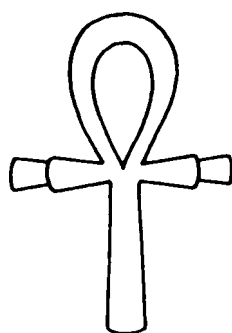


ORIENTALIA MONSPELIENSIA IX
CENTRE D'ÉGYPTOLOGIE FRANÇOIS DAUMAS
INSTITUT D'ÉGYPTOLOGIE — UPRES-A 5052 DU CNRS

Études sur
l'Ancien Empire
et
la nécropole de Saqqâra
dédiées à Jean-Philippe Lauer

réunies par
Catherine BERGER et Bernard MATHIEU

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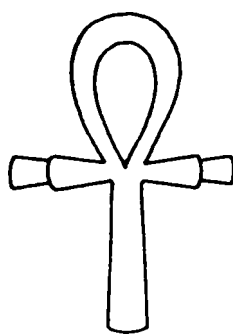
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“Covington’s Tomb” and Related Early Monuments at Gîza

Geoffrey T. MARTIN
Cambridge

The necropolis of Gîza, together with its counterpart Saqqâra, a few kilometres to the south, comprise the major northern “type-sites” for the study of royal and private tomb development in the Archaic Period and Old Kingdom, subjects to which M. Jean-Philippe Lauer has made fundamental contributions which will be of permanent value. It is an honour and a pleasure to contribute this paper on the early tombs in the South Field at Gîza in a volume commemorating the seventieth anniversary of his arrival on the *gebel* at Saqqâra to investigate the Step Pyramid complex, an event which was to have profound significance for our discipline.

The topographical distinction between sites in the Memphite area is a recent one.¹ In antiquity the desert fringe from Abû Rawâsh in the north to Dahshûr and beyond in the south was an extended cemetery, varying in depth, embracing also the sites now known as Zâwyet el-‘Aryan, Abû Ghurâb, Abûsîr, and north and south Saqqâra, which are severally distinguished by modern Egyptologists. Of these sites Gîza is the most extensively excavated and comprehensively published.² As the location selected by Khufu, Khafre’ and Menkaurê’ for their mortuary complexes it is ineluctably associated with the rulers of the IVth Dyn., and with the royal family and officials of this and subsequent dynasties of the Old Kingdom who were interred in the associated mastaba-fields.

Yet there were Early Dynastic mortuary traditions at Gîza, to which attention will be drawn in this paper. Excavations have brought to light funerary monuments dating from the first three dynasties in the southern sector of the Gîza necropolis, but the study of these has been hampered to a certain extent by the lack of an overall plan of the area, marking the locations of the known tombs. Such a map, prepared in 1902-1903 in connection with Covington’s excavations, has recently come to light.³ The map is quite detailed, and helps to resolve some of the problems of location which are signalled in earlier sources.

Lorenzo Dow Covington (1862-1935)⁴ began his excavations on the so-called “Mastaba Mount” at South Gîza in 1902, coincidentally the year of M. Lauer’s birth. It is clear from his publication of one of the monuments in the necropolis that he investigated a large number of tombs,⁵ 39 all told, of which 38 are marked on the plan [fig. 1]

here published for the first time. Tomb 1, also called Mastaba T,⁶ is the one that for lack of systematic numbering of monuments in the Giza necropolis still bears his name (“Covington’s Tomb”), even though he opened up or partially cleared so many others. Covington was not the first excavator in the area, since he refers to “the picturesque ruins of a large bluish-grey stone mastaba (about 28 metres x 12 metres) excavated by Mariette”,⁷ and notes that the “entire concession seems to have been fully worked, many of the best savants having tested it”,⁸ without naming the scholars in question. Evidently Mariette himself did not achieve any remarkable results in the area, and no reference is made to it in the Giza section of his publication on mastaba tombs.⁹ Reisner refers to the site only in passing in his magisterial treatment of the Giza cemeteries.¹⁰

The Map of the Necropolis south of the Giza Pyramid Field.

Since the map alluded to above is in a sense an historical document it is reproduced here in its original form. Evidently it was drawn up by a certain G. Curtis in 1905. The handwriting used in the labelling of the three Sections marked on it is somewhat idiosyncratic, so for clarity’s sake the various sectors and the numbered tombs in them are shown also in a simplified map [fig. 2], and are itemized below.

Section 1

Tombs 1 (called Tomb N° 1 First Dynasty), 2, 3.

Section 2

Tombs 4-10, 11 (labelled Tomb N° 11 3rd Dynasty dating about 4200 B.C.), 15, 23, 27, 28, 32.

Section 3

Tombs 12-14, 18, 19, 24, 26, 29-31, 33-38.

Other Tombs

Tombs 16 and 17 are shown north-west and east respectively of Section 3. Tombs 20-22 and 25 are south of Section 2. It has already been noted that Tomb 39 is not marked.

I assume that the tombs and shafts were investigated by Covington in the order in which they are numbered on the map, but there is no published documentary evidence to prove this. Other features signalled are “Quarry”, “Cemetery & Trees”, “South Causeway”, and “Ancient Causeway”. From personal observations made on the ground in 1995 the latter is still evident (it is made up of rough stones), as are Tombs 1-3 and 11. The “South Causeway” and tunnel are still striking features of the terrain south-east of the Menkaurē’ pyramid complex.

For the sake of completeness it may be noted that in respect of the main pyramid plateau the following are marked on the map: “Trench”, “Basalt Pavement”, “Inclined Passages”, “North Causeway”, “Edge of Rock”, “Stone Rubbish”, and “Sphinx”. Tombs 1-3 are situated on knolls, with extensive views over the surrounding landscape. The site of Tomb 11, one of the monuments singled out for special mention on the map, is not in such a favoured position. One wonders how many funerary monuments of the early periods were demolished by the architects and masons of Khufu and his successors, further north in the necropolis.

Other plans of this part of the Gîza necropolis are those of Perring,¹¹ Lepsius,¹² Mariette,¹³ Baedeker,¹⁴ and most recently Kromer.¹⁵ A general map in simplified form is available in Porter and Moss.¹⁶

Tomb 1. PM III², pt. 1, 294.

This mudbrick tomb, also called Mastaba T, is indubitably the one known under the sobriquet “Covington’s Tomb”. Covington’s excavation of it over two seasons (1902-1903) was published in a report¹⁷ which is remarkably detailed for its time, if a trifle repetitive, and even touches upon the later material overlying and adjacent to the monument. According to the plan [fig. 1] it lies due south of the mid-point of the south side of Khufu’s pyramid. It is unknown if this is significant, or the result of chance.

The walls of the main mastaba, which had an intricate palace-façade decoration, were vertical rather than battered. Covington does not assign a precise date to the tomb in his report, but seems to favour the Ist Dyn.¹⁸ on the basis of a comparison of part of the east façade of the Gîza monument with the south chapel of a tomb excavated at Saqqâra by Mariette and dated by him to that period. No inscriptions or sealings were found by Covington to corroborate his early date. Although Covington does not specify the Saqqâra tomb in question it is undoubtedly that of Kha’bausokar, to which Mariette assigned a Ist Dyn. date.¹⁹ Later research has shown that it should be dated to Dyn. III,²⁰ which is more in accord with the probable date of Covington’s mastaba, which architecturally fits better into the end of the IInd or the beginning of the IIIrd Dyn. His comparison was therefore apt.

Covington’s laudable account gives the impression that his team fully excavated Tomb 1.²¹ Flinders Petrie, who had a penchant for profitably re-clearing monuments already allegedly “worked” spent some time there in 1906-1907, and found much additional material.²² After drawing attention to the similarity of the panelling to that of early Ist Dyn. mastabas at Naqâda and elsewhere at Gîza, Petrie nevertheless opts for a date “nearly contemporary with the beginning of the IIIrd dynasty”.²³ The tradition of panelled façades of the “Covington Tomb”-type therefore had a long history.

Checklist of material from Tomb 1 (page references are to Covington’s article and Petrie’s monograph).

COVINGTON

25 hard wood pegs (p. 205)

Knife (called “steel”) with hard wooden handle and with bronze ring encircling the blade near the hilt (p. 208)

Double-edged copper blade (p. 217)

4 silex implements (p. 218)

Discs (p. 214, 216)

4 balls or marbles: 3 in “dull white alabaster”, 1 “in red” (p. 218)

Stone vessel fragments, including limestone, “alabaster”, granite, red and white breccia, diorite, “green schist”, and porphyry (p. 215-217; cf. Petrie, p. 7 [17])

Cylinder-shaped vessel, “alabaster” (p. 217)

Wood, fragment (p. 218)

Old Kingdom pottery (p. 211, 212, 215-217)

Human remains (p. 215-216)

Roman glass (p. 207-208, 215)

Roman pottery (p. 206-207, 208 (some containing bitumen and a “greyish powder”), 215)

PETRIE

Stone (gaming) balls or marbles: 2 of carnelian, 1 agate, 9 hard brown limestone, 59 white limestone, 52 quartz (p. 7-8 [17])

Stone vessel fragments (p. 7 [17])

Chert slab (p. 8 [17])

Copper tools or models (p. 8 [17])

10 bowls: 2 of porphyry, 4 diorite, 4 "alabaster", from tomb shaft immediately to east of "Covington's Tomb" (p. 8 [18]).

The drawing of the fragment of a painted offering-list, noted by PM III², pt. 1, 294 as possibly coming from here, cannot at the moment be located in the archives of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Tomb 2.

This monument was seen by me in 1995. Covington notes it ²⁴ as "... a large bluish-grey stone mastaba (about 28 metres x 12 metres) excavated by Mariette", and refers to it again ²⁵ as "... the interesting ruins of a large mastaba built of immense blocks of oyster-filled limestone". Petrie investigated it in 1906. ²⁶

Material found adjacent to Tomb 2 (reference is to Petrie's monograph).

7 stone bowls: 3 of syenite, 4 "alabaster" (p. 8 [18]).

Tomb 3.

Also seen by me in 1995. It is constructed of mudbrick and stone, and is the best-preserved monument of the group. There is a large shaft adjacent to the west, and additional structures are attached on the east. Presumably Covington did some work here, but this tomb is undoubtedly the mastaba excavated by an Austrian mission directed by Dr Karl Kromer in 1981-1983. ²⁷ Its situation as marked on the map published by the expeditions ²⁸ does not however correspond precisely with the site of Tomb 3 as marked on fig. 1. ²⁹

The mastaba, dated by the Austrian excavator probably to the late IIIrd Dyn., was enlarged soon after its construction. A smaller tomb, dated by fragments of a wooden coffin found in its substructure, was attached to the south on its east façade during Dyn. IV or V. Yet another structure with four shafts and a serdab was built onto the east façade of the main mastaba, northwards of the first addition, during Dyn. V. ³⁰ A final addition was made on the west façade of the original structure. It is dated to Dyn. IV-V on imported pottery evidence.

The complex was completely and efficiently excavated by the Austrian archaeologists, apart from the central tomb-chamber which was not reached owing to the presence of large stones encumbering the passage.

Material from Tomb 3 (references are to Kromer's monograph)

All objects, including pottery, are published in p. 63-67, and on pls. 23-39.

Human remains (p. 53-62, with pls. 40-45)

Petrie's IIInd Dyn. Tomb. PM III², pt. 1, 294.

Petrie's description of the location of this important monument is vague: "On the top of the south end of the ridge facing the cultivation, looking down on the site of the

tomb of the Ist dynasty, we found the remains of a tomb of the IInd dynasty”.³¹ It was covered by the debris of a Late Period monument. An earlier reference by Petrie ³² to the tomb may be misleading: “The IInd Dynasty was also represented by a rock tomb containing sealings of king Neteren”. The term “rock tomb” is usually descriptive of tombs cut into a rock escarpment or cliff face. There are innumerable examples of such monuments dating from the Old Kingdom and later periods in Gîza, many provincial sites, and to a certain extent in Saqqâra. Covington mentions that he investigated eight examples of “cave tombs” in the area of the “Mastaba Mount” excavations.³³ A rock-tomb as such would be unprecedented for the Archaic Period.³⁴

It is virtually certain that the Dyn. I tomb mentioned by Petrie refers not to “Covington’s Tomb”, which Petrie dated to the late Second or early IIIrd Dyn. (see above) but to the large and important mastaba, undoubtedly of Ist Dyn. date, found by Barsanti in 1904 and excavated by Daressy and subsequently by Petrie. This tomb ³⁵ lies somewhere in the area between South Gîza and Zâwyet el-‘Aryân, but does not seem to be pinpointed precisely on any map. Petrie says ³⁶ that it lies “in the plain about a mile and a half SSE of the Great Pyramid”.

Tomb 11.

On the plan of Covington’s area published here [fig. 1] Tomb 11 is shown as a monument of some consequence, to judge from its dotted outline and central shaft(?). It is unclear why it is labelled “3rd Dynasty” It is east of “Covington’s Tomb”, though whether it can be said to be “on the top of the south end of the ridge facing the cultivation” is arguable. At any rate its situation affords a view looking towards the site of Barsanti’s Ist Dyn. mastaba. With due reservations I identify Tomb 11 with Petrie’s IInd Dyn. mastaba.

Material from Petrie’s IInd Dyn. Tomb [= Tomb 11?] (references are to Petrie’s monograph)

Stone vessel fragments in “alabaster”, gypsum, limestone, and pink “marble” (p. 7 [14-15])

Mud seal impressions of Ninetjer (Neteren) (p. 7 [14]). See also PM III/2, pt. 1, 295

Pottery jar (p. 7 [15])

Apart from the work of the recent Austrian mission it will be noted from the above account that the important antecedents discussed here of the tombs in the great mastaba-fields on the main plateau at Gîza have been excavated and published in a piecemeal and rather unsatisfactory way, although Covington’s efforts in Tomb 1 were praiseworthy. Something can be gleaned about the architecture of these monuments, so comparisons can be made with Archaic and early IIIrd Dyn. tombs at Saqqâra, Mahâsna, Naqâda, Abydos and elsewhere, but the treatment of the objects, not least the pottery and stone vessels, leaves much to be desired. Surprisingly little is known about such material, deriving from the crucial transitional period spanning the IInd and early IIIrd Dyn., especially in respect of ceramics.³⁷ It would be a valuable exercise to study all the surviving material in Cairo, Cincinnati, and other locations.³⁸ In this paper it has been possible only to highlight the possibilities.

To add to the meagre existing documentation a Checklist of objects from Covington's excavations, derived from the Journal d'Entrée and Temporary Register of the Cairo Museum,³⁹ is appended.

Journal d'Entrée.

- JE 35871. Stèle à sommet cintré. Inscription en colonne. Époque ptolém. Calcaire. Haut. 1.08 m. Larg. 0.33 m [Note: Gizeh, fouilles Covington 1902]. This object is also in the Temp. Reg. as 31.5.15.4: Ptol[emaic] round topped stela with one col[umn] of text. 110 x 35 [cm].
- JE 35872. Table d'offrande à deux auges rectangulaires. Inscription au nom de [*Sndm*] et sa famille. Calcaire. Long. 0.39 m. Brisée en deux [Note: = 57007].
- JE 35873. Objet à destination inconnue, un des côtés étant creusé en forme de cône, comme un cadran solaire. Albâtre. Long. 0.20 m.
- JE 35874. Vase de la forme des aiguères en bronze avec bec formant deux rigoles. Albâtre. Haut. 0.11 m.
- JE 35875. Outils en silex [no other details].
- JE 37095. Deux billes, l'une en cornaline, l'autre en albâtre. Diam. 0.012 m [Note: marked 18.9.32.4].
- JE 37948. Couteau à lame en fer, manche en corne, virole en ivoire. Long. 0.32 m.
- JE 38973. Lame de silex polie, ayant dû servir de couteau de tisserand. Long. 0.39 m [Note: II Dyn. = Petrie, *Gizeh and Rifeh*, 7, with pl. III, a].
- JE 38976. Deux billes rondes en calcaire. Diam. 0.008 à 0.012 m [Note: = Cat. 68139 à 68148 (sauf 68144 qui n'existe pas et qui semble être remplacée par 68148 bis)].

Temporary Register.

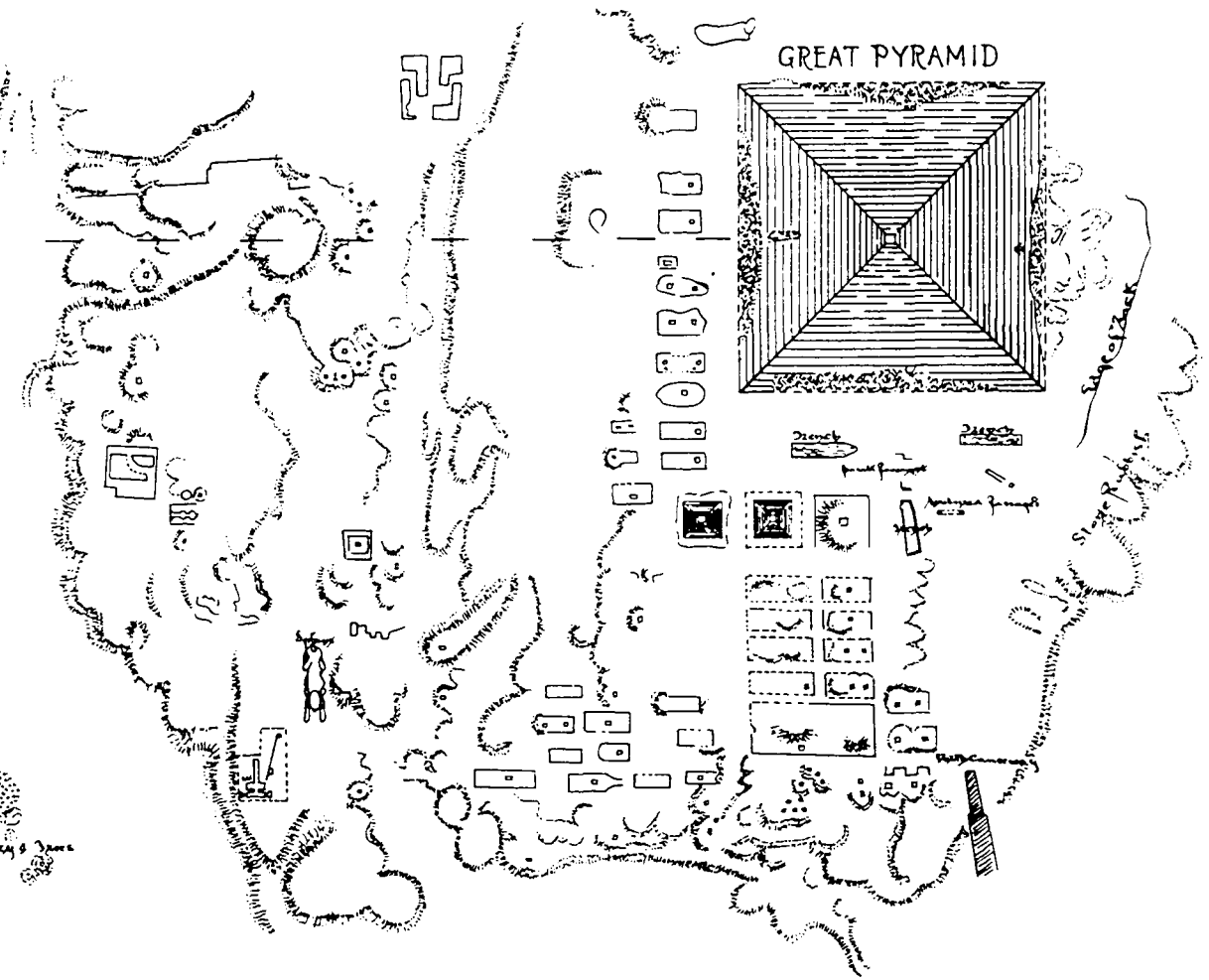
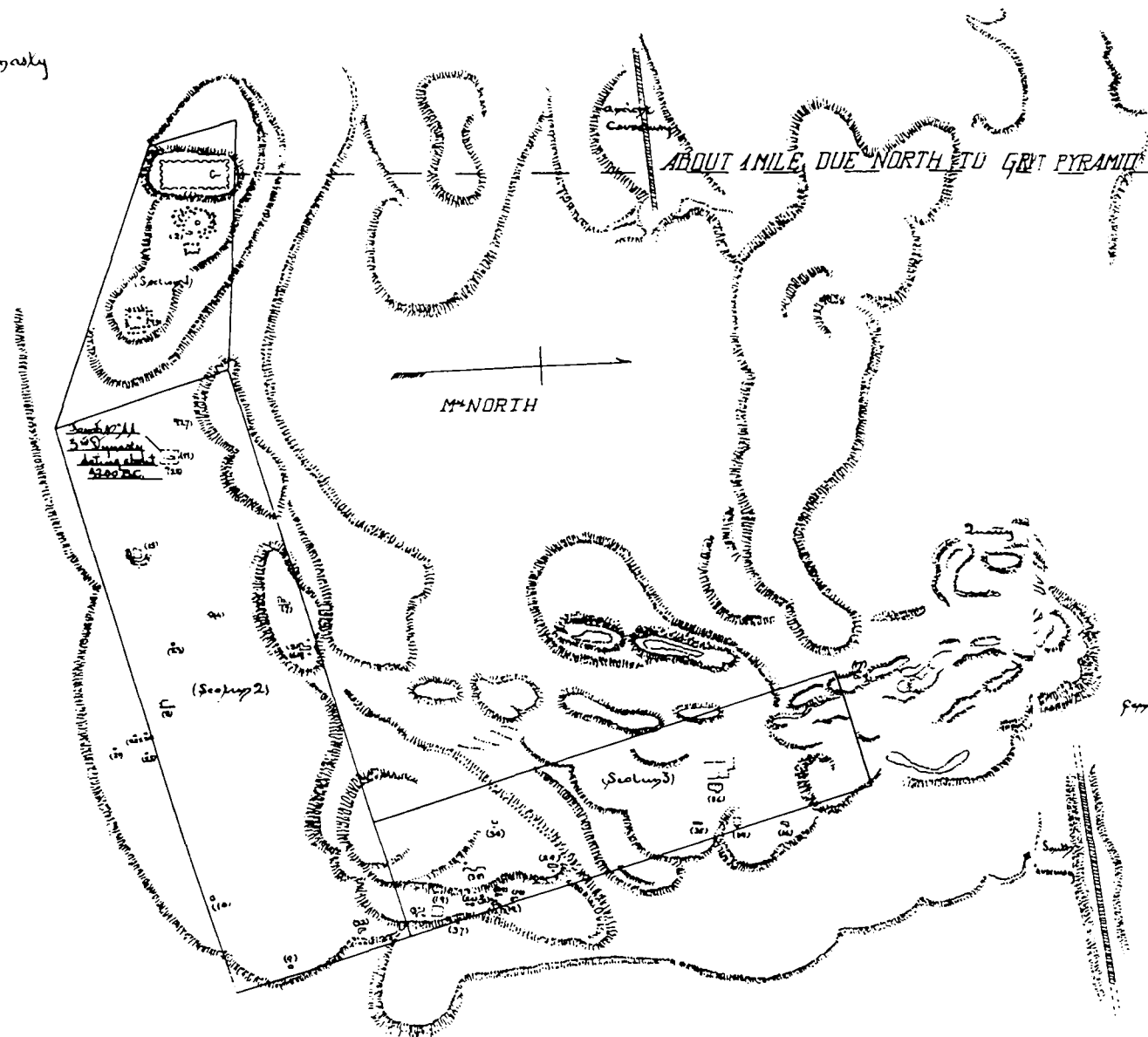
- 31.5.15.2. R[oun]d topped stela of [?] illegible. Traces of 3 lines inscr. 60 x 33 [cm.] [Note: Believed to be from Covington's work. F[oun]d near Photo Room (of the Cairo Museum)].
- 31.5.15.3. Stela. Similar [...] quite illegible. 58 x 28 [cm.].
- 14.3.23.1. Group of bronze objects [probably ritual]. Largest [0].155 m. [Note: "Mastaba Mount Excavations (Gizeh)"].

The last word should be given to Petrie: "It is a new view of Gizeh to see that it did not become occupied first by the Pyramid kings, but that it had a continuous history as a cemetery from the beginning of the Ist Dynasty".⁴⁰

1. Pointed out most recently by J. MALEK, *DiscEg* 30, 1994, p. 111.
2. PMIII², pt. I, 10-312; 353-354.
3. It was given to me by Mr R. Fazzini of The Brooklyn Museum, to whom I extend my warmest thanks. After the publication of this article the original map, on linen, will find a permanent home in the archives of the Cincinnati Art Museum, which houses objects from Covington's excavations as well as some manuscript material. I have been unable to obtain information about the latter.
4. W.R. DAWSON, E.P. UPHILL, *Who Was Who in Egyptology*, 3rd ed. rev. by M.L. BIERBRIER, London, 1995, p. 108. Covington's achievements are not dealt with in J.A. WILSON's informative study, *Signs & Wonders upon Pharaoh: a history of American Egyptology*, Chicago and London, 1964.
5. L.D. COVINGTON, *ASAE* VI, 1905, p. 193.
6. G.A. REISNER, *The Development of the Egyptian tomb down to the Accession of Cheops*, Cambridge, Mass. etc., 1936, p. 155-157. Reisner dated Tomb 1 to the reign of Kha'sekhemuy.
7. L.D. COVINGTON, *loc. cit.*
8. *Loc. cit.*
9. A. MARIETTE, *Les mastabas de l'Ancien Empire*, Paris, 1889, p. 488-571.
10. G.A. REISNER, *A History of the Giza Necropolis*, Vol. I, Cambridge, Mass. etc., 1942, p. 23, referring to Petrie's work.

11. In H. VYSE, *Operations carried on at the Pyramids of Gizeh in 1837*, Vol. III. Appendix, containing a survey by J.S. Perring (London, 1842), pl. opposite p. 1. The area on the east side of the necropolis is marked “Pits”. The western Causeway is shown as “Foundation”, and the “South Causeway & Bridge” are also marked.
12. K.R. LEPSIUS, *Denkmaeler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien*. Erste Abt., Berlin, 1849, Bl. 14.
13. A. MARIETTE, *op. cit.* pl. I. The southern section of the Giza necropolis shows some tombs marked in, four of which are numbered 102-5.
14. K. BAEDEKER, *Egypt and The Sūdān*, 8th rev. ed., Leipzig, etc., 1929, map between p. 132-133.
15. K. KROMER, *Nezlet Batran: eine Mastaba aus dem Alten Reich bei Giseh (Ägypten)*. *Österreichische Ausgrabungen 1981-1983*, Vienna, 1991, plan 1, and Abb. 1 on p. 11.
16. PM III², pt. 1, map III: South Field. “Covington’s Tomb” is marked, but misplaced somewhat to the east of its true location, if the new map now published is correct.
17. L.D. COVINGTON, *op. cit.*, p. 193-218. Where L.D. Covington mentions Plates he means Figures. See also R. WEILL, *Les origines de l’Égypte pharaonique*, 1re partie. *La IIe et la IIIe dynasties*, Paris, 1908, p. 371-374, 418, 454, 479.
18. L.D. COVINGTON, *op. cit.*, p. 201.
19. A. MARIETTE, *op. cit.*, p. 71-79, with plans on p. 71.
20. Y. HARPUR, *Decoration in Egyptian tombs of the Old Kingdom*, London, New York, 1987, s.v. *H^c-b3w-Skr*. A mid-Dyn. III to early Dyn. IV date is attributed by PM III², pt. 2, 449.
21. But see L.D. COVINGTON, *op. cit.*, p. 209.
22. W.M.FI. PETRIE, *Gizeh and Rifeh*, Double vol., London, 1907, p. 7-8 [16-18].
23. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
24. L.D. COVINGTON, *op. cit.*, p. 194.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
26. W.M.FI. PETRIE, *op. cit.*, p. 8 [18].
27. K. KROMER, *op. cit.*, plan 1; see also Abb. 1 on p. 11.
28. *Loc. cit.*
29. But see the reservations expressed about the quality of the plan and Abb. 1 in Kromer’s report in a review by A.O. BOLSHAKOV, *BiOr* LI/1-2, Jan.-Mar. 1994, col. 63. I cannot at the moment judge which of the two sources is the more accurate.
30. A.O. BOLSHAKOV, *op. cit.*, col. 61 prefers a Dyn. VI date.
31. W.M.FI. PETRIE, *op. cit.*, p. 7 [14].
32. W.M.FI. PETRIE, *EEF Archaeological Report 1906-1907*, London, 1908, p. 28.
33. L.D. COVINGTON, *op. cit.*, p. 193.
34. Though the possibility of the existence of rock-tombs in the first two dynasties cannot be dismissed out of hand.
35. PM III², pt. 1, 312.
36. W.M.FI. PETRIE, *Gizeh and Rifeh*, p. 2.
37. A.L. KELLEY signals possible Dyn. II pottery forms only from Hierakonpolis and Abydos, but PETRIE’s drawings are hardly usable; see A.L. KELLEY, *The Pottery of Ancient Egypt*, Toronto, 1976, pls. 6-7.
38. As regards the fundamental sigillographic material of King Ninetjer, a personal examination of the sealings in Manchester (PM III², pt. 1, 295) has shown that there are discrepancies between the drawings of Petrie and Kaplony, and in some cases the published drawings only approximate to what can be seen on the admittedly intractable material. Here again is a fruitful field for research.
39. With the kind permission of the Director, Dr Mohamed Saleh.
40. W.M.FI. PETRIE, *EEF Archaeological Report 1906-1907*, p. 28. The remarks of A.O. BOLSHAKOV, *op. cit.*, col. 62, are apposite here: “The main cemeteries of Giza were planned and founded under Cheops, centralized planning leaving its mark on the whole following development of architecture and decoration of Giza tombs more unified than those anywhere else in Egypt. As a result the Giza necropolis is too often regarded as having no historical roots, appearing instantly on a blank space and then developing according to its own rules... Giza no doubt had some early dynastic traditions which were continuing at its periphery, synchronous to the flourishing of the main cemeteries”.

Temp No 1 27512 Pyramid



MASTABA MOUNT EXCAVATIONS

SHOWING TOMBS NOS. I AND II, ALSO THE GREAT PYRAMID
GHIZEH PYRAMIDS 1902-3.

(Section corners marked by survey peg with tag & covered with small
pile of stones)

Discovered by E. Dyer, Capt. U.S.A. 1922-3

SCALE 1:1000
SCALE 1:1000

Fig. 1. Covington's excavations, 1902-1903, showing relationship to the Giza pyramid plateau.

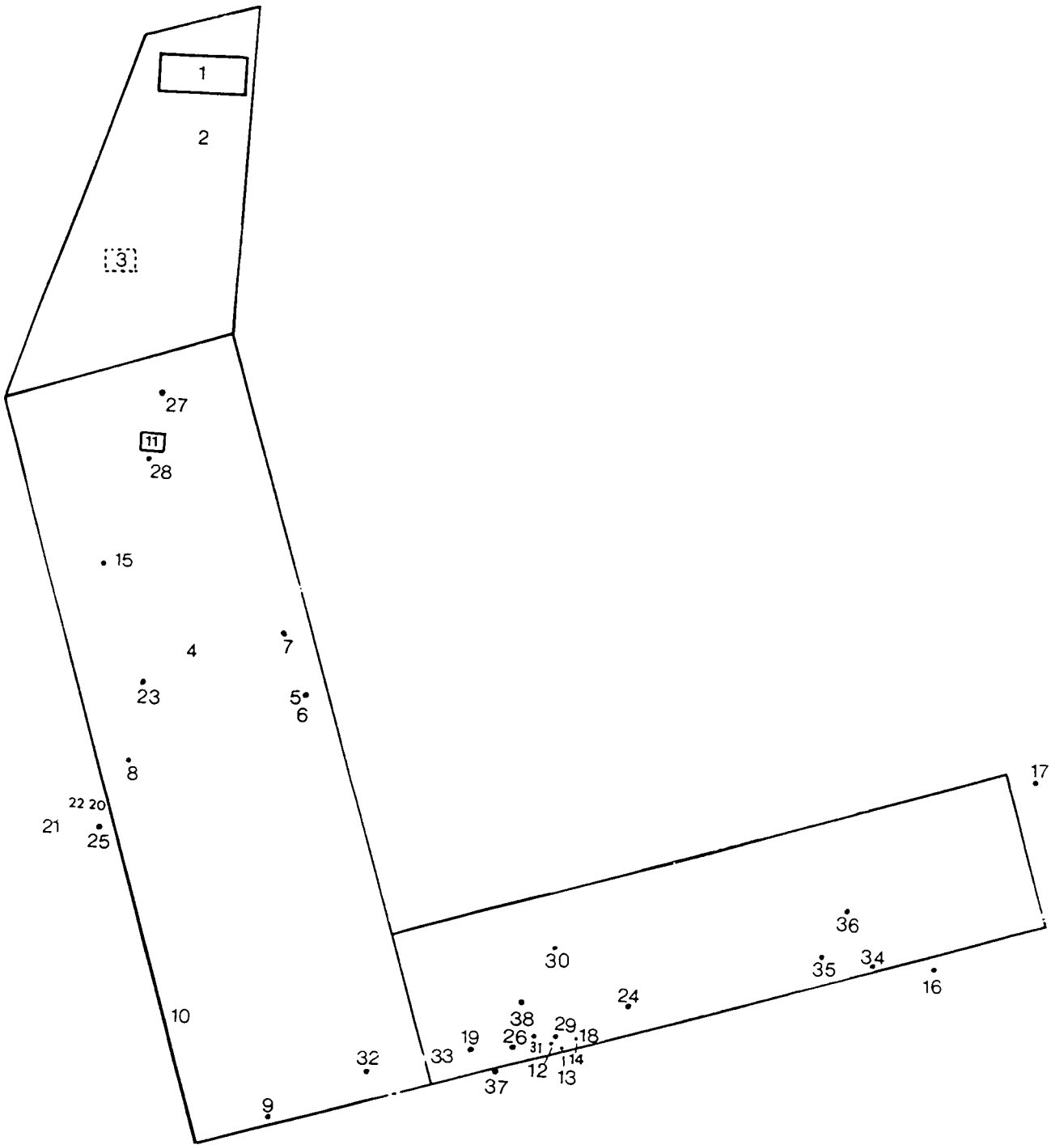


Fig. 2. Locations of the numbered tombs.

Achevé d'imprimer sur les presses
de l'Imprimerie de l'Université Paul Valéry
MONTPELLIER III

Dépôt légal : 3^e trimestre 1997.

ISBN : 2-84269-047-8 (édition complète)
ISBN : 2-84269-046-X (tome 2)