artistic style, see Stadelmann 1995b, pp. 155–66; and Stadelmann 1998a, pp. 353–87.
  14. The excavations were published by Reisner in 1931.
  15. For a study of the king’s triads, see Wood 1974, pp. 82–93.
  16. For recent remarks on the identity of the woman standing with Menkaure (who has been considered a goddess, Kha-merer-nebti II, or an unnamed queen), see Fay 1998, pp. 164–66; and Rzepka 1998, pp. 77–90.
  17. For a lively account of Pelizaeus’s Egyptological life, see Schmitz 1996, pp. 8–48.
  18. See note 8 above. For an excellent summary of Junker’s many productive years at Giza, see Jánosi 1997; as well as Junker’s own *Leben und Werk in Selbstdarstellung* (1963).
  19. Steindorff and Hölscher 1991.
  20. On the first funerary boat of Khufu, see Abu Bakr and Mustafa 1971, pp. 1–16; and Jenkins 1980. The second still awaits final excavation.
  21. See Junker 1929, pp. 132–62, pls. 18–23; and Schmitz 1986, pp. 36–41.
  22. Junker 1934, pp. 97–120, pls. 1–4.
  23. Junker 1931; Junker 1934, pp. 135–72, pls. 5–10; Satzinger 1994, pp. 90–93. See also note 8 above.
  24. Junker 1940.
  25. See Tefnin 1991; Assmann 1996, pp. 55–81; Bolshakov 1997; Lacovara 1997, pp. 28–36; and Wildung 1998, pp. 399–406.
  26. Hölscher 1912.
  27. Hassan 1949.
  28. Ricke 1970, pp. 1–43; Lehner 1991, pp. 32–39; Lehner 1992, pp. 3–26; Hawass 1997b, pp. 245–56; and in general see the Great Sphinx Symposium 1992. For a recent argument assigning the Great Sphinx to Khufu rather than Khafre, see Stadelmann 1998a, pp. 353–87; and Stadelmann 1998b, pp. 73–75.
  29. See Bolshakov 1991, pp. 5–14; Junge 1995, pp. 103–9; and Lacovara 1996b, pp. 6–7.
  30. See Reisner and Smith 1955, pp. 21–22, pl. 44. A recent publication on the complicated history of the tomb is Lehner 1985.
  31. See Simpson 1980, p. 24.
  32. See Dunham 1938, pp. 1–8.
  33. New transcriptions and translations of these inscriptions are scheduled for publication by Edward Brovarski in volume 7 of the Giza Mastabas Series.
  34. See Allen 1992, pp. 14–20.
  35. Hassan published his *Excavations at Giza* from 1932 to 1960.
  36. Abu Bakr 1953. For more on the contributions of Egyptian scholars, see “Excavating the Old Kingdom” by Hawass in this catalogue.
  37. Kromer 1978; Kromer 1991.
  38. Fisher 1924.
  39. Fakhry 1935.
  40. Badawy 1978.
  41. Forthcoming volumes are in preparation by Brovarski, Der Manuelian, Roth, and Simpson.

42. For more on the second funerary boat of Khufu, see El-Baz 1988, pp. 513–33.
43. On this site, see Petrie 1892; Mackay and Wainwright 1910; and El-Khouli 1991.
44. See Stadelmann 1991; along with a series of archaeological reports in Stadelmann 1982; Stadelmann 1983; Stadelmann et al. 1993; and Alexanian 1995, pp. 1–18.
45. Among Borchardt's important publications on this site are Borchardt 1909; Borchardt 1910; and Borchardt 1913.
46. For an excellent summary of Czech excavations at Abusir, see Verner et al. 1990; Verner 1994a; and Verner 1994b, pp. 295–305. Recent publications on his work at the site include Verner's *Pyramid Complex of Khentkaus* (1995).
47. Posener-Kriéger and Cenival 1968; Posener-Kriéger 1976.
48. For recent excavations at Abu Rawash, see Valloggia 1994, pp. 5–17; Grimal 1996, pp. 494–99; Grimal 1997, pp. 317–26; and Valloggia 1997, pp. 417–28. A summary of information on the royal pyramid is provided by Lehner 1997, pp. 120–21.
49. On new approaches to producing facsimile line drawings of Egyptian tomb and temple wall reliefs and paintings using computer technology, see Der Manuelian 1998b, pp. 97–113.