

## THE ARTIST OF THE EGYPTIAN OLD KINGDOM<sup>1</sup>

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### THE DEVELOPMENT OF OLD KINGDOM ART

THE history of ancient Egyptian culture has suffered from two mutually contradictory simplifications. On the one hand, the progression of predynastic and dynastic ages has been presented as cumulative in cultural gains, so that the effect is a continuous enrichment in material and spiritual expressions. Such a presentation would naturally lead upward, culminating in a cultural climax probably within the Egyptian Empire. The opposing simplification, emphasizing the strongly static character of Egyptian culture, argues that the essential forms were established very early in the dynastic history and remained unchanged in broad outlines throughout the pharaonic period. Each of these statements draws upon the same body of material, but neither uses the whole body of material. The truth lies in a recognition of the value in each of the arguments. In our judgment, Egypt did reach a very early cultural climax, at which point she attempted to fix all the essential forms of the Egyptian way of life. In Egyptian dogma the unchanging nature of her way of life was asserted constantly, and she really enjoyed an extraordinary success in reiterating certain general forms over thousands of years. However, no culture could have remained rigid and immutable over thousands of years, or, to put it differently, no culture could have lasted for thousands of years if it had been rigid and immutable. Change is the essence of history, and Egyptian culture was subject to constant

change within a system which was stable in its most general forms and within a dogma which ignored the factor of change and asserted a static condition. Thus we must recognize these elements: (a) a system laid down very early was followed with remarkable success for a very long stretch of time; (b) Egyptian dogma closed its eyes to historical change and insisted upon the immutability of the system; (c) this was possible because one important element of the system was that it was flexible enough to permit new forms for the assertion of the culture.

In the field of art many of the forms of expression go back to the predynastic or protodynastic period. The essential artistic forms received a canonization by the 3d or 4th dynasty and were then standardized for all subsequent generations. Nevertheless, it is possible for a modern specialist to date Egyptian works of art to the periods of their production, because, within the broad rules of artistic conventions, there was ample room for variation, and each major period had its own characteristic and recognizable output.

The book under consideration is a historical analysis of the statuary, relief sculpture, and painting of the Old Kingdom, with a statement of the earlier development of this art and of its transition forms toward Middle Kingdom art. Smith's historical approach provides an analytical catalogue of the art of the successive historical phases from the predynastic into the First Intermediate Period. This should become the standard reference book for the art products of the Old Kingdom. Although the very detailed

<sup>1</sup> A review of some phases of W. S. Smith, *A History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom* (Oxford University Press, 1946).

statement makes the general argument difficult to follow without careful reading, four indexes provide a guide to subject matter, names, and monuments.

This book does not attempt to give us as penetrating an analysis of the psychology of the Egyptian sculptor as Frankfort compressed into a few paragraphs of comparison between Sumerian and Egyptian sculpture.<sup>2</sup> Nor is there a succinct check list of criteria for dating statues similar to that in H. Evers' *Staat aus dem Stein*. One who is in an ungrateful state of mind and ignores the current high costs of printing may regret the lack of sharp clarity in many of the book's plate figures. The plates frequently do not do justice to the originals depicted.<sup>3</sup> However, we have a wealth of material, not only in Smith's plates, but also in his admirable line drawings, and we are duly grateful.

What emerges for the reviewer is a new appreciation of the high artistic abilities of the earlier part of the Old Kingdom and a sense of the constant change and experimentation throughout the entire period. In one sense, the climax was reached at the beginning, and subsequent periods followed the forms then set but could not recapture the subtle qualities of earlier accomplishment. In another sense, the encouragement to experiment within the system brought forth constant refreshment and enrichment.

Two quotations from Smith's Introduction will serve to give his attitude toward his subject.

Nowhere in the ancient world until the time of the new spirit of Greek civilization is there anything comparable to the technical accomplishment, the naturalism, and the

productivity of Egyptian art as exemplified in the first of its great periods of achievement, the Old Kingdom [p. xv].

Egyptian art reached its first great culminating point in Dyn. IV under the powerful kings who built the pyramids of Dahshur and Giza. . . . In the following pages I shall attempt to trace [the] development in sculpture and painting to its culmination in the royal works of Dyn. IV and then to show the enrichment of forms in Dyn. V and VI and the gradual spread of technical accomplishment throughout the country [p. xi].

In our times superlatives, particularly superlatives about works of art, may evoke some skepticism. The preference for Egyptian over other pre-Greek works of art is subjective and arises out of the attempt to compare incomparables, since pre-Greek cultures were so different in environments, materials, and psychologies. However, the very high appreciation of 4th dynasty art in comparison with later Egyptian art would seem, on Smith's presentation, to be justified. Even though subjective and aesthetic prejudices may affect the judgment, the argument that the first great period was also the best is very persuasive. Subsequent variations on the early themes provided a great enlargement of motifs and reached occasional peaks of accomplishment but never maintained the high plateau of the 4th dynasty production.<sup>4</sup>

This review will not attempt to follow Smith's historical analysis through the successive periods or to deal with the techniques employed by the artists or their methods of representing their sub-

<sup>2</sup> H. Frankfort, *Sculpture of the Third Millennium B.C. from Tell Asmar and Khafajah*, esp. pp. 34-36.

<sup>3</sup> Frankfort, through no fault of his own, experienced the same difficulty in the volume just cited, but he was able to repair some of the loss of quality by reprinting the same plates in his *More Sculpture from the Diyala Region* (cf. p. vii in that volume).

<sup>4</sup> A qualifying factor may be placed against this appraisal in the fact that a higher proportion of the 4th dynasty products were works of art for the king or for members of his household than was the case in the 5th and 6th dynasties. There is thus some tendency to compare 4th dynasty royal pieces with 5th-6th dynasty private pieces. Nevertheless, we believe that the same judgment results from the attempt to limit the comparison to royal pieces only or to private pieces only.

jects. Our interest is the Old Kingdom artist, the craftsman who was able to produce works of art which command such high appreciation. His products show him to be a creative personality, an individual who evokes our respect and curiosity. In what terms did the society of his day appreciate him? Did his individuality receive the recognition which his skill would seem to justify?

Smith begins his chapter on "The Craftsmen Who Produced the Sculpture and Paintings" with the following statement:

The artist in ancient Egypt did not occupy the same position that he did in the classical period or, for example, in Renaissance Italy. His work was considered more as a part of the products of other crafts, that of the builder, the carpenter, the metal-worker, or the artisan who manufactured objects of stone or pottery. The individuality of the artist was of little importance. His standing resulted from his technical proficiency as a craftsman. The sculptors and painters are often shown at work in the same shops with the craftsman who fashioned other objects. However, although there was small opportunity for the artist to stamp his own personal qualities upon his work, he did not remain entirely anonymous [p. 351].

This is a statement with which one certainly agrees. Essentially, the Egyptian artist was as anonymous as any other hired craftsman.<sup>5</sup> He was part of a recognized social system, to which he made his contribution and from which he did not expect that artist's reward of personal appreciation which medieval and modern societies have accorded. But the problem is not so simple as a generalization would suggest. Smith's qualification in the final sentence above shows that there were

exceptions to the general anonymity cloaking the Egyptian artist. Perhaps we can define the nature of these exceptions and offer reasons for their being exceptions.

We shall argue (a) that the Egyptian artist was a hired worker, whose recompense was payment in goods; (b) that there are really no "signed" artistic products; (c) that the artist's technical abilities put him in the forefront of the paid workers—generally an anonymous group; and (d) that this slightly higher standing won him some slight recognition, similar to that of stewards and mortuary priests, and this is the reason why he appears by name and title in some Old Kingdom scenes.

#### NAMED ARTISTS<sup>6</sup>

Before embarking upon our argument let us consider some of the names and titles listed by Smith on his pages 351–58. Two of his named artists are to be eliminated. On page 353 he refers to three

<sup>5</sup> As Gardiner has pointed out (*Egyptian Grammar*, p. 428), uniformity in the rendering of Egyptian proper names is unattainable when the leading authorities differ markedly and have reasons of inner consistency for their own systems. It would be too much to demand that Egyptologists should agree internationally on one arbitrarily selected system of rendering names. Those who write in French will prefer *ou-* to *w-* or *u-*, and those who write in German will prefer *j-* to *y-* or *i-* and *ch-* to *kh-*. Some may object to diacritic marks, as in the rendering Dhuty-hotep. The most that one could ask for is an element of consistency within one "school" of Egyptologists. Even here it would be futile to demand a categorical consistency, but a few general principles might be accepted. Such might be the choice between *z-* and *dj-* for "second *d*," between *th-* and *tj-* for "second *t*," among *k-* or *ḳ-* or *q-* for *qôph*, etc. Such might be the following of the order of the elements in a name as given in Ranke, *Die ägyptischen Personennamen*, unless compelling reasons move the scholar to the contrary. The result of our present individualism is group anarchy, as is indicated in such a book as that under consideration here. By and large, Smith has principles of rendering which he follows, but they are not followed through to the end, as the list below shows. Further, for purposes of easy identification, he sometimes takes the rendering given by other authority, even though it does not coincide in principle with other cases. We should like to see an inner consistency within the pages of one volume, but the current high individualism betrays Smith into the

<sup>6</sup> For consideration of some phases of the problem see A. Hermann, "Zur Anonymität der ägyptischen Kunst," *Mitteilungen des deutschen Instituts . . . in Kairo*, VI (1936), 150 ff.

artists shown in the chapel of Ankh-ma-Hor. This scene needs review.<sup>7</sup> The particular section shows work on four statues. (a) An unnamed man, designated as a "Chief Sculptor" (*imy-r kšty*), is polishing the first statue on the left. (b) The second statue is being painted. The inscription is divided by a vertical line into two parts: on the right is the word "painter" or "painting," without name; on the left are the words "a statue of *kšbt*-(wood)." Thus Smith's "the usual painter's title" is a misunderstanding of these hieroglyphs. (c) The third statue is being painted. Again the inscription is divided by a line. On the left are the words "a statue of *špnm*-(wood?)," like the example just cited. Thus Smith's "third man" must be eliminated as a named artist. On the right of the dividing-line are the hieroglyphs given by Smith as the first named artist in this series. Let us revert to them in the following paragraph. (d) A sculptor is using the chisel on the fourth statue, and he is designated as a "Chief Sculptor," without name, as in the first instance. Thus the artists are anonymous in three of the four groups.

The hieroglyphs which we have left un-

following inconsistencies, taken (unless otherwise indicated) from his Index of Personal Names:

Djehuwty-hotep, *but* Tuthmosis and Zoser  
 Djar, *but* Zari  
 Ukh-hotep, *but* Wekh-khuwen  
 Ra-hotep, *but* Sneferuw-hotep  
 Akhet-a'a, *but* Neferma'at  
 Khafra, *but* Min-khaf  
 Khnum-khuwen, *but* Khuwnera  
 Ny-ankh-sekhemet, *but* Ni-wazet-ankh  
 Ny-kaww-hor, Ny-kaw-khenemuw, *but* Ne-Inpw-kaww  
 Hetep-her-nebty, *but* Akhet-hetep-her  
 Ankh-ir-ptah, *but* *Pth-ir-<sup>c</sup>nh* (p. 74) and Ptah-ankh-ir

Minor inconsistencies like these condition one's appreciation of a fine piece of work like the present book. The blame belongs primarily to Egyptologists in general for their failure to reach agreement on a few general and broad principles of rendering names.

<sup>7</sup> Capart, *Rue de tombeaux*, Pl. XXXIII; Wreszinski, *Atlas*, III, Taf. 34, with commentary; text also in Montet, *Les Scènes de la vie privée*, pp. 289-90.

translated surely do include a title and a name: "the Painter of 'the Southern Mortuary Workshop' Mesi." As Smith's note points out, another wall of the same tomb shows Mesi presenting offerings: "the Scribe of the 'Scroll of the Palace and of' the God's House, the Painter of the Mortuary Workshop, Mesi."<sup>8</sup> Lingering doubts on the former text come from the peculiar position of the word "southern," which is separated from the word "workshop,"<sup>9</sup> and from the fact that the word rendered as the name Mesi might be a participle in the sense of "fashioning" a statue (as in the phrase "fashioning and opening the mouth" of a statue). However, since a Mesi does appear on another wall, with a title nearly the same, we accept our case as carrying a name. We then have the result that the Ankh-ma-Hor scene gives titles to four men but a name to only one of them. The fact that Mesi was also an offering-bearer indicates that he had a personal relation to Ankh-ma-Hor, the owner of the tomb, in addition to his employed relationship. He was named because of an intimacy and not because he was an artist. But this anticipates our argument still to come.

In partial compensation for removing two of Smith's named artists from his listing, we can offer only one case which he has omitted. In the Cairo Museum there is a slab from the 6th dynasty tomb of Sabu at Sakkarah.<sup>10</sup> Among other offer-

<sup>8</sup> Capart, *op. cit.*, Pl. XLVII. (Half-brackets in this article inclose translations subject to question.)

<sup>9</sup> We have no other occurrences of *w<sup>c</sup>bt ršy(t)*, apparently "the Southern Mortuary Workshop." This, in itself, occasions little difficulty, because the Old Kingdom texts refer to a pair of mortuary workshops to produce equipment for the tomb. However, there is a difficulty in interpreting the order of the signs, as shown to the right of this note. The word *w<sup>c</sup>bt* seems to have honorific transposition over the word *sš*, "scribe," but to be separated from its supposed adjective *ršy*, "southern."

<sup>10</sup> Cairo 1418, from Mariette E 1-2; Borchardt, *Denkmäler des alten Reiches*, Vol. I, under the catalogue number.

ing-bearers appears "his trusted man, his beloved, the Assistant Sculptor of the Palace, Iren-Akhti," offering his lord three geese.

#### TERMS DESIGNATING ARTISTS

Smith assumes that his reader will possess some knowledge of Egyptian when he writes on page 356: "A new title appears for the sculptor, although *gnwty*(?) is still used. This is the very expressive word *sꜥnh*." It may be worth while stating how much—and how little—we know about artists' titles. To begin with, the Empire title *sꜥnh* means "he who makes to live," that is, he who makes the work of art lifelike. In that sense, it has some similarity to the use of *mšī*, "to give birth," noted above as meaning "to fashion" (a statue or other work of art).

C. R. Williams, in *The Decoration of the Tomb of Per-nēb*, has given the standard detailed analysis of the work which went into the preparation of a carved and painted wall under the Old Kingdom. What this meant in terms of craftsmen—under the Empire—was stated by Gardiner in *JEA*, IV, 136–37. (a) The outline draftsman (*sš kꜥdwt*) prepared the wall with proportion squares and red outline sketches of the reliefs. (b) Then the sculptor, the "wielder of the chisel" (*tꜥ mdꜥt*), carved the reliefs along the lines of this outline. (c) Then the painter (*sš*) completed the carved scenes and inscriptions in color. Details of the activity and the designation of the sculptor differ across the centuries, but, by and large, this process was the same for the Old Kingdom and the Empire.

Egyptian writing was picture-writing, so that no technical distinction was made in the term which designated both the scribe and the painter. The man who wielded the brush was the *sš*, to be translated "scribe" or "painter" according to

the context of text or scene. Where adequate context is lacking, we may be in uncertainty. A particular kind of painter, whose role was stated above, was the *sš kꜥdwt*, "outline draftsman." It is not clear whether, in the process of decorating a tomb, the outline draftsman of step *a* might be the same person as the painter of step *c*.

The terms applying to the sculptor are more difficult to delimit. Let us first take two of the later designations. The title *sꜥnh*, "he who makes life(like)," applied to artists in general, although it is our impression that it applied particularly to sculptors-in-the-round and was extended loosely to cover other artists. The *tꜥ mdꜥt*, "wielder of the chisel," or *tꜥ m mdꜥt*, "wielder with the chisel," was particularly the relief sculptor, although perhaps this title might also be extended to sculptors-in-the-round. In all periods there was a less skilled worker in stone, who roughed out a block for the use of the more talented technicians. This was the *hꜥrty nꜥr*, a "quarryman" or "stonemason," literally "he who belongs to (the region) which has the god," so called because he worked in the cemetery.

Then we come to that critical title translated "sculptor" and written with two bone harpoons variously transliterated as *kꜥšty*, *gnwty*, or *mšnty*.<sup>11</sup> On this term Anthes has an interesting suggestion in an article where he deals with an Old Kingdom scene in which men designated by these two bone harpoons are working on statues with chisels or rubbing-stones.<sup>12</sup> Their work is designated as *šꜥrd*, "working with the chisel or adze," or as *šnꜥꜥ*,

<sup>11</sup> Erman-Grapow, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, II, 145, promises (under *mšnty*) to treat the word under *kꜥšty*, but it is not to be found under the latter head in their Vol. V.

<sup>12</sup> *Mitteilungen des deutschen Instituts . . . in Kairo*, X (1941), esp. 102 ff. The scene, from the tomb of Ti, is given in Wreszinski, *Atlas*, III, 35.

"polishing."<sup>13</sup> Next to these chisellers and polishers are depicted men designated by the sign of the stone-borer—*ḥmwty*, a title generally rendered "craftsman" or "artisan"—and these men work with hammers on a statue. Next to these hammerers are shown men drilling out stone vessels, and they also are designated by the sign of the stone-borer, *ḥmwty*. Anthes suggests a distinction between workers using the chisel or rubbing-stone on bone, wood, and soft stone, on the one hand, and workers using the hammer or drill on hard stone, on the other hand. In the former group would fall our word rendered by the two bone harpoons, which Anthes would read *kšty*, supposing that the word first meant "Knochenschneider," a shaper of bone figurines and implements, and that it was later extended to the worker in other soft materials, including limestone. In the latter group would fall the word rendered by the stone-borer *ḥmwty*, and Anthes argues that these were originally "Steinbohrerleute," those who drill out stone vessels, and that from this primary interest they went on to other work in the medium of the harder stones. Two statements by Smith might be cited in support of this argument: "But it is perhaps in the stone vessels that the Early Dynastic craftsman reached the apogee of his creative skill. Behind him was a long period of experiment in the boring of beads and the cutting of vases in stone" (p. 11), and: "The earliest sculpture owed its excellence to the facility gained in the making of stone vessels" (pp. xi-xii).

Anthes, then, would see a distinction between the sculptor in hard stone, *ḥmwty*, originally "he of the stone-drill," and the sculptor in bone, ivory, wood, and soft stone, *kšty*, originally "he of bone-work." Although minor doubts remain, because the evidence is not great in

quantity and because the scene in the tomb of Ti may show two successive stages of work on statues of the same materials, with hammerers preceding chisellers and polishers, yet Anthes' distinction must be kept in the foreground for the present. It does have the merit of giving etymological explanations of the two terms. In the Old Kingdom we should then have four main categories of artists: the *sš*, "painter"; the *sš kḏwt*, "outline draftsman"; the *ḥmwty*, "sculptor in hard stone"; and the *kšty*, "sculptor in soft stone."<sup>14</sup>

The early compound title treated by Smith on the lower part of page 354 is also open to several doubts. Gunn, in his discussion of the group in *Annales du Service*, XXVIII, 165-66, arrived at the suggestion that it was reserved for the sculptors of royal statues. Perhaps so, but the evidence seems to derive solely from the inscription on the base of the statue of Djoser, whereas Smith's listing of occurrences shows how often it occurs in relation to stone vessels. That last tripled sign looks like three flat bowls, so that the tentative thought that the end of this compound title might have to do with the shaping of stone vessels remains valid. This early title later drops out of currency. The collocation of elements may be related to those skills in the manu-

<sup>14</sup> The statement in Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, p. 499, Sign E 19, that the individual designated by the two bone harpoons was a "sculptor (in relief)," is not borne out by those scenes in which he is shown working on statues in the round.

One of Smith's "titles" should be eliminated. In the second paragraph on p. 353, he writes: "The father had the title [*ḥkr-nšwt*—Smith uses the hieroglyphs] which is associated sometimes with that of the sculptor." Hermann, in the article cited in n. 5 above (pp. 153-54), points out that *ḥkr-nšwt* was probably not a man's title but meant "royal ornament." When accompanying a true title, it may be translated in the genitive, e.g., "the sculptor of royal adornment," and then means that that particular craftsman served the palace. (The same combination of signs did serve as a woman's title, "the Royal Adornment.")

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Montet, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

facture of stone vessels noted in the two quotations from Smith above. We may have a combination of tools and products in the four elements of the title: (a) "he who uses the carpenter's axe"; (b) "he who works in bone" (and other soft materials); (c) "he who uses the (spatula-shaped) chisel"; and (d) "he who works on stone vessels." This combination of abilities runs counter to the distinction proposed by Anthes, and the only way in which we can extricate ourselves from that difficulty is the surmise that the triple sign at the end might be three rubbing-stones instead of three bowls: (d) "he who uses the rubbing-stones." Then all the elements might apply to working in softer materials, including limestone.<sup>15</sup> At any rate the title belongs to a craftsman, rather than to a noble or official,<sup>16</sup> so that Gunn is probably right in his belief that this compound title, when following the name of Ii-em-hotep on the statue of Djoser,<sup>17</sup> can hardly be a tag applying to the high official Ii-em-hotep but must have preceded the now lost name of the sculptor who worked on the statue. From space considerations the lost name must have been very brief. If it did once exist, it would be a rare instance of a sculptor's name applied to his product.

As has already been suggested, the terms for "sculptor" or "painter" enter into genitival combination with other elements or are accompanied by other titles. It is not necessary to argue this in detail. A few examples, all applying to the *kšty*, "sculptor," may be cited from Smith's pages. On page 353 he notes the "Sculptor

of the Mortuary Workshop In-kaf" and the "Chief Sculptor of the Palace Dj<sup>c</sup>a<sup>c</sup>am"; on page 354, the "Sculptor of Royal Adornment Khu-*ui*-Ptah" and the "Mortuary Priest and Chief Sculptor of Royal Adornment Teti"; and, on page 355, the "Mortuary Priest, Chief Sculptor, and Priest of the King, 'Sedau'." A relatively brief search has not disclosed instances in which a "sculptor" or a "painter" (when the latter may be separated from a "scribe") is indicated by his other titles to be a person of outstanding governmental or ecclesiastical position. On the contrary, as Smith remarks on page 352, he was a person of relatively simple dignity, comparable to the builder (*kd*), the steward (*imy-r pr*), the physician (*sunw*), or the mortuary priest (*hm-k3*). As a craftsman the artist stood above the peasant or the household servant but was not among the élite of society.

In social level the artist was on a lower plane than the "Overseer of Royal Works," with whom Smith deals on page 357.<sup>18</sup> Smith shows that this title was borne by a relatively small number of men in the 4th and early 5th dynasties and that those men were chiefly princes and viziers. Indeed, the title in that period seems to have been a fairly regular accompaniment to the titles of the vizier. Smith goes on to state that it was carried by a much larger number of people in the late 5th and 6th dynasties. That is like the proliferation of other titles in the history of the Old Kingdom, where a title once uniquely held, or held by a very few, became the property of an ever increasing number. A parallel case is the *imy-r šm<sup>c</sup>w*, "Governor of Upper Egypt," a single individual into the middle of the 6th dynasty and thereafter several contemporaneous

<sup>15</sup> If these are rubbing-stones, one would like to see the smooth face downward instead of upward.

<sup>16</sup> Smith's last instance does combine it with two other titles, "He Who Is in the Two (Administrative) Houses" and "Prophet of Ruti," but these are not necessarily high offices.

<sup>17</sup> *Annales du Service*, XXVI, 193; text in Sethe, *Urkunden des alten Reichs*, I (hereafter abbreviated as "Urk. I"), 153.

<sup>18</sup> In its fullest form, "Overseer of All (Construction) Works of the King"; in its briefest form, "Overseer of (Construction) Works."

individuals.<sup>19</sup> These are documents in the history of the decentralization of the Egyptian state and the growth of "feudalism" under the Old Kingdom. A particularly interesting family of the 5th-6th dynasties held the title "Overseer of All Royal Works" from father to son. Whereas Senedjem-ib Inti and his son Senedjem-ib Mehi held this title and also that of vizier, grandson Nekhebu came at a later period and had to work his way up the administrative ladder by proved ability. As Dunham shows,<sup>20</sup> Nekhebu began as a *kd n s3t*, "Common Builder," and then advanced progressively through the stages of *shd n kd*, "Assistant Builder," *imy-r kd*, "Chief Builder," *mdh nswt kd*, "Royal Carpenter and Builder," *hry-tp nswt, mdh nswt kd*, "He Who Is Beside the King, Royal Carpenter and Builder," and *smr wty, mdh nswt kd, imy pr.wy*, "Sole Companion, Royal Carpenter and Builder, He Who Is in the Two (Administrative) Houses," before he attained the final *imy-r k3t nbt nt nswt*, "Overseer of All Royal Works." In the two autobiographical inscriptions studied by Dunham, Nekhebu traces his career and states the actual work which he performed in the necessary demonstration of his abilities. It is indicated that in the early 6th dynasty experience and proved ability counted more for Nekhebu than the offices held by his father and grandfather. This was a feature of that element of individualism and the demonstration of personal capacity which we believe to have been a strong factor in the Old Kingdom. As the wisdom literature shows, success—that is, position and property—might be won by constant application. The broad, general lines of the Egyptian system had been fixed. Within those broad lines there

was a considerable flexibility, with the opportunity for individual initiative in the search for advancement.

The "Overseer of All Royal Works" stood upon an acceptedly higher plane than the artist. Nevertheless, we believe that the generalization just made with regard to individual voluntarism within large and loose social determinism was true for Egyptians in general. As we shall argue later, the artist was a hired worker, commissioned to undertake the production of works of art of a fixed and known type, but the details of his execution of that commission were left to him, with opportunity for a fair play of his artistic bent and experimental genius.

#### THE "MAKING" OF A MEMORIAL

1. Smith innocently leaves a wrong impression of the status of the artist when he writes of the tomb of Neb-em-akhet (p. 352): "An inscription on the doorway between the outer and inner rooms records that the painter Semer-ka designed the tomb *as a gift* and that a man named [In]-kaf made it *as a gift*" (italics ours). The inscription may be rendered: "His trusted man, who designed for him this tomb of his, the [Outline Draftsman Semer-ka. His trusted man, who made for him this tomb of his 'in (its construction) work', [In]-kaf."<sup>21</sup> There is nothing in this statement which says that these two men made a free donation of their services to Prince Neb-em-akhet. The word *mhnk*, translated "trusted man," is not a "donator" or similar in any context known to us, including the three examples near the top of Smith's page 354.<sup>22</sup> On page 358 Smith lists the "only three inscriptions

<sup>21</sup> Or "who made for him this tomb of his, 'the Over(seer) of Works', [In]-kaf." Cf. *Urk. I*, 16, n. b.

<sup>19</sup> Kees, "Beiträge zur altägyptischen Provinzialverwaltung," in *Göttingen Nachrichten (Phil.-hist. Kl.)*, 1932, pp. 85 ff.

<sup>20</sup> *JEA*, XXIV, 1 ff.

<sup>22</sup> To the references on *mhnk*, "Vertrauter o.ä. eines Höherstehenden," given by Erman-Grapow, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache, Belegstellen* to II, 129:7, add Gardiner-Sethe, *Egyptian Letters to the Dead*, p. 20.

referring specifically to the decoration of the tomb" known to him. These are the "gifts" of Semer-ka and In-kaf noted above, Senedjem-ib Mehi's statement that he decorated his father's tomb (No. 3 below), and the inscription in the niche of Itet, wife of Nefer-ma'at, at Medum (No. 2 below). Smith's statement needs some modification, on the basis of what it means to "make" a tomb, false-door, or other monument. It is one thing for a sculptor to make a wooden door (No. 30 below); it is a different thing for the king or a man's son to "make" a tomb or other monument (Nos. 23-24, 4-10 below). In one case we are talking about the craftsman who produced the work of art; in the other we are talking about the employer who commissioned and paid the artist to produce that work of art. Thus we shall find that inscriptions do occur in which the king orders the decoration of the tomb with certain inscriptions of interest to his majesty (Nos. 28-29 below). We shall find that a son "inscribes" or "decorates" a tomb for his father, with the probability that this means that he hired the artists who did the actual work (Nos. 4-5 below).

Let us first take Smith's two other cases on the decoration of a tomb.

2. At Medum, beside the named figure of Nefer-ma'at, appear the words: "It was he who made his gods in (such) a writing (that) it cannot be effaced."<sup>23</sup> Nefer-ma'at was a son of King Snefru; he was the Vizier of Egypt and the Overseer of All Royal Works. He bears no titles which would identify him as an artist, and his princely position probably means that he was not an artist. Thus, his statement that he inscribed his wife's tomb is dif-

<sup>23</sup> Hieroglyphs on Smith's p. 358 and in *Urk. I. 7*. If the word "gods" was correctly written, it must refer to the sacred character of the scenes and inscriptions in the tomb, the incised carving being filled with deep colored paste. Alternatively, the group "gods" might be emended to some such combination as *mdw nfr*, in order to yield the meaning "inscriptions."

ferent from the statement that the Outline Draftsman Semer-ka decorated the tomb of Neb-em-akhet. Nefer-ma'at had his wife's tomb decorated by unnamed artists whom he employed. Whether the technique of deep pigment for imperishable inscriptions was his or the artists' is immaterial to our argument.

3. On page 356 Smith renders a passage in which Senedjem-ib Mehi tells of his activity with relation to the tomb of his father Senedjem-ib Inti. Inasmuch as our rendering of an extremely difficult text differs from Smith's, we shall take a rather longer passage than he did.<sup>24</sup>

His majesty caused that decrees be ratified concerning it by the (official) sealing of a 'document'. Mortuary priests were appointed for him. . . . I caused that (it) be put in writing,<sup>25</sup> 'after' . . . this his [tomb], 'when they were removed'. It was the sculptor who spoke as the head 'of the gang in' . . . apportioned in the palace.<sup>26</sup> Then it was requested from my lord that [there be] brought for him a sarcophagus from Troia for this tomb of his, which I had made for him within 'one year and two-thirds', while he was in the mortuary workshop 'of a period of time in' the house of his estate which is in (the necropolis named) Beautiful-Is-Izezi.

Much in this text is obscure, but apparently the son caused an inscription concerning some royal honor to be placed in his father's tomb but did not himself engage in the activity of decoration. That he left to the artists. As Overseer of All Royal Works, the son had a better title

<sup>24</sup> *Urk. I* (2d ed.), 65.

<sup>25</sup> Reading *tw rdln.(t) (w)dt m ss*. We are sure that *wdt*, "put," is to be read, rather than *drt*, "hand." Further, the sign following *ss* is the book-roll, rather than the *kd*-sign (cf. *Urk. I*, 61:1).

<sup>26</sup> We find it difficult to handle the word *gd*, "speak," except as part of the emphasizing participial construction, thus separating the word "sculptor" from the word *shr*, which means basically "to make distant" and could hardly be Smith's "carved(?)." Is it too fantastic to suggest that the workmen's pay may have been apportioned in the palace, with the sculptor acting as the spokesman for the working group?

to his claim that he "made" his father's tomb than did some other sons, but we still believe that he "made" it in the sense that he commissioned and paid for it.

In the following four cases (Nos. 4-7) a son fulfilled his pious duty to his father by "making" or decorating his father's tomb.

4. "His beloved eldest son, the Count, Seal-Bearer of the King of Lower Egypt, Sole Companion, He Who Is Beside the King, and Chief Commissioner, Pepiseneb, whose good name is Seni, who says: I was the one who decorated this tomb for my august father."<sup>27</sup>

5. "That which his eldest son did for him, his beloved, the possessor of all his property, the Count Nun, who says: I buried my august father by an offering-which-the-king-gives; I interred him in the beautiful west; I embalmed him with ointment of the Residence, [in] red-linen of the House of Life; I decorated his tomb; I set up his statues—as does a conscientious heir, the beloved of his august father, who buries his august father while his arm is (still) strong."<sup>28</sup>

6. "His eldest son, his beloved, the Companion Mery. He says: I was the one who caused that this tomb [be made] for my father . . . Mery, when he went off [to] his *ka*."<sup>29</sup>

7. "The Overseer of the town Hetihet, Ka-em-rehu. That which his eldest son made for him, his revered, the Judge and Subordinate Scribe Hotep, to be for his honor with him, when he was departed to his *ka*."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> From the 6th dynasty tomb of Memi at Akhmim (*Urk.* I, 264).

<sup>28</sup> From the 6th dynasty tomb of Meri-*aa* near el-Hagarsa (*Urk.* I, 267). "House of Life" is to be emended to "Treasury" (*JEA*, XXIV, 160).

<sup>29</sup> From the 6th dynasty tomb of Mery at Akhmim (*Urk.* I, 264).

<sup>30</sup> From the 5th dynasty tomb of Ka-em-rehu at Sakkarah (*Urk.* I, 34). The pronouns are confusing: the son desired to win honor with his father, when his father departed in death.

In the following three cases (Nos. 8-10) a pious son made a false-door, offering-stone, or offering-bowl for his father.

8. "[X, the possessor of] reverence with the great god, for whom his son made this when he was in the west. (The son) Ikhi. He says: I made this for my father when he was departed to the west on the goodly ways on which the revered depart."<sup>31</sup>

9. "His son Ptah-user. I made this for him, Heri-tema, the revered."<sup>32</sup>

10. "The Subofficial Ni-ka-Re, who says: I made this for my father, the Subordinate Official [Ni-ankh]-Anti, in order that there might be invocation-offerings for him thereon . . . every day."<sup>33</sup>

Not only did the dutiful eldest son make memorial for his deceased father, but different members of the family acted for each other, in "making" elements for the tomb (Nos. 11-13).

11. "It was her husband, the Scribe of the Royal Scroll Nebwy, who made this inscription."<sup>34</sup>

12. "His beloved wife, the Royal Acquaintance Iret-Nub. She says: I made this for my beloved husband, who loved me, the Sole Companion . . . Ankh-ir-Ptah."<sup>35</sup>

13. "It was the 'Seal-Bearer of the Palace and of' the Divine Scroll Tep-em-ankh who made this for his wife Hetep-Nub, (when) <he> buried her in this beautiful tomb."

"The 'Seal-Bearer of the Palace and of' the Divine Scroll Tep-em-ankh. I made this for my eldest son, the Seal-Bearer of the Divine Scroll Hem-Min, when he was a child."<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> From a false-door, probably of the 4th dynasty (*Urk.* I, 9).

<sup>32</sup> From an offering-bowl (*Urk.* I, 229).

<sup>33</sup> From an offering-stone (*Urk.* I, 165).

<sup>34</sup> From a stela of the woman Irit (*Urk.* I, 119).

<sup>35</sup> From a 5th dynasty statue of Ankh-ir-Ptah (*Urk.* I, 73).

<sup>36</sup> Respectively, from the false-door of the wife and the false-door of the son, in the 5th dynasty tomb of Tep-em-ankh (*Urk.* I, 33).

Then we may go beyond family ties for a series of memorials presented by non-related associates or associates related by contractual obligation (Nos. 14–16).

14. "That which the *imy-nfrt* priestly phyle made."<sup>37</sup>

15. "It was her Estate Associate . . . Ni-ma<sup>c</sup>at-Re who made for her this tomb of her estate."<sup>38</sup>

16. "[Made for her] by the Steward and Chief Mortuary Priest Kai."<sup>39</sup>

There are, of course, plenty of instances where the proprietor of the tomb himself states that he "made" the tomb. Two will suffice (Nos. 17–18).

17. "The Scribe Ni-su-redi. He says: I made this as my rightful property. It is the god who will judge with him who may do (any)thing to it."<sup>40</sup>

18. "The Royal Acquaintance and Chief Craftsman Tjezi. He says: I made this box-(tomb) when I was suffering an ailment under the fingers of the priest, in order that I might be buried in this."<sup>41</sup>

As a bridge between these personally established monuments and those which enjoyed a royal interest, we offer the following two cases (Nos. 19–20).

19. "The Judge and Eldest of the Forecourt Hetep-her-Akhti. He says: I made this tomb on the western shoulder in a clean place, wherein there had been no tomb of anybody, in order that the property of him who has departed to his *ka* might be protected. . . . I made this tomb in the shadow of my honor with the

<sup>37</sup> From the obelisk of the 5th dynasty vizier Ptah-hotep the Red (*Urk.* I, 58).

<sup>38</sup> From the offering-room of a woman—not the wife—in the tomb of Ni-ma<sup>c</sup>at-Re (Selim Hassan, *Excavations at Giza, 1930–31*, pp. 202 ff.). For the *šn-ḡt*, "Estate Associate," as a coproprietor, see Junker, *Giza*, III, 6–7; *Annales du Service*, XLII, 45.

<sup>39</sup> From the false-door of the 4th dynasty princess Iabtet, following Sethe's restoration in *Urk.* I, 155. Junker, *Giza*, III, 162, n. 1, prefers: "[This was made] by," etc.

<sup>40</sup> From the 5th dynasty false-door of Ni-su-redi (*Urk.* I, 226).

<sup>41</sup> From a Giza stela (*Urk.* I, 152).

king, for there was brought for me a sarcophagus."<sup>42</sup>

20. "An offering which the king and Anubis . . . give: the burial of Sedjefah-Ptah very well in that which he made for himself."<sup>43</sup>

There are instances in which the king was graciously pleased to give equipment for the tomb which was being built for a noble. For example, Uni asked Pepi I for a limestone sarcophagus from the royal quarry at Troia, and his majesty directed that a commissioner of transportation fetch those tomb fittings which were appropriately of finer stone.<sup>44</sup> Or the king might show a special mark of favor to his vizier in arranging for the supplying of certain funerary furnishings:

21. "Reading for him the record of his burial equipment, which had been given to him as an offering-which-the-king-gives."<sup>45</sup>

Particularly interesting are those cases where his majesty took pleasure in watching the decoration of a tomb. We know of two cases in which the king had the work performed within the palace, so that he himself might oversee the activity of the artists (Nos. 22–23).

22. The Physician Ni-ankh-Sekhmet asked Sahu-Re for a false-door. "Then his majesty caused that there be brought for him two false-doors of stone from Troia and that they be set up in the midst of the audience-hall of (the palace named) The-

<sup>42</sup> From the 5th dynasty tomb of Hetep-her-Akhti (*Urk.* I, 50–51).

<sup>43</sup> From the 4th or 5th dynasty sarcophagus of Sedjefah-Ptah (*Urk.* I, 228). Or, instead of stressing burial in the sarcophagus, one may stress the burial itself, by reading: "as that which he did for himself." Cf. the sarcophagus of the 4th dynasty queen Meresankh II (*Urk.* I, 156): "An offering which the king and Anubis . . . give: that she be buried in that which was made for her," or "as that which she (herself) did."

<sup>44</sup> *Urk.* I, 99.

<sup>45</sup> From the 6th dynasty tomb of the vizier Ankhma-Hor (*Urk.* I, 203).

Crown-of-Sahu-Re-Appears. The two High Priests of Memphis and the craftsmen of the mortuary workshop were put over them, and the work was done on them in the presence of the king himself. The 'stone-work' went on every day, and what was done on them was inspected in the palace daily. Then his majesty had 'inscriptions' put on them, and they were painted in blue."<sup>46</sup>

23. "His majesty made this for him, for his honor with his majesty, while he was alive upon his feet. The Overseer of the Domain of the Palace, the Singer, Khufu-ankh.

"Made in the presence of the king himself, at the portal of the audience-hall, while his majesty watched every day there. Khufu-ankh."<sup>47</sup>

Other records of royal favor are more difficult to interpret. On the one hand, we have rather flat statements, like No. 24 below, that the king "made" a monument. On the other hand, Nos. 25 and 26 show the operation of a national system, in which the king's favor was the source of all good things, even though the king reigning at the time might have nothing to do with the actual transaction. In the Debehni case (No. 27), the king did intervene to take generous action for a noble. Finally, we have instances in which the king was graciously pleased to permit a statement of his favor to be inscribed in a noble's tomb (Nos. 28-29).

24. "It was his lord who made this for him."<sup>48</sup>

25. "An offering which the king gives: that there be given to him this tomb of his, so that he might be buried in it with

<sup>46</sup> *Urk.* I, 38-39.

<sup>47</sup> Inscriptions on two sides of the 5th dynasty false-door of Khufu-ankh (Reisner, *A History of the Giza Necropolis*, I, Pl. 65b, pp. 503 ff.). Note the similarity to the situation more fully stated in No. 22 above.

<sup>48</sup> From the 5th dynasty tomb of Akh-merutnesut, now in Boston (Wreszinski, *Atlas*, III, 69).

honor. The Chief Hairdresser of the Palace Ankh-ma-Re."<sup>49</sup>

26. "An offering which the king and Anubis . . . give: that he be buried in the west."<sup>50</sup>

27. "As for this tomb, it was the majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Men-kau-Re, [living forever, who] 'gave (it) to my father',<sup>51</sup> when [he hap]pened to be [on] the road beside the pyramid-plateau, so that inspection might be made of the work when (the pyramid named) Divine-Is-Men-kau-Re was constructed. . . . A decree of the king was made for the Overseer [of All Royal Works 'to take'] people to make it, a tomb 100 cubits in its length, by 50 cubits in width, by  $(x+)$ 5 cubits [in height, 'greater] than' that which that father of mine would have made when he was alive."<sup>52</sup>

28. When the 5th dynasty vizier Wash-Ptah suffered a sudden illness, King Nefer-iri-ka-Re took a personal interest in his case. "The heart of his majesty was more [sad] thereover than anything. [Then his majesty commanded that (it) be put] in writing on his tomb" and directed the sending of funerary equipment. Similarly, on another and somewhat obscure occasion, "then his

<sup>49</sup> From the 5th dynasty false-door of Ankh-ma-Re (Mariette, *Mastabas*, pp. 283-84). The text on the 5th dynasty false-door of the Chief Treasurer of the Residence Kai-pu-Re is very similar (*ibid.*, pp. 278-79).

<sup>50</sup> So often (Davies-Gardiner, *The Tomb of Amenemhēt*, pp. 81 ff.). This particular instance is taken from the 6th dynasty false-door of the vizier Mehu at Sakkarah (*Illustrated London News*, September 28, 1940, pp. 412-13).

<sup>51</sup> The text is defective. It might also be emended: "[who] caused that it be (made)." Our tentative rendering is based on the assumption that the same tomb is mentioned here as at the end of the inscription and on the notation that the measurements given do not correspond to the dimensions of Debehni's own tomb. We therefore hesitantly assume that the king made his gift to Debehni's father. Admittedly, the words "this tomb" make such an interpretation highly dubious.

<sup>52</sup> From the 4th dynasty tomb of Debehni (*Urk.* I, 18 ff.).

majesty commanded the Hereditary Prince to have (it) put in writing on [his tomb]. . . . When his majesty praised him for it, he extolled the god for him more fully than anything."<sup>53</sup>

29. The 5th dynasty priest Ra-wer had enjoyed some exceptional mark of recognition from Nefer-iri-ka-Re. "So he was more honored by his majesty than any (other) man, and his majesty commanded that (it) be put in [writing] on his tomb which is in the necropolis. His majesty caused that the text thereof [be made for him], written in the presence of the king [him]self in the [garden] of the palace, in order to write in conformance with [that which had been] said in his tomb which is in the necropolis."<sup>54</sup>

In some detail we have presented the statements of the "making" of a memorial—tomb, false-door, statue, etc. Except for the Semer-ka and In-kaf texts in No. 1, these statements have loftily ignored the artist. It was the noble who "made" or "decorated" his tomb, using the instrument of the paid artist and artisan. We give one final instance which combines the "making" by employment and the "making" by the craftsman. In the 5th or 6th dynasty tomb of a Royal Builder Ka-em-hezit at Sakkarah was found a carved wooden door, on which Ka-em-hezit does honor to his father and four brothers. As an afterthought, he gives us the name of the sculptor who carved the door.

30. "I made this for my old father and for my brothers, in order that they might have invocation-offerings together with me in my property. . . . I had the Sculptor Itju make (it)."<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> From the tomb of Wash-Ptah (*Urk. I* [2d ed.], 43–44). The final sentence states Wash-Ptah's pious gratitude to the king.

<sup>54</sup> From the tomb of Ra-wer (*Urk. I*, 232).

<sup>55</sup> *Urk. I*, 206. Smith (p. 353, apparently following Gunn's analysis of the inscription in *Annales du Service*, XXVI, 193) incorrectly attributes the door

## THE PAYMENT OF THE ARTIST

If the lordly patron assumed to himself the credit for the "making" of monuments, it was because he felt no sense of debt to the artist. The latter had been paid off, and, as an artisan who had delivered a product, he had no essential claim upon his patron for further recognition. Smith's listing of named artists shows how often the noble included the artist among those clients, servitors, and attachés whom he was pleased to list by name on the walls of his tomb. Just so, he might or might not list his mortuary priests, his scribes, his stewards, and—on a somewhat different plane—the members of his family. However, our point is that the artist received no exceptional recognition as a creative personality inspired by divine fire. A man's household and his clients were of importance to him for his enjoyment of the next world. He needed servants, so that he had figures of servants placed in his tomb or depicted on his tomb walls. Just so, he valued certain personal relations with artists and artisans who had worked for him, and he included them in his inscriptions. They would be included less often than members of his family, probably less often than the mortuary priests who were so important to his eternal service, but much more often than mere servants.

Nobility imposes its obligations, and the wisdom literature advised a man of position not to neglect the interests of his adherents. In the 18th dynasty the Theban official Amen-em-het gave a banquet of gratitude for the craftsmen who

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to "the chapel of Ka-m-sennuw at Saqqarah" and says that "a son called Hetep-ka" ordered the door. The door lists a father Senef-ankh and "his children," who are five sons. Ka-em-hezit and Hetep-ka are two of the five, Hetep-ka being depicted as smaller—and thus apparently younger—than Ka-em-hezit, the owner of the tomb. The quoted statement is surely that of Ka-em-hezit on behalf of his named father and four named brothers.

had worked on his tomb.<sup>56</sup> The Old Kingdom provides a number of texts in which the patron states that he has no further obligation to the artist or artisan because he has paid them off in full.

31. "This was made for me for bread and beer."<sup>57</sup>

32. "As for every man who has made this (tomb) for me, he is not dissatisfied: whether artisan or stonemason, I have satisfied him."<sup>58</sup>

33. "The Royal Priest Memi. He says: I had these statues made by a sculptor, who was satisfied with the payment for it and what I did for him."<sup>59</sup>

34. "I made this out of the liberality which my lord showed me according to my honor with him. No craftsman was ever 'displeased' about it."<sup>60</sup>

35. "As for all people who have been accustomed to do (any)thing for me herein, I shall act for them, and they will praise the god for me very greatly because of it. They have made this (tomb) for bread, for beer, for clothing, for ointment, and for barley and emmer in great abundance."<sup>61</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Davies-Gardiner, *The Tomb of Amenemhät*, pp. 36-37, Pl. VIII. Gardiner concludes that the banquet depicted did not correspond to an objective reality but that the noble "is here imagined to be making offerings in the tombs of the various craftsmen who helped to decorate his own tomb." It is still an instance of gratitude to specifically named artists.

<sup>57</sup> From a false-door (*Urk. I*, 226). "This" may refer to the false-door only or to the entire tomb.

<sup>58</sup> From the tomb of Meni (*Urk. I*, 23). Scharff dates it to the 6th dynasty (*Mitteilungen des deutschen Instituts . . . in Kairo*, VIII, 32).

<sup>59</sup> From a statue of Memi (*Urk. I*, 225).

<sup>60</sup> From the false-door of Nefer (*Urk. I*, 225-26). One may also read "out of the offerings which my lord made for me," which seems unlikely. The final sentence takes the word written *ind* as an Old Kingdom writing of the word which is later written *ind*, "to be grieved." K. C. Seele points out that there is an Old Kingdom word written *nd*, which would yield the sentence: "No craftsman was ever punished on account of it."

<sup>61</sup> From the 5th dynasty tomb of Hetep-her-Akhti (*Urk. I*, 50). Alternative renderings—such as that of Volten in *Acta Orientalia*, IX, 370 ff.—might emphasize the piety of the workers, rather than the

36. "As for all craftsmen, [I have satisfied them]. When I do this for them, they praise the god for me because of it. I wish for them work, '(but) they [never really] suffer (by) working too [much]', in order that they might praise the god for me thereby."<sup>62</sup>

37. "I made this tomb for bread and beer, which I gave to all craftsmen who made this tomb. Moreover, when I gave them payment in such great measure, in every material that they asked, they praised the god for it."<sup>63</sup>

These texts insist that the deceased has departed from this world without debt against him, whether real or moral. No workers on earth held any claim for payment against him—nay, rather, they had actually expressed their gratitude to him. In the Egyptian phrase, they had "praised the god for him." Although it might be claimed that the reiteration of the theme may show some uneasy conscience, it might equally be claimed that this is only one of a larger series of protestations of right-dealing with fellow-men.<sup>64</sup> The artist, as artist, was due no recognition beyond full payment. Like a man's

full payment for their services: "Alle Leute die etwas daran für mich getan haben, sie haben (es) getan, indem sie zu dem Gott für mich deswegen sehr viel gebetet haben." Volten treats our No. 36 similarly. It seems to us that the statement is an emphatic one of the noble's full payment, rather than of the worker's pious devotion.

<sup>62</sup> From the 5th or 6th dynasty tomb of Inti at Deshasheh, using Sethe's restorations in *Urk. I* (2d ed.), 70.

<sup>63</sup> From the 5th dynasty tomb of Remenu-ka (Selim Hassan, *Excavations at Giza, 1930-31*, Pl. 61).

<sup>64</sup> No. 31 above continues: "I have not done (any)thing evil (against any) man." No. 32 is accompanied by a curse against any possible violator of the tomb and by the plea: "I never did (any)thing against him." No. 35 continues: "I never did anything which was severe (against) anybody, for the god loves justice." No. 36 ends: "I am [He]-Loves-Good, He-Hates-Crookedness. The doing of justice is what the god loves." Protestations of the general nature of *Urk. I*, 46: "I never did what anybody might disagree with; I never made any man spend a night dissatisfied . . . since my birth," are of fair frequency in the Old Kingdom.

mortuary priests, the artist had to be paid adequately. When he had received a sufficiency of bread, beer, and other goods, the patron's obligation was finished, and the patron expressed no pride in the artist's product as the masterpiece of a famed person.

#### THE PROBLEM OF "SIGNATURES"

We have seen that the most persistent claim to the credit for making a memorial is the claim of the patron and employer. We have seen that the artist was classed with the craftsman (*hmwty*), all the way down to the stonemason (*hrty-ntr*), and was "satisfied" with the full payment for his services. The question still remains: Do we have from the Old Kingdom any artists' signatures, in the sense of a confident, personal claiming of credit for an artistic product?<sup>65</sup> We should accept as a "signature" the act of Hat-shepsut's Overseer of All Royal Works, Sen-Mut, when he inserted his name and likeness behind the doors of chapels in her Deir el-Bahri temple.<sup>66</sup> Even though part of Sen-Mut's purpose was to share in the benefits of worship within a royal temple, he performed a self-directed act in his capacity as architect of the temple, securing a kind of credit before the gods for his product. But where can we find similar assumptions of ability and dignity on the part of the artist?<sup>67</sup> The Middle Kingdom

stela of the artist Irtisen, to which Smith refers on page 356, is unique.<sup>68</sup>

In the strictest and narrowest sense, there are no "signatures" of artists in the Old Kingdom. In a more generous sense there is a limited number of cases where the name of the artist accompanies a product, which is sometimes definitely his product and sometimes possibly his product. But the volition for the recording of the artist's name belonged to the patron,

throne. . . . Tutankhamon. . . . The renewal of monuments for his father. . . . Thutmose (IV). . . ." The epithet "he who acts with his own hands" is common and conventional; it does not state that the king made this particular piece.

<sup>65</sup> Louvre C 14; references in Porter-Moss, *Topographical Bibliography*, V, 98. We give here a running translation of ll. 6-15, with the confession that it is too tentative to deserve detailed defense, but in the belief that its general statements of an artist's abilities are worth noting. "The Overseer of Craftsmen, the Painter (or Scribe) and Sculptor Irtisen says: (A) I know the mysteries of the divine word and the conducting of ritual. All prepared magic—it belongs to me, without (any) thereof passing me by. Moreover, I am a craftsman successful in his craft, 'one who comes out on top' through that which he knows. (B) I know '(how to reckon) the levels of the flood', how to weigh according to rule, 'how to withdraw or introduce when it goes out or comes in, in order that a body may come into its place'. (C) I know (how to express) the movement of a figure, the stride of a woman, 'the positions of one instant, the cringing of the solitary captive', how one eye looks at another, how to make frightened the face of 'the outlaw', the poise of the arm of him who harpoons the hippopotamus, and the pace of the runner. (D) I know how to make 'things of paste and inlaid things', without letting the fire melt them, nor do they wash off in water either. (E) There is no one who can reveal it to anybody except for me alone and my eldest son of my body. The god has commanded that he do (it) and that I reveal it to him. I have seen the products of his hands in acting as Overseer of Works, in every noble costly stone, beginning with silver and gold and going down to ivory and ebony." It is certain that, in A, Irtisen claims the abilities customarily the prerogative of a lector priest. His claims in B are doubtful, and we have taken them to apply to mensuration and calculation. In C his extraordinary boasts of ability to introduce motion and emotion into his art are most unusual claims for ancient Egypt. In D he asserts his abilities to make some kinds of materials which are indestructible. In E he states that the secrets of his calling are known to himself and his eldest son only. We emphasize again the unique character of this document. Such mild boastings as those of the artist Bak in the time of Akh-en-Aton (Breasted, *Ancient Records*, Vol. II, § 975) are conventional and not very illuminating.

<sup>65</sup> The most pertinent definition of a "signature" in *Webster's New International Dictionary* (1943) is: "The name of any person, written with his own hand to signify that the writing which precedes accords with his wishes or intentions." Thus it is a voluntary act of claiming credit or responsibility.

<sup>66</sup> Winlock, in *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, March, 1926, Part II, p. 13. For a comparable Old Kingdom case, see n. 71 below.

<sup>67</sup> To our regret, we must here withdraw an alleged case of a "signed" product. In our contribution to Frankfort et al., *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, p. 81, we wrote of an astronomical instrument "made by the hands of Tutankhamon himself." The inscription on one side of this piece (Oriental Institute 12144) runs: "The good god, he who acts with his own hands for his father Amon, who set him upon his

who was amiably pleased to make a recognition of an employed worker in whom he had taken satisfaction.<sup>69</sup>

It is unfortunate that the instance of the sculptor of Djoser's statue (pp. 236-37 above) must be dropped out of consideration because of incomplete and uncertain evidence. The Sculptor Itju, in No. 30 above, does receive due credit for the carving of a door, but the words of credit are not his, whether one translates "I had the Sculptor Itju make (it)" or "The Sculptor Itju was caused to make (it)." Semer-ka and In-kaf, in No. 1 above, receive credit for specific accomplishment on the tomb of Neb-em-akhet, but they receive this recognition as Neb-em-akhet's "trusted men" or retainers. For the rest, the named artists in Smith's listing appear in scenes of daily life on the tomb walls, along with other retainers of the noble. To take one example, the east wall of Room A 3 in the tomb of Merer-uka shows this noble inspecting his craftsmen, including the "Chief Sculptor of the Palace Dj'a'am" and "Idu," noted by Smith on page 353.<sup>70</sup> In addition to these

two, six other persons are depicted with names and titles: mortuary priests, scribes, and a steward. The two named sculptors are shown working on statues, and there is no indication that they had anything to do with the reliefs carved on this wall, so that they might have taken the opportunity to insert their names and thus "sign" their products. No, their inclusion appears to be the same as that of Merer-uka's other retainers, who were not artists. If, in the tomb of Ptah-hotep, "his trusted man, his beloved, his honored man, the Chief Sculptor Ni-ankh-Ptah," is shown exceptional consideration in the boating scene noted by Smith on page 354, this is gratifying but does not differ from situations in which other retainers are shown marks of honor.<sup>71</sup> The artist was a man of prized skill, but he was still an employed retainer, subject to his lord's pleasure.

Now that we have brought the Old Kingdom artist down to the level at which his own society viewed him, we should like

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Egyptologists Nims and Seele. If our citation above seems too impersonal, an alternative would be "Duell *et al.*, *The Mastaba of Mereruka.*"

<sup>69</sup> Since we have limited the definition of "signatures" to the artist's personal initiative and volition, we feel that we are not necessarily in disagreement with Smith and with Dr. E. W. Ware, "Egyptian Artists' Signatures," *AJSL*, XLIII, 185 ff. Our delimitation of "signatures" asks, not only that the name of the artist accompany his product, but that he should have affixed his name to claim credit for his product.

<sup>70</sup> The Sakkarah Expedition, *The Mastaba of Mereruka*, I, Pls. 26-33. We take this occasion for a personal plea. The volume in question has a title-page reading: "The Mastaba of Mereruka . . . by The Sakkarah Expedition," with a listing of the field staff members, headed by the Field Director, Prentice Duell. The epigraphic expeditions of the Oriental Institute at Sakkarah and Luxor present staff products, in which the work of the field director, the photographer, the artists, and the epigraphers is all essential. There is no one author, and credit is due the members of the expedition as a whole. On Smith's pp. 205-6, there is a citation of "Duell, *The Mastaba of Mereruka.*" For his text figures Smith has used more than a dozen elements with that citation, but the copies which he used were the products of four different artists—Duell, Strekalovsky, Shepherd, and Lack—and the photographer Thompson and the

<sup>71</sup> The scene is the same as that in which Merer-uka's brother, "the Overseer of the Domain and Eldest of the Dockyards Ihy," seated in a boat, is accorded special attention (The Sakkarah Expedition, *The Mastaba of Mereruka*, I, Pl. 43). A case which Smith argues (pp. 43-44) to be similar to that of Hat-shepsut's architect Sen-Mut (n. 66 above) is that of Khemetnu, the Steward and Chief Mortuary Priest of the 4th dynasty queen Meres-ankh III. He had a statue of himself and a name-bearing inscription inserted in her tomb. This may be an Old Kingdom instance of a "signature" in our sense. It does, however, serve again to place the artist on the same plane as the steward or mortuary priest or scribe—a valued factor for his master. Later Smith (p. 189) cites the row of seated scribes in the 5th dynasty tomb of Ankh-ma-Re as being similar to the Khemetnu case.

We cannot deal with the scene of Merer-uka, seated at an easel and painting a scene in some manner associated with the seasons of the year (The Sakkarah Expedition, *op. cit.*, Pls. 6-7; Smith, p. 355 and Fig. 231), because we do not understand what it means. We are skeptical that it makes Merer-uka an artist or that it means that Merer-uka or Ikhekhi were the designers of tombs. Cf. Hermann in *Mitteilungen des deutschen Instituts . . . in Kairo*, VI, 151; Wreszinski, *Atlas*, III, 1-3.

to give him the credit which is due him. Even though ancient Egyptian society tended to make him anonymous with respect to his specific artistic products, a modern like Smith is able to evaluate the artist's skill and spirit in terms which leave him in high regard.

#### THE INDIVIDUALITY OF THE ARTIST

Practically all the Old Kingdom works of art which have survived to our times were made for eternity and to serve the purposes of eternal life. They were carved and painted for temple and tomb. Egyptian culture dogmatically repudiated change and the transitory aspects of life. That which had come down to them from the times of the creator-god was asserted as valid for eternity. Art, therefore, was employed to affirm this static dogma and to insist upon the ideal which was unchanging, rather than upon the real which was transitory. Social and religious convention laid its restraint upon the artist and tried to make him its undeviating tool, which would represent over and over again the unchanging. Smith has brought out these principles in his Introduction (p. xiii):

Once we have accepted the fact that a scene as represented by an Egyptian artist is to be looked at as a more or less diagrammatic rendering of the facts as he knew them to be, we are in a position to interpret his meaning and to judge how well he has carried out his purpose. Almost always in his drawing he seeks to portray a generalization of an action, not its transitory aspect on a particular day under certain conditions. The narrative element is conspicuously absent from Egyptian art save in a few rare exceptions, and in the Old Kingdom is found only in certain subordinate details of a large composition. Somewhat less rare is the portrait sculptor's observation of striking individual peculiarities in the physical appearance of his patron. The development that we have to look for in Egyptian art is that of the technical per-

fection of the craft of the sculptor and the painter within certain boundaries laid down by convention. This convention, in itself, was the way in which a primitive people interpreted the visual perceptions of the world about them, and in Egypt their purpose was the recreation of this world for the use of the soul after death.

Thus the photographic, the perceptual, the candid, the real, the momentary, and the narrative were of little concern to the Egyptian artist. He sought the diagrammatic, the conceptual, the ideal, and the static. He sought to reduce his representations to those few types which would best serve the purposes of unchanging eternity.

Such conventions, if inflexibly enforced and carried out with rigorous logic, would have reduced Egyptian art to endless repetition of a few unworldly, idealized types. This was not the case. The Egyptian system was broad and general, and the artistic conventions were flexible enough to allow liberal opportunity for individual skill to experiment and innovate within those broad limits. It would not be correct to say that there was a rule and exceptions to the rule. It would be correct to say that there was recognized and obeyed rule which permitted variety. Under the Old Kingdom, an age of energetic and successful individuals, the rule even encouraged variety. Smith's analysis of individual works of art is studded with three constellations of concepts: (a) "realism," "naturalism," and "portraiture"; (b) "variety," "vivacity," "movement," and "transitory aspects"; and (c) "innovation," "originality," "experiment," and the "individuality" of the artist. To be sure, such words come out with emphasis because they constitute deviations from the most rigid application of the conventions. However, they occur so constantly in this analysis that they become a constant of Old Kingdom

art rather than an exception which has to be justified.<sup>72</sup>

Whether or not one accepts Dr. Reisner's recognition of two 4th dynasty sculptors as being two distinct individuals, each of whom produced a school of artists whose products may be categorical-

<sup>72 a)</sup> The Egyptian artist was a "realist," whose "aims were naturalism and enduring qualities . . . it is in the wonderful series of portrait heads that Old Kingdom art reaches its highest level" (p. xiii). The reserve heads show a "clear attempt to portray the personal characteristics of the owner" (p. 28). Ra-hotep and Nefert show "able portraiture" and "amazing naturalness" (p. 21). The head and torso of Hem-Iunu "are of unprecedented realism," and the attempt to present a portrait of Hem-Iunu is repeated in his reliefs (p. 22). The head of Ankh-haf is perhaps unrivaled for "pure realism" (p. 39). Reisner's "Sculptor B" was "essentially a realist, striving for exact portraiture" (p. 35). The Sheikh el-Beled is "one of the finest examples of the realism of the Old Kingdom" (p. 48). The statues of the early 5th dynasty are characterized by the "remarkable portraiture of their faces" (p. 47).

b) Subsidiary figures in reliefs and paintings were permitted "some of the transitory aspects of the human body in movement and repose" (p. 304). In his depiction of space or surface, the artist occasionally showed "recognition of the fleeting aspect of things" (p. 326). The reliefs of the 5th dynasty exhibit "movement, vivacity, and diverse subject-matter" (p. 201). The reserve heads show a "variety of facial types" (p. 28). The smaller figures in the reliefs of Queen Meret-hotep have a "vivacity and grace seldom equalled" (p. 160). "The irregular curving lines" of a small scene in the Boston chapel of Sekhem-ankh-Ptah show a "remarkable feeling of movement" (p. 306). Among the servant statuettes there appears an "unusual portrayal of movement" (p. 102). The offerings shown in the reliefs of Pepi II's temple are "widely varied" in "ingenious arrangement" (p. 204).

c) The reliefs and paintings show some "innovations due to the genius of certain individuals" (p. xiv). From time to time technical advances must have been invented by a man of ability (pp. 359-60). The sculptor rarely felt obliged to follow slavishly the lines laid down by the outline draftsman, or the painter to follow the sculptor (p. 252). In every case of copying from one tomb to another there is change in detail (p. 365). In statues and reliefs "there was always a certain deviation" from the canon of proportions (p. 107). The subordinate figures in the reliefs show a "good deal more experimental variety" (p. 128). There is also "experimentation" in the servant statuettes (p. 102). The sculptors of the tombs of Khaf-Re-ankh, Semenk-uh-Ptah, and the dwarf Seneb were "innovators," "unconventional," "original," attempting "a unique experiment" (pp. 57, 189, 304).

We have not attempted an exhaustive catalogue of Smith's terms which apply to the individuality of the artist. We do feel that the quoted words in this note are justified and sufficiently illustrate our thesis.

ly assigned to Sculptor A or to Sculptor B (Smith, pp. 35-36), his distinction of two clear schools does show that individuality is clearly discernible. Sculptor A is seen as "an older man working in a more severe manner, 'not so much an idealist as the creator of the formula of a type of face which influenced all his work.'" Since he strove more to represent ideal and eternal characteristics, he had a preference for the harder and more enduring stones. However, the medium of hard or soft stone is not the distinguishing mark between A and B: A worked also in limestone and alabaster, whereas B, who showed a liking for alabaster, worked also in diorite and slate. Sculptor B was "essentially a realist, striving for exact portraiture," with "a softer modelling to his surfaces." The parallelism of two distinct styles at the same time, the same place, and serving the same royal patrons is a sufficient illustration of the individual freedom of the Old Kingdom artist to express the general system in different ways. If it be true that King Men-kau-Re accepted three slate triads from Sculptor A and one from Sculptor B, then precisely the same specifications were executed in two distinct ways.

No sculptors' models are known for the Old Kingdom. The sculptor or painter was not required to execute a head or a hieroglyph as the reproduction of a stereotype. Smith's two plates of colored hieroglyphs indicate the variety possible in the shape and coloring of some of the birds. We have been fascinated by our attempt to find some general consistency to the "color conventions" applying to the hieroglyphs which Smith lists on pages 366 ff. We can understand the variation between blue and black, between blue and green, between red and yellow, and—in the depiction of objects made of fiber—between yellow and green. These have

been adequately explained by Mrs. Williams<sup>73</sup> and by Smith in this book. But we are still left with a sense that the painter was sometimes actuated by a perverse and antic impulse to try a new color combination, *despite the fact that he knew what his object was and what color it should be*. Why should the mouth (hieroglyph D 21), normally red and sometimes yellow, be once painted black? Why is the *nfr*-sign (F 35), which represents the internal organs of an animal, now painted red, now white with red outline, once yellow, and once green? Did it trouble no purist that the *nw-jar* (W 24) appeared yellow, red, black, white with black outline, blue, and green in different monuments? Was there a binding "convention" when the *nh*-sign (S 34) might appear colored blue, black, or green, but also red; when "second *h*" (V 28) might be blue, black, or green, but also red, yellow, or white with red outline; when the reed-leaf (M 17) might be blue or green, but also yellow or white with black outline? Yes, one must recognize and chart certain general conventions which condition the coloring of objects, but after one has done so there remains a residue of cases where the painter has permitted himself the play of his individual preference along nonconformist lines.

Old Kingdom art needs no praise from us. Its merits are sufficiently known, and Smith's valuation, cited earlier in this review article, is just. But Old Kingdom art and artists enjoy a curious paradox from the standpoint of a modern. They were subject to known conventions and limitations, which might well have been so coercive as to destroy the sense of crea-

tivity by demanding endless repetition. Yet the Old Kingdom artist was creative. He was free to express his individuality and to experiment within the known system. The second part of the paradox—to the modern—is that he was a creative individual and yet was content to remain essentially anonymous. His society was not ours, and he found his reward through serving his society faithfully. In the organization of a culture culminating in a god-king, he had a product to deliver, a purchased product which might disappear into a tomb and be hidden from appreciative eyes. He was paid in goods for this product, and he had the two additional compensations of a personal knowledge that his work was good and of the encouragement to put his own individual genius into the manufacture of the product.

The wisdom literature of the Old Kingdom is full of personal assurance that a man will get on in the world by combining a knowledge of the rules of the system with energy and intelligence. The essence of the system was a balance between freedom and control. A man could roam about at the end of a long tether, but the tether was always there. The successful man was warned against a self-presumptuous rejection of the controlling system: "Do not be arrogant because of thy knowledge, nor overconfident because thou art a knowing man. Take the advice of the ignorant as well as the wise, for the limits of craftsmanship cannot be reached, and there is no craftsman equipped to his (full) advantage."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> *The Decoration of the Tomb of Per-nēb*, pp. 38 ff.

<sup>74</sup> The Instructions of Ptah-hotep, ll. 52-56.