

UNDER THE POTTER'S TREE

Studies on Ancient Egypt
Presented to Janine Bourriau
on the Occasion of her 70th Birthday

edited by

D. ASTON, B. BÄDER, C. GALLORINI, P. NICHOLSON
and S. BUCKINGHAM

PEETERS

UNDER THE POTTER'S TREE



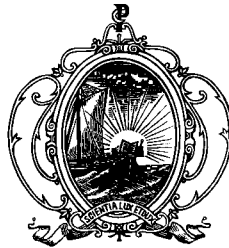
Janine Bourriau (centre) with Paul Nicholson and Sarah Buckingham sorting sherds at Memphis
(Photograph by David Jeffreys).

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DAVID ASTON, BETTINA BADER, CARLA GALLORINI,
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EARTHENWARE VESSELS IN OLD KINGDOM
TWO-DIMENSIONAL ART:
THEIR MANUFACTURE AND DIRECT USE BY
MINOR HUMAN FIGURES¹

Yvonne M. HARPUR

Anyone who has walked even a relatively short distance across the central section of the Saqqara Necropolis cannot fail to have noticed the vast quantity of pottery fragments lying on the surface of the desert. Yet more sherds are exposed whenever the sand is slightly disturbed, and excavations all over the necropolis have revealed innumerable similar fragments, as well as virtually intact vessels buried at even greater depths. These pottery remnants date to various periods of Ancient Egyptian history, but a huge number belong to the period between the 3rd and 6th Dynasties, when Memphis was the thriving capital of Egypt and the cemeteries at Giza, Saqqara and Abusir were the principal burial places for kings, priests, officials and lesser members of Egyptian society. During their earthly lives these people used earthenware containers for the long-term storage of food and liquids, and they also required earthenware vessels of different shapes and sizes for everyday purposes: for holding ingredients in kitchens; for serving food and drink; for displaying gathered fruit and vegetables; and for a wide variety of uses in baking, brewing, animal husbandry, butchery and many other activities.² Their deceased relatives also required storage and everyday vessels of similar types and functions. This is because the Afterlife was believed to be an idealised continuation of life on earth, and the material trappings of earthly existence were just as essential for life in eternity.

In Old Kingdom two-dimensional art it is often difficult to distinguish earthenware vessels from vessels made from stone, but the following suggested criteria might aid the process of identification:

¹ The author is greatly indebted to the photographer of the Oxford Expedition to Egypt, Paolo Scremin for preparing the photographs and author's drawings for this paper. Thanks are also due to the authors and publishers who gave permission for small parts of their line drawings to be used for illustrative purposes.

² References to most of the scene types depicting earthenware vessels in use can be found in the Linacre College Oxford Expedition to Egypt Scene-details Database (for a link to this database, go to www.oxfordexpeditiontoegypt.com). These references do not necessarily include all of the smaller details discussed in the present paper.

The first criterion is *the colour of the vessel*. In cases where the material of the actual vessel-type is already known — a beer-jar, for example — the dominant colour is red-brown, therefore in two dimensional art most vessels painted red-brown, or with traces of red-brown paint on the main part of their surface, are probably, though by no means certainly, representations of earthenware vessels.

The second criterion is *the shape of the vessel*. Occasionally in Old Kingdom scenes a vessel is depicted so accurately that its shape resembles a known type of earthenware container. 'Meidum ware' is one such example, and another is the distinctively shaped beer-jar mentioned above.

The third criterion is *the manner in which the vessel is held*, though in this case, in particular, artistic licence is a factor that should also be considered. Earthenware vessels are lighter than stone vessels of similar size, and this might well be reflected in the way they are held by workers when shown in use. The large pot used by field-workers for mixing dough, for example, is often tipped on its side so that most of its weight is supported by the worker's legs or feet, which suggests that the vessel is made from clay rather than stone. Likewise, in butchery scenes a kneeling butcher often raises a large spouted container in order to catch the spurting blood of a slaughtered animal, which suggests that the vessel is not particularly heavy. The same type of container, either filled with blood or with the internal organs of an animal, is often carried away from the scene of slaughter in the hands of a scurrying butcher, once again indicating that the vessel itself is of a manageable weight. In wine-making compositions the opposite interpretation might be true, because the vat depicted in grape-squeezing scenes is unusually large, and always sits firmly on the ground. This creates the impression that the vat is rather heavy, and in fact its surface sometimes bears multi-coloured flecks of paint that clearly represent inclusions in a particular type of stone.

The fourth criterion is *the function of the vessel*. For purely practical reasons the bowls and jars used by workers in most outdoor activities, such as marsh, orchard, pasture and agricultural pursuits, must have been reasonably light, strong and easy to replace, therefore clay was an ideal material for their manufacture. Often these containers are depicted in the hands of outdoor workers; less frequently they are included amongst the workers' refreshments; and on rare occasions a water-bottle might be tied to the end of a staff for ease of carrying, or hung by cord from the branch of a shady tree to keep its contents cool (pls. 1-2).

Specialists in ceramics frequently include photographs of reliefs and paintings in their books, articles and oral presentations specifically to illustrate the shape of a particular vessel or to reveal its varying uses in antiquity. This ever-increasing use of two-dimensional parallels underlines the main purpose of the present paper, namely (a) to examine the Old Kingdom reliefs and paintings that depict the manufacture of earthenware vessels and the direct use of such vessels by minor human figures when eating and drinking, (b) to organise this data as clearly as possible, and (c) to provide references, so that the cited images can be utilised as visual aids or as information for further research.

1. Pottery-making scenes

References: B. Vachala, *Abusir VIII. Die Relieffragmente aus der Mastaba des Ptahshepses in Abusir*. (Prague, 2004), 176-179 [57(B) + 81 + 93 + 221]; [I 204] (**Ptahshepses, Abusir**); L. Épron and L. Daumas, *Le Tombeau de Ti. Fascicule I. Les approches de la chapelle*. Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, Tome LXV (Cairo, 1939), pls. lxvi, lxxi (**Ty, Saqqara**); J. E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara 1907-1908*. Institut Francais d'Archeologie Orientale (Cairo, 1909), 23 (not confirmed); T.G.H. James and M.R. Apted, *The Mastaba of Khentika called Ikhekhhi*. Egypt Exploration Society Archaeological Survey of Egypt. Thirtieth Memoir (London, 1953), 34, pl. xlii, no. xii [244] (**Loose block found in the chapel of Khentika, Saqqara**); M. Bárta, *Abusir V. The Cemeteries of Abusir South I* (Prague, 2001), 168-169, fig. 4.17, pl. lxiii [a], no. 9 (**Loose block found in the chapel of Ka-aper, Abusir**).

Given the large quantity of vessels required by the local population of Old Kingdom Egypt, both living and deceased, it is surprising that so few scenes of pottery making have survived in tombs of this period. At present, all of the known examples are reliefs from privately owned tombs at Abusir and Saqqara. Only one of these reliefs is still in situ, and most of the examples probably date between the later years of the reign of Neuserre in Dynasty V to the later years of the reign of Pepy I in the 6th Dynasty. By far the most impressive scene of pottery making is on a large block from the mid-5th Dynasty tomb of the vizier Ptahshepses, the son-in-law of King Neuserre (fig. 1). This relief includes a sequence of events associated with the manufacture of pottery, spread over at least two registers. The sequence, however, is partly destroyed, and the precise position and context of the scene within the chapel's decoration is unknown. In addition to this pottery-making sequence a smaller block bearing the remains of a figure squatting beside a potter's wheel, and

probably a similarly depicted potter immediately behind him, has also survived from the tomb of Ptahshepses (fig. 2). This piece does not join directly to the larger pottery-making scene but it could be part of an upper register in the same composition.

The pottery-making scene of Ptahshepses might well have provided the artistic motivation for a far less comprehensive version in the Saqqara tomb of Ty, who was a slightly older contemporary of Ptahshepses, and one of the priests associated with the Sun Temple of Neuserre (fig. 3). Ty's pottery-making scene is depicted on the west wall of the smallest room in his chapel and is part of a composition occupying several registers that includes brewing, baking, and the inspection and recording of the workers' produce. Since the processes of brewing and baking required a plentiful supply of earthenware vessels, a representation of pottery making was chosen as the first scene in the composition's sequence. As such, it was depicted in the uppermost register where, miraculously (in view of the loss of innumerable reliefs in the upper registers of decorated stone-built chambers of the Old Kingdom period), it has survived intact to this day.

According to James Quibell, another example of pottery making is depicted in a narrow corridor in the tomb of Rashepses, an early vizier of Isesi dating to the later 5th Dynasty. This corridor was partly cleared in 2009 by an Egyptian expedition under the direction of SCA Inspector Hany el-Tayeb, but due to the collapse of the centre section of the chamber's roof before the full extent of the decoration became evident, it is not yet possible to confirm the location and identification of the scene to which Quibell refers.³

Representing the scene type in the 6th Dynasty is a relief on a loose block copied by James and Apton during their epigraphic work in the tomb of Khentika, a vizier of Pepy I, in the Teti Pyramid Cemetery (fig. 4). For many years the mastaba of Khentika has been locked and half-buried, therefore the block in question might still be lying

³ See B. PORTER and R. L. B. MOSS, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Paintings*. Vol. III, 2nd edition, *Memphis*, Fascicle I (Oxford, 1978), 496, upper. A colourful scene of scribes inspecting linen brought by female weavers is now exposed on the north end of the east wall of the corridor, to the left of the collapsed section. This scene and the scene of pottery-making are recorded together in the *Topographical Bibliography* as part of the corridor's decoration, both cited under a heading entitled: "Exact position unknown". Whether or not the pottery-making scene is depicted on the same wall as the weavers will no doubt be clarified once the fallen rubble and sand is removed from the corridor.

in one of the rooms inside the multi-roomed chapel. Perhaps it is part of the decoration of Khentika's monument, or alternatively it might belong to another 6th Dynasty tomb in the same cemetery. Brewing and baking are depicted in the lower two registers on the block, whilst in the third (upper) register is part of a pottery-making scene featuring two squatting male workers, each of whom is modelling an earthenware vessel on a potter's wheel rendered in semi-profile view. The activity of these artisans is very similar to the activity depicted on the relief fragment in fig. 2, from the earlier tomb of Ptahshepses at Abusir.

The last and definitely the most dubious evidence of a pottery-making scene is on another displaced block, this time discovered in the tomb of Ka-aper at Abusir (fig. 5). The surface of the relief is extremely worn, but the surviving hieroglyphs reveal that a bread-making scene is depicted to the left, while to the right, according to Miroslav Bárta, are possible traces of a pottery-making scene depicting a man shaping a vessel on a potter's wheel (cf. figs. 3, 4). It is worth noting, however, that the figure in the line drawing is not crouching as in the earlier scenes, but apparently standing next to a suspiciously tall potter's wheel, and that the head of this figure is level with the head of the squatting baker who must have shared the same baseline. An alternative suggestion, therefore, is that both of these individuals are seated male or female bakers, one squatting to the left, grinding grain or shaping loaves, and the other perhaps kneeling to the right, sifting flour. This block cannot be dated on the basis of its scene content, but its regional provenance, and its location in the ruins of Ka-aper's chapel, are factors that suggest a time-frame between the early 5th Dynasty (i.e. the date of Ka-aper's tomb, as proposed by its excavators) and perhaps the first half of the 6th Dynasty.

The noticeable lack of pottery-making scenes in Old Kingdom tombs might not be due to 'accidents of preservation' because there are many extant scenes of closely related activities, such as bread making, brewing and the manufacture of stone vessels. Perhaps the process of pottery making was generally regarded as being too mundane to 'catch on' as a popular scene type? The manufacture of stone vessels, on the other hand, was undoubtedly more significant, not only due to the higher value of stone and the greater expertise required for its fashioning, but because stone-made vessels were far more durable, and often prized for aesthetic reasons as well as for their special funerary functions.

2. Possible relative of the tomb owner in a banquet scene, drinking from a vessel

References: D. Dunham and W.K. Simpson, *The Mastaba of Queen Mersyankh III, G 7530-7540*. Giza Mastabas, Volume 1. (Boston, 1974), 19, pl. xii [a], fig. 11 (*Meresankh III, Giza*); K.R. Weeks, *Mastabas of Cemetery G 6000*. Giza Mastabas, Volume 5. (Boston, 1994), 44, fig. 35, Colourplate 3 [b], pl. 18 [a] (*Iymery, Giza*).

The first reference in this section is to a worn relief dating to the end of the 4th Dynasty, which happens to be the earliest-recorded example of an Old Kingdom human figure depicted in the act of drinking (fig. 6). Dominating the relief is the seated figure of Meresankh III, and facing her is a much smaller kneeling figure of a man holding a beer-jar or a similar conical-shaped vessel to his mouth. In view of his favoured position the man is probably a male relative of Meresankh III, such as her eldest son, Nebemakhet (LG 86), or one of her most important officials, such as her steward, Khemtunu (G 5210), each of whom is depicted prominently elsewhere in her chapel. Whether the vessel is made from clay or stone is impossible to tell, but the context of the scene is a banquet, and the vessel is similar in shape to the earthenware beer-jars sometimes shown in the hands of other drinking individuals, such as workers in boating and harvest scenes (see nos. 9-11, below).

A vessel of similar shape to the one just described is held by a kneeling male figure in the Giza tomb of Iymery, dating to the early 5th Dynasty (Neferirkare or slightly later). This man is also participating in a banquet, but his figure is far less prominent than that of the relative or official at the feet of Meresankh III, and the beer-jar, though raised towards his face, is not in direct contact with his mouth.

3. Wife of the tomb owner in a banquet scene, receiving a drink in a vessel

Reference: H. Junker, *Grabungen auf dem Friedhof des Alten Reiches bei den Pyramiden von Giza. Band X. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-historische Klasse Denkschriften 74, Band 1*. (Vienna, 1951), 120, Abb. 44-45, Taf. xviii [a] (*Nuneter, Giza*).

Small figures of the tomb-owner's relatives are sometimes depicted at separate offering or banquet tables, either in front of the large figure of the tomb owner at his own offering table or in a register immediately below. The majority of these figures extend their right hand towards their

table, but sometimes they have already selected an item of food and are now raising it to their mouth. In the 6th Dynasty reliefs of Nuneter the family of the tomb owner are enjoying a banquet, and as they do so a maid approaches the kneeling wife of Nuneter with a vessel shaped like a sealed earthenware beer-jar in one hand and a shallow fluted bowl in the other (fig. 7). Perhaps the jar contains a refreshing drink, whereas the stone or ceramic bowl contains water so that the noblewoman can wash her hands. A rather similar relief of a maid serving a noblewoman is preserved in the mid-5th Dynasty tomb of Nefer and Kahay at Saqqara (see no. 12, below).

4. Seated woman near a grain harvest, accepting a drink in a vessel

Reference: L. Klebs, *Die Reliefs des Alten Reiches* (2980-2475 v. Chr.). *Material zur ägyptischen Kulturgeschichte*. Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse 3 (Heidelberg, 1915), Abb. 40 (*Hetept, probably from Giza*).

This is one of two reliefs depicting the figure of a clearly important woman called Hetept about to accept a vessel offered to her by a servant, in this case a man (cf. no. 8, below). Hetept sits in a chair to the left of a group of flax harvesters, and as she watches their work a servant — perhaps one of the harvesters — offers her a drink in a small, finely-rimmed bowl. Only the context of the scene suggests that the bowl is made from clay rather than stone, for in an agricultural setting such a vessel would have been much easier to handle and transport, and to replace if accidentally broken during the course of the labourers' work.

5. Seated overseer on land, either drinking from a vessel, or accepting a drink in a vessel

References: Bárta, *Abusir V*, 168-169, fig. 4.17, pl. lxiii [a], no. 9 (*Loose block found in the chapel of Ka-aper, Abusir, possible example*); W.K. Simpson, *Mastabas of the Western Cemetery: Part I*. Giza Mastabas, Volume 4 (Boston, 1980), 20 with n. 16, pls. xliii [b], xlv [b], fig. 30 (*Iasen, Giza*); E. Brovarski, *The Senedjemib Complex, Part I*. Giza Mastabas, Volume 7 (Boston, 2000), 50 with n. 208, fig. 42 = LD II. 77 (*Senezemib:Inti, Giza*); Weeks, *Mastabas of Cemetery G 6000*, 42, fig. 34 = LD Erg. VII (*Iymery, Giza*); S. Hassan, *Excavations at Giza. The Mastabas of the Sixth Season and their Description 1934-1935*. Volume VI, Part iii. (Cairo, 1950), 100, fig. 80, pl. xli (*Kadua, Giza*); W.K. Simpson, *The Offering Chapel of Sekhem-anekh-ptah in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (Boston, 1976), 9

with n. 33, fig. 4 on p. 9, pls. C, vi, vii [a] (*Sekhemankhptah, Saqqara*); Y.M. Harpur and P.J. Scremin, *The Chapel of Kagemni. Scene Details. Egypt in Miniature, Volume I* (Oxford, 2006), 62, 377, detail [98] (*Kagemni, Saqqara*); N. de G. Davies, *The Mastaba of Ptahhetep and Akhetetep at Saqqareh. Part II. The Mastaba. The Sculptures of Akhetetep*. Egypt Exploration Fund Archaeological Survey of Egypt. Ninth Memoir (London, 1901), 16, pl. xvii (*Akhetetep, D 64, Saqqara*); C. Ziegler, *Le Mastaba de Akhetetep. Une chapelle funéraire de l'ancien empire*. (Paris, 1993), 44 (plate), 77 (description), 138-139 (drawing) (*Akhetetep, Louvre, Saqqara*); Y.M. Harpur and P.J. Scremin, *The Chapel of Neferherenptah. Scene Details. Egypt in Miniature series, forthcoming (Neferherenptah, Saqqara)*; A.M. Moussa and H. Altenmüller, *Das Grab des Nianchchnum und Chnumhotep*. Archäologische Veröffentlichungen 21 (Mainz, 1977), 153-154 with n. 951, Taf. 76, 78 [a] (*Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep, Saqqara*); P. Munro, *Der Unas-Friedhof Nord-West. I. Topographische-historische Einleitung. Das Doppelgrab der Königinnen Nebet und Khenut* (Mainz, 1993), Taf. 36 [a] (*Khenut, Saqqara*); H.T. Mohr, *The Mastaba of Hetep-her-akhti. Study on an Ancient Tomb Chapel in the Museum of Antiquities Leiden*. Mededeelingen en Verhandelingen No. 5. (Leiden, 1943), 60, fig. 30, pl. i [fig. 30 bis] (*Hetepherakhti, Saqqara*); J.E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara 1907-1908*. (Cairo, 1909), 25, pl. lxvi [2] (*Nikauhor, Saqqara*); A.M. Blackman and M.R. Apted, *The Rock Tombs of Meir. Part V*. Egypt Exploration Society Archaeological Survey of Egypt. Twenty-eighth Memoir (London, 1953), 37, pl. xxx (*Pepyankh:Heny kem, Meir, an official, possible example*).

The motif or 'mini-scene' of a seated overseer or elderly man either drinking or accepting an offered drink is mostly found in animal-husbandry compositions dating from mid-5th Dynasty to the early 6th Dynasty, and the majority of extant examples are in tombs at Giza and Saqqara. The only example in the provinces, in the later 6th Dynasty tomb of Pepyankh:Henykem at Meir, is quite different from the others, because the figure is a titled official called 'Iri' who squats before an offering table and appears to be drinking from a long, vase-shaped vessel which is now partly destroyed. Facing Iri is a man cooking over a brazier, and a standing male attendant, but there is no obvious link between the three figures and any of the marsh-related scenes depicted nearby. Elsewhere the overseer or elderly man is usually included near one or more pasture- or marsh-related activities, such as men milking a cow, feeding oxen, attending to the birth of a calf, making mats, or cooking loaves, and the position of his figure is generally at the end of the composition to the far left or right of the workers (fig. 8). Occasionally, however, he is depicted in a slightly different setting. In the Louvre chapel of Akhetetep, for example, the drinking figure is a balding goatherd sitting under

a tree (fig. 9), whilst in the chapels of Sekhemankhptah, Neferherenptah and Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep, for example, the overseer is receiving refreshments as he relaxes in a low wickerwork chair inside a makeshift shelter (fig. 10). Only one of the Memphite mini-scenes, in the pillared hall of Kagemni, is completely atypical. In this relief the overseer is not accepting milk in a proffered vessel for his own benefit but rather for the sake of a podgy little puppy which he feeds by blowing milk from his own mouth onto the tongue of the animal (fig. 11). In most of these scenes the context suggests that the liquid is held in a light-weight *earthenware* container. The most common vessel is a shallow bowl with a rolled rim (or sometimes without a visible rim), but Akhethotep's goatherd takes a swig, without assistance, from a globular bottle or flask, and Kagemni's overseer is offered milk in a tapered milk-jar with a short, slim neck, a wide lip and a rounded base, brought to him by a naked worker who is probably the assistant of a milkman working nearby. This variation in the shape of the offered container is also characteristic of Old Kingdom milking scenes, which feature as alternatives as many as ten variously shaped vessels under the udders of the milked cows.

6. Standing overseer on land, accepting a drink in a vessel

Reference: Mohr, *The Mastaba of Hetep-her-akhti*, 51, fig. 21 (*Hetepherakhti, Saqqara*).

This relief is probably an adaptation of the more traditional version of a seated overseer accepting a drink, described in no. 5, above. Unusually, there are five drinking figures in the reliefs of Hetepherakhti, each depicted in a different setting, including a seated overseer in a temporary shelter receiving refreshments. In the present relief an overseer stands in the midst of a herd of browsing goats and slakes his thirst with assistance from a naked boy (fig. 12). The proffered vessel is a long-necked bottle with a globe-shaped body, sometimes described as a water-jar, flask or water-bottle, and occasionally included with other refreshments in harvest and marsh-related scenes (pl. 1). In reality, these capacious water-bottles were probably much-used and relatively humble receptacles made from clay.

7. Seated overseer in a papyrus boat, drinking from a vessel

References: P. Duell, *The Mastaba of Mereruka. Part I (Chambers A1-10, plates 1-103)*. Oriental Institute Publications, 31 (Chicago, 1938), pls. 43-44 (*Mereruka, Saqqara*); C.M. Firth and B. Gunn, *Teti Pyramid Cem-*

eteries. Volume I. (Cairo, 1926), fig. on p. 10 (*Loose block from the Teti Pyramid Cemetery, Saqqara*); Y.M. Harpur and P.J. Scremin, *The Chapel of Ptahhotep. Scene Details*. Egypt in Miniature, Volume II. (Oxford, 2008), 146, 148-149, 314-315, details [209], [211], [212] (*Ptahhotep II, Saqqara*).

Although this is a very small group of scenes it includes two of the best examples of a drinking figure in Old Kingdom two-dimensional art. In the reliefs of Mereruka the obese brother of the tomb owner, called 'Ihy', sits in a papyrus boat in the company of an angler, his possible son, a manservant, and a man gutting fish, while further right eight fishermen in three similar boats are busily catching large quantities of fish by means of scoop-nets, and funnel traps immersed in the water. Ihy raises his right hand to support a bowl which is also held and carefully tipped upward by his attentive servant. The bowl, which is light reddish-brown with a delicate rim, might well be a two-dimensional example of 'Meidum ware', dating to the Old Kingdom period (pl. 3).

A comparable relief, known only through a fragment published by Cecil Firth, shows a plump male figure sitting comfortably in a wickerwork chair in the stern of a papyrus boat, but on this occasion the rimmed vessel held to the mouth of the recipient has a finely rimmed lid (fig. 13). All that remains of the attendant's figure are his two hands, one below, supporting the base of the bowl, and the other above, tilting its raised lid. The similarities to Mereruka's relief are very evident, and perhaps significantly the name 'Hepi' is inscribed behind the seated figure. If this relief fragment is not from the tomb of Mereruka then it must surely belong to another 6th Dynasty monument in the same cemetery — the tomb of Ankhmahor, for instance, where an obese individual bearing this very same name is depicted twice, with unusual prominence.

The third relief in the group shows a papyrus boat bearing the drinking figure of the 'Overseer of Sculptors, Niankhptah'. Evidently this official was greatly valued by the vizier Ptahhotep II, probably because he designed the decoration in Ptahhotep's chapel or supervised the carving and painting of the chapel's beautiful reliefs. Niankhptah half-kneels before a generous array of offerings, and drinks from a beer-jar which is supported by his own hands as well as those of his naked boy-attendant. No colour survives on the receptacle, but its slender body and rounded base identify it as an earthenware beer-jar with its clay stopper removed (pl. 4).

8. Standing woman in a papyrus boat, accepting a drink in a vessel

Reference: T. Säve-Söderbergh, *The Old Kingdom Cemetery at Hamra Dom (el-Qasr wa es-Saiyad)* (Stockholm, 1994), 66, pl. 49 [d], drawn from W. Wreszinski, *Atlas zur altägyptischen Kulturgeschichte*. Teil I (Leipzig, 1923), Taf. 376 [Berlin 15420] (*Hetept*, probably from Giza).

The lady Hetept in this particular scene is the same person as the lady Hetept who receives a drink from a field worker in no. 4, above. Both reliefs are unusual, not only because they show two drinking scenes featuring the same individual but because the recipient is a woman and the owner of the tomb to which the reliefs originally belonged. Hetept stands on a papyrus boat facing the smaller figure of a maid who offers a bowl to her mistress (fig. 14). The bowl resembles the receptacle in Hetept's flax-harvest scene, being relatively shallow with gently rounded sides, a fine rim, and a slightly rounded base which is partly hidden by the position of the servant's hand. It is not clear if the vessel is made from clay or stone. In view of the marshy location and apparently relaxed nature of Hetept's water-journey, however, the most practical drinking receptacle would have been a simple, light-weight ceramic bowl.

9. Sailor or passenger in a cargo-boat, drinking from a vessel

References: M. Verner, *Abusir I. The Mastaba of Ptahshepses*. (Prague, 1986), 15, pl. 3, photo 10 (*Ptahshepses, Abusir*); Mohr, *The Mastaba of Hetepher-akhti*, 49, fig. 18, pl. i [fig. 18, bis] (*Hetepherakhti, Saqqara*); Munro, *Der Unas-Friedhof Nord-West. I*, 66, Taf. 38 (*Khenut, Saqqara*); LD II. 103 [b] (*Ptahhotep, LS 31, Saqqara, possible example*).

There are very few representations of sailors or male passengers drinking on a cargo boat. All of the extant examples differ from each other, yet they have one detail in common: the container held by the key figure is an earthenware beer-jar, easily identified by its cigar-shaped body, rimmed lip, and half-oval base. In the Abusir tomb of Ptahshepses the drinking figure is standing or sitting in the doorway of the cargo-boat's cabin and only the upper half of his body is visible (fig. 15). This is in contrast to the versions in the tombs of Ptahhotep LS 31 and Hetepherakhti, where the figure either sits on the roof of the cabin and drinks from a beer-jar while a young attendant operates the rudder, or sits on the roof of the cabin and drinks from a beer-jar offered by a young attendant (fig. 16). In Khenut's cargo-boat scene the attendant is omitted. Instead, the rudder-man sits on the cabin's roof, as in the scenes of Ptahhotep and Hetepherakhti, and holds in his extended hand what appears to be a

beer-jar with its clay seal still in place. If the vessel is indeed a beer-jar then perhaps the message being conveyed by its presence is the sailor's anticipation of a well-earned drink (fig. 17).

10. Sailor or passenger in a sailing boat, drinking from a vessel

References: MMA. *Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids*. (New York, 1999), 406, detail no. 150 [c] (*Tepemankh II, Saqqara*); A.M. Blackman, *The Rock Tombs of Meir. Part IV. The Tomb-chapel of Pepionkh the Middle Son of Sebkhotpe and Pekhernefert (D, No. 2)*. Egypt Exploration Society Archaeological Survey of Egypt. Twenty-fifth Memoir (London, 1924), 44-45, pl. xvi (*Pepyankhheriib, Meir*); M. Saleh, *Three Old-Kingdom Tombs at Thebes*. Archäologische Veröffentlichungen 14 (Mainz, 1977), 26, Frontispiece, pl. 19 (*Ihy, El-Khokha, possible example*).

The three examples cited in this section are related to the motifs described in no. 9, above, but are adapted for use in a slightly different setting (i.e. a drinking figure on a sailing boat, rather than on a cargo-boat carrying produce). Tepemankh's relief is unique, because the relevant figure is not an adult but a naked boy. This individual stands behind the pilot in the bow of the sailing boat, and drinks from a beer-jar which he raises with both hands to his mouth (fig. 18). Altogether different is the drinking figure of a possible official depicted in the later tomb of Pepyankhheriib at Meir. Yet again he sits on the roof of the cabin, but on this occasion he is unattended and helps himself to the contents of a beer-jar which he raises to his mouth (fig. 19). The third example, in the tomb of Ihy at El-Khokha, is so badly damaged that it is now impossible to tell whether the squatting male figure is meant to be drinking, smelling unguent in a stone vase, or even holding a lotus. In fact, it is quite possible that this is a representation of the tomb owner rather than a drinking sailor, because the figure is slightly larger than the rest of the crew members and occupies a space outside the entrance to a shelter or wickerwork cabin on the boat.

11. Harvester drinking from a vessel

References: LD II. 9, lower (*Khafreankh, Giza*); Brovarski, *The Senedjemib Complex, Part I*, 123 with n. 94, pl. 88 [b], fig. 88 (*Khnumenti, Giza, possible example*); Hassan, *Excavations at Giza II*, 221, fig. 240 (*Nimaetre, Giza, possible example*); Mohr, *The Mastaba of Hetep-her-akhti*, p. 81, fig. 47, pl. iv [fig. 47 bis] (*Hetepherakhti, Saqqara*); B. van de Walle, *La Chapelle funéraire de Neferirtenef* (Brussels, 1978), 57-58 with nn. 186-187, fig. 3 on p. 58, pl. 12 (*Neferirtenef, Saqqara*); Moussa and Alten-

müller, *Nianchchnum und Chnumhotep*, 131, Taf. 58 (*Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep, Saqqara*); A. M. Moussa and F. Junge, *Two Tombs of Craftsmen*. Archäologische Veröffentlichungen 9 (Mainz, 1975), 22, pl. 4 [b] (*Sekhentiu and Neferseshemptah, Saqqara*); W. Wreszinski, *Atlas zur altägyptischen Kulturgeschichte. Teil III. Gräber des Alten Reiches* (Leipzig, 1936), 111, Taf. 54 (*Niankhnesut, Saqqara*); LD II. 106 [b] (*Khunes, Zawyet el-Maiyetin, possible example*); N. de G. Davies, *The Rock Tombs of Sheikh Saïd*. Egypt Exploration Fund Archaeological Survey of Egypt. Tenth Memoir. (London, 1901), 22, pl. xvi (*Werirmi, Sheikh Saïd*); N. de G. Davies, *The Rock Tombs of Deir el-Gebrâwi. Part I. Tomb of Aba and Smaller Tombs of the Southern Group*. Egypt Exploration Fund Archaeological Survey of Egypt. Eleventh Memoir. (London, 1902), 18, pl. xii (*Ibi, Deir el-Gebrâwi*); N. de G. Davies, *The Rock Tombs of Deir el-Gebrâwi. Part II. Tomb of Zau and Tombs of the Northern Group*. Egypt Exploration Fund Archaeological Survey of Egypt. Twelfth Memoir. (London, 1902), 7, pl. vi (*Djau, Deir el-Gebrâwi*).

All of the figures of drinking harvesters are in tombs dating between mid-5th Dynasty and late 6th Dynasty (Pepy II), located at Giza, Saqqara and a few provincial sites. It is probable that the provincial examples were copied from Memphite prototypes, because the four tombs, of Khunes, Werirmi, Ibi and Djau, include other details that certainly derive from known monuments at Saqqara. Perhaps the best versions of drinking harvesters are in the Saqqara tombs of Hetepherakhti and Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep, though there are two differences between these figures. In the first tomb the worker is a flax harvester, and the vessel held to his mouth is a narrow-necked bottle with a globe-shaped body, whereas in the second tomb the worker is a grain harvester, and the vessel held to his mouth is a long jar not dissimilar to a beer-jar but with a short neck and a semi-oval base (pl. 5). All of the remaining examples feature either the narrow-necked, rounded bottle or the traditional cigar-shaped beer-jar, and most of the relevant figures are grain harvesters pausing to enjoy a much-needed drink.

12. Servant washing her hands with water from a spouted jar

Reference: Moussa and Altenmüller, *Nefer and Ka-hay*, 31, pls. 26-27 (*Nefer, Saqqara*).

The maid-servant in this scene is facing the kneeling wife of Nefer, and between them is a table laden with delicious food (pl. 6). Before serving her mistress the maid has taken water from a tall spouted jar, and she is now rubbing her hands together as if cleansing them as thoroughly

as possible. The jar is painted a rich red-brown, indicative of fired clay, and has black zigzags on its central decorative 'skirt', indicative of water. There are several parallels to this scene: the figure of the wife of Nuneter, receiving a beer-jar and perhaps a water-bowl from a maid-servant (see no. 3, above), the figure of Hetept on a boat, receiving a drink from a maid-servant (see no. 8, above and cf. no. 4), and the figure of a *ka*-servant, rubbing his hands together as he approaches the deceased tomb owner in a small number of lotus-presentation scenes. In this last scene-type the *ka*-servant sometimes stands before a ewer and basin, or a bowl, placed on a small table — a detail that emphasizes the fact that he is washing his hands before serving his master.⁴

13. Child in a brewing scene, perhaps eating food in a vessel

Reference: H. Altenmüller, *Die Wanddarstellungen im Grab des Mehu in Saqqara*. Archäologische Veröffentlichungen 42 (Mainz, 1998), 108, Taf. 16 [a] (*Mehu, Saqqara*).

According to Altenmüller the child in this brewing scene is sucking his thumb, but equally he might be eating the contents of a small, round pot on the ground at his side, in much the same way as a monkey is occasionally depicted eating fruit from a bowl. Altenmüller suggests that the vessel contains dates, and that the boy's mother, who accompanies her son, is straining date mash and bread as part of the brewing process. The pot has a squat, rounded body, a fairly wide rim and a flattened base. It is unlikely that a stone receptacle would have been used for such a menial purpose, but a ceramic receptacle would have been very appropriate. No colour has survived on this unique detail.

14. Water-bottle hanging from a branch of a tree

Reference: Moussa and Altenmüller, *Nefer and Ka-hay*, 20, pls. 1-2, 4 and p. 27, pl. 19 (*Nefer, Saqqara*).

In two separate reliefs in the chapel of Nefer a goatherd has wound and knotted a length of cord around the long neck of his globe-shaped water-bottle and tied the free end of the cord to the branch of a tree

⁴ For three good examples of this figure-type, see Simpson, *Mastabas of the Western Cemetery: Part I*, 19, pl. xxxviii [a], fig. 32 (Iasen, G 2196); Weeks, *Mastabas of Cemetery G 6000*, 53, fig. 43, pl. 29 (Iymery, G 6020); 62, fig. 56, pl. 35 [b] (Shepseskafankh, G 6040).

(pl. 2). By this means he is keeping his supply of water as cool as possible, and well away from his herd of inquisitive goats. The same type of water-bottle is shown in other outdoor contexts (see above, nos. **5**, **6** and **11**), and occasionally the vessel bears traces of its original colour, which, in the present case, is light reddish-brown to imitate the colour of fired clay (cf. pl. 1).

15. Sailor on a boat, using a container to obtain water from the river

References: Moussa and Altenmüller, *Nefer and Ka-hay*, 26, pls. 1, 16 (*Nefer, Saqqara*); Ziegler, *Le Mastaba d'Akhethetep*, 66-67 (plate), 69 with n. 266 (description), 143 (drawing) (*Akhethotep, Louvre, Saqqara*); Mohr, *The Mastaba of Hetep-her-akhti*, 49, fig. 18 (*Hetepherakhti, Saqqara*).

A small and rather appealing motif only rarely depicted in cargo-boat and sailing-boat scenes shows a sailor leaning over the side of the boat's hull in order to extract water from the river for drinking, cooking or cleaning purposes (pl. 7). Either the container is a cigar-shaped jar suspended by a cord tied around its rim (Nefer, Hetepherakhti), or a shallow dish used in the manner of a scoop (Akhethotep). Logically, the sailors would have chosen a dispensable light-weight container for this purpose therefore the three cited examples probably represent vessels made from clay.

16. Sailor on a cargo-boat, pouring the contents of a jar overboard

Reference: Verner, *Abusir I*, 15-16, pls. 4-5, photos 11-12 (*Ptahshepses, Abusir, two examples*).

The detail above is closely related to the motif of a man drinking on a cargo-boat or sailing-boat, and a man drawing water from the river (see nos. **9-10**, **15**). At present, however, the only known examples of a man pouring slops over the side of a boat are in the cargo-boat scene of Ptahshepses at Abusir, which also includes a drinking sailor. Discarding slops was undoubtedly one of the everyday chores of a sailor, but the representation of such a menial activity might well have been devised by the artist who designed or executed the cargo-boat scene for Ptahshepses. Yet again the receptacle in use resembles the distinctive shape of an earthenware beer-jar which, when emptied of its original contents, must have had a multitude of functions thereafter (figs. 20-21).

17. Sailors on a cargo-boat, removing jars from the hold

Reference: LD II. 62 (Rashepses, Saqqara)

This scene is closely related to certain other activities depicted on cargo-boats (see nos. **9-10, 15**), except that a group of sailors is involved. Rather than drinking the contents of earthenware beer-jars, or using these jars for other purposes, the crew members are passing sealed beer-jars and other containers from one man to another, as if removing them from the boat's hold (fig. 22). Evidently these sailors and their cargo have just arrived at Memphis, there to be greeted by none other than their master, the vizier Rashepses. Amongst the entourage of the vizier is a team of diligent scribes recording the cargo, and elsewhere on the wall the fate of the erring crew members is made abundantly clear.

Since cargo-boat scenes represent journeys undertaken by sailors and their overseers, but not by their all-powerful overlord, it is hardly surprising that the crew's secondary activities are occasionally included in these nautical compositions. Moreover, is quite logical that these secondary activities should feature the receptacle most cherished by sailors and indeed by many other workers and privileged individuals — the ubiquitous earthenware beer-jar, preferably full to the brim and without its clay stopper.

Summary

The majority of 'daily-life' scenes depicted in tombs dating between the late 3rd Dynasty and the early 5th Dynasty are very clear and simple in terms of their subject matter, and details not essential to the meaning of the main activity are not depicted on a regular basis. With the introduction in the early to mid- 5th Dynasty of a variety of new chapel types — in particular the multi-roomed chapel — the wall space available for decoration increased substantially and, partly as a result of this development, a variety of secondary details entered the artistic repertory. The majority of these details can be found in tombs at Giza, Abusir and Saqqara, mostly dating within the time-frame starting with the reign of Neuserre in the mid- 5th Dynasty and ending with the reign of Pepy I in the first half of the 6th Dynasty.

Minor figures drinking or accepting a drink (or rarely eating) from an earthenware vessel are occasionally depicted in the following scene-types: banquet, pasture, marsh, harvest, cargo-boat and sailing-boat scenes, and the majority date within the time-frame mentioned above.

Many of these figures are associated with beer-jars or finely rimmed bowls, but sometimes the receptacle is a round bottle, or rarely a milk-jar or a shallow dish.⁵

Slightly larger-sized figures drinking or accepting a drink from a probable earthenware vessel are hardly ever depicted in Old Kingdom scenes, the exceptions being a favoured male relative or official of Meresankh III (Giza), a female tomb owner called Hetept (Giza, two examples), the wife of Nuneter (Giza), and the wife of Nefer (Saqqara). All three women are depicted a little larger than typical minor figures and have one unusual feature in common: each is accompanied by a maid-servant who either offers food and/or liquid in a bowl or jar (Hetept, Nuneter) or washes her hands with water from a spouted container before serving any food (Nefer).

Most of the vessels cited in this paper have been identified (albeit tentatively in some cases) as *earthenware* vessels on account of their distinctive shape, the way they are held, and the context in which they are shown, i.e. three of the four suggested criteria mentioned in the introductory paragraphs in this paper. Due to the generally poor record of paint traces in the relevant publications, however, the remaining criterion, namely the colour of the vessel, could only be used as supportive evidence in cases where the surviving colour had previously been studied directly by the author.

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⁵ Towards the end of Dynasty VI and in the First Intermediate Period a considerable number of major figures are offered a typical beer-jar, a beer-flask (like the beer-jar hieroglyph), a dish, and/or a loaf of bread, by a small servant who either 'floats' or stands on a baseline close to his master's face. The inclusion of these vessel-carriers and major-figure recipients is beyond the stated scope of the present paper.

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Fig. 1. Stages in the manufacture of pottery (Ptahshepses, Abusir).

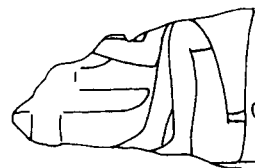


Fig. 2. Remains of a scene of two workers, each operating a potter's wheel (Ptahshepses, Abusir).

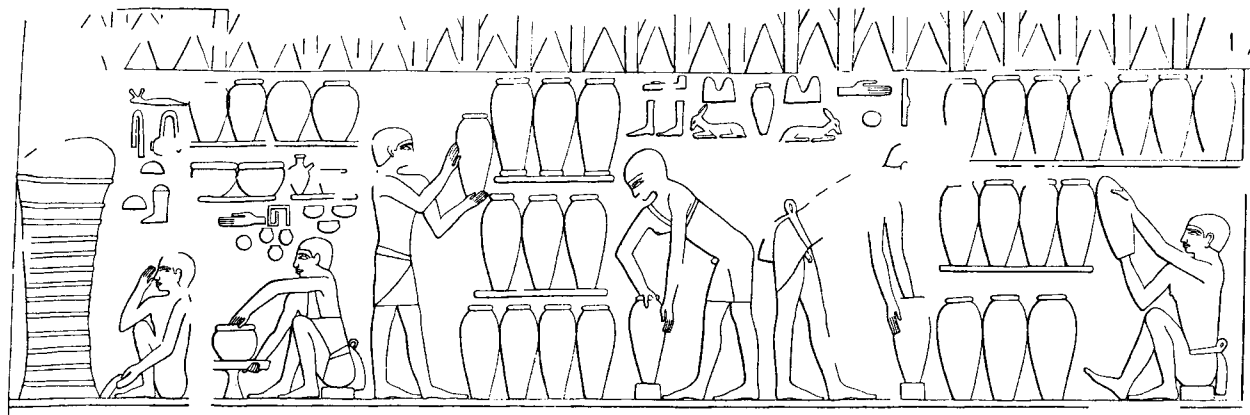


Fig. 3. Pottery-making depicted above registers of baking and brewing (Ty, Saqqara).

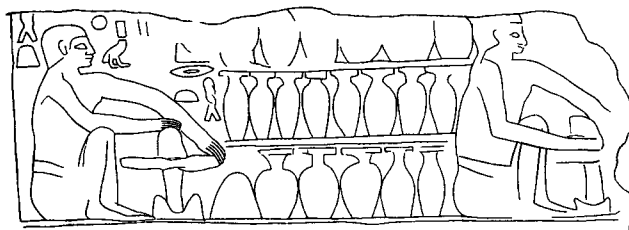


Fig. 4. Two workers, each operating a potter's wheel (Block found in the chapel of Khentika, Saqqara).

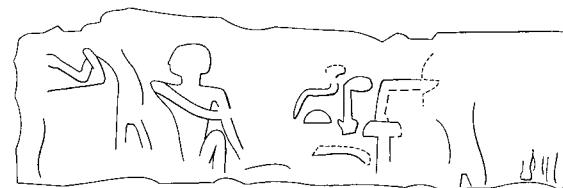


Fig. 5. Suggested traces of a man and a potter's wheel (Block found in the chapel of Ka-aper, Abusir).



Fig. 6. A favoured individual enjoying a drink of beer (Meresankh III, Giza).

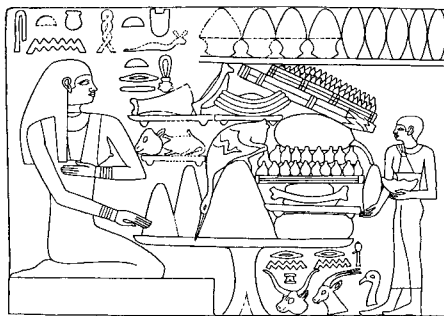


Fig. 7. Beer-jar and a bowl of water offered by a maid to her mistress (Nuneter, Giza).

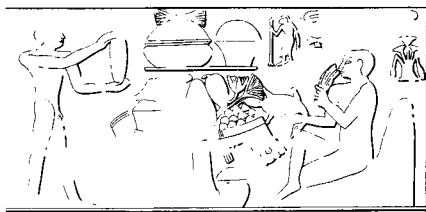


Fig. 8. Eating overseer offered a beer-jar by a naked boy (Akhethotep D 64, Saqqara).

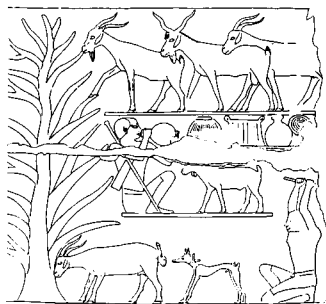


Fig. 9. An elderly goatherd drinking from a round water-bottle (Akhethotep, Louvre, Saqqara).

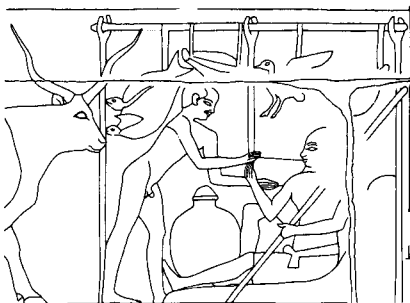


Fig. 10. Overseer in a shelter, drinking from a bowl held by a naked boy (Sekhemankhptah, Saqqara).



Fig. 11. Boy offering a milk-jar to an overseer feeding a puppy (Kagemni, Saqqara).

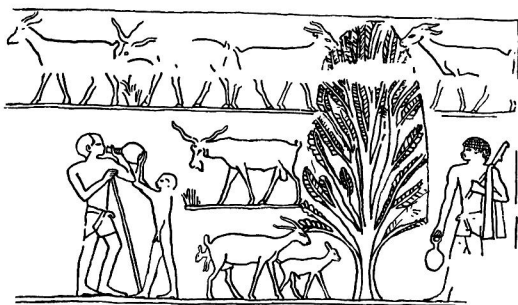


Fig. 12. Goatherd receiving assistance as he drinks from a round water-bottle (Hetepherakhti, Saqqara).



Fig. 13. Overseer on a boat, drinking from a lidded bowl (Fragment, Teti Pyramid Cemetery, Saqqara).



Fig. 14. A young maid serving her mistress on a boat (Block, Hetept, probably from Giza).

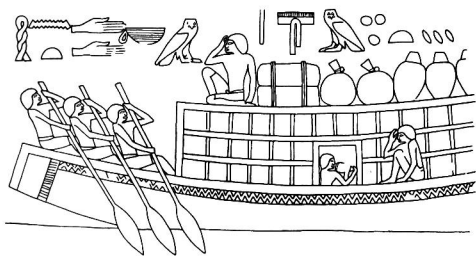


Fig. 15. Sailor in the doorway of a cargo-boat, drinking from a beer-jar (Ptahshepses, Abusir).



Fig. 16. Sailor on the cabin roof of a cargo-boat, drinking from a beer-jar (Hetepherakhti, Saqqara).

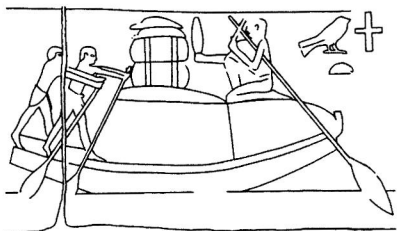


Fig. 17. Sailor on the cabin roof of a cargo-boat, holding a sealed beer-jar (Khenut, Saqqara).

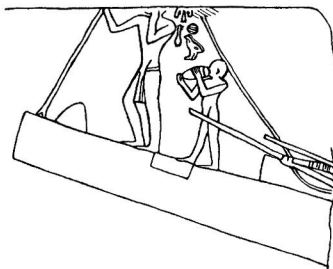


Fig. 18. A naked boy on the deck of a sailing-boat, drinking from a beer-jar (Tepemankh, Saqqara).

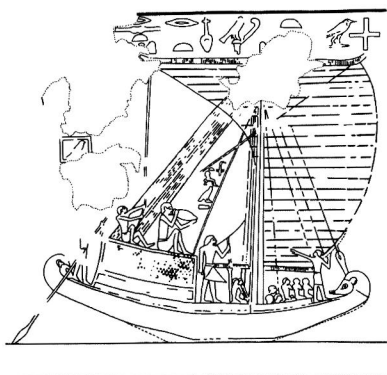


Fig. 19. Official on the cabin roof of a sailing-boat, drinking from a beer-jar (Pepyankhheriib, Meir).

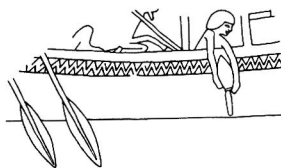


Fig. 20. Worker on a cargo-boat, pouring a jar of slops into the river (Ptahshepses, Abusir).

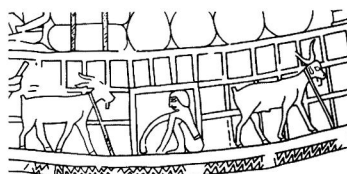


Fig. 21. Worker in the doorway of a cargo-boat, probably upturning a jar of slops (Ptahshepses, Abusir).

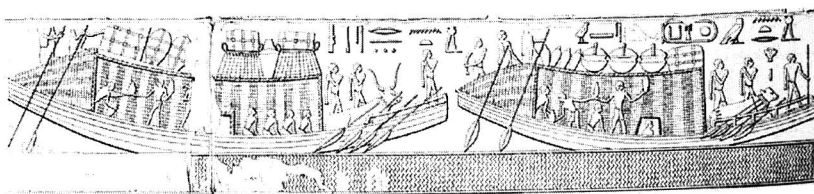
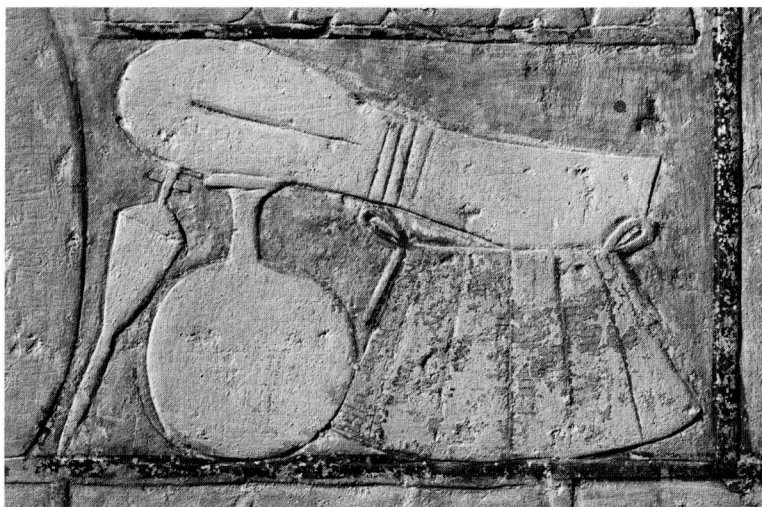


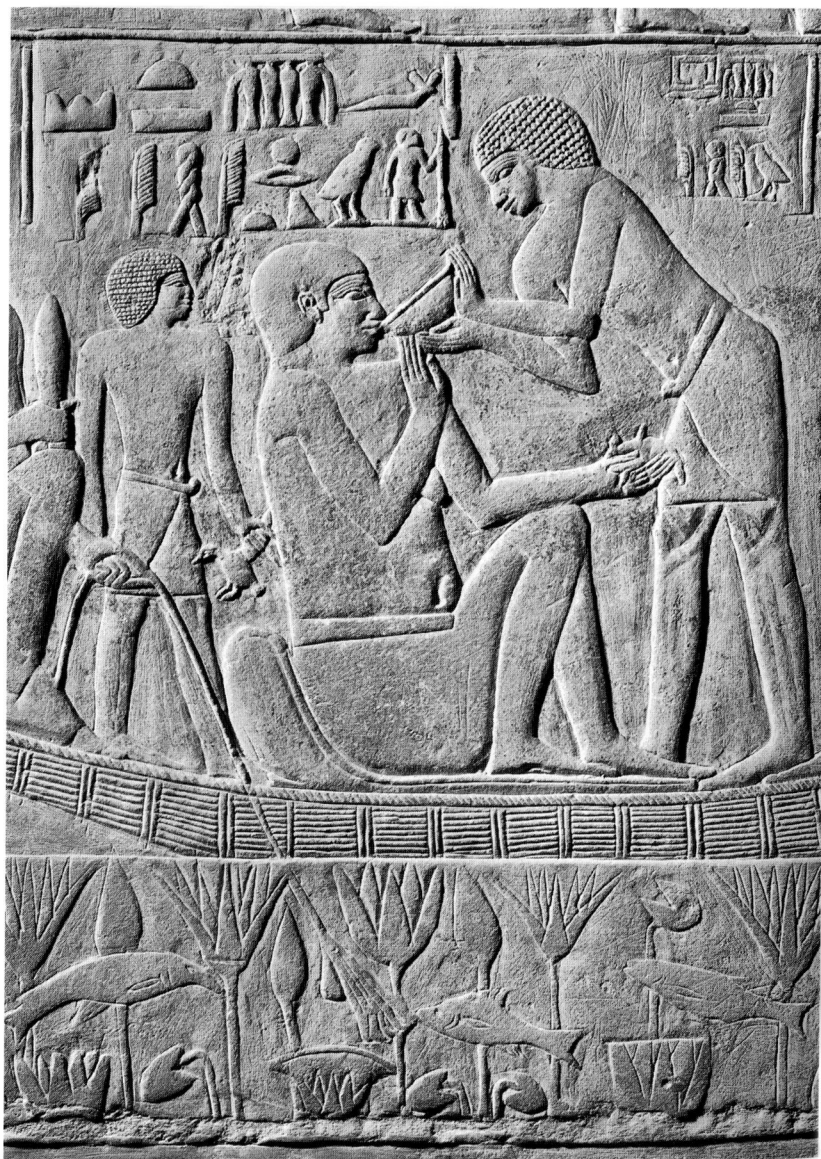
Fig. 22. Men removing jars from the hold of a cargo-boat (Rashepses, Saqqara).



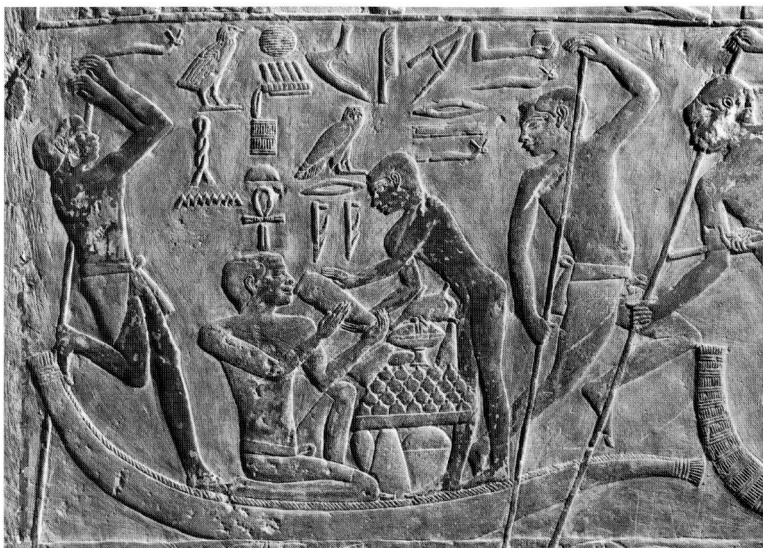
Pl. 1. Workers' equipment and refreshments
(Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep, Saqqara).



Pl. 2. Goatherd's water-bottle hanging from a branch of a tree
(Nefer, Saqqara).



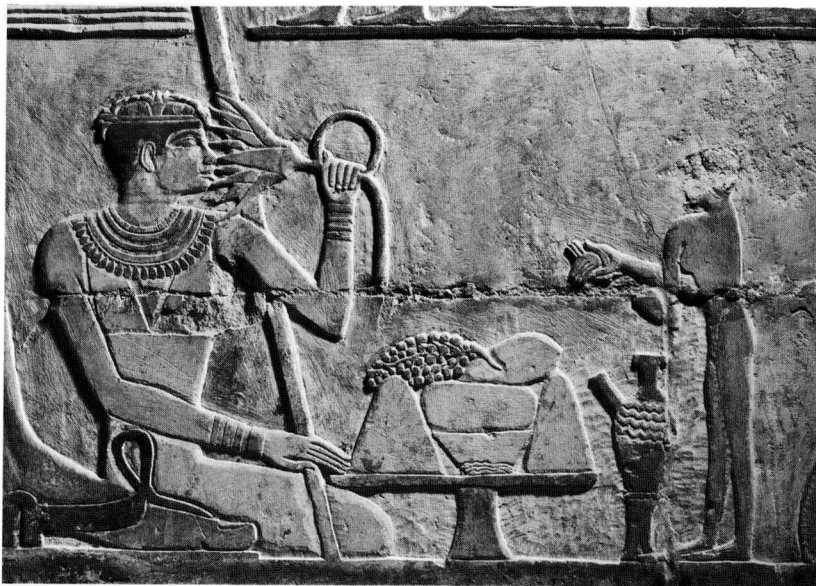
Pl. 3. Ihy, the brother of Mereruka, drinking from a bowl
(Mereruka, Saqqara).



Pl. 4. Niankhptah on a boat, drinking from a beer-jar
(Ptahhotep II, Saqqara).



Pl. 5. A grain-harvester satisfying his thirst
(Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep, Saqqara).



Pl. 6. A naked maid washing her hands with water from a spouted vessel (Nefer, Saqqara).



Pl. 7. Sailor using a beer-jar to collect water from the river (Nefer, Saqqara).