

BLACKWELL COMPANIONS TO THE ANCIENT WORLD

A COMPANION TO  
**ANCIENT  
EGYPTIAN ART**  
EDITED BY MELINDA K. HARTWIG



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TO ANCIENT  
EGYPTIAN ART

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# A COMPANION TO ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ART

*Edited by*

Melinda K. Hartwig

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**Alexandra Woods** is Lecturer in the Department of Ancient History at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. Since 2003, she has been involved in archaeological fieldwork with the Macquarie University Expedition at Saqqara, Meir, and Beni Hassan. Her area of research is in Old and Middle Kingdom history and art history with a special interest in the social and cultural contexts of art in temple and tomb environments.

# Foreword

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When I began my career as an Egyptologist in the early 1960s I was fortunate to have excellent teachers and mentors in the areas of language, material culture, architecture, and history (Raymond Faulkner, Anthony Arkell, Walter B. Emery, and Margaret Drower); but I do not remember Egyptian art being much discussed, or deployed so as to at least illuminate these other aspects of ancient Egypt. I suspect these circumstances were then true throughout much of the Egyptological world, comprised of philologists and archaeologists, and focused on history; on religious and literary studies; and on material remains, with relatively few scholars who could be identified as art historians. And if today this situation is improved, it is not as markedly as one might wish; the relatively slow development of art historical studies is evident from Diane Bergman's historiographical essay in this volume, listing the small number of outstanding treatments of ancient Egyptian art over the last 100 years.

This is one reason, among many, that makes Wiley Blackwell's *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*, expertly edited by Melinda Hartwig, both so welcome and so stimulating. The essays it contains are not only invaluable in themselves, but also take us back to the salient aspects of earlier phases in the study of Egyptian art, and point the way to exciting developments—already emerging—in the future. Students reading these essays (all presented in highly accessible style) will be encouraged to consider Egyptian art history as one of the desirable specializations that they might choose; while many philologists and archaeologists are likely to be stimulated to integrate art historical material more extensively in their work. It has I think become increasingly clear that full understanding of ancient Egypt depends on three pillars that are of equal importance: written (and inscribed) sources; archaeological data; and art in all its multiple manifestations. Practicabilities may require a strong degree of specialization, but a book like this should persuade all of us that students need to be taught the full range of these three areas, and encourage mature scholars to recognize more fully the interrelationships between them.

To return briefly to my own personal experiences in these regards, it is useful to note that my involvement in the study of Egyptian art was a gradual process, necessarily so in

the absence of any formal training. During my years as a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, and curator of the Egyptian and Nubian collection of its Penn Museum, and subsequently as a professor at the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University, I increasingly found that in both research and teaching, the analysis of art historical materials, as well as as much as that of written and archaeological evidence, was essential to both my own understanding of the sometimes astounding complexities of Egyptian culture and my responsibility to convey that richness to undergraduate and graduate students.

In particular, my archaeological interests included the study of ancient Egyptian urbanism, but in particular its possible cosmological dimensions (already well proven for temples and tomb chapels), which in turn, led me to Tell el-Amarna, the only extensively excavated city available to us, even today. This kind of research naturally involved reference to written sources, but also to the revealing interplay between the city's remains and the style and content of the scenes displayed on the walls of el-Amarna's elite tomb chapels. Amarna art of course has its unusual and even unique aspects, but my work on these materials began to reveal for me the visual and conceptual complexities and subtleties of Egyptian art in general, on which Amarna art is basically a variation. Since then, my published work has often involved the interface between art and text in ancient Egypt, and between these and architecture and landscape as well. These experiences have also persuaded me that Egyptian art should be defined as broadly as possible, so as to include “the art of small things” (John Mack, *The Art of Small Things*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2007) and thus be inclusive of not only temple and chapel art, but also the aesthetic, symbolic, and compositional aspects of such “minor arts” as decorated cosmetic implements and erotic papyri.

To return to *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*, there are several reasons for it to be recognized as a landmark publication in the study of art and as a revelation of the recent achievements in that field, which may be a surprise to many Egyptologists. Each contributor is an expert in the topic of his or her contribution, and on top of all the relevant recent publications and projects, makes the *Companion* an invaluable reference work. Even more importantly, each contributor is a leading researcher in their own right, full of original and stimulating insights, and provides colleague and student alike with the freshest thought in the field. I have already noted the accessibility of each essay, providing clear and jargon-free coverage of topics that could be intimidating, such as semiotics, reception and perception, and narrative theory. And finally, the treatment is fully comprehensive, covering all relevant topics; citing relevant materials of many periods (from prehistoric times to the periods of Greek and Roman rule) that are genuinely illuminating; and taking up theoretical issues in depth. Comprehensiveness is evident also in the valuable essays covering the mutual patterns of influence between Egyptian art and that of Nubia, the Near East, and Greece and Rome, treatments rarely attempted in histories of Egyptian art. Indeed, this *Companion* will surely be a great attraction to scholars of art in general, and in all fields as much as the ancient, for it has no rival as an up-to-date treatment of Egyptian art of great intellectual distinction.

David O'Connor  
Lila Acheson Wallace Professor of Ancient Egyptian Art  
New York University  
October 20, 2013

# Preface

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*A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art* is intended as a first-of-a-kind reference work that explores key concepts, critical discourses, and theories in the art of ancient Egypt and its interconnections. The discipline has diversified to the extent that it now incorporates subjects ranging from gender theory, hermeneutics, and hybridity to “X-ray fluorescence” and “3-D recording.” As a result, ancient Egyptian art stands at the threshold of a new era of critical and interdisciplinary scholarship. This volume provides the discipline with the first comprehensive synthesis of many of the issues that shape ancient Egyptian art history today as a whole. The *Companion* presents overviews of past and present scholarship and suggests new avenues of analysis to stimulate debate and allow for critical readings of individual monuments and artworks. The aim of this book is to convey a full sense of ancient Egyptian art history through the various concepts and approaches within the field.

This *Companion* is intended to fit into the Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World series that provides sophisticated and authoritative overviews of the most important themes in ancient culture. While many surveys on Egyptian art are organized chronologically, I chose to organize this *Companion* thematically in order to highlight the methodological, material, sociocultural, and technological debates in art. Written by noted international specialists in their field, each author brings their significant expertise to bear on the nature of ancient Egyptian art. In my guidelines to the authors, I asked that they examine well-established and widely accepted methodologies, but also offer new suggestions for productive future approaches. Where opinions differ between authors, the reader will find critical points of debate that can stimulate dialogues about art, both in and out of the classroom. The chapter length in the *Companion* allows contributors to explore the breadth and depth of their subjects, imparting a state-of-the-art synthesis to this textbook that can be used by scholars, advanced students, and interested general readers.

This *Companion* begins with posing a critical question: how did the ancient Egyptians define art? The book is then divided into six parts. Part I treats the methods and terminology used by art historians to examine Egyptian art. Beginning with a thorough chapter on the historiography of ancient Egyptian art, this section includes important discussions on formalism and the meaning of style, iconography and analysis of data, the principals of semiotics and the interpretation of meaning, the social and cultural construction of gender, the criteria of aesthetic pleasure, the conventions of constructing the “Other,” and the cultural meanings of art. Part II anchors methodological discourse in specific materials and mediums. Since the *Companion* series consists of authoritative overviews and reference works, this section provides a chronological summary of the development of sculpture, relief, painting, coffins, and luxury arts from the Predynastic to Roman periods and beyond. The main foci of these chapters are the various concepts and theoretical methods used to examine these mediums—both traditional and innovative—and their inherent problems and potentials. Part III explores the basic constructs of ancient Egyptian art and their development in scholarship. This includes discussions on the tenets of ideology and propaganda, the synergy of ritual action on artistic expression and individual beliefs, the visual narrativity of monoscopic and concurrent images, the intentionality of the proportional system in art, and the contextualization of portraiture in the discourse of Egyptian art history. Part IV moves beyond the boundaries of Egypt to explore how art intersected with the visual culture of the ancient Mediterranean basin, the Near East and Nubia, through Egypt’s cultural formation to the Roman period. These chapters illustrate the transmission of models through conquest and trade, and the impact of local foreign communities on Egyptian art. Part V investigates the phenomenon of “Egyptomania”—the modern reception of ancient Egyptian art. Part VI covers the role of technology in ancient Egyptian art, including how line drawings interpret (or can misinterpret) information, the contributions of modern science toward understanding material culture, and the various techniques of object conservation, both in the field and in the laboratory.

The goal of this *Companion* is to shed light on Egyptian art and its interconnections by using the tools that art historians wield today. The methods, concepts, influences, and devices discussed in this book comprise the current dialogue that forms and will continue to define the field of ancient Egyptian art history. It is my sincere hope that the unprecedented breadth of coverage and impeccable scholarship in *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art* will make it an indispensable reference resource for scholars and students of the ancient world as well as general readers who are captivated by the art of ancient Egypt.

Melinda K. Hartwig  
Georgia State University  
August 27, 2013

# Acknowledgments

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*“It was he who made his hieroglyphs (and figures) in [a type of] drawing that cannot be erased”*

(Panel from the tomb of Nefermaat and Atet, Meidum, Old Kingdom,  
Oriental Institute Museum inv. no. 9002)

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Melinda K. Hartwig  
April 12, 2014

# List of Abbreviations

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CG	Catalogue General (Egyptian Museum, Cairo)
LD	Lepsius, R. (1849–1859), <i>Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien: nach den Zeichnungen der von Seiner Majestät dem Könige von Preussen Friedrich Wilhelm IV. nach diesen Ländern gesendeten und in den Jahren 1842–1845 ausgeführten wissenschaftlichen Expedition.</i> 12 vols. Berlin.
<i>Lexikon der Ägyptologie</i>	Helck, W., Otto, E., and Westendorf, W., eds. (1972–1992), <i>Lexikon der Ägyptologie.</i> 7 vols. Wiesbaden.
MFA	Museum of Fine Arts (Boston)
pBM	papyrus British Museum (London)
PM	Porter, B. and Moss, R.L.B., with Burney, E.W. and Málek, J. (1927–2012), <i>Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Paintings.</i> 8 vols. 2nd edition 1960–. Oxford.
TT	Theban tomb
<i>Urk. I</i>	Sethe, K. (1903, 1933), <i>Urkunden des Alten Reichs.</i> Leipzig.
<i>Urk. IV</i>	Sethe, K. and Helck, W. (1906–1958), <i>Urkunden der 18. Dynastie.</i> Leipzig.



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# Chronology of Egyptian Kings

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The following list is intended to give the reader a general chronological framework. The dates until 664 BCE are based on E. Horning, R. Krauss, and D.A. Warburton, eds. (2006), *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*, Handbook of Oriental Studies 83, Leiden, and J. Baines and J. Málek (2000), *Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, Oxford. The dates given for the Macedonian and Ptolemaic Periods are derived from G. Hölbl (2001), *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, London and New York. Dates and spellings may differ in some illustration captions due to specific copyright restrictions required by the object's institution.

Predynastic/Nagada I–III  
(ca. 4000–2950 BCE)

Early Dynastic/Archaic Period  
(ca. 2950–2545 BCE)

## Dynasty 1 (ca. 2950–2730)

Narmer

‘Aha

Djer

“Serpent”

Den

‘Adj-ib/Anedjib

Semer-khet

Qa-‘a

## Dynasty 2 (ca. 2730–2590)

Hetep-sekhemwy

Ra‘-neb

Ny-netjer

Per-ibsen

Sekhem-ib

Sened

Kha-sekhemwy

**Dynasty 3 (ca. 2592–2544)**

Djoser ca. 2592–2566

Sekhem-khet ca. 2565–2559

Kha‘ba ca. 2559–?

Sanakht ?–?

Nebka ?–?

Huni ca. ?–2544

## Old Kingdom

(ca. 2543–2120)

**Dynasty 4 (ca. 2543–2436)**

Snofru ca. 2543–2510

Khufu (Cheops) ca. 2509–2483

Radjedef/Djedefre ca. 2482–2475

Bikheris ca. 2474–2473

Khafre (Chephren) ca. 2472–2448

Menkaure (Mycerinus) ca. 2447–2442

Shepseskaf ca. 2441–2436

**Dynasty 5 (ca. 2435–2306)**

Userkaf ca. 2435–2429

Sahure ca. 2428–2416

Neferirkare Kakai ca. 2415–2405

Neferefre/Raneferef ca. 2404

Shepseskare ca. 2403

Niuserre ca. 2402–2374

Menkauhor ca. 2373–2366

Djedkare Isesi ca. 2365–2322

Unas ca. 2321–2306

**Dynasty 6 (ca. 2305–2152)**

Teti ca. 2305–2279

Userkare ?–?

Pepy I ca. 2276–2228

Merenre ca. 2227–2217

Pepy II ca. 2216–2153

Merenre II ca. 2152

**Dynasty 7/8 (ca. 2150–2118)**

Neferkaure ca. 2126–2113

Neferkauhor ca. 2122–2120

Neferirkare ca. 2119–2118

First Intermediate Period  
(ca. 2118–1980 BCE)

**Includes Herakleopolitan Dynasties 9 and 10**

Middle Kingdom  
(ca. 1980–1760 BCE)

**(Theban) Dynasty 11 (ca. 2080–1940)**

Mentuhotep I ca. 1980–?

Inyotef I ca. ?–2067

Inyotef II ca. 2066–2017

Inyotef III ca. 2016–2009

Mentuhotep II ca. 2009–1959

Mentuhotep III ca. 1958–1947

Mentuhotep IV ca. 1947–1940

**Dynasty 12 (ca. 1939–1760)**

Amenemhet I ca. 1939–1910

Senwosret I ca. 1920–1875

Amenemhet II ca. 1878–1843

Senwosret II ca. 1845–1837

Senwosret III ca. 1837–1819

Amenemhet III ca. 1818–1773

Amenemhet IV ca. 1772–1764

Nefrusobk/Sobekneferu (Queen) ca. 1763–1760

Second Intermediate Period  
(ca. 1759–1539)

**Dynasty 13 (ca. 1759–1630)**

**Dynasty 14 (ca. ?)**

**Dynasty 15 (Hyksos, ?–ca. 1530)**

**Dynasties 16 and 17 (ca. ?–1540)**

New Kingdom  
(ca. 1539–1077 BCE)

**Dynasty 18 (ca. 1539–1292)**

Where reign overlaps occur, they arise from coregencies

Ahmose ca. 1539–1515

Amenhotep I ca. 1514–1494

Thutmose I ca. 1493–1483

Thutmose II ca. 1482–1480

Thutmose III ca. 1479–1425

Hatshepsut (Queen) ca. 1479–1458  
 Amenhotep II ca. 1425–1400  
 Thutmose IV ca. 1400–1390  
 Amenhotep III ca. 1390–1353  
 Akhenaten (Amenhotep IV) ca. 1353–1336  
 Smenkhkare/Neferneferuaten ca. 1336–1334  
 Neferneferuaten ca. 1334–?  
 Tutankhaten/Tutankhamun ca. 1333–1324  
 Ay ca. 1323–1320  
 Horemheb ca. 1319–1292

**Dynasty 19 (ca. 1292–1191)**

Ramesses I ca. 1292–1291  
 Sety I ca. 1290–1279  
 Ramesses II ca. 1279–1213  
 Merneptah ca. 1213–1203  
 Sety II ca. 1202–1198  
 Amenmesse ca. 1202–1200  
 Siptah ca. 1197–1193  
 Twosret (Queen) ca. 1192–1191

**Dynasty 20 (ca. 1190–1077)**

Sethnakht ca. 1190–1188  
 Ramesses III ca. 1187–1157  
 Ramesses IV ca. 1156–1150  
 Ramesses V ca. 1149–1146  
 Ramesses VI ca. 1145–1139  
 Ramesses VII ca. 1138–1131  
 Ramesses VIII ca. 1130  
 Ramesses IX ca. 1129–1111  
 Ramesses X ca. 1110–1107  
 Ramesses XI ca. 1106–1077

Third Intermediate Period  
 (ca. 1076–723 BCE)

**Dynasty 21 (ca. 1076–944)**

Smendes ca. 1076–1052  
 Psusennes I ca. 1051–1006  
 Amenemnisut ca. 1005–1002  
 Amenemope ca. 1002–993  
 Osorkon “the Elder” 992–987

Siamun 986–ca. 968

Psusennes II ca. 967–944

**Dynasty 22 (ca. 943–746)**

Shoshenq I ca. 943–923

Osorkon I ca. 922–ca. 888

Takelot I ca. 877–874

Shoshenq II ca. 873

Osorkon II ca. 872–842

Shoshenq III ca. 841–803

Shoshenq IIIa ca. ?–790

Pami ca. 789–784

Shoshenq V ca. 783–ca. 746

**Dynasty 23 (Upper Egypt and Rival Kings, ca. 845–812)**

**Dynasty 23 (Lower Egypt, ca. 730)**

**Dynasty 24 (ca. 736–723)**

Late Period

(722–332 BCE)

**Dynasty 25 (ca. 722–655)**

Piye/Piankhi ca. 753–723

Shabaka ca. 722–707

Shebitku ca. 706–690

Taharqa 690–664

Tanwetamani 664–655/53

**Dynasty 26 (664–525)**

Psamtik (Psammetichus) I 664–610

Necho II 610–595

Psamtik (Psammetichus) II 595–589

Apries 589–570

Amasis 570–526

Psamtik (Psammetichus) III 526–525

**Dynasty 27 (First Persian Period, 525–404)**

Cambyses 525–522

Darius I 521–486

Xerxes 486–466

Artaxerxes I 465–424

Darius II 424–404

**Dynasty 28 (404–399)**

Amyrtaios 404–399

**Dynasty 29 (399–380)**

Nepherites I 399–393

Psammuthis 393

Hakoris (Achoris) 393–380

Nepherites II ca. 380

**Dynasty 30 (380–343)**

Nectanebo I 380–362

Teos (Tachos) 362–360

Nectanebo II 360–343

**Dynasty 31 (Second Persian Period, 343–332)**

Artaxerxes III Ochus 343–338

Arses 338–336

Darius III Codomannus 336–332

**Greco-Roman Period**

(332 BCE–CE 642)

**Macedonian Dynasty (332–305 BCE)**

Alexander the Great 332–323

Philip Arrhidaios 323–317

Alexander II (IV of Macedon) 316–305

**Ptolemaic Period (305–30 BCE)**

Ptolemy I Soter 305–282

Ptolemy II Philadelphos 282–246

Ptolemy III Euergetes I 246–221

Ptolemy IV Philopator 221–204

Ptolemy V Epiphanes 204–180

Ptolemy VI Philometor 180–145

Ptolemy VII Neos Philopator (never reigned)

Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (Physkon) 170–163, 145–116

Ptolemy IX Soter II (Lathyros) 116–107

Ptolemy X Alexander I 107–88

Ptolemy IX Soter II (restored) 88–81

Ptolemy XI Alexander II 80

Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos (Auletes) 80–58

Kleopatra VI Tryphaina and Berenike IV Epiphaneia 58–55

Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos (restored) 55–51  
Kleopatra VII Philopator ruled jointly with 51–30  
Ptolemy XIII and 51–47  
Ptolemy XIV and 47–44  
Ptolemy XV Caesaron 44–30

**Roman Period (30 BCE–CE 323?)**

**Byzantine Period (CE 324–642)**



# Chronology of Kushite Rulers

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Questionable rulers and ascribed burials in parentheses. Key to abbreviations: Ku. Tum. = el-Kurru Tumulus; Ku. = el-Kurru; Nu. = Nuri; Bar. = Gebel Barkal; Beg. = Begarawiya

Name of Ruler	Burial	Date
<b>Pre-Dynasty 25</b>		
Ruler A	Ku. Tum. 1	ca. 885–835 BCE
Ruler B	Ku. Tum. 2	ca. 865–825 BCE
Ruler C	Ku. Tum. 6	ca. 845–815 BCE
Ruler D	Ku. 14	ca. 825–805 BCE
Ruler E	Ku. 11	ca. 805–795 BCE
Alara	(Ku. 9)	ca. 785–765 BCE
<b>Early Napatan Kings/Kings of Dynasty 25</b>		
Kashta	(Ku. 8)	ca. 765–753 BCE
Piankhi (Piye)	Ku. 17	ca. 753–722 BCE
Shabako	Ku. 15	ca. 722–707 BCE
Shebitqo	Ku. 18	ca. 707–690 BCE
Taharqa	Nu. 1	690–664 BCE
Tanwetamani	Ku. 16	664–655/53 BCE (in Egypt)
<b>Napatan Kings</b>		
Atlanersa	(Nu. 20)	second half of seventh century BCE
Senkamanisken	Nu. 3	second half of seventh century BCE
Anlamani	Nu. 6	late seventh century BCE
Aspelta	Nu. 8	early sixth century BCE
Aramatelqo	Nu. 9	second quarter of sixth century BCE
Malonaqen	Nu. 5	first half of sixth century BCE
Analmakheyne	Nu. 18	middle of sixth century BCE
Amani-nataki-lebte	Nu. 10	second half of sixth century BCE

Name of Ruler	Burial	Date
Karkamani	Nu. 7	second half of sixth century BCE
Amaniastabarqo	Nu. 2	late sixth century BCE
Sikhespiquo	Nu. 4	early fifth century BCE
Nasakhma	Nu. 19	first half of fifth century BCE
Malowi-Amani	Nu. 11	middle of fifth century BCE
Talakhamani	Nu. 16	second half of fifth century BCE
Irike-Amanote	Nu. 12	second half of fifth century BCE
Baskakeren	Nu. 17	late fifth century BCE
Harsiyotef	Nu. 13	early fourth century BCE
King, name unknown	Ku. 1	middle of fourth century BCE
Akhratan	Nu. 14	second half of fourth century BCE
Amanibakhi	?	second half of fourth century BCE
Nastasen	Nu. 15	last third of fourth century BCE
Late Napatan Rulers		late fourth century to second third of third century BCE
Aktisanes	(Bar. 11)	
Ary	(Bar. 14)	
Kash ... amani	(Bar. 15)	
Arike-Pi(ankhi)-qo	?	
Sabrakamani	?	
<b>Meroitic Kings and Ruling Queens</b>		
Arkamani I	Beg. S. 6	second quarter of third century BCE
Amanisaraw [Amanislo]	Beg. S. 5	
Amani-tekha	Beg. N. 4	
Arnekhamani	(Beg. N. 53)	last third of third century BCE
Arkamani II	Beg. N. 7	end of third century BCE
Adikhalamani (Tabriqo)	Beg. N. 9	first third of second century BCE
King, name unknown	Beg. N. 10	
King, name unknown	Beg. N. 8	
Queen Shanakdakheto	(Beg. N. 11)	second half of second century BCE
King, name unknown	Beg. N. 12	
Naqyrinsan	(Beg. N. 13)	
Tanyidamani	(Beg. N. 20)	early first century BCE
King, name unknown	Bar. 2	
Queen, name unknown	Bar. 4	
Queen Nawidemak	Bar. 6	
Amanikhabale	(Beg. N. 2)	
Teriteqas	(Beg. N. 14)	last third of first century BCE
Queen Amanirenas	(Beg. N. 21)	late first century BCE
Queen Amanishakheto	Beg. N. 6	
King Natakamani and Queen Amanitore	Beg. N. 22	second half of first century AD
(Sotakarora)	Beg. N 1	
(Amanitaraqide)	?	end of first century AD
Amanakhhereqerem	(Beg. N. 16)	
	?	end of first century AD

Name of Ruler	Burial	Date
Amanitenamomide	Beg. N. 17	second half/end of first century AD
Queen Amanikhatashan	Beg. N. 18	to middle of second century AD
Tarekeniwala	Beg. N. 19	
Ariteneyesebokhe	Beg. N. 34	
Takideamani	(Beg. N. 29)	
(Arayesebokhe)	(Beg. N. 36)	
Teqorideamani	Beg. N. 28	accession AD 248/249
(Tamelordeamani)	?	
Yesebokheamani	?	end of third century AD
Queen, name unknown	Beg. N. 26	
Queen, name unknown	Beg. N. 25	end of kingdom, about AD 330–370

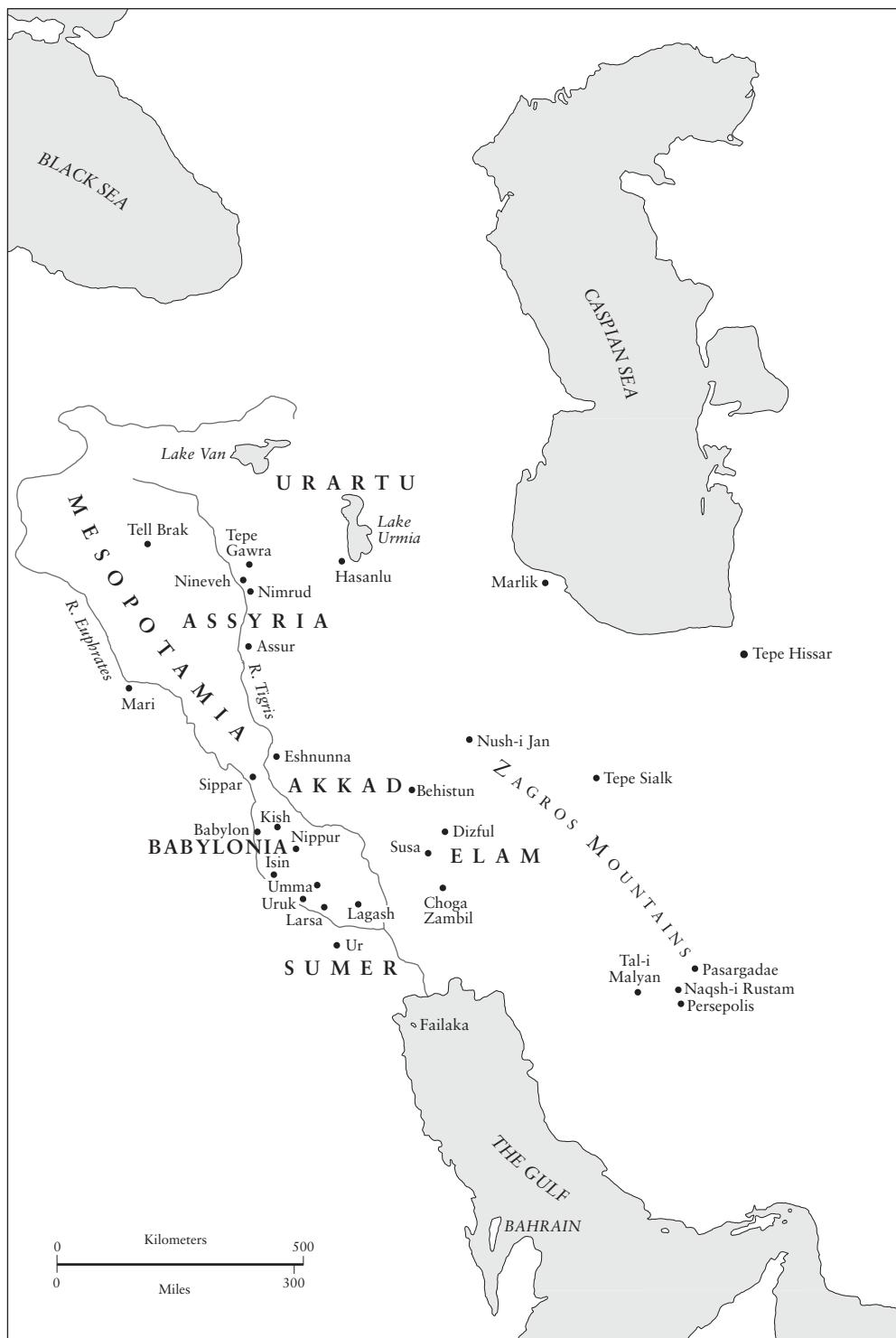
List reproduced courtesy of Peter Lacovara.



# Maps



**Figure 0.1** Egypt and Nubia in the Pharaonic Period.



**Figure 0.2** Ancient Near East (after P. Harper et al., eds. (1992), *The Royal City of Susa*, xiv. New York).



**Figure 0.3** Ancient Eastern Mediterranean (after V. Karageorghis (2000), *Ancient Art from Cyprus: The Cesnola Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, xiv. New York).

## CHAPTER 1

# What Is Art?

*John Baines*

### Introduction: “Art” and the Aesthetic

Studies of ancient Egyptian art since the nineteenth century have generally used approaches and categories similar to those that have dominated research on western art. Earlier Egyptologists and art historians often assumed implicitly that ancient Egypt, being older than European traditions, produced works that were less evolved and at a lower level than those of later times. An opposed, but nonetheless related and continuing tendency has been to say that since no ancient Egyptian term exists that closely corresponds to the modern western concept of art, there was no “art” in ancient Egypt, and to use approaches based on a modern concept would be methodologically slipshod.

Both of these points of departure privilege post-Renaissance and post-eighteenth century western perspectives. They do not take into account the universality of aesthetic concerns in human society, at least since the emergence of modern *Homo sapiens* and probably earlier. If applied to other social phenomena, the terminologically based argument would yield the conclusion that the Egyptians had neither mathematics nor religion, because ancient terms for those domains are lacking. Furthermore, a good correspondence can be found between the Egyptian *hmt* and pre-nineteenth century western terms and usages for “art” (Baines 2007b [1994]).

One reason for the unreflecting use of a western-based approach has been the high degree of apparent congruence between core western artistic genres and those of ancient Egypt. It is seductively easy, and not necessarily wrong, to place architecture, statuary, and painting (here including painted and unpainted low relief) at the center of both traditions. Ancient Egypt, however, is an archaeologically recovered civilization for which a continuous tradition that might describe the living artistic environment and lead into modern discourse is lacking. Because of this disjuncture, one must be very cautious about accepting congruence between ancient and modern traditions and classifications. Although unusual numbers of works in organic and often ephemeral materials survive

from Egyptian antiquity, it remains difficult to gain a sense of the total range of ancient artistic production. For some periods, it is clear that genres other than those just named were at least as significant as the standard trio of architecture, statuary, and painting. The possible range and focus of aesthetic concerns in antiquity should be left open for testing against material and indirect evidence, as well as against reconstructions of the ancient context.

Another complication often encountered in nineteenth and twentieth-century western attitudes to art—whether or not what is discussed belongs in the western tradition—is the widespread assumption that only works that have no function beyond being aesthetic objects can be termed art. The art world of today—displaying new creations or those from the past—is then seen as a domain of action and experience that would be partly detached from its social context and from other areas of human experience. The programmatic title of Hans Belting's work on medieval religious icons: *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art* (1994 [1990]) raises the implication that the icons might not have been “art” by more recent definitions because they had functions. Problems with taking lack of function to be a defining feature are evident. For example, because most works of architecture have a clear utility, they would be excluded from belonging to the category of art, as would a high proportion of what was produced in many aesthetic domains before the modern period of art galleries and museums—homes for functionless objects. The same would apply to a great deal of music and literature. Moreover, within their modern setting, objects in art galleries and museums do not lack a function: they are cultural artifacts that serve numerous purposes, including some that have been fulfilled by religion in other societal contexts. Be this as it may, one should assume that all aesthetic products have a function; the non-functional definition is an obstacle to understanding.

The rise of the art gallery and museum in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries contributed to narrowing the conception of art. By contrast, developments in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, in which the range of activities of visual artists extends to include performances and various interventions in the environment, have been helpful in stimulating thought about the range of phenomena and traditions, whether surviving or lost, that might have belonged to ancient artistic environments. Here one might compare Richard Bradley's concluding question in his *Image and Audience: Rethinking Prehistoric Art*: “Is it possible that, quite by chance, Installation Art and Conceptual Art have more in common with prehistoric archaeology than they do with the dominant trends in the Modern Movement?” (Bradley (2009), 233–234). Perhaps this parallel is not “quite by chance” but is in keeping with broader human proclivities.

This analogy between ancient practice and modern performance, neither of which fits familiar categories, suggests that, while some western ideas about art and the debates surrounding it can stand in the way of productive approaches to ancient Egyptian art, other western developments can point toward a broader understanding. Since study of ancient Egypt is necessarily undertaken from an outside perspective, it is legitimate to exploit such parallels. Is it possible to define art satisfactorily for ancient contexts, and how close will such a definition be to definitions used elsewhere? Rather than addressing this question directly, in this chapter I survey issues that I consider to be relevant to the context and significance of art in ancient society. I characterize art informally as the complete range of aesthetically ordered activity in a society, whether or not this results in the production of artifacts or leaves permanent

traces or other features that can be recovered from the material, pictorial, or textual record. My basic category is thus “the aesthetic” rather than “art.” This expansive approach is intended to avoid excluding anything that might be relevant, and it is tempered by taking into account that art and its products need to be seen in relative terms: things can be more or less artistic and can have more or less effort and value invested in them. In keeping with the aim of this volume, I focus on visual phenomena. Other sensory domains, such as music and verbal art, are embedded in Egyptian visual works and should be borne in mind as integral to the aesthetic environment.

## The Aesthetic Context

The majority of the material culture known from ancient Egypt is aesthetically formed. This preponderance is due, in large part, to the fact that royalty and the elite controlled most of the society’s wealth. They appropriated vast resources in order to create durable monuments and to place products that were as beautiful as possible in locations where they have survived to be found in modern times. Both the contexts for those products—temporary and permanent ordered spaces and structures—and the products themselves constitute works of art in the sense advocated here (the notion of beauty just evoked would repay analysis, but this cannot be offered here).

Indirect evidence shows that aesthetic expenditure in other domains was enormous. One arena, among a number for which pointers are available from many periods, is navigation on water, the most important and prestigious mode of travel and transport. From the beginning of the pictorial tradition in the Naqada I Period onward, images of boats often emphasize their display features (e.g., Landström 1970). These are particularly conspicuous in the decoration of Naqada II period pottery (“D-Ware”; e.g., Patch (2011) 67–77). The Gebel el-Araq knife (Naqada III) shows two types of boats belonging to opponents in a battle, with the victors’ craft having high, decorated prows (e.g., Malek (2003), 24; and see Figure 22.2 in Ataç, this volume). A flotilla of 14 large boats was entombed at Abydos as part of the funeral of a Dynasty 1 king (O’Connor (2009), 182–194). Several larger ships were dismantled and deposited next to the Great Pyramid. The boat that has been reassembled is elaborately designed, with both practical amenities and marked embellishments of form. An image of a river ship from the Dynasty 5 mortuary temple of Sahure is hoist with a huge sail that is shown as colored and embroidered with a flower pattern, a winged disk, and the royal titulary across the top fringe (Borchardt et al. (1913), pl. 9). A stela that narrates the architectural and spatial remodeling of Thebes by the Dynasty 18 king Amenhotep III has a section describing the newly commissioned river barque of Amun-Re, which is accorded almost equal status with major temples (O’Connor (1998), 162–165, figs 5.5, 5.6).

Two of the ships just mentioned survive, and they happen to be plain in appearance. Images of royal and divine barques are painted in bright colors and show cloth or leather coverings to cabins; the effect they gave through their reflection in the river is described in the stela text just mentioned. The finest barques would have been gilded. They were part of a culture of display on the river that gave indispensable élan to the movement of gods, kings, and elite. Funeral processions, sometimes conveyed on land and sometimes

by water, were comparably significant arenas of display; the salience of such processions is evident both from images of them and from the grave goods which survive in particularly large quantities from the New Kingdom (e.g., much material in Brovarski, Doll, and Freed 1982). Although such funerals would have been performed only for the wealthiest, high mortality and variable age at death made them more prominent in people's normal lives than comparable events are in the modern world. Moreover, the reality that the tomb would almost certainly be robbed, of which most people were surely aware, could only heighten the significance of the process of the funeral and the ceremony of burial, when the material was intact and being used for its intended purpose.

Thus, ceremonies of travel, festivals, and funerals were strongly aesthetic performances, and if possible, sited in aesthetically ordered locations (e.g., Plate 1). They presumably followed custom or defined rules, but they no doubt also departed at times from inherited forms in order to enhance their character, or to evoke modes hallowed by antiquity, as is stated in the tomb of Kheruef, where the performance of the *sed*-festival of Amenhotep III is depicted in the artistic style of its period but with archaizing details of costume and dance steps (Epigraphic Survey (1980), 43–45, pls. 24–28, 33–40). This was also a time when “curiosities” were collected and inscribed (Morenz 2010).

The aesthetic dimension celebrates and enhances single actions and rehearsed performances, impressing both participants and audiences while enjoining intense commitment on the part of the former and providing one among many bases for social distinctions, especially among the latter. Aesthetic qualities are inherent in finished material products as well as in performed works. For the central institutions of society, such as temples, king, and court, the premium placed on such qualities favored the creation of total environments in which as many domains as possible were ordered aesthetically. Those environments reached out, through the all-important mediating spaces of gardens, into the wider landscape. An example is provided here by institutions and practices relating to flowers, which are very widely depicted as accompaniments to rituals (Dittmar 1986), as well as being attested archaeologically (e.g., Hepper 2009; comparative study: Goody 1993, but weak on Egypt). Flowers must have been extensively tended and cultivated. A number of species were valued for symbolic and therapeutic qualities, but visual treatments show that they were appreciated aesthetically, while their perishable character was mitigated in elaborate, staff-like confections, as well as being converted into lasting form in many decorative motifs. Flowers were thus both displayed and performed, being turned into enduring objects and being integral to the general visual repertory.

Display can be in tension with utility. Human beings, being aesthetically attuned, very often give preference to display, or at least invest additional resources in order to create something that is not just useful but also beautiful. The prime arena of such tension is the human body. Much that is done to enhance the body through direct modification, dress, ornament, and comportment, conflicts with practicality, often requiring that the subject suffer in the name of beauty (which can never be easily separated from fashion). Aesthetic discourse about the human body, broadly focused on making it as beautiful as possible within constraints of decorum and fashion, can be observed on Egyptian monuments of many periods, whereas it is not strongly attested in texts. Such management of the body extends to human treatment of animals, both through breeding for at least partly aesthetic ends—conspicuous in dogs from no later than the Naqada III Period (Baines (1993), 64)—and through bodily alteration, as in the practice of deforming one horn

of choice oxen, which is quite widely depicted on monuments from the Old to the New Kingdom (e.g., tomb of Ptahhotep at Saqqara: Lange and Hirmer 1968, pl. 71).

In other cases, aesthetic aspects of things are in harmony with their utility. Aesthetically formed artifacts are very often better fitted to practical functions than those made without aesthetic regard. Well-balanced tools that are pleasing to hold and look at work better than poorly articulated ones. In many societies weapons are favored as objects for aesthetic display. Except in extreme forms, elegantly arranged and inscribed manuscripts are easier to navigate and read than badly written ones. It is difficult to point to an area of human activity where aesthetic concerns are completely absent. In Egypt, domains such as ceramics attracted less aesthetic involvement than in many cultures, but aesthetic concerns are present even there.

## The Aesthetic Community

While any normal Egyptian presumably possessed, to a greater or lesser degree, the aesthetic orientation which is characteristically human, the means to express it were very unequally distributed. The world of the peasant majority is almost entirely inaccessible, and we cannot know how and how far their everyday lives and celebrations were configured aesthetically. Most of the land's wealth was appropriated by royalty and elites who exploited the labor of others, including the peasants, fishermen, herders, and potters who produced necessities, in order to sustain their highly aestheticized way of life. The scale of the most grandiose Egyptian aesthetic products, such as pyramids and temples, shows that the exploiters could motivate vast numbers of people to participate in projects that entailed significant deprivation, even if there were compensatory advantages, such as the experience of different modes of living in the strikingly elaborate buildings and material provision at the town site south of the Giza pyramids (e.g., Baines (2009–2010), 127–136). One thing that made such exploitation possible was the workers' own susceptibility to the common goal and aesthetic impact of the enterprise.

The community that directed aesthetic matters, consisting primarily of royalty and elites, was not understood to be the prime beneficiary: in their and others' eyes, the beneficiaries were the gods. While the gods do not appear to have absorbed the bulk of the investment for lasting works in the third millennium, from the New Kingdom onward they clearly did so. By the Greco-Roman period temples were overwhelmingly dominant as environments and were works of art in their own right in the indigenous cultural context. To some extent, the same was true in the context of the largely Hellenistic milieu of the rulers (Arnold 1999).

Gods, the king, and elites generally directed the people who actually made works of art. Yet although the large numbers who were needed to make anything more than simple, small-scale artifacts were drawn from outside the elite, there was no neat division between these groups. Moreover, artistic activities such as architectural design, manufacturing and transporting colossal monuments and the creation of statuary, were so prestigious that they feature in the self-presentations of leading members of society. A unique example is the naming of an “overseer of sculptors” on a colossal statue base of Djoser from the Dynasty 3 Step Pyramid complex at Saqqara (unlikely to be Imhotep, contrary to widespread assumption: Gunn (1926), 187–196). Old Kingdom “Overseers of all the

king's works" were men of the highest status who probably directed the construction of pyramid complexes and may have been their architects or people responsible for the overall design (Strudwick (1985), 217–250). Some Old Kingdom tomb owners depicted sculptors and painters as favored members of their own entourages (Junker 1959). Prestigious specialist areas of production, such as jewelry-making, are mentioned in titularies, belonging in some cases to quite high-ranking people, who could have supervised jewelers or possibly been executants. The Old Kingdom leatherworker, Weta, possessed a fine stone sarcophagus (Donadoni Roveri (1969), 132–133, pl. xxxvi.1). From the Amarna period, when change in artistic forms was intense and rapid, names of several sculptors are known. An ivory horse blinker found in the house compound of the sculptor Thutmose, from which came the painted bust of Nefertiti, shows that he possessed a chariot, a status marker that had no direct utility for his occupation (Krauss and Newesely 1983).

Thus, members of the elite were not just aesthetic consumers or audiences, but also patrons, project directors, administrators, and to some extent designers or executants. They also had multiple connections outside their circles. Those who were of lower status emulated the elites and shared their aesthetic values, no doubt in part because other values were not easily available. How far such values penetrated the wider population cannot be known, and degrees of penetration may have varied in different periods: late prehistory and much of the third millennium appear to have been times of aesthetic plainness for many people, on occasion including the elite (Wengrow (2006), 151–175; Manuelian (2003), 167–169). A New Kingdom settlement area such as Kom Rabia in Memphis provides a different picture of large amounts of relatively ordinary aesthetic products used by people of lower elite status (Giddy 1999).

Making and performing art required many people. During periods when works were created in vast quantities and at a large scale, a significant proportion of the total population contributed directly to aesthetic production. In this network of patrons and executants, there were sub-elites whose activities and identities centered on the elite even though they may have resided among the wider population. Thus, in addition to being a consumer of art, the elite aesthetic community was an audience for art during its creation and probably supplied some participants or performers. The ideal audience extended further to all the groups that constituted Egyptian society—deities, the dead, the king, and humanity—even if most of the final group had little access to the products and performances. Furthermore, as in many traditions, much aesthetic creation was seldom or never seen after it was produced, because it was deposited in the ground or rendered inaccessible in other ways. In making things that would not be seen, executants followed their socially embedded aesthetic promptings and responded to their human patrons and peers, while having the suprahuman and deceased audience in mind as dedicatees and consumers. Texts, for example in the Ptolemaic period temple of Edfu, state that deities responded with delight to seeing the perfection of the work that the king and humanity created for them (e.g., Kurth (1994), 80–88).

## Pictorial Representation

Some artistic domains or genres are pictorial or representational, and others are not. This distinction is not intrinsically one of value, but representation can possess value for

what it is and does, as it clearly did in ancient Egypt. Individual pictorial images of the dynastic period—as opposed to whole scenes—were generally close to reality in outline and proportions; what they depicted could and can be easily identified. This focus on real things extended to composite forms, notably in decorative arts such as ceiling designs and textiles, most of which used abstract shapes less often than recognizable elements derived from prototypes in the natural or cultural world. The same is true of many architectural forms, with the notable exception of highly geometric structures such as pyramids.

Representation extended to entities of unknowable visual and spatial character, notably deities and the underworld (e.g., Hornung 1990), both of which were widely depicted in Egyptian art. In the case of deities, the use of human form to represent them did not imply that they “looked like” their pictures. Texts demonstrate that deities were believed not to have any single physical manifestation (e.g., Hornung (1982 [1971]), 100–142). Rather, they inhabited visible shapes, including statues, and those shapes displayed a domain of exchange between humanity and the gods. Cult statues also acted as a prime locus for human–divine contact. The ultimate form of deities could not be known.

At the ideological core of the system of two-dimensional representation and associated iconography was temple relief. This shows deities and the king interacting to mutual benefit in a context that is at once abstract—mostly lacking specific markers of place—and cosmographic: each scene or group of scenes represents an idealized cosmos. The king is human, but his assumption of a divine role enables him, unlike other humans, to be depicted with the gods and to act as the protagonist of the human world in relation to the divine realm. However, this convention weakened from the late Middle Kingdom onward for all contexts except temple relief, so that people and gods were increasingly included within a single scene. Depictions of the king with gods had no close correlate in the living world, not even in temples, because the cult was performed by priests rather than the king. Priests are shown only in special contexts, notably in scenes where cult images of deities are taken out in procession while remaining shrouded inside shrines. Scenes in temples thus present an analogy for the cult, not a direct representation. Moreover, cult images themselves, which were only seldom depicted, seem to have been very diverse in form and did not necessarily conform to general norms of representation.

If temple relief, as the central and most prestigious context of representation, mostly shows activities that did not happen in the way in which they are depicted, one should be cautious about taking other pictorial subjects as realistic in any simple sense. There is a tension between the center, with its restricted range of forms that are constrained by decorum, and modes used in other contexts. From non-royal monuments to more ephemeral decoration and live performance and practice, the pleasure of visual forms was experienced by human beings more than by the gods. Those who commissioned the works had an evident desire to create beautiful environments, both for the gods and for themselves.

A central unifying feature across many visual contexts is the rendering of the human form with near-natural proportions, which gives a characteristic appearance to Egyptian pictorial art as a whole. The proportions and scale of human figures also form a basis for multi-register compositions. This treatment and focus set Egyptian art apart from the traditions of some early civilizations, such as that of Bronze Age China, which maintained an almost entirely non-representational character for over a millennium. Modern, particularly modernist, art critics such as Henriette Groenewegen-Frankfort (1951) tended

to favor traditions with more strongly abstract decorative tendencies or focused on traditions that more overtly dramatize their subject matter. Approaches like these led to negative evaluations of Egyptian decorative art in particular. Such evaluations are irrelevant to the ancient context, not least because they make no attempt to comprehend the roles of representation and decoration in that context. Egyptian art conveys many meanings through pictorial representation, from the relatively literal to the strongly symbolic, iconographic, and indirect. In most contexts pictorial forms carried a higher value than pattern-based ones, and pictures were more prestigious than writing (e.g. Baines (1999), 34–35), even though the two were designed to operate together through the pictorial character of hieroglyphic signs. In tomb and temple decoration, pictorial compositions occupy the main wall surfaces, while more strongly patterned designs that make less use of the human figure and more use of extensive texts, typically appear in peripheral areas.

As in many traditions, the mimetic side of Egyptian representation, which can be strongly virtuosic, for example in the rendering of skin and flesh in relief (Figure 1.1), could have a value in itself, and one that can be contrasted with others, such as delight in the evocation of shapes and textures in painting through just a few brushstrokes (many detailed examples in Mekhitarian 1954). Mimesis is intrinsically difficult, and mastery of it in two and three dimensions was prestigious. Displays of mastery include departures from standard types in the rendering of genre figures in the finest Old Kingdom tombs, such as that of Ti (Epron, Daumas, and Wild 1939–1966) and the differentiation of facial types in statuary, notably of late Dynasties 12 and 18 and the Late Period. A comparable phenomenon in a different context is the proliferation of detail and inventive composition in the depiction of offerings, a motif ubiquitous both in temples and on non-royal monuments (Robins 1998). In the deployment of detail, rich surface textures can complement and compete with mimetic aspects, constituting a stylistic tendency that is evident, for example, in the Theban late Dynasty 11 (e.g., Bisson de la Roque 1937), in reliefs in Theban tombs like that of Ramose (e.g., Lange and Hirmer (1968), pls. 172–178), and in temples of the Greco-Roman period (such as some areas at Kom Ombo, not published in photographs).

One subject of works of art is the making of art. Scenes or texts on monuments from many periods show the production and transport of works of statuary, architecture, jewellery, and tomb equipment, as well as the creation of relief and painting, though this was less easily depicted. First-millennium examples include additional motifs, such as the manufacture of perfumes (e.g., Aldred et al. (1980), 83, fig. 64), which formed part of the aesthetic and performance-oriented environment. Depictions of gardens and ordered settings for funerals and festivals are also renderings of art within art.

In texts and images, the engineering side of artistic production can hardly be separated from more obviously aesthetic concerns, but the former predominates in descriptive texts. Amenhotep III's namesake, Amenhotep Son of Hapu, oversaw the transport of the enormous quartzite Memnon Colossi to the king's mortuary temple and commemorated his achievement in the inscriptions on several of his own statues (Helck (1958), pp. 1822–1823, 1833). One should not, however, conclude that size was the principal criterion of achievement. Perhaps the engineering was more prominent than aesthetics because it was more exceptional (although only one text focuses explicitly on the statues' dimensions); works of more ordinary scale were made all the time. The colossal statues engaged more participants for their installation and were seen by more people. Aesthetic



**Figure 1.1** Standing figure of Kagemni in his tomb at Saqqara, room IV, west wall, Old Kingdom, early Dynasty 6. Photo Paolo Scremin. By kind permission of Paolo Scremin and Yvonne Harpur. © Oxford Expedition to Egypt.

aspects are more difficult to describe compellingly, and it would go without saying that the statues should be as beautiful as possible. The king's reward to Amenhotep was to give him statues of himself to set up in the temple of Amun. These statues, one of which bears a text narrating the statue transport, are noteworthy for their design and execution rather than for their size, being among the premier works of the period (e.g., Varille (1968), pls. iii–iv; Romano (1979), pl. viii, no. 117). Both these and another statue (which was restored in a later period: Lange and Hirmer (1968), pl. 159), revive Middle Kingdom types, displaying the depth of cultural knowledge that was at the disposal of king and elite.

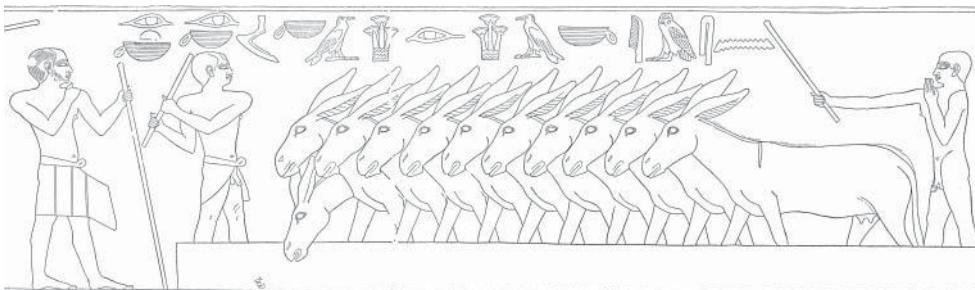
From late Dynasties 18 and 19 come a number of biographical inscriptions of artists, in various media and genres, that testify to their high social standing, and state that they executed commissions across the land (Frood (2007), 117–139). The creation of statues of deities went together with festivals and rituals within temples, integrating artistic skills, the use of rare materials, and religious participation. A different and revealing case is a relief in the tomb of the vizier Paser that shows him visiting the “house of gold,” where a group of sculptors present a statue of the king to the vizier. The statue is to be gilded. In the caption, Paser praises the sculptor and reports on the king’s satisfaction with the work, which is made according to an ancient model (Assmann 1992). The captions include strong religious elements and praise the statue’s quality. The goldsmiths shown in the lower register are said to be making vessels for offering stands, with representational works being made side by side with objects of other types. This is a broad, religiously charged, aesthetic environment in which works in various genres are produced, not a context of craftwork.

The integration of magical power, special knowledge, and skill is evident in the Dynasty 11 stela of the artist Irtisen, which uses florid, often obscure language to describe his accomplishments in pictorial representation, as well as some technical processes, stating that his whole expertise is a matter of initiation and will be passed on exclusively to his eldest son (Barta 1970; Delange 2000). Here, as in many cultures (e.g., Davis 1997), aesthetic concerns and making sacred things explicitly involve status and exclusivity. This may be one reason why few texts mention artistic methods and techniques; another reason may be that such matters are not well conveyed in language or easily coopted for prestige and display. The magical aspect of Irtisen’s knowledge can be associated with the widespread use of pictorial representation in magical and other rites, including the notion that a priest must imagine the form of a statue in order to revivify its owner (Fischer-Elfert 1998).

## Idealization

The interest in rendering real forms (evoked above) aimed not at a narrow realism, but at an idealization. Idealization is common to most artistic traditions: people and things should be shown at their best or their most typical. The latter aim can approach caricature, for example in genre subjects such as the emaciated herdsmen in some Middle Kingdom tombs (Maitland, in preparation). The same person can be represented in more than one ideal form. Men are youthfully perfect in physique in one statue or relief, while they are fatter through success and bureaucratic ease in another, a pairing that is common in Old Kingdom statuary and false-door reliefs (Fischer (1963), 17–22). Women, as in many societies, are rarely shown other than youthful and elegant; details of dress and accoutrements, rather than of physical allure, distinguish the generations of a mother and her adult daughter. Egyptian ideals of male and female form happen to be close to those of today’s west, a coincidence that can cause us to overlook that the manner of depiction is culturally specific. The idealization is made clear by cases where women are depicted in abject circumstances, notably in Old Kingdom tombs showing them nursing babies while attending to other demanding tasks (e.g., Harpur and Scremin (2010), 72–78, 579).

These patterns show that idealization normally correlates with status: the higher someone’s status, the more he or she is idealized. Figures that are not idealized often display



**Figure 1.2** Group of donkeys threshing; one opens its mouth and lowers its head to eat some of the grain. Saqqara, tomb of Ti, chapel, east wall, north section, second register from bottom, Old Kingdom, late Dynasty 5. After Epron, Daumas, and Wild (1939–1966, III pl. clv).

virtuosity in the depiction and differentiation of types or individuals. Late Dynasty 12 statues and some reliefs, in which the king is rendered as haggard with a clearly identifiable physiognomy, fuse virtuosity in rendering with a specific idealization that signifies the caring role of a particular ruler (e.g., Tefnun 1992).

Idealization does not rule out humor and particularity, notably in “scenes of daily life.” Humor is difficult to identify in works from a remote culture, but it is clear in scene captions, especially of the Old Kingdom, and highly probable in many genre details (e.g., Houlihan 2001), as well as in much imaginative literature. Details that enlivened common motifs were appreciated. An example is a donkey in a group threshing grain that bends down to take a mouthful, probably alluding to a general stereotype of donkeys as wayward and greedy (Figure 1.2). Patrons and viewers presumably took delight in such things in this life and wished to do so in the next world as well.

## Enactment

Much of the aesthetic environment was in lived contexts that are now inaccessible. A particularly intense aesthetic organization can be assumed for palaces. Indirect evidence for the functioning of palaces appears notably in Dynasty 5 decoration of the mortuary temple and approach causeway of Sahure (Borchardt et al. 1913; el-Awady 2009; Brinkmann 2010), in the remains of the palace complex of Amenhotep III and related structures at el-Malkata on the Theban West Bank (Koltsida 2007, with refs), and in the tomb of Tutankhamun. The last of these offers illuminating examples.

Tutankhamun’s tomb and its contents present several features that are relevant here. Many pieces had been used, presumably in palace contexts during the king’s life. Significant numbers of furnishings had been altered, notably after the abandonment of the reforms of Akhenaten near the beginning of Tutankhamun’s reign. Among the more fragile objects, several thrones showed signs of previous damage, strongly suggesting that they had not been made for the tomb (Eaton-Krauss 2008). Other objects, such as the small golden shrine (e.g., Robins 2010), had no clear mortuary purpose and again are likely to have been used in life. This is true also of many boxes and garments. The evidence that the plethora of elaborately decorated pieces (many made from rare, costly,

and intractable materials) were used in life shows that the king's surroundings were saturated with artistically complex objects, no doubt organized by his ritualized everyday life and by the choreography of special occasions in which he was the protagonist.

After the king's unexpected death, a small tomb that had not been intended for him was filled with this material. Both images of elaborate elite funerals from the same period (e.g., Lange and Hirmer (1968), pls xxviii–xxix, 171) and a painting in Tutankhamun's burial chamber showing the funerary cortege of the highest officials (e.g., Reeves (1990), 72; Robins 2007) suggest that the transport of material to the tomb would have been a major event, unless such actions were performed in secret for kings.

Within the cramped tomb, those who performed the deposition made a virtue of necessity in the arrangement they created. The process of deposition would have constituted a significant experience for the small numbers of people involved, including the grief felt by some of them. A sense of order and enactment emerges from the placement of objects. Order is evident, for example, in the arrangement of a group of pieces around the small golden shrine, in a corner next to the entrance to the annex (Eaton-Krauss and Graefe 1985, pl. ii), and in the approach to the treasury, which was reached through the sarcophagus chamber and must have been filled before the actual burial. In the treasury itself, a statue of Anubis on a chest acted as a visual guardian, behind which—and thus deposited earlier—was the canopic shrine, toward which led a set of chests ranked by increasing size. Set up behind a gilded statue of a Hathor cow's head, immediately in front of the shrine, were three ceramic offering stands with lids that evoked a completed ritual action (e.g., Reeves (1990), 86–87). The treasury also contained numerous boat models that were placed as high as possible, on top of other objects, perhaps evoking the deceased's emergence from the tomb in the next world and his celestial and terrestrial navigation there.

This deposition, which was influenced by chance factors in the makeshift setting, was accompanied by elaborate procedures that included much wrapping in cloth, making the filling of the tomb a sequence of actions with aesthetic as well as ritual import. The process must have been largely improvised, because the tomb had to be filled by following general principles of design and order rather than an existing pattern. Similar principles presumably operated in lost contexts of ceremonial and elite living.

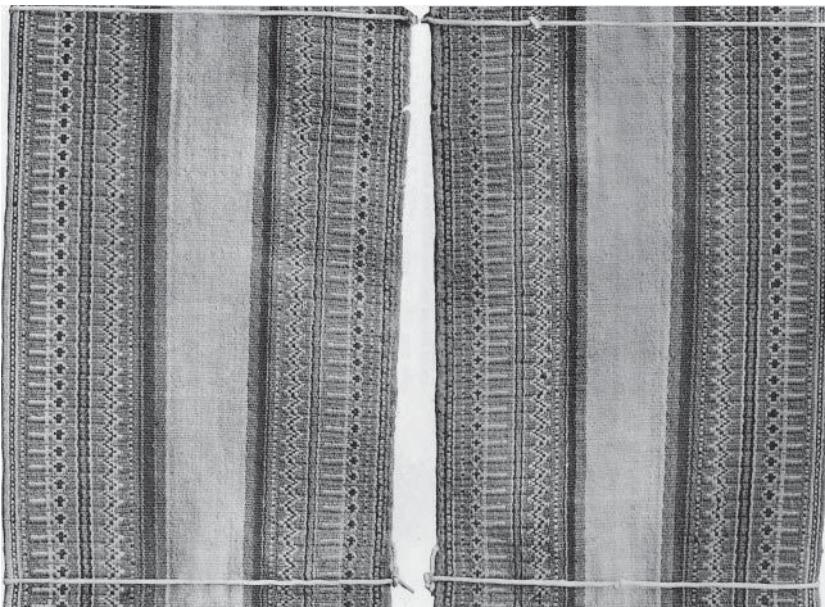
## The Unity of Aesthetic Forms

As already remarked, surviving aesthetically formed materials appear generally consistent in visual terms, a quality that is regularly noted, if not always admiringly, by modern observers. While there is no reason to question the impression of unity (but not uniformity or sameness) in the case of architectural and representational works, it may not have had quite the character that is perceived today, after the near-complete loss of perishable materials and of many pigments. Because the survival of color is at best patchy and much painting of relief was planned but never executed, Egyptian art can seem more focused on outlines and unadorned three-dimensional shapes than was the case in fact. Much complex, enriching detail has disappeared. Here, some western usages in statuary and misconceptions about ancient art, which have privileged plain and monochrome forms from the Renaissance onward, in addition to constraints of reproduction of images,

have tended to draw Egyptian art into the orbit of classical antiquity where, for example, polychromy and use of patterning on statuary have only recently been fully accepted and analyzed (e.g., Brinkmann and Wünsche 2007).

The idea that the Egyptian aesthetic field was largely unified is surely correct, but in many periods its unity was probably much richer and gaudier than can now be appreciated, as glimpsed in the detailing and color of the linen “girdle” of Ramesses III (Figure 1.3), an object that can be compared with rich painted details in the king’s mortuary temple at Medinet Habu. Moreover, the widespread presence of whimsical pieces among smaller object types, such as decorated spoons (Wallert 1967)—whether or not they possessed strong symbolic aspects—or pictorial ostraca (e.g., Minault-Gout 2002), shows that the earnest and literal-minded character often ascribed to Egyptian art does not do justice to its range. These pieces exploit the same visual vocabulary as major works of architecture and representational art, for example by using architectural motifs like the cavetto cornice that scholars tend to see as carrying sacred meanings. Small and ephemeral forms were probably perceived as belonging ultimately in the same aesthetic domain as temple decoration (as discussed above), along with more “serious” works.

A couple of exceptions to this widespread unity are revealing. First, the corpus of amulets and related objects from late Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period burials in the Nile valley includes many types that are not otherwise attested (Dubiel 2008). These pieces, which often show wear and were thus not exclusively funerary, suggest that the aesthetic and apotropaic practices of provincial populations differed, at least in part, from elite norms. Stephan Seidlmayer (2001) has drawn a related conclusion from the configuration of burials of the same general period at Elephantine, in which he observes a



**Figure 1.3** “Girdle” bearing the name of Ramesses III in a hieratic annotation; linen, length ca. 5.2 m. National Museums Liverpool (World Museum). After Van Gennep and Jéquier (1916), pl. 10.

change in the early Middle Kingdom to a mythologized style of interment that was closer to elite types. Second, several widespread types of ceramic figurines of women that seem to have been used in ritual fall outside general representational and stylistic conventions (Pinch (1993), 197–234; Waraksa 2009). These are found in contexts where those conventions otherwise apply, suggesting that they were believed to possess special properties that were inseparable from their form. However, New Kingdom types of these figurines include ones that conform to more standard conventions. This change may show that associated ritual practices declined or that they became more closely embedded in the normative, elite-focused aesthetic culture.

The non-standard amulets and female figurines might be compared with the “preformal” provincial culture, which Barry Kemp proposes characterized shrines and offerings deposited in them in the third millennium before being gradually superseded by more standardized forms in the Middle Kingdom (Kemp (1989), 65–83; (2006), 112–135; see also Bussmann 2010). These two sets of phenomena, however, belonged in different periods. Moreover, the figurines were situated, perhaps a little uncomfortably, within the dominant aesthetic as “folk” phenomena. Such phenomena, particularly ones relating to healing, are accorded a special position in many high cultures.

Artifacts or artifact types that fall outside general conventions are much rarer from the first millennium BCE than from the foregoing periods. Unlike the distinct but clearly Egyptian forms of the earlier figurines, Late Period objects that are neither Egyptian nor Greek in character emulate Egyptian style, as with an aberrant statuette of Osiris, perhaps of the fourth century BCE, found at Saqqara (Emery (1970), pl. viii, 1–2). It seems that indigenous visual culture became more uniform in later Egypt, surviving for many centuries in the face of the modes associated with Ptolemaic and Roman rulers and elites. This increased uniformity, during a time when the country was often politically fragmented, as well as being largely under foreign rule in the latter stages, is a measure of the power and significance of Egyptian forms. Those forms continued to develop and to relate in creative ways to their own past, as well as exerting enormous influence in the Near East and in the Greco-Roman world.

## Change and Tradition

Significant, aesthetically meaningful works result from choices made by patrons, designers, and executants. Although some categories of artifacts, such as block statues of the first millennium BCE, can seem rather stereotyped, little material with any aesthetic pretension that survives from Egyptian antiquity is mass-produced. Even when a manuscript of the Book of the Dead was created and the name of its recipient either left blank or filled in later, the choice of vignettes and layout was not strongly standardized (e.g., Taylor (2010), nos. 149, 155). Exercise of choice requires that the actors engage with existing tradition, in which the immediate past is the necessary context of training for future personnel (compare e.g., Bagley (2008), 118–119).

The principal arena of change is among elite social groups, and the elite’s desire to display difference in what they commissioned is evident in the patterning of the record. Emulation and competition should be posited as central to the processes of change. Difference is also essential to aesthetic response: it attracts attention because human

perception is focused by what is not uniform. The fact that pressures toward change and difference are seldom explicit in written sources does not mean that they were absent.

Complex responses to the past, as well as interest in recovering remote and damaged materials from it, are evident from many periods. Two early instances are revealing. The Hierakonpolis Main Deposit, a vast body of prestige objects in a range of materials that varied in age by some centuries, was buried at an unknown date perhaps during Dynasty 1 (McNamara 2008, with refs). Most of the object types found there have no close parallel from later periods perhaps, in part, through chances of preservation but also because ritual and aesthetic practices changed. Around two centuries later, tens of thousands of stone vessels of Dynasties 1 and 2 were interred in galleries under the early Dynasty 3 Step Pyramid of Djoser. At that point, such vessels, in many different stones, ceased to be a major aesthetic genre. Since many pieces were inscribed with royal and religious information (e.g., Roth (1991), 145–195), this deposition too probably signaled change in ritual practice. The superseded objects were buried in a sacred place rather than being discarded. Acts like these, perhaps more than coincidentally, sometimes laid the ground for later revivals as people returned over long periods to important sites, on occasion excavating ancient structures (e.g., Baines and Riggs 2001).

Interplay between the recent past and more remote times imparts patterns to aesthetic choices, in addition to increasing aesthetic options. It is meaningful to choose a past period as a stylistic or iconographic source, and for a cultured audience the choice between models from different periods in the past is also significant. Scholars often interpret such choices in political or ideological terms, and that must be at least partly valid. The early Dynasty 12 emulation of late Old Kingdom monuments and styles made valuable rhetorical points at a crucial historical juncture, displaying specific artistic and ideological values (Silverman, Simpson, and Wegner 2009). By contrast, the eighth-century BCE introduction of a plain, archaizing style in statuary and relief cannot be linked as neatly to historical events, because it began a generation or two before wider political changes (Leahy 1992). In such a case, the development of taste is probably a crucial factor. Taste, or the predilection for particular styles and techniques within a social group (perhaps led by a small number of individuals), should always be accorded a significant role in aesthetic developments. Taste can be influenced, positively or negatively, by anything that patrons or artists have seen. From the New Kingdom, some types of luxury materials have a similar character across the whole Near East (see Feldman 2005, who slightly overstresses their similarity). Indigenous Egyptian architecture, relief, and painting of the Ptolemaic and Roman periods show a complex interplay of styles (Arnold 1999; Riggs 2005), some of it so subtle that Hellenistic influence was long overlooked (McKenzie (2007), 119–146).

## What Is Distinctively Egyptian?

Egyptian artistic forms constitute a coherent whole. From the late fourth millennium onward, those forms were normative within Egyptian civilization and highly influential beyond. The earliest surviving art that displays a clear influence of developed Egyptian forms may be the relief-decorated incense burners from Cemetery L at Qustul in Lower Nubia, dating to Naqada IIIA (Williams (1986), pls 33–38). The same influence

is pervasive on Syrian and Palestinian seals of the early second millennium (Teissier 1996), a common and durable genre that attests to styles and motifs that were no doubt present in perishable media. Even today, several millennia later, Egyptian influence and Egyptianizing art are familiar in many genres (e.g., Humbert and Price 2003). People see Egyptian art as both distinctive and attractive.

What is it about the art that is so distinctive and appealing? The large Egyptian investment in aesthetic matters can be paralleled in many cultures and so cannot be the answer. It is the clarity and consistency of Egyptian forms, as well as the sense of order that they impart, that communicate so effectively and appeal to so many people. Fundamental among these forms are the treatment of the human body, the use of registers, and the norms of proportion that contribute to lucid pictorial compositions (Robins 1994). Dense and complex scenes adhere to the same principles as open and simple ones: they are read and convey their meaning against the same background of clarity and order. Exceptions, such as cases where (often with symbolic or humorous intent) tall elements break out of registers or borderlines are crossed (e.g., Figure 1.1), show that the principles of art were consciously understood and could be adroitly manipulated.

Whatever may have been the stimuli that originally drew Egyptian art to develop in the direction it did, its role at the core of the aesthetic system in temple relief and its cosmological mission gave deep significance to its distinctive character. Aesthetic matters were central to the Egyptian definition of order. That order was anything but static: the art of the Late Period was fundamentally different in appearance from that of Early Dynastic times. Rulers and elites who inaugurated new periods of history evoked earlier times in the artistic changes that they commissioned, creating something like a cycle of stylistic and thematic configurations that drew upon older forms, while developing them further and incorporating new developments. These configurations remained valid into the Roman period, when traditional Egyptian temple construction and elite burial practices were actively maintained for centuries after the country had ceased to be a self-standing political and cultural entity (e.g., Riggs 2005).

Aesthetic concerns are of paramount importance both for human beings and for their societies. For Egypt as for any other archaeologically recovered culture, in order to grasp the significance that such concerns had it is necessary to take into account all of society, including the gods and the dead, and to imagine features of the aesthetic environment that cannot be recovered from the material record. The greater the range of contexts and aesthetic forms that is taken into account, even on the basis of very limited survival or indirect hints, the better we can situate and understand those genres for which evidence is abundant.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

In this chapter I develop approaches presented in Baines (2007b [1994]), which focuses on “major” genres, and, in the brief contextualization in Baines (2007a), extends the argument to general aesthetic practice, including ephemeral forms (Baines in preparation) and arts of performance (Baines 2006). My treatment is in dialogue with the tentative, text-focused argument of Junge (1990). Questions relevant to my approach are implicit in some studies of Egyptian art, but I know of little Egyptological discussion. A classic survey of related issues, encompassing many genres, is Schäfer (1986 [1974], 9–68, first published 1930). A broad presentation with much useful

analysis is Kemp (2006) 111–160, who treats mainly earlier periods and architecture. Here are cited a few examples: many are illustrated elsewhere in the present volume.

Domains of material evidence that are particularly relevant include textiles (e.g., Van Gennep and Jéquier 1916; Vogelsang-Eastwood 1993; Donadoni Roveri 2001), faience (Friedman 1998), and metalwork, of which two premier examples from the Old Kingdom and one of mixed date are treated in Eckmann and Shafik (2005). For a type of metal vessel known primarily from pictorial sources, see Schäfer (1903); for surviving vessels with different forms, see Radwan (1983). Implications of luxury media for the ancient Near East including Egypt, are discussed by Feldman (2005). Smith (1965) presents relevant material and arguments for thinking about aesthetic environments and the context of the East Mediterranean region as a whole.

A valuable set of essays on classical antiquity, focused primarily on art history and standard genres of sculpture and pictorial representation, is Platt and Squire (2010). Works that explore wider artistic environments for Renaissance Europe and offer suggestive analogies for the Egyptian case include Nash (2008) and, for luxury arts, Belozerskaya (2005). Aspects relating to performance and the creation and curation of works are covered by Howarth (1997). These examples can doubtless be paralleled in many cultures and periods; Coote and Shelton (1992) present a range of studies from ethnographic contexts. Riggs (2010) discusses the presentation of ancient Egypt in museums, a powerful locus of reception that intersects with definitions of art.

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## PART I

# Methodological Approaches

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## CHAPTER 2

# Historiography of Ancient Egyptian Art

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*Diane Bergman*

Egyptian art has not always been an obvious concept. The look of Egyptian antiquities is noticeably out of step with Classical antiquities and thus with the art of the Renaissance inspired by them. A cursory glance at 3,000 years' worth of examples of the Pharaonic period might cause one to draw the conclusion that no artistic progress had been made in all that time. The Greeks, in contrast, learned from the Egyptians and progressed to classical perfection in just a few hundred years. In fact, there is evidence that Plato, one of Greece's greatest thinkers and commentators on the classical Greek opinion of "perfection," knew and admired Egyptian art (Davis 1979).

The history of Egyptian art can only begin to be discerned by close examination of many examples. European Renaissance and later scholars and artists were influenced by the classical antiquities that were visible, and were recovered from as early as the sixteenth century in Rome (Christian (2010), 265). The same kind of access to Egyptian artifacts would be necessary before the history of Egyptian art could begin to be written. In fact, among those antiquities found in Rome were both Egyptian antiquities—many of which had been brought to the center of the Roman Empire by the emperors—and Egyptianizing objects created in Rome. In the late fifteenth century, the Carmelite scholar Michele Fabrizio Ferrarini made accurate copies of the hieroglyphs inscribed on monuments visible in Rome (Curran 2007). The most obvious of such antiquities were the obelisks which attracted the attention of the seventeenth-century Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher (Kircher 1650). He was mainly interested in the texts on the obelisks, and understood them to be Egyptian. The artist and architect Giovanni Battista Piranesi displayed a keen interest in Egyptian forms in his designs that may be considered the beginning of the Egyptian revival (Pevsner 1968 and Piranesi 1769).

The recognition of these antiquities as objects of art and their analysis as such began with Johann Joachim Winckelmann. He is the father of the art historical discipline focusing on works produced by then lost cultures. His massively influential work, *Geschichte*

*der Kunst des Alterthums*, first published in 1764 (Winckelmann 1764 and 2006), deals with Egyptian antiquities as art. It is clear from the beginning of his chapter on pre-Greek art that he was neither sympathetic toward the Egyptians nor their art. He did understand that art produced in Egypt had its own context, but he did not have adequate knowledge of that context because he never saw enough examples (Grimm and Schoske 2005) to be able to make a reasoned assessment and, since the Egyptian language had not yet been deciphered, he could not begin to understand the context.

The first great publication of Egyptian antiquities was the *Description de l'Égypte* (Commission des sciences et arts d'Égypte 1809–1828), composed by the scholars and artists who accompanied Napoleon on his military expedition to Egypt between 1798 and 1801. Images of Egyptian antiquities were carefully drafted, published, and disseminated. This was followed a few decades later by the publications of the joint French–Tuscan expedition (1828–1829) led by Jean-François Champollion (1844–1889) and Ippolito Rosellini (1832–1844), and the Prussian expedition (1842–1845) led by Richard Lepsius (Lepsius 1849–1856). Now for the first time, large corpora of reproductions of Egyptian antiquities were available to be studied, while, at the same time, actual objects were flooding into Europe largely as a result of these expeditions. In addition, as the Egyptian language had now been deciphered (Champollion 1822), texts were being translated, allowing the context in which the art was created to be understood.

The second half of the nineteenth century was devoted to increasing the knowledge of the Egyptian language and relating the information found in texts to the antiquities that were being discovered, published, and exhibited. Knowledge of the language is particularly crucial for Egyptian art because a large proportion of objects, including buildings, are inscribed. Publications on ancient art, like those of classical archaeologists Georges Perrot and Charles Chipiez (Perrot and Chipiez 1882 and 1883), examined ancient Egyptian art through their appreciation and admiration of the classical world. Perrot and Chipiez did have the capacity to examine Egyptian art on its own, and thus noticed its artistic development in a section entitled “Change observable in Egyptian art: that Egyptian art did not escape the law of change and that its history may therefore be written” (Perrot and Chipiez (1883), 70–89), a phenomenon not obvious to everyone at the time. They affirm explicitly that many examples must be examined before art history can be attempted. At its publication, Egyptologist Georg Ebers stated that Perrot and Chipiez treated Egyptian art as it had never been treated (Perrot and Chipiez (1883), v). Publications like these promoted the process of data gathering that was necessary to discern patterns of style and technique.

Achille Constant T.É. Prisse d'Avennes began his study of Egyptian art in the first half of the nineteenth century but avoided the Hellenocentric approach found in the work of others. His focus was firmly on Egypt. He was a talented draftsman and artist who spent many years in Egypt recording antiquities. His *Monuments égyptiens, bas-reliefs, peintures, inscriptions, etc.* (Prisse d'Avennes 1847) consciously continues the work of Champollion (Champollion 1844–1889). Prisse d'Avennes, like Lepsius, illustrated and discussed Amarna art from Thebes, the beginning of the long process of understanding this unique episode of Egyptian art. Thirty years later, Prisse d'Avennes published arguably the first true history of Egyptian art (Prisse d'Avennes 1878–1879). The text begins with a relatively short historical introduction followed by in depth artistic discussions on topics like the canon and proportion, accompanied by two volumes of excellent quality illustrations of art and architecture.

Similar work of focusing on Egypt was being conducted by the German scholar Adolf Erman. His *Ägypten und ägyptisches Leben im Altertum* (Erman 1885 and 1894) devotes a chapter to representational art, but the observations still want for a larger number of examples from which to draw conclusions. This work was augmented with photographs and published in a second edition by Hermann Ranke in 1923 (Erman 1923). There is a noticeable change in the method displayed in the work of Friedrich Wilhelm von Bissing. His publication on sculpture (Bissing 1914), and his survey of Egyptian art history (Bissing 1934–1938) display a highly systematic approach. The illustrations are good quality photographs that are described in detail with references, and analyzed with several indexes.

Ludwig Borchardt, a student of Erman, was a major contributor to the field of Egyptian architecture in the first third of the twentieth century. He studied all types of Egyptian architecture; royal, religious, mortuary, and domestic. His interest in the domestic architecture of Amarna led him to excavate the sculptor's studio, where the models of the royal family, including the famous head of Queen Nefertiti, were uncovered. They now form the core of the Amarna collection of the Neues Museum in Berlin. He published the first volume of *Beiträge zur ägyptischen Bauforschung und Altertumskunde* (Borchardt 1926) thus establishing a major and continuing series for the evaluation of Egyptian architecture.

The study of Egyptian architecture is particularly woven into the totality of Egyptian art because of the integration of architecture, relief/painting, statuary, and text. Borchardt's work was continued by Herbert Ricke in what was to become the Schweizerisches Institut für Ägyptische Bauforschung und Altertumskunde in Kairo. He continued to edit and publish in the *Beiträge zur ägyptischen Bauforschung und Altertumskunde* (Ricke 1944). The archaeologist Gustave Jéquier focused on the decorations found in Egyptian buildings, providing beautiful examples in his publications, some in color (Jéquier 1911 and 1920–1924). George Andrew Reisner, who had been actively excavating on the Giza plateau, not only published the magnificent sculpture excavated by his team, but carefully described the context within the buildings where they were found (Reisner 1931). The Egyptian architect and Egyptologist, Alexandre Badawy, began his career in Egypt where he published *Le dessin architectural chez les anciens Égyptiens* (Badawy 1948). He moved to the United States in 1957, where he completed the publication of his three-volume history of Egyptian architecture (Badawy 1954–1968). Dieter Arnold established himself as a scholar of architecture with the publication of *Wandrelief und Raumfunktion in ägyptischen Tempeln des neuen Reiches* (Arnold 1962). His work within the field of architecture has been wide ranging, from general books on Egyptian architecture (Arnold 1994 and 2009) to the particular study of architectural materials (Arnold 1991), and site specific structures (Arnold 1987). Architectural historians supplement their work on the physical structures with examinations of the significance and meaning of these structures within the context of their creation (e.g., Jánosi 2005).

The study of Egyptian monumental architecture is almost meaningless without the accompanying discipline of epigraphy because of the integral relationship between architecture and decoration including written language. Lepsius is the father of epigraphy, according to Ricardo Caminos in his brief history of the subject (Caminos 1976). The subsequent leader in this method of investigation is the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute Epigraphic Survey (Bell 1987). Its series, *Oriental Institute Publications* (University of Chicago, Oriental Institute 1924–), with subseries of

monuments such as Medinet Habu, documents the results of the work of the teams of epigraphers. The Deutsches Archäologisches Institut is equally committed to the publication of epigraphic material in its series *Archäologische Veröffentlichungen* (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut 1970–). At the time of this writing, the site of Elephantine is documented in thirty-four volumes. Norman de Garis Davies was an individual artist and epigrapher who worked for every major expedition to Egypt during the first half of the twentieth century. His copies of many tombs increase in value because they document monuments that are now damaged or lost (Wilkinson and Hill 1983). Perhaps the greatest contribution of Egyptian Egyptology in the twentieth century has been the work of the Centre de documentation et d'études sur l'ancienne Égypte which is devoted to the recording of inscriptional evidence on monuments and rock inscriptions (Mokhtar 1972).

The finding, gathering, and collecting of Egyptian antiquities has been steadily increasing since the major expeditions of the early nineteenth century. Buildings were cleared, objects were “excavated” and gathered in a number of private collections and museums, mainly in Europe. The largest body of material by far, however, was amassed within the country of origin, but few saw it because for westerners, Egypt was still accessible only to the wealthy.

In Egypt, the objects and monuments were being cared for as never before with the founding of the Antiquities Service in 1858. Its first two directors, Auguste Mariette and Gaston Maspero, were energetic both in their excavations and in setting up the means and mechanisms to preserve and interpret the antiquities. As early as 1835, the Egyptian government set up a museum or, more accurately, a repository for antiquities in the Ezbekiah Gardens in Cairo. Subsequent museums were set up in Bulaq and Giza, but the major depository of Egyptian antiquities in the twentieth century was the Egyptian Museum in central Cairo, opened in 1902. This museum's first major publication (Grébaut 1890–1915) appeared in three volumes between 1890 and 1915 under the direction of Maspero. This is a publication of good quality photographs of superb objects with detailed descriptions, and remains a valuable tool for art historical interpretation.

The first volume of the series *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire* appeared in 1901. Borchardt suggested the idea of this catalog to Maspero, the then director of the Bulaq Museum. Together they established the principles that guide it to this day. The *Catalogue général* is organized by types of material, each object being discussed and illustrated where possible with a good quality photograph. The form and quality of this series is well demonstrated by Borchardt's own publication of sculpture (Borchardt 1911–1936). Although the *Catalogue général* was never intended to be an art historical work, the large amount of related material that it includes greatly facilitates art historical analysis.

Maspero, in addition to his archaeological and administrative accomplishments, contributed directly to the study of art. His *Essais sur l'art égyptien* (Maspero 1912 and 2004 [1913]) is a collection of thirty years' worth of articles published in various periodicals. He recognized the fact that most Egyptologists were absorbed with the study of the language and history, with little mention of the objects. His unique position gave him access to a greater number and variety of objects than anyone else then living. One benefit of this was that he recognized regional differences or schools of Egyptian art.

At the opening of the twentieth century, enough data had been collected and disseminated to make detailed art historical analysis possible. Heinrich Schäfer, director of the Egyptian Museum in Berlin from 1914, where he reorganized and cataloged the collection, wrote the first major analytical study of Egyptian art history in 1919 (Schäfer 1919). This study concentrated on two-dimensional art, specifically painting and relief. He addressed the issues of rendering of nature, and spatial relationships, using classical Greek art as a yardstick with which pre-Greek art was contrasted. He referred to a child's way of drawing as a way to think about how the Egyptian artist represented reality in simple two-dimensional terms without perspective. The fourth edition, published in 1963, contains an essay by Emma Brunner-Traut (Schäfer 1963 and Brunner-Traut 1963) in which she coined the term "Aspektive" in an attempt to explain this (University College London 2002). The Egyptian artist relied upon proportion to represent this life and the afterlife. This important work of Schäfer was rendered more accessible to non-German readers in 1974 with an English translation by John Baines (Schäfer 1974 and 1986).

Schäfer's work, both his *Von ägyptischer Kunst* and his organization of the Berlin Museum, seems to have created a milieu in which categories of Egyptian antiquities became interesting points of departure for study. In addition, the continuing publication of the *Catalogue general*, pointed in this direction. An early example of this is Hans Gerhard Evers' *Staat aus dem Stein* (Evers 1929) in which he studied the history and meaning of stone sculpture in the Middle Kingdom.

Jean Capart, a Belgian contemporary of Heinrich Schäfer, performed similarly valuable works in the Musées Royaux du Cinquantenaire in Brussels. Capart entered its employ in 1900, becoming the Chief Conservator of Egyptian art in 1925. His survey of Egyptian art (Capart 1920 and 1923) contains a chapter on the artistic ideas of the Egyptians, where he described the contexts for which the objects or buildings were created. Perhaps his greatest contribution to disseminating the study and appreciation of Egyptian art was his engagement with America. During the decade after World War I, he traveled around America delivering a series of lectures (Capart 1928) at a time when the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Museum of Fine Art in Boston, and the Oriental Institute in the University of Chicago were vigorously excavating in Egypt and adding to their collections. This was also immediately after the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun so the time was right to focus popular attention on Egyptian art. One of the lectures was entitled "Problems of Egyptian aesthetics" in which he discussed art historical issues directly, including the Egyptian idea of "perspective." These lectures, and his appointment as Honorary Curator of Egyptology at the Brooklyn Museum in 1932, helped to set the art historical tone that would blossom on the East Coast of the United States after World War II.

Unsurprisingly, the outbreak of World War II caused an almost complete interruption of Egyptological activity. Ricke remained in Egypt, where he wrote his *Bemerkungen zur ägyptischen Baukunst des Alten Reichs* (Ricke 1944). In early 1941, before the United States entered the war, the Brooklyn Museum presented a loan exhibition centered on Coptic art (Brooklyn Museum 1941). This was the first time that Coptic art has been the focus of a study in the form of an exhibition. The Brooklyn Museum continued this focus in 1943 with a catalog of its own collection of Coptic art (Cooney 1943), which was possible because John Cooney, the curator, had prepared the manuscript before joining the war effort in England.

Immediately after the war, activity first began in the United States. William Stevenson Smith, who had been Reisner's assistant at the Boston Giza excavations, was able to publish his history of sculpture and painting of the Old Kingdom (Smith 1946 and 1949), which is an excellent complement to Ricke's book on Old Kingdom architecture (Ricke 1944). These works continued the trend of focused study that began with Evers (Evers 1929).

The early 1950s saw new activity among European scholars. Walther Wolf, who had worked with Borchardt in Egypt, examined the essence of Egyptian style in relation to western art as well as the anonymity of the Egyptian artist (Wolf 1951). He followed a few years later with a large-scale history of Egyptian art, in which he analyzed how social and cultural changes also had their effect (Wolf 1957). In 1951, Henriette Antonia Groenewegen-Frankfort devoted one third of her book *Arrest and Movement* (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951 [1972]) to Egyptian art. After expressing her theories on space-time relationships in the art of the ancient Near East in general, she applied them to Egyptian monumental art. In 1955, Erik Iversen published his book on canon and proportion (Iversen 1955 and 1975). The existence of a canon was noticed by early Egyptologists including Lepsius (Lepsius 1871), but Iversen's is the first detailed analysis and explanation. The two editions are somewhat different in all but the conclusion that in the male form, as represented by the Egyptian artist in relief and sculpture in the round, combined objective and constructed proportions to create the characteristic look of Egyptian art. Work on this topic was advanced by Gay Robins with her work on and subsequent full treatment of the canon (Robins and Shute 1985; Robins 1994). Whitney Davis used the term "canonical" to mean a set of formal and iconographic principles used by the Egyptian artist to achieve the correct look of Egyptian images (Davis 1989).

The post-war period also saw the continuation of the desire to organize the data of Egyptian art as an aid to analysis. H.O. Lange and H. Schäfer had given Bodil Hornemann the idea for her *Types of Ancient Egyptian Statuary* (Hornemann 1951–1969), which consists of seven boxes measuring 12 × 20 centimeters containing hand drawn cards, ordering the many forms of Egyptian sculpture into related groupings. This, however, is a purely objective reference work to aid analysis. The first volume of Jacques Vandier's extraordinary *Manuel d'archéologie égyptienne* appeared in 1952 (Vandier 1952–1978). The six volumes are a collection, classification, and evaluation of the whole length and breadth of ancient Egyptian representational art together with other aspects of the material record, in which he often discussed style and technique in keeping with his long career in the Louvre's Egyptian Department.

Museum-based Egyptologists in the United States also increased their activity at this time. Smith expanded his publishing beyond the Old Kingdom in his *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (Smith 1958 and 1998). He discussed the relationship between art and history as well as the influence of other cultures. His 1965 book on interconnections (Smith 1965) was the first major study to examine the spread of artistic style and taste among the cultures of the eastern Mediterranean.

The Brooklyn Museum mounted an exhibition (Brooklyn Museum 1956) of its own recent acquisitions with an accompanying catalog in which all the objects are described and discussed in purely art historical terms. William C. Hayes, of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, wrote *The Scepter of Egypt* (Hayes 1953–1959) to provide background information for its steadily growing Egyptian collection.

The 1960s witnessed the beginning of intercontinental art exhibitions. The first of these, organized by Hans-Wolfgang Müller, was titled *5,000 years of Egyptian art*. It displayed objects from collections in Egypt, and was exhibited in several cities in western Europe, starting in Brussels and ending in London. In each venue, objects from collections in that city supplemented the exhibition and were incorporated in a catalog (Palais des Beaux-Arts 1960 and Royal Academy of Arts 1962). The first major, international, strictly art exhibition was *Egyptian Sculpture of the Late Period* (Brooklyn Museum 1960). This was closely focused, yet comprehensive in its coverage of the topic. The exhibition was created to be a representative sampling of the Corpus of Late Egyptian Sculpture, a photographic archive of every object falling into this category that was started by Bernard V. Bothmer in 1950 and is still being maintained in the Brooklyn Museum.

Five years later, John Cooney, then Curator of Ancient Art at the Cleveland Museum of Art, published the first book (Cooney 1965) in English looking at Amarna relief very closely. The material was almost entirely non-mortuary building blocks, many depicting the royal family. These blocks came from Hermopolis, a site in Middle Egypt close to Amarna, and were originally published by Günther Roeder (Roeder 1959 and 1969). The abandonment of the excavation because of World War II left the blocks vulnerable to theft, and consequently they were discovered scattered around the world after the war. Cooney's gathering of the numerous examples from American collections allowed art historical analysis for the first time. In the same year as the appearance of Cooney's book, an Amarna exhibition was mounted in Hamburg (Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg 1965) with Hermopolis reliefs as its focal point. In Brooklyn, Bothmer recognized the interest level in the art surrounding Akhenaten and Nefertiti and mounted a major exhibition (Aldred 1973) numbering 175 objects. The catalog is an art historical study of the art of the reign of Akhenaten containing essays tackling many of the stylistic and chronological problems attached to this period. Many exhibitions on this topic followed and this period of Egyptian art has continued to attract students, and inspire research on its creation and meaning.

A similar pattern developed at the end of the 1970s with the Brooklyn Museum exhibition *Africa in Antiquity: The Arts of Ancient Nubia and the Sudan* (Wenig 1978). Never before had such a sharp focus been placed upon the distinctive art of Dynasty 25 in Egypt, and of Nubia. Like the Amarna exhibition, the Nubia exhibition's detailed catalog sparked many subsequent studies, as well as temporary and permanent exhibitions. In its last major loan exhibition of the twentieth century, the Brooklyn Museum presented Cleopatra's Egypt (Bianchi 1988). The exhibition and accompanying catalog looked at the art of Cleopatra and her ancestors from the millennia long tradition of Egyptian art, rather than from the closer viewpoint of Hellenistic art. This approach inspired renewed interest in Ptolemaic art as Egyptian art. This continuation of interest in this period had been stimulated by the discoveries made in the harbor of Alexandria (e.g., Goddio 2006 and 2009). The 2012 exhibition in the Musée Jacquemart-André in Paris (Perdu and Meffre 2012) took a fresh look at statuary, from Dynasty 21 through the Ptolemaic Period, fifty years after *Egyptian Sculpture of the Late Period* in Brooklyn.

The reexamination of archaeological sites and monuments is another fruitful means of insight into art historical methods and theories. Richard Parkinson's study of the painted wall fragments from the tomb of Nebamun (Parkinson 2008), now in the British Museum, examines the physical remains, artistic techniques, and subject matter in detail.

Melinda Hartwig's study of the well-known paintings in the tomb chapel of Menna in Thebes uses many art historical methods to understand how the images express the cultural reality of the tomb (Hartwig (2011) 313–326). This is an example of how returning to long-known monuments can yield new results. The Temple of Luxor, a monument that was never entirely hidden from view, yielded in 1989 a valuable collection of statuary buried in a pit in the temple court. This discovery not only added to the corpus of major, well-preserved statues, but it also provides information about the relationship between the temple and these offerings (El-Saghir 1992). Similarly, a cachette of monumental statues was discovered by the University of Geneva's mission to Kerma in the Sudan in 2003. Again, splendid, well-preserved monumental statues of Dynasty 25 kings had been buried in the floor of a temple in Doukki Gel, Kerma (Bonnet 2005).

A characteristic of Egyptian art history at the turn of the twenty-first century is careful reexamination of the data, reevaluation of past research, and fitting new discoveries into the art historical continuum. Current research investigates the communicative power of the image and how the content is influenced by the medium chosen to represent it. Perhaps it is not enough to study the images, but also the relationship between the image and its observer (Verbovsek 2011).

The World Wide Web has enabled and motivated museum collections to open their virtual storerooms to all. The increasing ease of access to the material gives scholars considerably more time and scope for analysis, where in the past data gathering was time-consuming, exhausting, and expensive. Online resources like the *Ancient World Online* (Jones 2009–), ARTstor (2003–), and the *Online Egyptological Bibliography* (2005–) greatly aid the process of research and publication. These electronic media complement printed sources to create a thorough research tool-kit.

Each new generation brings fresh eyes with the capacity for new understanding of what the Egyptians meant when they wrote, and when they depicted their gods, their world, and themselves. The historiography of Egyptian art will never be finished because fresh ideas will never stop emerging.

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## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Winckelmann's treatment of Egyptian art (1764, 2006) is interesting because it is early, but his comments are not sufficiently enlightening for close attention. It is better to start with the scholars of the early nineteenth century like Lepsius (1849–1856 and 1871), Rosellini (1832–1844), Prisse d'Avennes (1847) and Champollion (1844–1889) who turned the full weight of their attention on Egypt by visiting, recording, and publishing the sites, and making observations based on their vast experience with the objects. Then move on to Perrot and Chipiez (1879, 1882 and 1883), and Prisse d'Avennes (1878–1879) near the end of the nineteenth century whose interpretations have benefited from a large body of material, and an understanding of the culture by reading the Egyptian language made possible by Champollion (1822). Schäfer's work (1919, 1922, 1930a, 1930b,

1963, 1974, and 1986) in the early twentieth century produced a detailed analysis of Egyptian art and created a base upon which further perception as well as alternate interpretations could emerge. Publications of object types (Evers 1929, Vandier 1952–1978, and Hornemann 1951–1969) and catalogs of collections (*Catalogue général* 1901 – and Hayes 1953–1959) produced new depths of analysis. Starting in the second half of the twentieth century much can be learned from the assembly of deliberate groupings of objects brought together for major exhibitions (Brooklyn Museum 1960; Cooney 1965; Aldred 1973; Wenig 1978; Bianchi 1988; and Patch 2011). Scholars with a specific expertise devoted their attention to particular aspects of form, material, or context to produce important results with the power to inspire supplementary or complementary research. The twenty-first century has provided the art historian with digital tools (ARTstor 2003–; Jones 2009; *Online Egyptological Bibliography* 2005–) to aid in the collection, interpretation, and presentation of the material.

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## CHAPTER 3

# Style

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### Introduction

The definition of style is one of the most elusive yet fundamental concepts in the study of art. Provisionally described as the “coherence of qualities in periods or people” (Elkins 2012), style is also characterized as “the constant form—and sometimes the constant elements, qualities, and expression—in the art of an individual or group” which is expressed by “communicating and fixing certain values of religious, social, and moral life through the emotional suggestiveness of forms” (Schapiro (1994), 51). To the art historian, style is the central entity of investigation. Style is used as an archival tool to date and place works of art; trace relationships between monuments or objects; measure innovations in art and architecture; and to investigate individual and group techniques. Variations in style can be matched with historical events and cultural changes, just as individual and group styles can reveal phases of development. With this definition in mind, this chapter will explore some of the traditional approaches and new modes of stylistic analysis with the goal of understanding the nature of style in ancient Egyptian art.

### Early Studies

What was the early notion of the ancient Egyptian style in art? We begin with Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768) whose ideas were largely informed by Greco-Roman sculpture and classical authors (Winckelmann 1764 [1966]). He characterized Egyptian art in three phases: “In the first class of the art of the Egyptians are to be remembered two different styles; the older one and the following; and thirdly are found imitations of Egyptian works ... The older style had probably lasted

until the conquest of Cambyses, and subsequent and later is from the time of the Persians and afterwards the Greek administration over Egypt ...” (Kunze (2005), 123). His three-stage model of development of Egyptian art was also followed by a brief description of the characteristics of Egyptian society, climate, religion, and cult as well the role of the artist. Winckelmann noted that Egyptian artists were, in fact, craftsmen who were not allowed to “venture into the heights of art” because their culture placed little value in producing something innovative (Winckelmann (2006), 128–158). In essence, Winckelmann’s stylistic assessment of Egyptian art was biased by his adherence to the superiority of the classical artistic tradition. For generations, Winckelmann’s ideas about Egyptian art held: as an aesthetician and theoretician, he made it clear that although Egyptian art was an ideal created according to fixed rules, it was not truly beautiful.

Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1770–1831) established that each historical period had its own period style, its *zeitgeist* (spirit of a time or age) that could be assembled into an evolutionary sequence toward an ideal. He divided these stylistic periods into three main stages that he termed “Symbolic, Classical, and Romantic.” Hegel found ancient Egyptian sculpture static and rigid, and situated the style of Egyptian art within the Symbolic stage, defined in terms of what was hidden, internal and immortal, that ultimately pointed to the realm of the dead (Gethmann-Siefert and Collenberg-Plotnikov (2004), 85–86; Lampert 1995; Houlgate 2010). Alois Riegl (1858–1905) in *Stilfragen* (1893 [1923]) and *Die spätrömische Kunstdustrie* (1901 [1927]) described two fundamentally opposed phenomenological dualities in art: the “haptic” or tactile, and the “optic” or painterly/impressionistic. He used the art of ancient Egypt as his paradigm for the “haptic” ideal at the beginning of a continuum based on the vision of the object and its components as tangible and distinct. Building on Riegl’s binary opposition and Hegel’s notion of *zeitgeist*, Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945) argued that period style represented cultural mentality, and summarized this in terms of Renaissance and Baroque art. He said: “To explain a style then can mean nothing other than to place it in its general historical context and to verify that it speaks in harmony with the other organs of its age” (Wölfflin (1964), 79). Wölfflin (1915, 1932) devised five essential characteristics of each style and described them in pairs of polar terms (linear–painterly, plane–recession, closed–open, multiplicity–unity, clearness–unclearness) that he believed defined characteristics in the evolution from Renaissance to Baroque art. Inherent in Wölfflin’s work was the implication that a relationship existed between style and content where form pointed to meaning. This led art historians such as Erwin Panofsky to realize the need to begin with formal analysis in order to enter a larger interpretive framework that also included iconography, iconology, semiotic and hermeneutic methods of interpretation (see Angenot, this volume).

Following the stylistic polarities of Wölfflin, Max Wegner (1933) made one of the first forays into characterizing stylistic development in the realm of New Kingdom Theban tomb painting, which he divided into three stylistic periods—Early/Archaic, Mature/Classic, and Late/Baroque—and noted the following stylistic characteristics:

EARLY Hatshepsut–TIII	MIDDLE AII–TIV	LATE AIII–Aye
<i>Early/Archaic</i>	<i>Mature/Classic</i>	<i>Late/Baroque</i>
Linear	Plastic	Painterly
Flat	Anatomy	Volume
Variety	Balance	Unity
Plentiful	Obvious	Essential
Enumeration	Tension	Subordination
Narrative	Organized	Descriptive
Calm	Lively	Agitated
Simple	Stately	Dramatic
Worldly	Human	Transcendent
Sensuous	Ethical	Passionate
Vitality	Humanity	Sentimentality
Will	Feeling	Attentiveness
Realistic	Idealistic	Naturalistic

Wegner's study made an important contribution to the study of painting, particularly by creating a framework with which to date uninscribed painted tombs (Hartwig 2011). However, his adherence to the methods of Wölfflin brought with it the problems of that approach. Wölfflin looked for the central qualities in a period of style and anchored them in a Hegelian evolutionary sequence. His systematic unity with a beginning, a middle, and an end locked artistic development into an unnatural evolutionary system where if classical characteristics come first, baroque traits will always follow. Wölfflin also ignores the intermediate characteristics associated with Mannerism. Likewise, the logic is circular: a baroque painting looks the way it does because it is baroque. It has also been proven that this "evolutionary" sequence can, in fact, be reversed (Elkins (1988), 369).

## Formalistic Analysis

Formalistic analysis (analysis of forms), also called connoisseurship, remains one of the central methods used by Egyptologists to describe and categorize the style of an individual, group, or even a period. In Egyptian art, works of art dated by cartouche or findspot are compared to uninscribed works, or objects whose only provenance are the private collections that previously owned them. Formal analysis is also used to measure innovation and trace relationships between monuments or objects, often grouping them to gauge a king's style, or even a period style. Given the wide range of studies that use formal criteria in their analyses, only a few examples can be mentioned here.

The inventor of connoisseurship, Giovanni Morelli (1816–1891), used a hierarchy of anatomical details and techniques to attribute Italian painting to an artist or school (Morelli 1892). His method established a typology of all observable stylistic details and then observed repeated patterns that corresponded to habitual techniques that could be

associated with a workshop or individual artist. Specifically, he gauged figural poses and movement, color, folds of drapery, and most importantly, anatomical details (e.g., hands and ears). J.D. Beazley and Gisella Richter adapted his method for the attributions of Greek vases (Kurtz 1985) and were followed by a host of art historians specializing in Egyptian art with each contributing their own distinctive methodological twist.

Arielle Kozloff (1991; Kozloff and Bryan 1992) used the Morellian method to identify the style of anonymous artists who created Theban tomb paintings. To Morelli's criteria, she added the linear and proportional characteristics (draftsmanship) of the forms due to the Egyptian painting's dependence on the outline (see also Shedid (1988), 89–90; Mekhitarian 1956). Although not specifically stated, the use of connoisseurship led George Andrew Reisner to identify the "severe" style of Sculptor A who crafted the larger statues of the Dynasty 4 pharaoh Khafre, and the softer style of Sculptor B who completed the statuary of his successor Menkaure (Reisner (1931), 127–129; see Figure 27.4 in Gånsicke, this volume). William Stevenson Smith enlarged Reisner's stylistic assessment by noting Sculptor A worked in a "fine tradition which extended back into the great workshops of the reign of Khufu and probably also of Sneferu ... while a new spirit of naturalism coupled with more plastic modeling made itself felt both in the works assigned to Sculptor B" to which he assigned the bust of Ankhaf (see Figure 20.6 in Bryan, this volume), the two large heads of Djedefre (Smith (1949) 39, pls. 11a, b, and c). A number of studies detail the artistic style of the Amarna sculptor Thutmose, in whose villa was found a group of extraordinary and stylistically cohesive images that could only be the product of one artist (Valbelle (1997), 56–58). In particular, the plaster casts found there reflect an early stage of the creative process, one of which bears a striking resemblance to the famous Nefertiti bust now located in the Berlin Museum (Arnold (1996), 41–52).

William Stevenson Smith (1907–1969) devoted the last chapter in his encyclopedic *History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom* to named and anonymous craftsmen (Smith (1949), 351–365). His technique of analysis is as follows:

... with a chronology based upon historical evidence and upon the succession of tomb types and the development of archaeological groups, it is possible to complete this evidence usefully by the observation of stylistic changes in sculpture and painting. Once the general style of a period is established upon definite groups it is possible to examine the individual variations that occur in each period, and in a few rare instances to note the influence which has been asserted by an artist of special ability. (Smith (1949), 365)

Stylistically, Smith relied on formalist criteria such as workmanship, forms, postures, linear characteristics, and patterning, among other things, to identify the work of individual sculptors. Smith's connoisseurship method quoted above continues to be the preferred method of assessing an artist's style in two-dimensional works.

Most of what we know about artists is procedural: their skill in wielding a brush and knowing how to draw a figure, as is stated in the often-cited Stela of Irtisen (Barta 1970). This limitation is coupled with the organization of artists who worked in teams to complete statues, paintings, and reliefs, and who worked for the state that provided them with their tools and standard of living. Rarely are works signed, making it difficult to pinpoint the style of an individual artist (Ware 1926–1927). However, it may be possible to identify an artist through his final line work in a painting (Leterme and Hartwig

2013), through supplementary paleographic and visual comparanda of a known artist (Keller 2001), or in a context where it is clear one artist was responsible for the work of art. The conventional forms in Egyptian art restricted an artist's style; however, the maker's style does reveal itself in the material aspects of the work and in the smaller, less important figures and vignettes.

Scholars have joined formalist analysis with the procedural aspects of making paintings to identify a specific artist's traits and work process. Betsy Bryan (2001) combined the technical aspects of painting (numbers of pigments mixed, how long the binder would last, how many artisans can work comfortably in a room, etc.) with the visual examination of the wall paintings to divide the walls in the tomb chapel of Suemniwet (TT 92) into a number of work zones. Another series of studies examined the application sequence of the paintings, stage by stage, from the preparation of the walls to the completion of the final coatings and joined that with the visual analysis of artistic techniques with the goal of elucidating the "hands" of the artist (Leterme, Hartwig, and Vandenabeele 2009; Leterme and Hartwig 2013). Another deeper examination looks at painting from the viewpoint of the artist—his materials, gestures, techniques, and the technical conditions under which he worked (lighting, spacial organization, and individual work methods) to identify his individual style (Laboury 2010).

When monuments are undated, qualities and elements of form are used to date and assign works of art. Nadine Cherpion (1987) examined and identified particular details such as wigs and facial details to date Dynasty 18 painting. For Old Kingdom relief, she examines motifs such as the chair, the offering table, clothing and accessories, the design of false doors, and other details such as the shapes of cartouches, scribal palettes, etc. (Cherpion 1998). Yvonne Harpur (1985) applied criteria such as the quality of relief, style, paleography, and her extensive knowledge of scene positions and the orientation of figures (Harpur 1987) to identify and position unprovenanced Old Kingdom relief fragments found in either in museums or private collections. In addition, many single monument (i.e., tomb) and museum publications make use of formalistic criteria to situate relief, painting, and other works of art within a chronological framework with varying results (see discussion below).

When it comes to sculpture, a little known book by Hans Gerhard Evers, *Staat aus dem Stein: Geschichte und Bedeutung der ägyptischen Plastik während des mittleren Reiches* (1929) (literally, *State out of Stone: History and Meaning of Egyptian Sculpture during the Middle Kingdom*) influenced a whole generation of art historians with his analytical connoisseurship. Evers defined and anatomically described different portions of the face and body, as well as details of the clothing and attributes of the Middle Kingdom figures. Cyril Aldred (1973), Bernard V. Bothmer (1960), and Hans Wolfgang Müller built on Evers's connoisseurship and added, for example, the size and shape of the back pillar, the type of form (e.g., seated or standing statue), the rendered body parts (e.g., bipartition or tripartition of the male torso), and facial features (e.g., plastic or sculpted eyebrows), along with the historical meaning of the work and its chronological placement. This stylistic method continues to be followed today in museum catalogues and specific sculptural studies on Egyptian art.

It was with Jacques Vandier's encyclopedic *Manuel d'archéologie égyptienne* (1952–1978) that the entire span of Egyptian art and architecture was put into chronological order and examined. A masterpiece of formalistic analysis, these volumes are densely

packed with information about specific artistic and architectural styles and their development from the Neolithic to New Kingdom. For example, the statuary of Senwosret III from Karnak, Medamud, Deir el-Bahri, Ehnasya, Abydos, Hierakonpolis and Nubia, have the same basic traits, but the small variations between them are explained by Vandier as products of provincial sculptors who were working off a mold or cast from the pharaoh's official portrait which was done by his chief sculptor (Vandier (1958), 194). However, this is not without some controversy due to a later study that noted that differentiation into stylistic groups is impossible for the statuary of Senwosret III (Polz 1995).

In exhibition catalogs, connoisseurship continues to be a popular method to analyze, date, and place works of art. The power of this method lies in the application of a rigorous methodology to a corpus of inscribed works of art found in well-documented dated contexts. Using this core group, differences and similarities of dress, facial characteristics, paleography, posture, proportion, and technique are assessed, which are then used to assess undated works of art. Sometimes works slip through the cracks, especially in the case of archaizing or archaic characteristics that are hard to pin down, particularly in the sculpture of the Late Period. Exhibition catalogs and monographs on the development of statues, painting, and relief often use rigorous methods of analysis, but in their summation, devolve into characterizing a style as "realistic" or "naturalistic"—terms coined in the nineteenth century CE. In his manifesto on the subject of realism, Gustave Courbet wrote that it could "only consist of the representation of *real and existing things*," and was, essentially, "the negation of the ideal" (Rubin 2013). And the term naturalism, in its broadest sense, implies a style in which the artist observes and faithfully records the actual subject before him without deliberate idealization or stylization (Needham 2013). In the ancient Egyptian language, the noun used to describe statues, relief and paintings is *tut*, meaning "likeness" and "to complete or perfect." Yet, in Egyptological scholarship, the terms "realistic" and "naturalistic" are interchangeable and are thrown around to describe works of art such as the Middle Kingdom king Senwosret III (see Figure 11.1, Hartwig, this volume), the statue of Hemiunu (see Figure 11.2, Hartwig, "Sculpture," this volume) or images from the workshop of Thutmose at Amarna. First of all, we have no idea how these individuals appeared in life. In the royal sphere, art reflected the king's official portrait, his "perfected likeness" intended to identify him and inform the viewer about how the ruler wanted to be seen (see discussion in Kozloff and Bryan (1992), 125–129). It was also a receptacle for the king's divine essence, his spirit, which needed to recognize himself in the sculpture in order to dwell in his eternal home. Private art responded to the same commemorative and eternal needs, but more often than not reflected the features of the ruler under whom they served, with unique sculptures such as Hemiunu being in the minority.

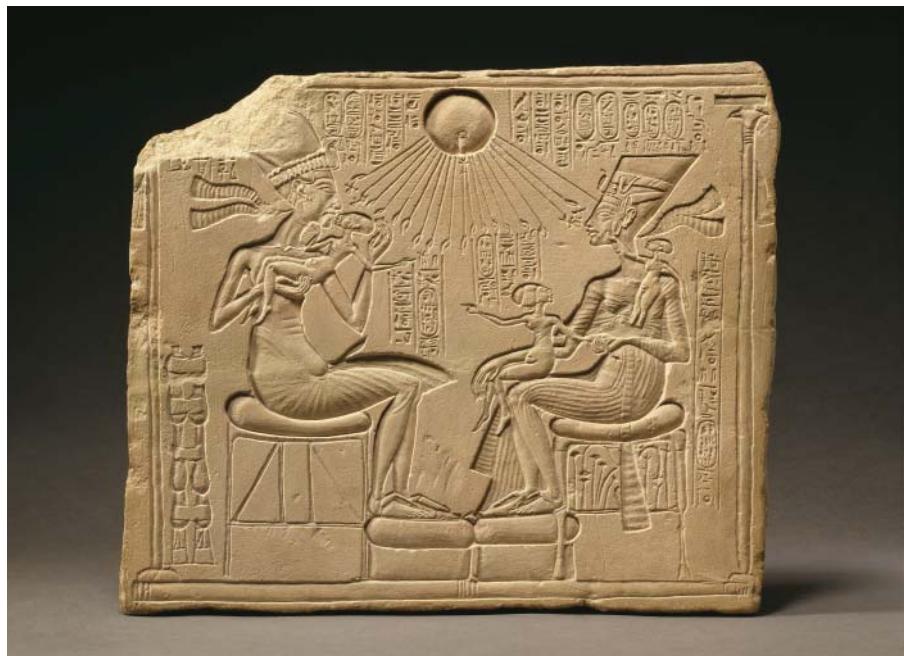
In recent decades, the scientific examination of works of art has led to the application of new criteria to connoisseurship. The spectroscopic analysis of pigment recipes can reveal a painter's work process and movement when it is coupled with visual analysis (Hartwig 2013). The same techniques also point to pigment origin and trade networks. Analysis of the Herakleides portrait mummy in the Getty Museum (Corcoran and Svoboda 2010)

revealed that the red lead pigment used to color the shroud originated from the Roman silver-mining site of Rio Tinto in southwest Spain, while the blue pigment was vergaut (a combination of indigo and orpiment) representing the earliest use of this pigment. When used in conjunction with stone provenancing, the manufacture of the stylistically hybrid statue of Darius I found in Susa identified its origins as Egyptian with the stone originating from the Wadi Hammamat (Trichet and Vallat 1990; Perrot (2010), 256–287).

Of course, a number of criticisms are leveled against formalistic analysis and connoisseurship. First, connoisseurship is often seen in opposition to cultural history. While this may have been true in early art historical syntheses, today, art is approached more holistically as a part of and a window into Egyptian material culture. Art historians often look at the aesthetics or the formal aspects of a work of art, and see it as a reflection of its cultural context. Retrieving the artwork's context plays an important role in stylistic analysis, especially given a scholar's responsibility to uphold Egypt's values toward its cultural property. As noted above, style is referred to as "realistic," "conventional," "naturalistic," and "expressionistic" without definition or explanation. It is also described in pejorative and subjective terms such as "clumsy" or "mediocre." There is a tendency toward psychological interpretation of works of art such as a face's "mischievous expression" or "sorrowful features" that are subjectively linked to cultural changes in Egypt. Granted, this personalizing narrative of art is often used to engage the larger public, but in the analysis of style and connoisseurship, a much more rigorous and scientific method is needed that focuses on the work's formal morphology, dress, inscription, material aspects, and context (if known) in order to synthesize the date and explain them succinctly to the reader rather than relying on the author's *Gefühl* (feel or sense). Likewise, the tendency to group specific features to illustrate the development of style is inherently Hegelian and thus is often seen as an artificial construct. What about archaism—the deliberate attempt to reproduce a style of the past to sustain earlier traditions? The style of Egyptian art reveals a number of different forces that, in fact, can copy and adapt an earlier style for its inspiration, for example in Kushite sculpture where archaism was used as a propagandistic statement of royal power (see Lacovara and Woods, this volume). Obviously, stylistic development is not as straightforward as it seems, but in the hands of a knowledgeable art historian it is an incredibly valuable method in teaching surveys of art, as well as organizing collections and exhibitions.

## Stylistic Change and Its Meaning

The assessment of deliberate stylistic change in ancient Egyptian art is a slippery topic. The impetus for these stylistic changes is hard to discern because the Egyptians never wrote philosophically about their creations. Therefore, although the "Second Style" (Russmann 1995) also called the "Nekhebuw" style by Smith (1949, 84–88, pls. 26a–c) (see Figure 11.4, Hartwig, "Sculpture," this volume) appeared in the late Old Kingdom, we are left to probe the cultural or religious climate and piece together the disparate sources for answers.



**Figure 3.1** Stela from a house shrine showing Akhenaten and Nefertiti with three of their daughters beneath the rays of the Aten, New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, ca. 1340 BC, from Tel el-Amarna, limestone, height 32.5 cm (12 3/4 in.). Ägyptisches Museum, Berlin, ÄM 14145. © bpk / Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, SMB / Margarete Büsing.

That said, probably the best-known deliberate stylistic change was associated with the pharaoh Akhenaten and his monotheistic vision of the preeminence of the Aten, the sun disk (Figure 3.1). Sometime within the fourth year of Akhenaten's reign, his art changed from a continuation of his father's style to an elongated, androgynous body type. There is debate as to whether Akhenaten himself instructed his "overseer of works," Bak, in this new style, but clearly the king had a hand in setting his own portrait. The roots of Akhenaten's androgynous and divine transformation can be traced in Amarna texts, which identified him as the "son who comes from your (Aten's) body" (Lichtheim 1976), with the Aten being the "father and mother of all you make" (Murnane (1995), 158). The roots of the king's androgynous style of representation is explained in a number of different ways which include: Akhenaten depicted as the primeval god, Shu; Akhenaten in the guise of all gods, especially the fecundity god Hapy; Akhenaten symbolizing the solar cycle as the young sun, Shu, the old sun Atum (the king's wearing of the *nemes* or *khat* headdress with the double crown), and the womb through which the sun is born (the "sexless" colossi); and Akhenaten as Aten's child depicted in a more perceptual system of visual representation (for discussion of these theories, see Manniche (2010), 85–133; Laboury 2011). His distinctive form can also be interpreted as the span of time that Aten oversaw and passed on to his son, Akhenaten. More specifically, the eternity of the gods (*djet*-time) in the form of Akhenaten and the cyclical repeating present of nature and

humanity (*neheb*-time) that was embodied in the Aten sun disk's progress through the heavens. As stated by Gay Robins:

Given Akhenaten's role as the image on earth of the creator god Aten and also his identification with Hapy, representing the Nile inundation, the bringer of prosperity, it seems plausible to relate the king's notoriously androgynous images to notions of creation and fertility embodied in his person. His images may have been construed solely with this purpose in mind, or they may have drawn their inspiration from life; one might even speculate that an unusual physique on the part of Akhenaten led him to see himself as marked out as having a special relationship with the sun god. (Robins (2003), 226–227)

It is clear that Akhenaten's style, referred to as the Amarna style, was driven by ideological and religious aspects and lasted through his reign into that of Smenkhkare and the elusive Neferneferuaten, and into the very early part of Tutankhamun's reign. We also see deliberate stylistic changes in ancient Egyptian art, for example in the statuary of Hatshepsut where she metamorphoses from a slight, fine-boned woman into a "male" pharaoh in order to legitimize her place on the throne (Tefnin 1979; Dorman 2005). Deliberate changes are also evident in the "expressive realism" of Senwosret III, which attempted to reflect the king's inner character, keen intelligence, and power (Assmann 1996a; Müller 2009).

## Style and Iconography

Another method in which style is treated in a work of art is its iconography and, recently, the iconology. As developed by the art historian Erwin Panofsky, the analysis of iconography and iconology is based on three levels of analysis: first, the pre-iconological level of description defined as the "history of style"; second, the iconographic level of analysis defining a "history of types"; and third, the iconological level of intrinsic meaning that uncovers "the unifying principals which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, period, class, a religious or philosophical persuasion" (Panofsky 1939 [1972]). Panofsky drew attention to the links between words and images to situate works of art in their historical and ideological contexts. In short, his method viewed visual form as part of the larger phenomenology of culture that was a product of a specific time and place. However, in the mid-twentieth century, Panofsky came under fire with his critics claiming that that his pursuit of absolute meaning did not address issues of gender or cultural politics. Yet now, iconology and the cultural significance of the object are seen as complements to stylistic analysis, "as if a work of art were a composite object made of a perfect balance of non-verbal style and verbal meaning" (Elkins 2012).

The Egyptological studies that use iconography and iconology are too numerous to cite here, so a brief example will have to suffice (see Müller, this volume). Applying the first or elementary level of analysis, a scene from the Dynasty 18 Theban tomb of Nebamun depicts a celebration (Plate 2). Couples are seated on a separate register and the women seated below, none of whom are identified. Men and women are dressed in their very best and wear tall unguent cones on their heads with rivulets of scented fat cascading down,

illustrated by the thin coating of yellow on their clothes. Scantly dressed serving girls are offering beverages, unguent, and floral collars to the guests. On the register below, a woman refuses a cup offered to her while the girl holds a small flask and a cloth in her other hand. The banqueters offer each other lotuses and mandrake fruits, and appear to embrace or perhaps steady each other. Other than the two tables heaped with victuals and wine, it appears no food is being consumed.

Analyzing the iconography of the Nebamun banquet scene draws on archaeological, visual, and textual parallels. During Dynasty 18, an annual ancestral festival called the “Beautiful Festival of the Western Valley” was celebrated. While the king or his cult statue and the chief god of Thebes, Amun-Re, toured the mortuary temples on the valley below, relatives gathered in the tombs of their ancestors above (Schott 1952; Teeter (2011), 66–72). The highlight of the festival was a “banquet” in which copious amounts of alcohol were consumed, the goal of which was to blur the boundaries between this world and the next so the living could commune with their dead ancestors. Participants would also call upon Hathor, the goddess of music and wine, and the dead, as “the Lady of Drunkenness” (Bryan 2005; Sheikholeslami 2011). In Plate 2, one woman refuses a cup of wine, presumably because she has reached her limit. A similar vignette from a banqueting scene in the Dynasty 18 tomb of Pahery at El-Kab offers up a meaning to her gesture. In the scene, a woman refuses a cup of wine only to be chastised by the serving girl who says: “For your ka, drink to drunkenness, make a holiday! O listen to what your companion is saying ‘do not weary of taking.’” The reticent woman’s companion rebukes her by saying: “Give me eighteen cups of wine! Behold, I should love (to drink) to drunkenness, my inside is as dry as straw!” (Tylor and Griffith (1894), pl. VII).

An additional level of symbolism is the lotus flower design on the cups which may indicate this plant was added to the wine, giving a hallucinogenic effect to those who drank it (Emboden 1981; Harer 1985). Additionally, the small flask held by the servant girl may have held an herbal concoction to “spike” the wine for added effect (Manniche 2003). Likewise, the scent of the mandrake fruit, when fully ripe, was addictive and perhaps used to enhance the drinker’s drunkenness (Fleisher and Fleischer (1994), 248–249). Lotus petal collars worn by the participant, known as *māh*-collars, were also referred to as “collars of justification” symbolizing rebirth and regeneration with the god of the underworld Osiris (Bell (1997), 137, 183). The unguent cone is most likely symbolic, and mimics the application of scent to their wigs that warmed and cascaded down their bodies creating a perfumed atmosphere (Cherpion (1994), 81) and ritually purified the guests (Harrington in press).

Finally, when drawing on cultural and religious sources, the banqueting scene of Nebamun offers up deeper meanings. In ancient Egypt, an official’s tomb was a liminal, permeable space located simultaneously in the world of the living and the dead that allowed contact between both. Inebriation, hallucinogens, strong scent, and heat experienced by guests at the banquet blurred the boundaries between this world and the next, overwhelming the senses so that the living could briefly touch the realm of their divine ancestors. At the same time, the banquet reinforced family ties and associated all participants with the earthly festivals and divine spheres of Amun-Re, Hathor, and Osiris, the god of the dead. The liminality and the inherent magical properties of Egyptian art allowed the transference of the food and beverages to the deceased in the hereafter (Hartwig 2004). In addition, from the inherent creative power of the image, the banquet

would be eternally celebrated so that the deceased could be continually reincorporated with his family, relatives, and friends, regenerating all, both living and dead. As illustrated by this example from the tomb of Nebamun, style, iconography, and iconology work together to reveal the intrinsic meaning of the imagery and the culture within which it was produced.

## Style and Egyptian Proportions

Any discussion of style is not complete without briefly touching on the underlying principles of ancient Egyptian imagery. Julius Lange (1838–1896) and Emanuel Löwy (1857–1938) were concerned with how proportion and projection systems were applied and developed in early Greek art, which had ramifications for the understanding of the principals of Egyptian art. In his examination of three-dimensional sculpture, Lange (1899) established the “law of frontality” which was further refined by Löwy (1907) who explained statuary in terms of three- and many-sided views (*drei- und veelansichtig*), noting that four views of a statue, front, back, and two sides, were the easiest remembered views by an artist. Löwy focused on the progression from conceptual form based on “memory image” to the representation of perspective that resulted from the direct perception of the object.

The Egyptologist Heinrich Schäfer (1868–1957) was heavily influenced by Lange’s and Löwy’s analyses, and attempted to identify the principals that led to two-dimensional Egyptian art forms; in other words, what made Egyptian art look Egyptian (Schäfer 1919, 1974). Schäfer coined the term *geradvorstellig*, translated as “based on frontal images” (Baines 1974), which was later discussed by Brunner-Traut (1974) in terms of meaning “perspective-free.” Other terms used include *Gegenstandbezogenheit* (object-relatedness) to explain how the Egyptian form captured the objective reality of the person or object depicted (see also the discussion in Peck, this volume). In other words, how art asserted the existence of the object and was oriented toward its own function and materiality (Wolf 1955). Moving beyond one-word terms, Robins (2008) describes Egyptian forms in terms of their most characteristic and easily recognized aspect which is frontal, in profile, plan and elevation on a single plane. In terms of sculpture, frontality was dependent on context, cultic actions, and status.

Briefly summarized, the distinctive manner in which the ancient Egyptian composite form was rendered is explained in a number of different ways, including: how the mind renders an image-based idea and recognizes it (Schäfer 1919), as a system to preserve the image’s magical and religious purpose for eternity (Wolf 1955), as a cultural creation of interacting conventions (Davis (1989), 191–224), as an anthropometric system of human proportions (Iversen 1975), and as a mutable system for encoding information that changed at various periods (Robins 1994).

## Semiotics, Hermeneutics, and Style

Given the indissoluble connection between Egyptian art and writing, it was not long before Egyptologists realized the potential of semiotic and hermeneutic analysis to interpret the stylistic principals of ancient Egyptian art. Inherent in semiotic analysis is the idea



**Figure 3.2** Semiotic lexicon of subject-action-object using an agricultural scene from the tomb of Menna (TT 69). Courtesy of Melinda Hartwig.

that hieroglyphs are miniature images and images are large hieroglyphs. Hermeneutics draws on semiotic theory by restoring the voice of art works that can no longer speak clearly or directly to us (Angenot 2011; see Angenot, this volume). In ancient Egyptian art, Roland Tefnин (1984) applied semiotic analysis to the two-dimensional tomb chapel images to describe the figurative language of the Egyptians in its significative dimension. Tefnин discussed how the imagery could function as a semiological language, and established a lexicon of subject-action-object by which most figures were organized in tomb art (Figure 3.2). The Subject pole was unified, named, and magnified (i.e., the tomb owner) as opposed to the pole of Object, which was multiplied, anonymous, and miniature (i.e., the subsidiary figures). Further, the Subject in the image acted as the contemplator of the Object. Tefnин employed the *poetic* function, one of the six functions of communication defined by noted linguist Roman Jakobson (1896–1982), and expanded his discussion to include the shift that occurred between the two levels of imagery: namely, the shift between the figurative significant and the existential world serving the referent, and between the real world and its represented image (Tefnин (1991), 60–88, esp. 65 and 76). Later, Tefnин (1997b) added context to his semiological and structural system that focused on the relation of the image to the text (writing as image, image as writing), the relation of the image to the space (where space functions entirely as a sign), the relation of text to the space (bands, friezes, etc.), the combined relationship of text, image, and space in the tomb, and its relation to cosmos (symbolic geographic orientations, etc.).

Jan Assmann (1987) delved into semiotics, laying out the semantic hierarchy of two-dimensional representations that he termed “hierotaxis” (subordination; hieroglyphicity). Hierotaxis is a completely abstract, aniconic organizational principle in which the coherence of the picture plane and the coherence of reality are arranged grammatically. Three groups constitute the way in which single scenes are distributed on the wall: synonymy (general theme/concept), autonomy (spacial distribution), and temporal progression (episodes, series). Hierotaxis follows the same ideas as Tefnин based on the application of poetics to art, but where Tefnин ordered the pictorial components

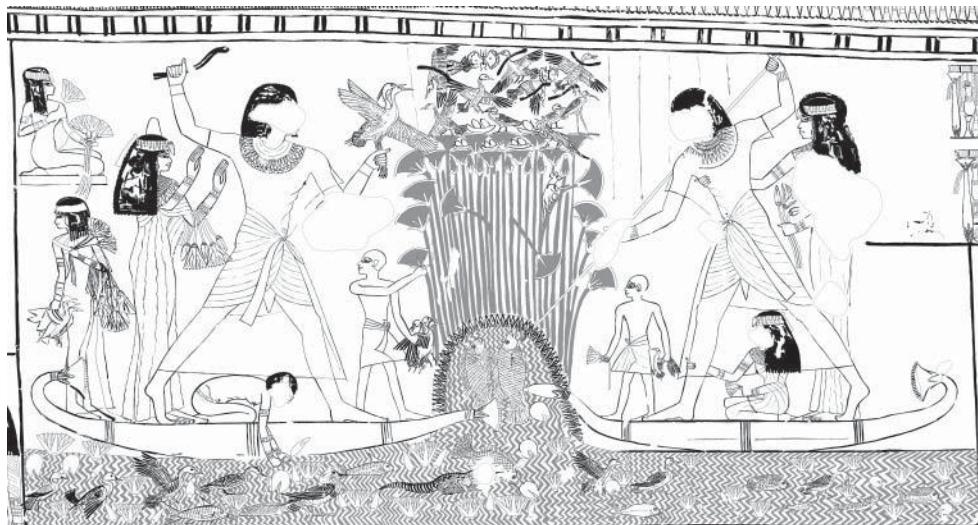
along the lines of speech (subject-action-object), Assmann analyzes compositions in terms of the poetically formed text (synonyms, antonyms, and temporal progression).

Both Tefnin and Assmann highlight fundamental stylistic principles in two-dimensional tomb art in ancient Egypt. Tefnin, in particular, discussed the symbolic meanings encoded in the style of decoration in the tomb, but approached them within a closed system, stating the image does not address the eye of the observer but instead is oriented to the subject included in the image itself. On the other hand, Assmann integrated Jakobson's poetic function that is, by definition, the message itself, which requires the role of the receiver (reader, hearer, or spectator) to decode it (Jakobson (1987), 69). Assmann (1983, 1990, 1996b) discusses two- and three-dimensional forms and their inscriptions as the vehicles for the individual's eternal self-preservation through the inherent creative power of the image. Later, this develops into the individual's self-representation in social memory on earth and beyond as a transfigured spirit (*akh*) when closed installations change to open ones. Thus, the object in its context becomes the "sign" of the individual who is the sender and the community who viewed it functioned as the receiver. This approach opened the way to a number of scholars who saw the beholder as an integral participant in decoding the ancient Egyptian image and its semiotic-communicative system to give it meaning. This can be seen in the recent work of Fitzenreiter (2011) in late Ramesside tombs who found the connection between relief scenes and textual captions that is similar to *parallelismus membrorum* or iconographic parallelism that guided the perception of the ancient beholder in a culturally specific way.

## The Reception of Style

Communication theory and reception aesthetic has also found its way into stylistic analysis where style can be anchored in the viewer's aesthetic response to the imagery (Müller 1990; 2012a; Hartwig 2003; Verbovsek 2006; Den Doncker 2012; and see Verbovsek, this volume). The presence of the beholder, traditionally defined by art historians as the patron or later as the viewer, opened the interpretation of an artwork to social and political considerations, rather than just formal ones. A key concept in the theories of Alois Riegl (see above) was the impact of the artwork's aesthetics on the beholder (Olin (1989), 286). According to Riegl, the presence of the beholder and his or her perception of the aesthetics of the work of art brought an external significance to the piece. Roman Jakobson (see above) wrote about the communicative act in the visual arts. In visual communication theory, a message must have a context which is understood by the receiver, a code or logical system of forms comprehended by the sender and receiver, and a contact or "physical channel and psychological connection" between both parties. Jakobson noted that the sender and receiver need not be self-conscious about all six aspects, given the subtlety of visual communication. However, it is important that visual communication occurred between parties with a common cultural background or a framework of shared knowledge that allowed the sender's attitude and motivation to be understood (Grice 1969; Novitz 1977).

If we take Figure 3.3 for example, a scene of fishing and fowling from the Dynasty 18 tomb of Menna (TT 69), the "sender" is the artist working within the ancient Egyptian canon of proportions, as well as the patron Menna who initially specified the scenes to be



**Figure 3.3** Fishing and fowling scene from the tomb of Menna (TT 69), Thebes, tp. Amenhotep III, New Kingdom. Reproduced by permission of the American Research Center in Egypt, Inc. (ARCE).

used in the decorative program. The “message” is the painting itself, and the “receiver” was also the patron Menna and viewers, including his family, friends, and the tomb chapel’s visitors. The message is incorporated within a code such as the forms and motifs of painting, its color, and brushstrokes. The context is the tomb chapel, or “physical channel and psychological connection” in which the contact occurred between the sender and receiver. In the private tomb chapel, context is enhanced by the structure’s liminality and the mortuary rituals performed within it. At its most effective, the visual communicative act depends on the stability of the social framework (see examples in Gombrich 1960; Baxandall 1972); however, the viewer’s mutual understanding of the sender’s intentions cannot be taken for granted. Every viewer received the decoration differently given the spectrum of human experience and the complexity of pictorial meaning in ancient Egypt (Bryan 1996).

Although uninscribed, the viewer could surmise that the two large antithetically placed figures belong to the tomb owner Menna, one fishing and the other fowling, with his wife and children accompanying him, following the conventions of other Dynasty 18 fishing and fowling scenes. One is struck first by the highly elaborate clothes worn by the participants that seem oddly out of place for a hunting excursion in the marshes. Since size and the fineness of clothes connoted status in ancient Egypt, we could deduce that this scene shows a high status official and his family engaging in privileged recreation. Since the tomb chapel was inherently magical, the killing of birds and the spearing of fish would magically secure the provisioning for the deceased in the hereafter. On a more symbolic level, the actions of spearing and harpooning are visual puns for the word “*seti*” meaning “to ejaculate/impregnate” that, within the liminal space of Menna’s tomb chapel signified Menna’s rebirth (see Robins, this volume). In the thicket, a brown mongoose creeps up a stem that bends under its weight, followed by a genet that stalks five

abandoned nests with eggs. More than an idle depiction, the artist showed the diet, natural habitat, and agility of these animals in the wild that would not be lost on the image's viewer. Above the thicket, six pintail ducks fly overhead, four of which are caught by the throw-sticks propelled by Menna. Two more ducks rest on papyrus umbels as well as a lone heron. Two schematically drawn Tiger butterflies fill in the remaining space. The entire scene is suffused with the flurry of wildlife as it is flushed out of the thicket.

At the base of the papyrus grove is an arc of water with two fish—both tilapia, one of which is about to be punctured by Menna's spear. The Egyptians were astute observers of nature, so some would have known about the mouth-brooding habits of the tilapia fish that associated it with the creator god Atum, who took his seed in his mouth and spat out the world. Once the Nile flood retreated, the abundance of tilapia that lived and bred in shallow waters was seen as both capable of rebirth and chaotic elements. In popular superstition, both the birds and the fish symbolized chaotic animals that needed to be controlled so as not to penetrate the tomb and disturb the dead. Chaos also appears in the form of a crocodile eating a tilapia seen immediately below the arc of water that the painter rendered smaller to curtail its magical power. At some point, the crocodile's eyes were hacked out, perhaps to make it incapable of harming others.

Viewers would have understood the images, albeit in varying degrees, based on their literacy and level of cultural knowledge. Because the images were presented canonically (message), and represented or symbolized familiar objects in their world (code), the process of decoding that is so problematic to the modern-day observer likely did not exist for the ancient Egyptian viewer, because, to him or her, the visible world was seen as a symbol in its entirety (Assmann (1992), 88). For the sender, both artist and patron knew the images would be viewed and appreciated, the artist for his rendering and the patron for his status, the goal of which was to receive the delivery or utterance of a much-needed mortuary offering. Senders and receivers were linked through culturally relevant imagery that reinforced their family ties and linked them to the realm of the gods.

## Conclusion

So in the end, what can we characterize as the Egyptian style? It is the way in which images are rendered in their most characteristic aspect from period to period, in combinations of frontal and profile views, plan and/or elevation. Style is the way in which formal elements were painted or sculpted and reflected the dictates of Egyptian culture, and at an individual level can reveal the patron's intentions and artist's methods dictated by decorum. Style can hold the ideology of an age or of a pharaoh. Based on similarity or dissimilarity, style is used to date works of art, mark development in the visual arts, or trace relationships between workshops and regions. Variations in style can be matched with and reveal historical events or religious and cultural change. Style can encode ideas or give voice to an artwork through interpretation. Style is also a language that holds an internal significance for the one represented in the image based on its inherent creative power. Likewise, style has an external expressiveness that is relayed to an audience through the depiction of objects, actions, ideas, and their symbolism. Style is not an evolution but "an ongoing dialogue between the construction of history and the constructing of the

self” (Elkins 2012). As a tool, style defines and measures Egyptian art in terms that are accessible on many different levels, and allows the researcher to resurrect the underlying meanings through which we can once again hope to understand the multifaceted realm of ancient Egyptian art.

## Acknowledgment

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## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

There are very few synthetic studies of style in ancient Egyptian art; most focus on methods of manufacture or cultural influences such as Romano (2002), Robins (2008), and Riggs (2014). Conference publications such as Grimal (1998) make use of style as an archival tool with which to date works of art, or explore the nature of style in Egyptian art in edited volumes by Eaton-Krauss and Graefe (1990), Kóthay (2012), Baines and Vischak (in press). Other studies look at the larger applications of style: Assmann (1987), Russmann (2001), Hartwig (2003), Hoffmann (2004), Bryan (2009), among others. To truly appreciate how wide-ranging the use of style can be in Egyptian art and architecture, some recent publications illustrate the various approaches available to those who study Egyptian art: Verbovsek, Backes, and Jones (2011); Müller (2013); Hartwig (in press) as well as this volume.

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## CHAPTER 4

# Connoisseurship

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## Introduction

Connoisseurship is the role or activity of the connoisseur, defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as “a person with a thorough knowledge and critical judgement of a subject, especially one of the fine arts” (Brown 1993). Borrowed from the French language, the word connoisseurship had no equivalent in the vocabulary of ancient Egypt, nor was there one for “art.” Currently, connoisseurship is typically performed by art historians utilizing critical analyses of iconography, composition, and dating criteria. In iconography, the researcher uses connoisseurship to elucidate the underlying meaning of the artwork and its cultural context. The connoisseur utilizes composition to analyze how the formal elements of a work of art are arranged such as line, shape, color, texture, form, value, and space. To date a work of art, the art historian compares an uninscribed work to one that bears a name, title, or royal cartouche so it can be anchored in the historical record.

When comparing the products of royal workshops with those from provincial or commercial ateliers, there is little doubt that elite artists worked under the direction and critical scrutiny of kings or high officials. The model for the royal portrait was personally approved by the pharaoh and generally was a political message. In the private sphere, provincial workshops often produced generic statues distinguished only by the inscription of the owner’s name.

Statuary was created for two reasons: religious purposes for the symbolic rebirth and preservation of the image of the owner for eternity; and as propaganda. The latter function was principally reserved for the pharaoh or his family. Even today, the colossal New Kingdom images of Amenhotep III and Ramesses II fill their viewers with awe. The walls of tombs and temples were usually covered with two-dimensional, painted relief representations and, or, paintings. While they lack perspective and usually frontal views, they present scenes of great battles or vignettes of daily life. Again, propaganda and religion were the reasons for their existence.

The faces of statues are either idealized or realistic, the latter usually more interesting to the contemporary viewer since they may be considered portraits, although there is no way of knowing if they accurately imitated the actual features of the subject. The same is often true of relief and painted representations on stone or wood panels. A number of the finest examples discussed later in this chapter were made in Dynasty 3 (ca. 2592–2544 BCE). Some realistic Middle Kingdom statues, particularly those of Senwosret III, exhibit expressions that some scholars interpret as indicating stress or worry. The various poses, costumes, accessories, and insignias of statues or relief representations are also integral to their iconographic meaning. They may denote social status, profession, or even the aspirations of their subjects. The interpretation of these attributes is an important role of art historical analysis.

The wide range of materials utilized by Egyptian artists testifies to their innovative abilities. In the early Predynastic Period, clay was the material of choice. Readily available in the Nile valley, it is easily molded and decorated by pigment or incision. Later, bone, wood, and ivory were carved into objects including knife handles and human images. Limestone and other soft stones soon became commonly used, followed by hard stones such as quartzite, obsidian, granite, diorite, and basalt. Precious minerals were also added to the repertoire. Larger-than-life statues were also produced, including the Min statues in the Ashmolean and Cairo Museums (Dreyer 1995; Crowfoot Payne 2000). The challenge of working with hard stone cannot be underestimated. Because soft copper tools were unable to carve hard stones, the technique consisted of roughing the crude outline of the figure with “beater” stones, carving details with flint or other hard stones, abrading them with sand applied by wooden tools to achieve a fine finish, and finally painting them—a process requiring workshops with individual specialists. During the Old Kingdom, ateliers became dedicated to either hard or soft stones, a practice that would continue thereafter. Much of the extant art of ancient Egypt is in the form of painted relief representations and paintings on temple and tomb walls that were undertaken by teams of artisans composed of scribes, outliners, carvers, and painters, among others.

Today, we see ancient Egyptian art with modern sensibilities and attempt to describe and even rank it utilizing comparisons with other cultures, including our own, a concept well-expressed by Yve-Alain Bois: “Like it or not, our view of the past is always determined by our own present” (Bois (2008), 11). For example, whereas we are accustomed today to attributing works of art to the hand of a specific artist, the works of Egyptian sculptors were never signed and are products of collaborative endeavors rather than individual creations. It was not until the Greek era that individual artists were acknowledged and even lionized. With these caveats in mind, we can attempt to apply modern criteria of art to ancient Egypt. It would be impossible to discuss all the works that might qualify for inclusion here, so I have chosen a limited sampling which I hope will illustrate the depth, breadth, and beauty of Egyptian art.

## Predynastic Period

The Egyptian civilization most likely arose in the Nile Valley about 5300 BCE, although there is some conjecture that it had originated earlier in the western desert when there

was an abundant water supply. At this time, sculpture became a favorite form of expression; animals were carved in a wide variety of materials and the human form gained sophistication. The earliest sculptural object we know of, a crudely fashioned clay votive head from the Merimda culture from the Delta, has survived from that period (Saleh and Sourouzian 1987). During the ensuing two millennia (the latter half of it known as the Predynastic Period), and prior to the establishment of the empire, the production of small carved or molded items as well as larger stone statues, many of which we now call “fine arts,” proceeded apace.

Among the finest examples of Predynastic art are carved ceremonial ivory knife handles. Like statuary and relief representations, extant traces of paint are present on these objects. It is difficult to conceive of them being executed with crude tools and without magnification. The minute human figures have faces as small as one millimeter, with carefully drawn, expressive features. The compositions are often complex, incorporating mythological animals, boats, soldiers, and captives. One of the finest examples is a well-preserved knife with an intact serrated flint blade now in the collection of the Musée du Louvre (Ziegler 1990). The manufacture of these objects was apparently never again duplicated. In a Predynastic tomb at Abydos, Günter Dreyer found a beautiful ivory female figure wearing an intricately patterned shawl whose interstices are filled with colored paste (Rummel (2007), no. 42). It exemplifies the emergence of sculptural sophistication of the human form. Earthenware pottery was often molded and painted with geometric designs and figures, some having three-dimensional seated or dancing humans arranged on their rims. An outstanding example was also discovered in Abydos by Dreyer (Rummel (2007), no. 40).

## **Early Dynastic Period and Old Kingdom**

The Egyptian Empire was established circa 3050 BCE with the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt after many years of warfare with the people of the Delta. A large greywacke ceremonial palette depicting King Narmer, the ultimate ruler of Upper Egypt in Nagada III/Dynasty 0, celebrating a great victory is one of the most precious objects in the Egyptian Museum (Saleh and Sourouzian 1987). In addition to its historical importance, it is a masterpiece of figurative carving: the lively compositions accomplished with great artistry. On the front the king wields a mace, smiting the soldiers of Lower Egypt. The intertwined, long-necked creatures illustrated on the reverse symbolize the union of Upper and Lower Egypt. Although its shape is that of a cosmetic palette, it in fact functioned as a commemorative stela in the Horus Temple in Hierakonpolis.

Dynasties 0–2 are now known as the Early Dynastic, or Archaic Period (ca. 2950–2590 BCE), and Dynasty 3 (ca. 2592–2544 BCE), the early Old Kingdom. During this era, the pharaohs began massive building projects, providing the impetus to create statuary for worship in the temples and tombs of the royal family and the nobles. The earliest monumental structures are large mud brick enclosures in the Abydos necropolis, culminating in King Djoser’s stone step pyramid and its precinct in Saqqara to the north. This pharaoh was the first ruler of Dynasty 3. Although earlier surviving royal portraits appear somewhat awkward with shortened necks and forward thrusting heads, by Dynasty 3 a majestic seated statue of Djoser in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, is a sophisticated



**Figure 4.1** Detail of a wooden panel carved in raised relief of Hesire depicted as a young man, Dynasty 3, reign of Djoser, Saqqara, mastaba of Hesire. Egyptian Museum, Cairo CG 1430. Photograph: © Jack Josephson.

representation of a powerful ruler, displaying the stern visage of a commanding godlike figure (Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), no. 16). The king is dressed in a Heb-Sed ceremonial cloak. His empty eye sockets, once inlaid, and a forbidding expression, impart a menacing message: Do not damage my image or suffer the consequences! This impressive representation was discovered near his pyramid in Saqqara in a small freestanding statue chamber called a *serdab*. It may be the earliest statue that can be regarded as a portrait. A copy of it has been placed in its original position facing away from his burial place in his step pyramid and looking to the north. Two extraordinary examples of Third Dynasty carving are the two-dimensional depictions of a nobleman named Hesire, depicting him as a young (Figure 4.1) and old man (Figure 4.2) (Arnold (1999), 25). The subtle portraits, carved on wood panels, accurately depict the changes associated with the aging process in a sophisticated manner seldom duplicated in the ensuing two millennia.

Along with sculpture, artisans fashioned intricate and delicate stone vessels to be part of the funerary equipment deposited with the king's body and used in his afterlife. A greywacke offering dish in the Metropolitan Museum of Art is among the finest of these wares (Hayes (1953), 43). Carved in the form of an *ankh*, the hieroglyphic symbol representing life, its partitions are paper thin and perfectly done. The number of artistic triumphs from the early dynasties is almost endless, so we must proceed to the works of Dynasties 4–6, the age of the pyramid builders (2543–2152 BCE).

The Old Kingdom, particularly Dynasty 4, is distinguished by the construction of the huge stone monuments that for many epitomize ancient Egypt. The pyramids of Giza and the great sphinx of Khufu are only a fraction of what remains at this site. In funerary



**Figure 4.2** Detail of a wooden panel carved in raised relief of Hesire before an offering table who is depicted as an old man, Dynasty 3, reign of Djoser, Saqqara, mastaba of Hesire. Egyptian Museum Cairo, CG 1427. Photograph: © Jack Josephson.

temples and the tombs of nobles numerous statues and relief representations, that are first rank works of art, are found in profusion. Intriguingly, only a small, rather nondescript ivory statuette survives, found in Abydos, of Khufu (Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), no. 28), the first pharaoh of Dynasty 4, while his successors, Khafre and Menkaure, have many. Perhaps the finest of these, a diorite statue in the Egyptian Museum, represents Khafre seated with the god Horus, in the form of a hawk, perched behind him, its wings protectively shielding his head CG 14 (Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), no. 31). Almost perfectly preserved, the stone image is imbued with life and exudes a royal presence. A group of greywacke dyad and triad statues of Menkaure with his wife and various goddesses, discovered in the funerary temple near his granite-clad pyramid, are carved with great skill and bear distinctive faces (Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), no. 33). They are excellent examples of the creative process, while perhaps not as impressive as those of Khafre.

Private statuary of Old Kingdom nobles was the product of royal workshops, and often more expressive than that of the king. The highly realistic portraits of Prince Ankhaf in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (see Figure 20.6, Bryan, this volume), and Hemiunu, the architect and builder of Khufu's pyramid, in Hildesheim, Germany (see Figure 11.2, Hartwig, this volume) are surely two of the finest ever made in Egypt. The Boston figure is a bust whose limestone core is covered with plaster, allowing his extraordinary facial features to be subtly carved and carefully painted. The Hildesheim statue depicts a portly man with rolls of body fat, and an animated, although heavily restored, face. Each statue could be favorably compared to the works of Renaissance masters.

A superb example of early Dynasty 4 wall painting, now in the Egyptian Museum, was discovered in the tomb of Nefermaat in Meidum (Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), no. 26). The artist rendered three pairs of geese, two feeding and the other with heads held erect; each pair with different markings drawn with meticulous care and realism. The state of preservation is nothing short of miraculous. Mineral-based pigments mixed with plant-based binders provided a strong bond to the plaster-covered mud brick giving them a freshly painted appearance. From the same tomb, a paste inlay relief scene depicts two hunters netting ducks (Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), nos. 25a, 25b).

The three Giza pyramids were thoroughly looted in ancient times and their funerary equipment is long gone, but relief representations from the nearby tombs of the nobles, known as mastabas, have survived and contain numerous treasures from that time. Many depict their owners in scenes of daily life. Originally brightly painted and sometimes enhanced with paste inlays, they allow a glimpse into that era. Today, they are highly prized artifacts of the Old Kingdom, but were of no value to the ancient looters who coveted objects that could be reused or melted down. The depredations of the modern antiquities trade have caused serious damage in tombs and the loss of works of art.

Not to be omitted from the art of the Old Kingdom are wood objects, particularly statuary. Because it is more fragile than stone and often attacked by insects, surviving examples are comparatively rare. One of the best known in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, dated to Dynasty 4, represents a bald, overweight official nicknamed the “Sheikh el Beled,” because the workmen who found it thought it resembled their local village headman (Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), no. 40). He grasps a staff—a symbol of authority—in his hand, and wears a long skirt leaving his torso exposed. An artistic triumph, his pleasant, rotund face exudes power and wisdom. A number of other slender and sensitively worked wood statues survive from Dynasties 5 and 6. Clearly, wood was a much-valued commodity reserved for elite subjects and the product of specialized ateliers. Another use of wood was as a core for copper-clad statues. Two royal representations of Pepy I, the next to last pharaoh of the Old Kingdom, are composed of copper sheets hammered onto a wood under layer (Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), no. 63). Recently conserved, the larger one is the earliest life-sized metal portrait known.

Dynasty 4 (2543–2436 BCE) marked the height of monument building and artistic achievement in the Old Kingdom. The following two dynasties declined in both categories. As a large bureaucratic system evolved, the demand for statuary was increased by a larger class of officials. Quantity overcame quality as more pedestrian work from lesser workshops overwhelmed superior products. From the end of Dynasty 5 throughout Dynasty 6 (ca. 2321–2152 BCE), a so-called Second Style emerged characterized by exaggerated large eyes and elongated bodies—aesthetically mannered and not very pleasing (Cooney 1953; and see Hartwig, this volume). The Old Kingdom ended shortly after the death of Pepy II about 2153 BCE. This king had ruled an extraordinarily long time, perhaps over sixty years, and this was one of the factors contributing to the collapse of the empire since his power must have weakened as he aged. The time after the fall of the Old Kingdom, known as the First Intermediate Period (2118–1980 BCE), was characterized by the breakdown of the central authority with local nomarchs ruling parts of the former empire. This dissolution was reflected in the arts with a dearth of building projects, while tomb art and stelae became crudely rendered.

## Middle Kingdom

Egypt was reunited by Mentuhotep II in 1970 BCE, in the fourteenth year of his rule in Thebes in Upper Egypt. A war was precipitated by an attempt of the Herakleopolitans to the north of Thebes to capture the Thinite Nome, then part of Mentuhotep's territory. Defeating his foes, Mentuhotep advanced further north and eventually all of Egypt came under his sway. This began Dynasty 11 and the Middle Kingdom, which some scholars believe was the zenith of the empire. The kings of Dynasty 12 (1939–1760 BCE) invaded and conquered vast amounts of territory from Nubia in the south to Anatolia in the north. Art and literature flourished throughout the dynasty, although monumental building projects languished. One possible explanation for this might be that the pharaohs of that time were preoccupied with maintaining large military forces rather than armies of laborers. The comparatively small pyramids erected for great kings such as Senwosret III and Amenemhet III were built of mud brick with limestone casings and suffered considerable damage when their casings were quarried for reuse.

Sculpture from Dynasty 11 represents a striking departure from the Old Kingdom norm. Statues of Mentuhotep II have rather brutal, idealizing faces and heavy bodies with little, or no, grace. Not until Dynasty 12 did statuary become aesthetically satisfying, and only in the second half of the dynasty did it reach extraordinary heights. Artists then created portraits that explored and displayed emotional content. Nor were portraits of such quality restricted to the pharaohs. Perhaps the most exceptional private example is a quartzite portrait of a nobleman dated to the reign of Senwosret III, and probably from Medamud, just south of Thebes (Figure 4.3) (Freed and Josephson (2008), 141). Wearing a satin smooth bag-wig, the head depicts a mature man with a forceful and wise expression. The sculptor used subtle modeling to achieve this effect. He carved heavy bags under the almond-shaped, hooded eyes and well-defined nasal labial folds descending downwards from the center of the thin, slightly aquiline nose. The root of the nose appears as a swelling on the forehead—a feature often found on Egyptian depictions of Libyans. The thin-lipped mouth, with no hint of a smile, emphasizes the nobleman's serious mien. Prominent high cheekbones frame the face. The head is clearly the product of a royal workshop; its subject undoubtedly a man of consequence, perhaps a member of the king's immediate family. This masterpiece ranks near or at the top of portraits from ancient Egypt, and, in this author's opinion, from any time or civilization.

Images of the nobleman's king, Senwosret III, are often distinguished by worry lines engraved on his forehead and over his nose, and sad, hooded eyes. These features persuade many Egyptologists to conclude that the artists faithfully captured the portrait of a great monarch wearied by the onerous burdens of rule (Hayes (1953), 199). A well-known quartzite fragment of Senwosret III's face in the Metropolitan Museum of Art epitomizes his mournful expression (Hayes (1953), 198, fig. 120). A red granite colossal head in the Luxor Museum, discovered near Pylon IV at the Amun Temple of Karnak in Thebes, is an outstanding example of the sensitive portraiture associated with that king (Romano (1979), 32–35, figs. 28–31). The king wears the double crown, a combination of the high white crown of Upper Egypt and the red crown of Lower Egypt. His plaited beard suggests that the statue represented a deified pharaoh. The tip of the



**Figure 4.3** Head of a nobleman (the Josephson Head), Egyptian, Middle Kingdom, late Dynasty 12. Object place: Egypt, possibly Memphis (on basis of style), quartzite,  $24 \times 18.5 \times 21$  cm ( $9\frac{7}{16} \times 7\frac{5}{16} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$  in.), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2003.244. Photograph: © Jack Josephson.

nose is missing, but its thin, indented bridge is very similar to that of the Boston head of a nobleman as is the tight-lipped, unsmiling mouth. The small eyes have hooded lids, and beneath them, traces of bags. Deep nasal labial folds descend from the sides of his nose, heightening his disconsolate look. This striking portrait surely qualifies as a tour-de-force. Senwosret III's son and successor, Amenemhet III, was also usually depicted in a realistic manner, but his portraits do not bear the harried look of his father, rather his images are often recognizable by a distinct under bite, thrusting the lower jaw outwards.

While the second half of Dynasty 12 is one of the most renowned periods of Egyptian sculpture, relief representations from the earlier part of the dynasty also show extraordinary grace and skill. Generally carved in low relief, they are unusually fine. One example in the Metropolitan Museum (Wildung (2000), no. 20) depicts Senwosret I in a portrait-like manner, with a long face and prominent nose—quite dissimilar to his idealized three-dimensional representations. Recently recovered fragments from the pyramid temple of Senwosret III at Dahshur by a team from the Metropolitan Museum of Art prove that the production of beautiful relief work continued throughout the dynasty.

The jewelry and fine toilet articles from Dynasty 12 must not be omitted from discussion. Fabergé, the Russian imperial jeweler, might have envied the exquisitely delicate ornaments of the Dynasty 12 Princess Khnumet found in Dahshur (Aldred (1971), nos. 27–31; see also Figure 15.1, Kozloff, this volume). The ethereal lightness of the gold crown and circlet decorated with semi-precious stones is a marvel of design and

craftsmanship. The jewelry of Sithathor, another princess entombed in Dahshur, while not as delicate as that of Khnumet, also incorporates masterpieces (Aldred (1971), nos. 31–40). Her magnificent pectoral and necklace display both elegance and an artistic use of colored gemstones. Along with the amazing jewelry, exquisitely fashioned cosmetic vessels were a part of the funerary equipment. Often made from glass-hard obsidian, banded with gold, it is difficult to imagine such perfectly formed objects manufactured without modern steel tools.

There is hardly a form of art that did not reach a peak during the Middle Kingdom, and painting is high on the list. The wood sarcophagus of Djehutynakht from Deir el-Bersha in Middle Egypt is surely one of the finest examples of painting from that time (Plate 3) (Freed, Markowitz, and D'Auria (2009), 105–135). Discovered by an archaeological expedition from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in the early twentieth century, it is now a prized object in their collection. Lawrence Berman eloquently describes this great work of art (Berman et al. (2009), 116): “The painting is a triumph of delicacy and precision. There is a dazzling combination of linear and geometric patterns—checkerboards, chevrons, triangles, and lozenges.” These elements surround the seated figure of the tomb owner. His son stands before him among the large number of offerings provided for his afterlife. The vibrant, yet subtle color and the composition represent exceptional virtuosity.

Dynasty 12 ended the Middle Kingdom and its glories, artistic and political, ushering in the Second Intermediate Period (1759–1539 BCE) with renewed instability, allowing the invasion by Asiatic people known as the Hyksos. As during the First Intermediate Period, the artistic accomplishments of the preceding dynasties soon fell into decay and did not recover for several hundred years. It is often said that art is the truest reflector of the political and social condition of a society, and this observation is borne out by the collapse of the central government.

## New Kingdom

For the second time, the Egyptian empire was restored by a Theban, this one named Ahmose, who, ascending to a diminished throne in ca. 1539 BCE, founded Dynasty 18 (ca. 1539–1292 BCE), inaugurating the New Kingdom (ca. 1539–1077 BCE). In little over a decade, Ahmose expelled the Hyksos invaders. Several years later he invaded their stronghold in southwestern Palestine, preventing any further threat from them. He then turned his attention to Nubia, restoring Egyptian hegemony over that territory. This military activity left few resources for monument building and the revival of royal workshops, a task left to his successors to do with signal success. The artistic accomplishments of the New Kingdom include legendary temples, the royal tombs of the Valley of the Kings, and many iconic masterpieces of painting and sculpture. The reigns of Hatshepsut, Thutmose III, and Amenhotep III, three of the greatest rulers of that dynasty, brought enormous prosperity to Egypt, much of it acquired through foreign conquests and trading expeditions.

Queen Hatshepsut was an early monarch of Dynasty 18. At first the regent for her stepson, the very young Thutmose III, she clearly savored power and acting as co-regent ruled Egypt until her death 22 years after her husband's. Apparently, her stepson was

not happy with being prevented from assuming his proper position until he was close to 30 years old and later systematically destroyed, or buried, his stepmother's statuary and erased her name. Most of Hatshepsut's surviving statues were discovered in a cache near her funerary temple at Deir el-Bahri. Although most are heavily damaged, they are masterful images, some depicting her as a man, others delicately feminine. One of the latter, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is one of the most beguiling (Roehrig (2006), 171–172, no. 96). Carved in indurated limestone, it depicts the slender queen with childlike small breasts seated on a low throne. Her endearing, round, youthful face has an alert expression, a thin aquiline nose surmounting a small pointed chin. The mouth is small and sensual with the slight hint of a smile. The image is not one would expect of a powerful pharaoh, but it is an extraordinary example of sculpture in the round.

Hatshepsut's funerary temple, very much restored in recent times, is one of the great sights on the West Bank of Thebes. Many of the carvings that once covered the wall have survived in situ, while some fragments are now in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo. Among the latter, the famous depiction of the queen of Punt, depicted as hugely obese and covered with rolls of fat, is an excellent example of the skills of the artisans who drew, carved, and painted these scenes (Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), no. 130). Aside from the humorous depiction of that lady, the scene confirms the existence of trade between the far away land of Punt (perhaps modern Eritrea) and Egypt. Ivory, ebony, ostrich shells, and other luxury products were highly prized by the Egyptians and only available from distant lands by trade or conquest. Nubia, on Egypt's southern border, was subjugated for almost two millennia, beginning in the Old Kingdom until the end of the New Kingdom, and was a principal supplier of gold.

The ill-used stepson of Hatshepsut, Thutmose III, became one of the greatest warrior kings of the New Kingdom, if not in the history of the Egyptian empire. His portrait sculpture, akin to images of the queen, depicted him as a slender, youthful individual with an aquiline nose similar to hers. Perhaps the finest of his portraits, carved in greywacke and discovered in a cachette north of Pylon VII, originally stood in the Temple of Amun-Re at Karnak and now graces the Luxor Museum (Romano (1979), no. 61, pl. VI). Though most of its lower legs are missing, the head and torso are almost unblemished. The king stands erect, both arms at his side, the right hand grasping either a roll of cloth, or a scroll. He wears a *nemes* headdress and a *shendyt* kilt, his smooth torso exposed. Except for the distinctive nose, his face is idealized. The outer canthi of his almond-shaped eyes have long, square-ended cosmetic lines. Above the eyes, the gently curved, raised relief eyebrows extend outward to almost meet the cosmetic lines drawn from the eye corners. His mouth, with the hint of a smile, adds to the youthful impression. This superb image, sculpted with great care, set the standard for royal representations of Dynasty 18.

Thutmose III's rival for the title of the supreme pharaoh of Dynasty 18 is Amenhotep III. During his long reign Egypt enjoyed unparalleled prosperity and power and an ostentatious building program that would not be rivaled, even by Ramesses II in the following dynasty. Massive additions to the Amun-Re Temple in Karnak and the Luxor Temple to its north on the east bank of the Nile were not, by any means, his greatest accomplishments. His funerary temple on the West Bank and his palace at Malkata were magnificent, huge structures; the temple is presently being cleared by German and Egyptian archaeologists. Their work has revealed the existence of at least four additional colossal statues of the king standing further into the temple grounds behind the 17 meter tall Colossi

of Memnon (Nims (1965), 162, fig. 80). Although upended and broken, perhaps by an earthquake, their features are in much better condition than the Colossi of Memnon. Having been buried by sand, they are comparatively unweathered and show the skill of the artisans who carved them in hard quartzite and erected them. As wonderful as they are, one could not describe them as fine art, but as propagandizing instruments.

Representations of Amenhotep III usually depict him as a youthful athlete whose serene features and haughty mien testify to his high status, although some show him as an older man with an expanding waistline and time-worn features. His portraits are easily distinguishable from the other pharaohs of Dynasty 18. He reigned for an unusually long time, celebrated three *heb sed* festivals after 30 years of reign, and was deified during his lifetime. One superb image shows him as a statue standing on a sled (El-Saghir (1991), 21–27). It was found in a cache in the center of the sun court of Luxor Temple along with other fine statuary dating to the New Kingdom and the Late Period. Secreted by priests during a period of turmoil (perhaps the Roman occupation of Thebes) they were under the paving and discovered by workmen doing repairs to the drainage system in 1989. Carved in red quartzite, the king stands regally wearing the red crown and dressed in a short kilt bearing the emblems of deification. Roughened bands on his breast, arms, wrists, and ankles were once ornamented with gold. The statue survived almost unblemished and is in many ways, a paragon of Amenhotep III's surviving representations. One can hardly imagine a more striking masterpiece of sculptural art and a premier accomplishment of its makers.

A private representation of the nobleman, Amenhotep, son of Hapu, as an old man, is one of the great private statues from the reign of Amenhotep III (Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), no. 149). Once a pawn in Egypt's effort to recover the famous bust of Nefertiti in the Berlin Museum, it remains in Egypt. While not as decorative as the bust, this portrait has no peer in Dynasty 18. It depicts its subject wearing a Middle Kingdom-style wig, with a worn, seamed face, and wise eyes, sitting cross-legged on a cushion. His head is slightly bent forward and rolls of loose skin on his stomach denote old age. The wig, his pose, the realistic facial features, and the fat folds persuaded Dieter Wildung to argue that it was a usurped Middle Kingdom statue (Wildung (1984), 232) but his view is not shared by many of his colleagues.

Dynasty 18 included the reign of the “heretic” pharaoh Akhenaten who brought not only political and religious change, but a stunning revolution in art. The son of Amenhotep III, he originated the concept of monotheism, presaging and possibly inspiring Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Some of Egypt's finest and most original sculpture was produced during his 12-year reign, during which Akhenaten built a new capital at Amarna, north of Thebes. Most of his statues are unique, unlike those of other pharaohs. While innovative, his images are quite puzzling, even disturbing. He is often depicted as hermaphroditic with wide feminine hips, pronounced breasts, and a long narrow face with full lips—neither god- nor warrior-like (Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), no. 164). Various explanations have been advanced to explain his appearance; one is that he suffered from Marfan's syndrome, others suggesting a religious significance. The hypothesis that he had a genetic disease, that indeed can cause an odd physique, is doubtful since males with this defect are sterile and Akhenaten did have children. A more logical suggestion was that the pharaoh wished to be portrayed in the guise of Shu, a hermaphroditic god. This portrayal was repeated on relief representations that depict him kissing and

fondling his daughters, unconventional behavior for an Egyptian pharaoh in art. He was clearly a loving and involved father and the intimate family scenes provoke strong emotions. Blocks from the Aten Temple of Akhenaten (Romano (1979), nos. 159–168), later destroyed by Tutankhamun, were used as fill in pylons at Temple of Amun-Re at Karnak. They are in the style used during his father's reign and preceded the building of Amarna with its distorted representations carved as Akhenaten himself specified.

His wife Nefertiti was considered a great beauty. A number of her portraits are outstanding images of a stunning woman, and are among the finest sculptures from ancient Egypt. The best known is a bust in the Berlin museum (Kaiser (1967), 71, no. 767). Although awarded to its German excavators in a legal division, the Egyptian government insistently demands its return, claiming that the process of display during the division was deliberately deceptive—even fraudulent. The bust is a national icon of Egypt and its loss deeply disturbing to the Egyptians. The almost indescribably beautiful sculpture was found in the sculptor Thutmose's atelier in Amarna and meant to be a model for future portraits. The slender face has perfect features, its sole blemish one missing inlaid eye. The head, surmounted by a distinctively shaped tall crown, has a long, swanlike neck whose stretched tendons accommodate the upward thrust of the head. Many regard this glorious portrait as Egypt's finest work of art. Found in the same atelier and from the same hand were several red quartzite unfinished heads of the queen now in Cairo (Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), no. 161) and Berlin (Kaiser (1967), 68). Some would argue that they are superior to the Berlin image. Both expressive and lovely, they display the same upwardly thrust heads and slender necks. Their unfinished state makes them beguiling in a different manner from the finished bust, imparting a mysterious aura.

No intact royal treasure had been found in modern times until Howard Carter discovered, in the Valley of the Kings, the tomb of Tutankhamun, the son of Akhenaten. Considering that this pharaoh was a teenager at his death, one can only imagine what the burial of a king like Amenhotep III would have contained. The funerary equipment of the young king beggars description. It is almost impossible to select objects for discussion from among the profusion of splendid artifacts.

Nothing from the tomb surpasses the workmanship and magnificence of the king's solid gold inner sarcophagus, but the large golden shrine is also remarkable, not only for its decoration, but for the delicate grace of its four guardian goddesses (Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), no. 177). The golden throne of Tutankhamun is notable for its graceful and poignant illustration depicting the king and his queen in an idyllic setting (Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), no. 179). The fantastic jewelry, so wonderfully conceived and executed, must be classed as superlative examples of the goldsmith's art.

Painting and relief representations reached close to perfection during Dynasty 18. Royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings are richly ornamented with rows of fantastic figures whose functions are not fully understood, while private tombs in neighboring Dra Abu el-Naga preserve endearing scenes of daily life. In a radical combination the walls of the tomb of the vizier Ramose on the West Bank of Thebes are decorated with exquisite relief carvings displaying starkly divergent styles from the reigns of Amenhotep III and Akhenaten (TT 55) (Nims (1973), 181–182).

Paintings which have survived in tombs are often masterpieces of color and composition. The tomb of Sennedjem in Deir el-Medina in western Thebes offers one of

the most striking examples (TT 1). In one scene, the owner and his wife kneel, hands outstretched, before a goddess who emerges from a tree and offers them an offering tray holding libation jars (Hodel-Hoenes (2000), 258, fig. 185). Western Thebes boasts a great number of such painted tombs of great artistry and many surprises. One of the most delightful paintings from Dynasty 18 is on a limestone fragment in the Museo Egizio, Turin (Scamuzzi (1965), pl. LIV). Called an ostracon, it is an artist's trial piece or a model. Obviously the work of a master, it illustrates a lithe nubile dancer clad only in a loincloth, performing a backbend, her hair sweeping, and her hands touching, the ground. The girl's pretty face is deftly delineated, and enhanced by gold hoop earrings.

The end of Dynasty 18 did not signal a reduction of monument building or artistic triumphs. There is no more beautiful temple surviving from ancient Egypt than the temple in Abydos dedicated to Osiris by Seti I, the second pharaoh of Dynasty 19 and clearly a patron of the arts. The exceptionally well-preserved relief images on the mostly intact walls of the structure are miracles of elegance and sophisticated refinement. This temple also includes a list of kings beginning with the legendary Menes (who is identified with King Narmer or Aha), known to the Egyptians as the first king of Dynasty I.

Dynasty 19 (1292–1191 BCE) was a very active time for monument building, particularly during the reign of Ramesses II, although three-dimensional art was not on a par with that of the previous dynasty. Many royal statues from the Middle and New Kingdoms were usurped by Ramesses II, and he commissioned, primarily for propaganda purposes, numerous colossal statues, including the gigantic figure overturned and smashed in the Ramesseum on the West Bank of Thebes (Leblanc (2001), 90). Ramesses III's funerary temple at Medinet Habu is impressively decorated with much color remaining on its walls. The recently conserved tomb of Nefertari, Ramesses' beloved queen, is an outstanding example of tomb painting, and one of the great tourist attractions in Luxor.

## Third Intermediate Period

The New Kingdom and Dynasty 20 ended with the death of Ramesses XI. The next 300 years, known as the Third Intermediate Period (1076–723 BCE), witnessed a divided Egypt ruled in the south by Theban priests and in the north by the kings in Tanis. Monument building slowed dramatically, and statuary was stylistically derivative of the New Kingdom. This period produced many objects of metal, bronze, gold, and silver that rank amongst the finest ever manufactured in ancient Egypt. A gold statuette acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art from Lord Carnarvon representing the god Amun exemplifies this artistry (Hill (2004), pl. 16). It is solid cast, the fine details added by engraving the surface. The plume adorning the red crown and part of one foot are missing, but it is otherwise perfect, demonstrating the extraordinary capabilities of its makers. A bronze standing statue of Karomama, a Divine Consort of Amun from Dynasty 22, at the Louvre illustrates just how skilled the metal workers of that period were (Ziegler (1990), 71). The graceful figure, arms outstretched, wears an intricately detailed broad necklace. Her dress, inlaid with amazingly elaborate gold and electrum decoration, is outstandingly elegant—the finest bronze, in this author's opinion, known from Egypt.

## Late Period

The Nubians ended the Third Intermediate Period in the late eighth century BCE, reestablishing a united kingdom and initiating the Late Period (722–332 BCE), which endured, despite two successful incursions by the Persians, until Alexander the Great's invasion in 332 BCE. The study of the art of this period has been generally neglected, even belittled, a view succinctly expressed by T.G.H. James: "In 1958 most Egyptologists believed that after early 20th Dynasty it was downhill all the way" (D'Auria (2010), 195). James added that he was converted to a different opinion by B.V. Bothmer, whose landmark exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum in 1961, with its accompanying catalog, revealed the art of the Late Period to an enthusiastic public (Bothmer 1960).

The Nubians, or Kushites, strove to restore religious orthodoxy and order in Egypt. During their brief hegemony, lasting about sixty years, they undertook the construction of numerous monuments, especially in Thebes. Their two- and three-dimensional sculpture relied heavily on Old and Middle Kingdom styles, a practice termed "archaism." The three-dimensional images of this dynasty were often inspired by Middle Kingdom style, an era clearly admired by the Kushites. This slavish copying has led to numerous misattributions of uninscribed statues.

A striking relief representation of a dog lying under its owner's chair was recently discovered in the heavily damaged tomb of Karakhamun (TT 223), an early Dynasty 25 Kushite official, located in the South Asasif on the West Bank of Luxor (Figure 4.4) (Pischikova (2010), 267, fig. 3). The astonishing vitality of the image of this pet makes it one of the most endearing animal representations in all of Egyptian art. It reveals the



**Figure 4.4** Sunk relief of a dog lying under its owner's chair, tomb of Karakhamun (TT 223), early Dynasty 25, South Asasif, Thebes, Egypt. Photograph: © Jack Josephson.

superior abilities of artists, perhaps Memphite, used by the Nubians to decorate their Theban tombs.

In 665 BCE, the Assyrians, probably alarmed by the military might of the combined Egyptian-Nubian Empire on the southern flank of their empire, expelled the Kushites from Egypt. In 664 BCE, Psamtik I, the son of an important prince of Lower Egypt, with the consent of the Assyrians, seized control of the north, founding Dynasty 26, the Saite Dynasty. At this time, Upper Egypt was controlled by Mentuemhat, the Mayor of Thebes. After lengthy negotiations, Mentuemhat recognized Psamtik's legitimacy as pharaoh while retaining de facto control of Upper Egypt. Two statues of this powerful man, discovered at the beginning of the twentieth century, illustrate this fascinating story. One, a standing figure in a pharaonic pose, probably carved before his submission to Psamtik, exudes royal authority (Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), no. 246). The other, a bust portrays him as a begging priest, and was likely made after the arrangement with Psamtik (Figure 4.5) (Russmann (1989), fig. 79). His hand cupped under the mouth of his deeply lined face, asks to be fed—a humble gesture that may express his



**Figure 4.5** Bust of Mentuemhat portraying him as a begging priest, early Dynasty 26, from Thebes, Karnak Temple of Mut. Black granite, height 48 cm × width 47 cm, Egyptian Museum Cairo, CG 647. Photograph: © Jack Josephson.

resignation to a newly subservient status. The bust makes a powerful statement, relating a story of profound disappointment. Few, if any, of Psamtik I's monuments have been discovered in Upper Egypt, since he apparently never traveled there. It is reasonable to conclude that it was agreed between the two rivals that Mentuemhat could maintain his former status, but not be pharaoh. Mentuemhat's magnificent tomb is currently under restoration in the Assasif region of the West Bank (TT 34). It contains relief representations of exceptional quality combining Kushite and Saite styles (for example, see Bothmer (1960), fig. 32, no. 14; and Figure 23.3, Lacovara, this volume), its construction bridging both dynasties.

Statuary of Dynasty 26 returns to New Kingdom style, attractive and idealized, but not particularly innovative. In 525 BCE, a Persian army led by Cambyses overthrew the last pharaoh of Dynasty 26 and established Egypt as a vassal state ruled by a succession of Persian satraps. They remained in Egypt until 404 BCE, undertaking little building activity, and achieving no noteworthy artistic accomplishments. Eventually, a little known noble named Amyrtaios defeated the Persians, founding a short-lived Dynasty 28 (404–399 BCE), and leaving virtually no trace of his rule. Dynasty 29 (399–380 BCE), while peaceful and successful, also left few distinctive works of art. Nectanebo I founded Dynasty 30 in 380 BCE, initiating a great period of building and artistic innovation in Egypt. He admired Greek culture and invited Hellenistic merchants and artisans to Memphis who contributed greatly to Egypt's trade activity and artistic output.

The influence of Greek sculptors in the fourth century BCE extended throughout the Mediterranean region, so it is not surprising to find it in Egypt where they were welcomed by the pharaoh. During Nectanebo I's reign some of the finest portraits in Egyptian history were made in a style influenced by Hellenic sculptors. Two examples spring to mind: the Boston and Berlin “Green Heads” (Fazzini, Josephson, and O'Rourke (2005), pl. 38b–c and 39a–b). Both were carved in greywacke, an easily wrought stone amenable to receiving fine details and a lustrous finish. The Boston head (MFA 04.1749) depicts a mature bald priest, his forehead lined with shallow frown lines caused by his raised eyebrows, and deeply furrowed nasal labial grooves. The outer corners of his eyes terminate with crow's feet wrinkles, and a small blemish is visible on one cheek. The artist responsible for this masterpiece understood the gravitas of his subject and successfully rendered it in stone. The Berlin head (AMP 12500) shares many of the characteristics of the Boston head: a bald pate, crow's feet at the eye corners, frown lines extending vertically from the nose, a small scar on the right cheek, and a stern expression. Both portraits incorporate the realistic features originated by Greek artists on the so-called philosopher heads. Only at this time were crow's feet and small imperfections introduced, endowing sculpture with a new dimension of realism.

Two-dimensional art also flourished throughout Dynasty 30 (380–343 BCE). The so-called Neo-Memphite relief carvings are extremely well executed, ranking high in that form of sculptural art. A superb example of this genre, a fragment from a Memphite tomb in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, is coolly described by Georg Steindorff as “good workmanship,” faint praise for this prize work (Steindorff (1946), fig. 273). Nectanebo II had the unenviable distinction of presiding over the end of native rule in Egypt in 343 BCE, when that country was reinvaded and once again conquered by the Persians. A few years later, Alexander the Great defeated the Persians initiating over two millennia of Egypt as a vassal state.

This brief resume of the connoisseurship of Egyptian art hardly addresses the totality of this priceless inheritance, but hopefully it highlights the artistic qualities of that rich and prolific civilization and will lead to a broader study. Once the connoisseur unravels the iconography, composition, and date of a work of art, it becomes a window through which we can understand the aesthetic, social, and political mores of ancient Egypt. Even though Egyptian art history has largely disappeared from university curricula in favor of philology (the study of the Egyptian language), art history must occupy a critical if not essential place in the learning experience of aspiring Egyptologists in order to understand the past of this ancient land.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

While comparatively few books discussing Egyptian art history have been published, a few stand out and should be read by students wishing to pursue this topic. Perhaps the most important general exposition is Robins 1997. Another highly recommended volume is Smith 1958. Also excellent is Russmann 1989: Russmann's text and Finn's photography make this book alone in its class. A number of specialized treatments are also available to the general reader (Josephson 1997; Myśliwiec 1988; Stanwick 2002; Vandier 1952–1978). Bronzes are well covered in Hill 2004. For drawings Peck 1979 contains much information and pictures of a great art form in ancient Egypt.

Museum catalogs are another valuable source for those interested in art. For the Predynastic Period, Teeter 2011 has a series of essays by specialists and photographs of many objects largely unknown except to a few scholars. For the Old Kingdom, see Metropolitan Museum of Art 1999. The Middle Kingdom exhibition I am most fond of is Wildung 2000, with the text in German. The New Kingdom is very well illustrated and explained in Freed, Markowitz, and D'Auria 1999. B.V. Bothmer is the primary source of information about art from the Late Period. His 1960 exhibition catalog is the bible for that era.

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## CHAPTER 5

# Iconography and Symbolism

*Maya Müller*

## Introduction: What Is Iconography?

Iconography may be considered the foremost and leading method of art historical research in recent times. In Egyptological literature, very modest beginnings can be observed around 1910, followed by a noticeable improvement in the 1930s. Important progress began in the 1960s when fresh impetus occurred with the technological progress of the documentation of monuments. Since the last quarter of the twentieth century, the effectiveness of iconography was enhanced by combining it with other methods, such as semiotics, statistics, or linguistics.

The term “iconography” designates the totality of images; essentially the entire corpus of works of fine and applied arts which are preserved from ancient Egypt. Also, iconography is a modern approach to ancient art that deals with the themes and motifs on all types of works that must be identified, classified, and interpreted. The term thus refers to the contents of a picture, as opposed to its form, style, or design (Müller 1993, 2002; Eggler et al. 2006). The term “iconology” is closely related to iconography, even if its use is largely restricted to the Anglo-Saxon Warburg-School of European art history (Eberlein 2008). Iconology refers to elucidating the theme of a picture through the discovery of its cultural, social, and historical background (van Straten 1994). Iconology has largely remained ignored in Egyptology to this day. Only in recent years have authors used the term in titles or prefaces of publications, assuming that iconology refers to a second, higher level of interpretation. The term “symbolism” is rarely used in Egyptology (Wilkinson 2001). Nonetheless, the omnipresence of symbols in Egyptian art is of course well known and taken into account by researchers. In theoretical discussion, it is thought that art can be regarded as a system of symbols (Eggler et al. (2006), 3). However, there is some Egyptological discussion about the term “semiotics,” the theory of signs, which is used almost synonymously with the term “symbol.”

According to the semiotic approach, a work of art can be understood as a system of signs (Reiche 2006).

So much for a first orientation on the subject. More elaborate definitions of iconography, iconology, and symbolism will be presented in the section Theoretical Reflection on Iconography, Iconology, and Symbolism below. The theme of methodology and terminology first appeared around 1990, and was a latecomer to Egyptology.

Since iconography is a wide field, how does one explore it, technically speaking? To begin with, the modern beholder should be aware of how visual information is organized in a picture. The main parameters can be defined as follows (Müller 2002):

- Identifying carrier objects. Since every picture needs a medium on which to materialize, the first step is to identify it. There are two kinds of carrier objects: either buildings or mobile objects, and both categories comprise a multitude of types. Characteristically, buildings contain a large series of pictures, and this is even the case for some types of mobile objects, such as painted coffins or illustrated papyri.
- Identifying the elements of a picture. Among authors, there is a general consensus that human and animal figures, things, inscriptions, and their parts are the basic elements; however, designations and definitions may differ.
- Identifying the scenes, i.e. the actions carried out by the main figures. Actions normally are arranged in continuous sequences on tomb and temple walls or on illustrated papyri, etc., and their protagonists are often surrounded by subsidiary figures and objects. Consequently, specialists must begin by subdividing rows of figures or scenes into meaningful units, because they are organized like hieroglyphic script that is a continuous flow of signs not divided into words.
- Defining the relative position of a scene. On complex media, such as the rooms of a temple, the position of a scene in relation to its context, i.e. the neighboring or more distant scenes, must be defined. The aim is to recognize correspondences between scenes situated on different parts of the medium.
- Identifying the types of inscription on a picture, such as names and titles, offering formulas, or hymns.
- Stating the identity (social standing and occupation) of the figures represented.
- Identifying the ritualistic, mythological, or profane themes or cycles to which a single picture or a sequence of scenes may belong.

When choosing a research subject, the choices are extremely manifold, and can range from a single type of figure, such as the god Horakhty (Berteaux 2005), the pharaoh motif on scarabs (Wiese 1990), to the relief program of a whole temple (Arnold 1962). Ideally, researchers try to completely document a chosen subject, comprising all instances and not just a statistically relevant quantity. Only in recent years have electronic databases been used by individual scholars as the preferred instrument for storing and searching all kinds of documents. Interestingly, the traditional methods of iconographic work have not become obsolete in the course of time, but were modified periodically, as researchers accepted the challenge of seeing pictures from continually new perspectives. Methodically, iconography is most closely related to archaeology and to the analysis of style, to a degree that sometimes forbids attributing a publication clearly to the one specific discipline.

In the last three or four decades, we have been confronted with an increasing flood of publications in the field of iconography. However, there are no manuals containing the totality, or even the important parts, of the extant material owing to the immense amount of pictorial production in ancient Egypt. Nor do we have manuals on teaching methods for iconographical research for students, up to now. This lack is rooted in the fact that, at universities, chairs in the history of Egyptian art are almost non-existent to this day. For this reason, there is no wide-ranging and continuous teaching tradition that could be the foundation for the development of systematic guides.

## First Phase of Iconographical Research: Emergence (ca. 1900–1950)

Iconographical research cannot begin until some basic requirements are fulfilled. First of all, monuments must be discovered and excavated. A critical mass of pictures of many types and of all periods must be known. This was the case around 1910 when royal relief sculpture and statues of the Old and Middle Kingdoms had been excavated in the sun temples and pyramid complexes of Dynasty 5 at Abusir (1898–1908), and the pyramid complex of Senwosret I at Lisht (1895). The second basic requirement concerns the techniques of documentation and printing. The chief technique of documenting the decorated walls of temples and tombs was graphic copying. The great pioneers of copying in meticulous accordance with the originals were Norman de Garis Davies and his wife Nina who worked for decades for the Egypt Exploration Fund's Archaeological Survey, beginning in 1898 (Strudwick n.d.). In 1907, Norman de Garis Davies became the head of the graphic section of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's expedition to Egypt. That same year he worked with J.H. Breasted who founded, in 1924, the equally important Epigraphic Survey of the Chicago Oriental Institute. As vital as the copying and subsequent publishing of miles of reliefs was the rendering of photographs in books in good quality and at a reasonable price. The invention of the *heliogravure*, in the late nineteenth century, was the start of a new era of publishing on art themes, as witnessed by von Bissing's monumental volumes *Denkmäler ägyptischer Skulptur* (von Bissing 1906–1914).

In the initial phase of iconography, there was no need for methodological reflection. The well-developed method used in the history of Christian medieval art could be applied to different fields. Early iconographical themes normally focus on the explanation of a single motif or scene, for example the spear of Horus (Schäfer 1904), the blue crown (Steindorff 1917), the duck with reverted head (Hermann 1932), or scenes of hunting in the papyrus thicket (Balcz 1939). The process of introducing iconographical themes into Egyptology can be followed in the journal *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* (ZÄS). This periodical appeared in 1863 and welcomed new subjects of research as proposed by authors in the course of time. Since the late nineteenth century, an article on a stela, statue, or an object of applied art occasionally appeared in the ZÄS, and by the 1930s and 1940s, articles discussing the subject and meaning of a motif or scene became more frequent.

An interesting example is Part III of Georges Foucart's *Etudes Thébaines (Theban Studies)*, published in 1924 in the *Bulletin of the French Archaeological Institute in Cairo* (BIFAO), bearing the title "The Precursors of the Sun" (Foucart 1924). He explicitly

interpreted the iconography of the New Kingdom Theban necropolis as dominated as he saw it by solar gods and stellar goddesses. The leitmotif is the so-called “Festival of the Valley” (the great procession of Amun-Re, the sun god of Karnak, to the necropolis on the West bank). While explaining pictures on tomb walls and grave goods through parallels in funerary texts, Foucart displayed of his knowledge of Egyptian theology from the Pyramid Texts down to the temples of the Ptolemies. Characteristically for his time, he does not bother to give references identifying the text passages and tomb paintings he mentioned, leaving readers who were less well acquainted with the material in despair.

## Second Phase of Iconographical Research: Consolidation (ca. 1950–1980)

A third requirement for essential progress in iconographical work was recognized at the beginning of the 1950s: entire relief cycles, mural paintings, complete corpora of statuettes, or decorated objects of applied art in museum collections, and so on, must be published in order to enable advanced research on their origin, development, and meaning. Important advances in documentary techniques also came at the right time. The 1950s and 1960s saw the emergence of the Photostat machine for half-tone copies, the reflex camera with autofocus, and color slides. Through the use of these devices, the creation of documentary photos became relatively easy and cheap for those who were not professionals in the field.

Researchers felt ready to tackle more ambitious tasks for the first time. From the 1950s through the 1970s, monographs focusing on a specific type of object in its entirety, or a complete cycle of scenes in relief or painting, were produced. Authors became aware of the importance of reconstructing the archaeological contexts and functions of objects carrying pictures. They also considered the connections between objects, relationships between representation and inscription, and the role of artisans, patrons, and users of works of art. Regrettably, the limited space of this chapter allows only a few examples to be mentioned.

Selim Hassan (1953) assembled and commented on the votive objects found in the sanctuary of Horemakhet at the feet of the great sphinx of Giza. Alliot (1949–1954) followed the course of the sun-god’s cult, in the Ptolemaic temple of Horus at Edfu, by comparing relief scenes and hieroglyphic inscriptions. Slightly later, Derchain (1962) discovered a non-sequential, complex layout of ritual scenes at the Edfu temple, which he termed “temple grammar.” Dieter Arnold (1962) thought of reading the ritual scenes on the inner walls of New Kingdom temples in order to identify the function of the rooms. Others dealt with the iconography of apotropaic wands (Altenmüller 1965), the funerary ritual (Settgast 1963) or the judgment of the dead scenes for officials (Seeber 1976). Important pioneering work was carried out by Hornung and Staehelin (1976) when they analyzed scarabs from a dozen different perspectives and reintegrated results into a holistic image of this peculiar kind of object. They were followed by Claudia Müller-Winkler (1987) who was the first to classify, date, and interpret a large collection of amulets.

At the same time, the first attempts at editing iconographical manuals occurred. The first great pioneering work of this genre, the *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Thebes*

compiled by Berta Porter and Rosalind Moss (1927–1929, second edition 1960–1972), did not mention the term “iconography.” Nevertheless, the two authors, focused for the first time on a complete bibliographical registering of the tombs and temples of Thebes, created *ex nihilo* a consistent terminology and syntax for describing all kinds of scenes and their parts, including a system for placing each scene and inscription on its proper wall, thus establishing the standards in use to this day. Their analytical scheme of describing walls reflects the Egyptian artists’ system of accumulating long rows of figures on a ground line, and, in the case of private tombs, the dominance of large key scenes showing the tomb owner or king over large subsets of anonymous personnel.

Jacques Vandier’s *Manuel d’archéologie égyptienne* (Vandier 1958–78) aimed at presenting, in volume III, a survey of the statuary. Owing to the conventional character of Egyptian art, he had to choose a typological order, restricting the criteria of classification by the number of standard postures, gestures, attributes, and articles of costume and headgear that occurred during all periods. Volumes IV–VI dealt with the profane imagery on the walls of the private tombs from the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms, the so-called “scenes of daily life,” and introduced a typological classification of scenes that followed the hierarchical order of actors, their attitudes and actions. Vandier identified a series of standardized scenes that represented either the occupations and pastimes of the tomb owner and his personnel, or the production of life’s sustenance, such as cattle breeding, agriculture, and transportation by ship.

The third case, the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae (LIMC)* (Ackermann and Gisler 1981–2009) was conceived in the early 1970s. In contrast to individual Egyptological undertakings, this Lexicon was a wide-ranging project of international classical archaeology. As suggested by the title, the Lexicon presents Greek and Roman deities and heroes as individual personalities, arranged by name. It pertains to Egypt in so as far as it includes Egyptian deities identified, in the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods, with classical counterparts such as Isis-Demeter, Horus-Apollo, and Osiris-Dionysus. To this corpus may be added Richard Wilkinson’s succinct iconographical manual *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, even if it is of a more recent date (Wilkinson 2003). Its concept is related to the *LIMC*, by understanding Egyptian deities as mythical personalities. However, owing to their lack of individuality, the sequence, in the book, is a compromise of names and types of physical appearance.

Strangely enough, the term “iconography” went almost unused in Egyptology before the late 1960s as researchers began very slowly to realize what they were doing on the methodological level. It follows, therefore, that none of the above-mentioned manuals discuss the theory or method of iconography.

### Third Phase of Iconographical Research: New Horizons (ca. 1980–2010)

From about 1980, iconographic research increased considerably in quantity and quality. Recent electronic catalogs of university libraries and complete digitized editions of

periodicals enable some spot-checks on the extent of iconographical publications. The *Bulletin of the French Archaeological Institute in Cairo (BIFAO)* enables us to observe the use of the term “iconography” through the last 120 years. After a single precursor in 1924, the term appears sporadically from 1965 to 1975, and then, from 1976 onward, it is regularly listed several times a year. Similarly, the Special Collection Catalog of Egyptology at Heidelberg University in Germany retrieves, from titles and abstracts of publications, the keyword “iconography” sporadically in the 1960s, and increasingly thereon from the 1970s. In 2008, the complete abstracts of communications to the Tenth International Congress of Egyptologists at Rhodes (Greece) were published on the Internet. About 12 percent of the lectures concerned art history, and over 80 percent of these, iconography.

The recent rise of iconography owes much to new techniques of documentation, data processing, and publishing, thanks to advanced information technology including scanners, digital cameras, and the Internet from the 1990s onward. Moreover, Egyptological archaeology and philology are of primary importance for supplying the foundations on which to build iconographical research. I refer to a large number of excellent publications describing (re-)excavations of royal monuments or elite tombs. Categories of equal importance are new editions and translations of text corpora from tombs, or Leitz’s 2002–2003 *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen* (Lexicon of Egyptian Deities and Designations of Deities).

The third phase is particularly characterized by the discovery and exploration of new fields of research. All categories of pictorial production, if regarded as art or as non-artistic, were now the subject of research. Moreover, material from new, rarely explored historical periods was taken into account, thus giving rise to a new multiplicity of themes. Documenting the large quantities of material became possible thanks to the use of electronic databases. A more differentiated analysis of data was achieved through complementing traditionally iconographical approaches with new ones, such as the history of religions, linguistics, archaeology, sociology, gender studies, statistics, and the history of interrelations with the Eastern Mediterranean and the Levant. Authors began to explain their interdisciplinary or multi-perspective methods and approaches in their publications in about 1990. Following is a brief presentation of some innovative methods of analysis.

At this time, new types of objects or categories of pictures were introduced into research. Very simple types were chosen, whether of artistic interest or not, such as amulets or votive offerings for a deity (Bulté 1991; Pinch 1993; DuQuesne 2009). An entire necropolis containing funeral buildings and burial chambers with their layouts of coffins and grave goods can be perceived as pictures (Seidlmaier 2001). The same is true for richly decorated Roman mummies that previously were not systematically considered as aesthetic objects or pictures rendering specific themes (Riggs 2005). New epochs or periods were introduced as well, that were rarely or never included in iconographic research before, such as the very early or very late periods of Egyptian history (Kaplan 1999; Fluck and Vogelsang-Eastwood 2004; Koetzsche 2004; Graff 2009; Del Vesco 2010; see Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2).

From “Osiris in the tree” to “Dionysus in the vine”: revival of a Pharaonic composition with the same god in the same antithetic scheme, yet in Byzantine transformation.



**Figure 5.1** “Osiris in the tree” on a mummy sheath, Dynasty 22, ca. tenth/ninth centuries BCE, Museum of Cultures Basel, inv. III 129a. Photograph: Maya Müller.



**Figure 5.2** “Dionysus in the vine” tapestry roundel, ca. sixth/ninth centuries CE, Museum of Cultures Basel, inv. III 575. Photograph: Peter Horner.

Recent methods of iconographic research can be included under the catch phrase “new analysis of data” and are summarized below.

### *Constructing highly complex typologies*

The pictorial material that must be analyzed can be more or less homogeneous. An example of working with highly homogeneous material is Regine Schulz’s study *Der kuboide Statuentypus* (Schulz 1992). Reserved for officials, the cuboid or block statue type is clearly defined by posture. Baines’ *Fecundity Figures* (Baines 1985) is also a valuable example. Although mainly executed in relief and in royal monuments, the so-called fecundity figures are the most common allegorical representatives of prosperity and well-being granted by the king. In both cases, the complexity lies in the high number of subtypes and their possible connections with contextual factors such as the original location of a statue or relief figure. Myśliwiec’s *Le portrait royal dans le bas-relief du Nouvel Empire* (Myśliwiec 1976) and *Royal Portraiture of the Dynasties XXI–XXX* (Myśliwiec 1988) as well as Tefnин’s *La statuaire d’Hatshepsout, Portrait royal et politique sous la 18e Dynastie* (Tefnин 1979) likewise disclose the antagonistic relationship of the one and the manifold, i.e., the physical person of a king and the many facets he (or she) presents. On the other hand, the iconographical material to be analyzed can be less homogeneous, although belonging to a well-defined theme. Eminent examples are Niwiński’s *Studies*

*on the Illustrated Theban Funerary Papyri of the 11th and 10th Centuries* (Niwiński 1989), Bulté's *Talismans d'heureuse maternité* (Bulté 1991), and Pinch's *Votive Offerings to Hathor* (Pinch 1993). In these cases, not only the subject matter or contents of the pictures pertaining to such a theme are variable, but also the media (i.e., the objects or wall surfaces bearing pictures) are variable. This enhances the complexity of relationships that are possible between types of media and/or types of motifs and scenes. The challenge of such studies is to identify ancient patterns of choosing and arranging motifs and scenes, or rules governing the almost unlimited number of variants.

### ***Introducing semiotics and statistics in the analysis of two-dimensional art***

A combination of semiotics and statistics can be introduced to the analysis of two-dimensional art, that is reliefs and paintings on walls, or on mobile objects. Maya Müller (Müller 2003, 2009) introduced a semiotic-statistical method (although without using these designations) in order to analyze and explain unusual representations of deities. She focuses on static scenes that are neither ritual nor mythological, but allegorical, in a specifically Egyptian way. They are understood as specific combinations of some conspicuous motifs, that is properties of the body or attributes of the protagonist, such as nudity, frontal view, or standing on an animal or animal-shaped boat. The analysis is done in two steps: first, by identifying four or five of the most conspicuous and rare iconic components determining the meaning of the scene which is used as a paradigm. Second, by comparing the paradigm with other scenes containing all or at least two of these components, all possible contexts in which they can appear can be checked. Results demonstrate which combinations of decisive pictorial components belong to what kinds of symbolic or allegorical themes.

Gwenola Graff (Graff 2009) was the first to present a semiotic-statistical study on Naqada vase painting based on a comprehensive digital databank. Conditions for working on prehistoric ceramics are difficult: a surface has no lateral borders but curves around the body of a vase. Consequently, motifs on vases have no common orientation or direction, nor are they spatially related by intersections. Notwithstanding, pictures can be regarded as a complex communication system as Graff explains in her chapter on methods. Exploring relationships between pictorial elements, she found syntactic rules comparable to the ancient Egyptian language. Some constellations or groups of pictorial elements are supposed to express some basic ideas on the (re)creation and sustenance of life.

Amy Calvert (Calvert 2009) describes her method using the festival and battle scenes in the court of the temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu as a demonstration. All pictorial elements are entered into her databases. The king as the most active figure is predefined as the center of attention to which all other elements are related. The king's costume and attributes, gestures and postures, names and epithets, and all other figures, objects, and inscriptions are registered to account for the complexity of the pictures. This comprehensive analysis aims at searching for correlations between elements that are significant, allowing one to ask, for example, what is the effect of the king's regalia on the persons in the picture or on the beholders, both ancient or modern?

## *Defining the role of key scenes, the so-called icons, in the officials' tombs*

According to some authors, the entire design and decorative elements of a tomb form an active system under the leadership of the icons, intending to further the well-being of all implied persons, living or dead. Assmann, in an article of 1987, formulated a hypothesis on the functioning of a tomb's decorative program (Assmann 1987). In his understanding, there were rules for arranging scenes on the walls in analogy to the rules of grammar and syntax in language. For example, key scenes like the tomb owner sitting at the offering table or inspecting works are dubbed "constellations" which have remained unchanged for millennia.

Martin Fitznerreiter (Fitznerreiter 1995, 2001, 2006) redefines the function of pictures, particularly in key scenes or icons, based on their technical value in funerary practice, opening up a new perspective on the thematic cycles of Old and New Kingdom mastabas. Decorative programs describe neither the earthly life of the tomb owner, nor his ideal existence in the hereafter. Rather, the icons represent or confirm ritual actions taking place at the very location of the picture in the tomb, or pointing symbolically to a venue outside of the tomb. The dominating icons show the tomb owner large-scale in standard situations, while small-scale sub-scenes that comment on the main visual themes give us an idea of the tomb owner's individual intentions.

Melinda Hartwig (Hartwig 2004) finds a thoroughly new interpretation of the tomb installations and decorations of the mid-Dynasty 18. Her focus is on disclosing how the tomb owner continues his identity beyond death and into rebirth as well as how all components of the tomb—the building, the burial, and the performance of rites—serve that aim. The most important themes for the tomb owner are condensed into large standardized pictures, the icons. The author discusses how patrons and artists chose and redefined these icons for every new tomb individually, adding varying subsets of small scenes, as well as how priests and visitors contributed to the function of the pictures and the whole installations of the tomb continuously on behalf of the owner. The making and functioning of the tomb is conceived and described, by Hartwig, as an active process.

## *Reading sophisticated layouts of ritual scenes in temples*

When it became clear, some decades ago, that the numerous ritual scenes involving kings and deities on Ramesside and Ptolemaic temple walls could not be read in a linear chronological sequence, alternative ancient systems of arrangement had to be discovered. The solution was to read decorative programs of a temple hall or a whole temple integrally, finding intertwined relationships between scenes after deciphering symmetries of form and of meaning on corresponding walls.

Françoise Labrique (Labrique 1992) studied five sequences of the ritual of "Offering the Fields" in the Ptolemaic Edfu temple. She found a dense net of mirrored, symmetrical correspondences between entire sequences of scenes, single scenes, or elements of the texts commenting on the scenes. While the corresponding entities (mostly text blocks)

are often not identical but complementary, it is the very difference between them that sheds light on the meaning of the ritual.

According to Benoît Lurson (Lurson 2001, 2007), ritual scenes in Ramesside temples do not have inscriptions that comment on the action represented in a picture. Rather, he had to identify distinctive iconographical elements “commenting” on the ritual act of a scene pictorially not linguistically. The elements, such as crowns, aprons, names, and gestures of the actors, recur on distant walls and pillars, forming complementary pairs (but not identical), or symmetrical patterns reminiscent of stylistic rules current in ancient rhetoric. They form “discourses” among scenes revealing the characters of the gods involved.

Martin Fitzenreiter (Fitzenreiter 2011) presents the case of a Late Ramesside official’s tomb, revealing, among the relief scenes and textual units on the walls, a number of relationships similar to the *parallelismus membrorum* of poetry. This enables a tentative reconstruction of the ancient beholders’ reception, and of the social interaction between artists and client.

### *Exploring the many-sided nature of Egyptian gods in monographic studies*

In recent years, three prominent deities have been studied. All three authors agree that iconographic studies uniting the totality (or a high percentage) of instances of a specific god were badly missing until recently, although this is a prerequisite for achieving a highly differentiated analysis of data.

Véronique Berteaux (Berteaux 2005) dealt with Horakhty, a solar god whose omnipresence contrasts with his unknown nature. She collected an important number of sources, and looked at pictures and inscriptions as equivalent bearers of meaning that must be processed together. Horakhty poses the problem of being present mainly in ritual scenes, but having no specific properties, save over seventy composite names containing other solar gods (Re, Amun, Atum, etc.). Trying to find a possible identity for this god, Berteaux discusses the relationship between texts and pictures, and suggest that pictures need to be read similarly to texts.

Kristina Lahn’s (Lahn 2005, in press) goddess Qedeshet (Qadesh) is the very opposite of Horakhty since the relatively small number of instances of her all come from popular belief, not the temple cult. Qedeshet is a rare case of a deity that originated in the Levant and whose appearance was imported from there, but was completely re-invented on entering Egypt. The author adapts her methods and approaches to the particular conditions of this case, combining iconography with semiotics, linguistics (Egypt, Syria), the history of religions, and archaeology. The double nature of Qedeshet as a Syrian and Egyptian goddess is studied with care, closely observing the possible transfers of pictorial or conceptual elements in both directions.

A third case, occurring in the Ptolemaic era, concerning the creation of a goddess for political reasons was studied by Maria Nilsson (Nilsson 2012). For Nilsson, any scene carved on the walls of Ptolemaic and Roman temples represents a system of signs forming a code. The message of a scene can be decoded by analyzing its components and all occurring constellations of these components. In this case Arsinoe II, the divinized queen

who was distinguished by an individual crown was studied together with a particular form of Hathor of Dendera who was created at the same time as Arsinoe the goddess. When analyzing all representations of Arsinoe II, the creation of the new goddess could be followed closely, together with her assumption of two roles: as the reigning co-regent for her husband and brother Ptolemy II, and as the God's Wife of the Ram of Mendes. Her integration into the circle of Hathoric goddesses conferred a singular political and religious authority to her. This was done to win the loyalty of both the Egyptian and the Greek population. The author aimed to demonstrate how the outer temple walls, visible for all to see, expand a program of assimilation in both directions, from Greek to Egyptian culture and vice versa.

The above-mentioned research ultimately widened the scope of the terms "art" and "iconography," achieving more complex interpretations, and experimenting with several levels of reading images. However, there may be an inherent danger that can be called "over-interpretation." Authors like to discover, in the minds of the ancient Egyptians, a wealth of methodical thoughts, and of sophisticated devices to express them that can be deduced from a series of images. In the end, this tends to be over-speculative. On the other hand, there is a promising recent trend among researchers to become aware of and explain their methods of analysis.

## Showing, Propagating, and Discussing Iconography: The New Mass Media

For the purposes of this chapter, mass media is conceived in a broad sense, comprising museum exhibitions designed for a large public, electronic databases publicly accessible on the internet, and international congresses, such as those of the last 20 to 30 years. Through new forms of communication, iconography as a subdiscipline of Egyptian history of art begins to generate more attention to the art of reading images, among specialists and amateurs.

### *Museum exhibitions*

Although major Egyptian exhibitions are more frequent since the 1970s, they rarely deal with iconographic themes. Two early exhibitions were created by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and have been documented in comprehensive catalogs. The first was called *Egypt's Golden Age: The Art of Living in the New Kingdom* (Brovarski, Doll, and Freed 1982). Based on extensive research, 400 objects of applied art were assembled, embodying or symbolizing the professional and family life of the elite during the prosperous Imperial Age of Egypt. Six years later, the second project, entitled *Mummies and Magic: The Funerary Arts of Ancient Egypt*, was carried out (D'Auria, Lacovara, and Roehrig 1988). Since the Egyptians expressed concern for the afterlife in pictures accompanied by captions or spells, the exhibition offered a chronologically arranged "iconography of death." An exhibition of an entirely different character, sponsored by the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, was held at the Rietberg Museum

in Zurich (Do. Arnold 2010). The show explored the symbolism of animal representation as based on the ancient artists' observation of behavior. A traveling exhibition with a uniquely attractive theme was conceived in 2008 by the Bibel & Orient Museum at Freiburg in Switzerland entitled *Gott weiblich, Eine vergessene Seite des biblischen Gottes* (Female God, a forgotten side of the Biblical God). A smaller part of the exhibits stemmed from Egypt, while the majority of the show consisted of female idols from the Levant. This imagery proves how the people of the ancient Orient clung to their female divinities even in strongly patriarchal societies, and documents the astonishing evolution of the divine in female shape (Keel 2008). Among smaller local exhibitions based on exhaustive iconographic research, one instance can be cited only: the Museum of Byzantine Art, Berlin and its presentation of Coptic tapestries with Biblical subjects—a category of images which is extremely hard to decipher (Fluck 2008).

## *Online databases*

A few museums have published their Egyptian collections in the form of online databases. Examples include: the *British Museum Collection Database*, and the *UCL Petrie Collection Online Catalogue* in London; at Freiburg, Switzerland, the *Bibel & Orient Museum Databank Online* (BODO); and a specific part of the collection at the Louvre Museum, Paris is registered in the *Catalogue en ligne des céramiques coptes* (online catalog of Coptic ceramics). These databases are in various states of completion in terms of photographs and descriptions of objects. However, they are not designed for iconographical research, with the possible exception of the British Museum's database.

In the last decade, archives pertaining to the exploration of great archaeological sites were made available online, containing object records and photographs with important iconographic potential. For example, *The Giza Archives Project* of the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), Boston, based on the Harvard-MFA expedition to Giza, is equipped with advanced search functions for users. Furthermore, there are the *Electronic Resources from the Griffith Institute Archive* at Oxford with a wealth of documentary material from the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb and the Theban necropolis in general. A third case is the *Karnak Cachette Database*, offering a complete inventory of the statues, stelae, and so on, found between 1903 and 1907 by Georges Legrain in the cachette found in the court of the VIIth pylon at Karnak. This is a joint project of the French Institute of Oriental Archaeology, Cairo (IFAO) and the Supreme Council of Antiquities.

At least three iconographic research projects are being carried out at present by university institutes, aiming at the creation of important databases. At the University of Heidelberg, rituals are the focus of the Institute for Cultural Studies (*Ägyptologische Forschungsstätte für Kulturwissenschaft* (AeFKW)), headed by Hubert Roeder. Since 2005, a digital database is being compiled containing, ideally, all extant ancient Egyptian ritual scenes. Input and retrieval of data are guided by an elaborate system of thesauri, as explained on the AeFKW website. The image database was designed as a research instrument that will result in a series of publications on iconographic aspects of rituals. An equally ambitious research project at the History of Religions Chair of the University of Zurich is called *Iconography of Deities and Demons in the Ancient Near East* (IDD). The aim of this project is to produce an online version alongside of a print version

of an iconographic dictionary with special emphasis on Palestine/Israel during the first millennium BCE. The first part is concerned with theoretical and methodological issues, followed by a second, systematic section containing the entries. Egyptian deities are included if they are related to the religious world of the Near East. Owing to the focus of this multi-disciplinary experiment on the complete Near Eastern iconography, occurrences of deities and demons, whether Egyptian or other, are treated integrally, not in separate entries according to their countries of origin. Thus, Egyptian deities are seen from a new perspective. *AIGYPTOS* is the designation of an in-progress, comprehensive bibliographical database sponsored by the Egyptological Institutes of the universities of Munich and Heidelberg. Entries are systematically indexed with search keywords covering many fields including art and iconography. In 2012–2014, *AIGYPTOS* will be merged with the *Online Egyptological Bibliography* (OEB) of the Griffith Institute, Oxford.

### *Congresses and international meetings*

Congresses and international meetings specializing in iconography are still rare. The theme of the Third Egyptological Conference on Temples held at Hamburg in 1994 was, however, entirely devoted to iconography as it pertained to systems and programs of decoration of Egyptian temples (Kurth 1995). New concepts of reading and interpreting ritual relief cycles in temples were discussed. For the first time, international researchers became aware of a topic that had formerly been relegated to the domain of French-speaking Egyptologists who were engaged in documentation projects in huge Ptolemaic temples. In the case of the conference on the art of the Old Kingdom in Cairo, which took place at the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (DAI) in 1991, iconographic subjects were complemented by some stylistic issues. Participants demonstrated the importance of detailed observation, causing fragmentary statues to speak out about their original “condition of life” (Anonymous 1995).

## **Theoretical Reflection on Iconography, Iconology, and Symbolism**

Theoretical reflection on the methodology of iconography and iconology began late in Egyptology, and may be considered to be in its incipient phase, to this day. It was not until around 1990 that the first tentative works appeared.

### *Iconography*

Two articles deal with the fundamentals of Egyptian iconography (Müller 1993, 2002). At a time when digital databases were supposed to become available on the desk of every individual researcher, it appeared urgent to develop a terminology for entering iconographical data. However, Egyptian relief sculpture and mural painting largely avoid referring to space and time, arranging rows of figures on horizontal ground lines from

right to left, or vice versa, in a rhythmic order. Owing to this particular structure of pictures, conditions of readability are fundamentally different from those of classical and later cultures. A primary task was therefore to define and designate all basic pictorial elements and their parts (things, figures, etc.), as well as actions and scenes. Next, pictorial elements and scenes had to be classified in order to build a general foundation for advanced iconographical research.

The so-called Freiburg School, founded by Othmar Keel, the former head of Old Testament studies at the University of Freiburg (Switzerland), was (and still is) active in this newly disclosed field. Focusing on the Near East of the first millennium BCE, the Freiburg School invented iconographic research on all those categories of anepigraphic applied art which had, so far, been virtually ignored such as scarabs, cylinder seals, amulets, bronze and clay figurines. Iconographic research was established as an autonomous discipline. It was realized that the interpretation of pictures may shed new light on the understanding of Biblical and related texts. This was in contrast with the traditional method of interpreting pictures through texts only. Moreover, all neighboring cultures of Palestine/Israel were included in the study, comprising Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean, and thus achieved a multidisciplinary approach (Uehlinger (2000), xv–xxx).

The main representatives of the school of Freiburg explain their opinion on iconography in an online article in *Das wissenschaftliche Bibellexikon im Internet* (WIBILEX) (Eggler et al. 2006). According to them, the term “iconography” refers to the methodical exploration of pictures. The actual method is still based on Erwin Panofsky’s three-step scheme as designed and adapted in 1932, 1939, and 1955, in which he defined three phases. The first phase identifies and describes pictorial elements; the second phase analyzes pictorial representations in order to attribute them to specific themes and ideas; and the third phase of interpretation aiming at a deeper understanding may be called iconology (see below). While traditional iconography in classical and Christian art largely relies on pertinent texts for interpretation, in the Ancient Near East texts and pictures are generally incongruous. Pictures or texts from the latter region should ideally be treated separately in order to avoid superficial correlations. Ancient Near Eastern figurative art does not normally refer to texts; rather it is a partially autonomous system of symbols that exist alongside literature.

An eminent specialist of Egyptian iconography, Quaegebeur (1989), found Keel’s method inspiring. However, he objected that, when dealing with the highly complex Egyptian material, a motif cannot be interpreted using a random selection of pictorial representations only, but rather must be understood based on a thorough check of all occurrences including those from written sources.

Achievements of classical archaeology such as the LIMC and of the Freiburg School devoted to Ancient Near Eastern Studies, have a considerable effect on Egyptology. However, Egyptology cannot dispense with developing an appropriate theoretical framework for the iconography of religion. Ancient Egyptian concepts of the divine have an original structure, because the ancient Egyptians seemed to think in images: one’s perception of deities depends on icons, as if it were icons that created deities. This is what follows from the words of Amenhotep III, engraved on the granite stela from his mortuary temple at Thebes, explaining how he, the creator next to the sun-god, created new images of all deities. Through this process, the gods and goddesses came into existence in his temple.

## *Iconology*

The term iconology was scarcely used in Egyptology until very recently. John Baines called his book on fecundity figures the “Iconology of a Genre” (1985). Notwithstanding, he did not use the term in the modern way, but in the Renaissance sense, that is for deciphering allegorical or symbolic figures. The article on “Iconography” in the WIBILEX (Eggler et al. 2006) considers iconology to be the third step in Panofsky’s methodological model, as mentioned above. This last step aims at “interpreting the very meaning of a representation in its intellectual (*geistgeschichtlich*) context which can be seized through intimate knowledge of the ideology (*Weltanschauung*) of a specific culture or period.” The authors prefer not to use the term iconology, but to integrate this step into iconography.

## *Symbolism*

This expression is scarcely used in Egyptological art literature. As mentioned above, the authors of the article “Iconography” in WIBILEX take it for granted that art can be understood as a system of symbols. In the *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, an entry under “god” contains Jan Assmann’s concept of “the symbolic structure of the divine” (Assmann (1977), 760–762). The author explains that deities, while being essentially distant and hidden, are revealed by symbol. The main symbols of the deities are their forms as they appear in art and literature, i.e., their names, their pictures, or their earthly incorporations such as the reigning king or the Apis bull.

Richard Wilkinson (1994, 2001) wrote a book and a Lexicon article on symbols, agreeing with Schott’s (1953) assertion that symbolism is a primary form of Egyptian thought. Symbolism was manifested not only in the representational forms of art and architecture, but also in other areas of life, such as magic or religious ritual. Designating the term “symbol” as composed not of conventional signs but stylistic ways of expression in pictures, he defines nine categories (form, hieroglyphs, relative size, location, material, color, number, action, gesture), bearing in mind the complexity and ambiguity of Egyptian symbolism.

Besides theoretical considerations on iconography and symbolism, a trend that may be called “applied methodology” and that appeared around 1990, is growing in importance. In recent books and articles on iconographic themes, methodological chapters contain the author’s or editor’s reflections on their research methods used in the work (Schulz (1992), 1–16; Seidlmaier (2001), 205–208, 245–247; Hartwig (2004), 2–4, 54–55; Berteaux (2005), 1–6; Calvert 2009; Graff (2009), 18–23; Nilsson (2010), 20–27); Lahn (in press)).

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

There are not many sources on iconography in Egyptological literature. Works that are to mentioned here are studies which either pertain to a much wider field, not iconography alone, or to classical and more recent European, not Egyptian art. Other studies are in preparation and have

not yet appeared. In Verbovsek, Backes, and Jones (2011), the articles in part III.2 (“Kunst-, Bild- und Medienwissenschaft,” 255–401, in German or English) discuss a number of modern methods and approaches to art, including iconography. Van Straten (1994) is a recognized expert on iconography, having been one of the founding editors of ICONCLASS, the leading classification system designed for European art at the Netherlands Institute for Art History, The Hague.

Hölscher (2002), 85–88, contains a brief chapter that provides a didactical introduction to the use of iconography in classical archaeology. The IDD project aims at producing an internet database (a description of the project and a number of entries including some names of Egyptian deities are available at: [www.religionswissenschaft.uzh.ch/idd/](http://www.religionswissenschaft.uzh.ch/idd/)) and a print version in three volumes. The first volume of IDD consists of regional introductory essays, some of which address general issues of IDD’s scope and methodology, while others provide religious and historical background information as well as the “grammar” and “syntax” of the iconography of deities. Müller (2013) provides a comment on methods in Egyptological studies of art history, with bibliography. Müller (in press) will analyze all visual elements indicating the divine nature of figures represented on pictures.

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## CHAPTER 6

# Semiotics and Hermeneutics

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*Valérie Angenot*

## Semiotics

### *Definition and historiography*

Semiotics is the discipline that studies signs as the mechanism of meaning production for all signifying systems. Semiotics started as a branch of linguistics (then named “semiology” by Ferdinand de Saussure in 1968) aimed at analyzing the way meaning was produced and the way thought was translated into linguistic systems. From the 1970s, at the instigation of the earlier works of Charles S. Peirce, the precepts of semiotics evolved to incorporate the analysis of meaning production in non-linguistic systems such as the *Highway Code* (or any iconic road user guide), which expanded the discipline into a wider and more general theory of meaning production of all types of signs (including, for example, non-human sign production such as medical symptoms or animal communication).

The idea of devoting a rigorous area of study to images as communicating systems came along with the structuralist period, at which time linguists, literary persons, philosophers, and psychoanalysts, among others, started to understand social reality as a formal set of epistemological relations which semiotics could interpret. Under the impulsion of that movement, some semioticians notably exhumed the ancient rhetorical categories, such as tropes and figures of speech, to apply them not only to written productions but also to all media using images, including works of art, as well as those objects that did not have artistic status at the time: cinema, comic books, and publicity, among others.

### *Semiotics and Egyptology*

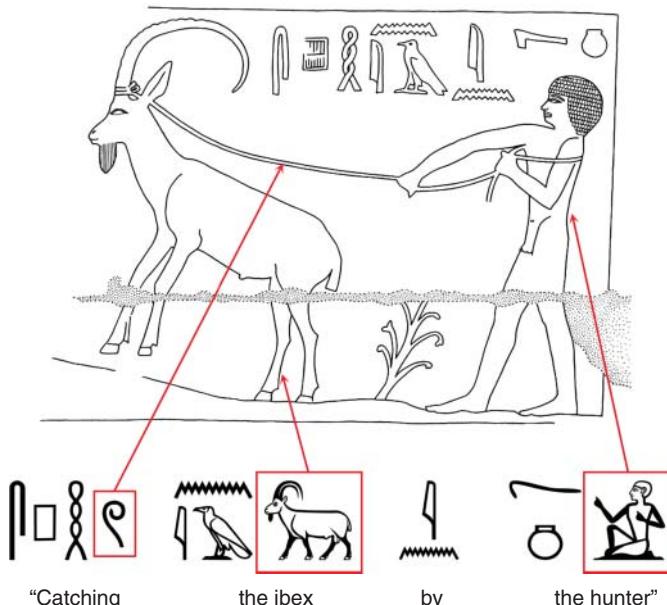
Very quickly, scholars saw the advantage there was in applying semiotic precepts to Egyptology. Even though many Egyptologists had issued theories about how to read and

understand the wide corpus of ancient Egyptian images, it was mostly through the impetus of the so-called “School of Brussels” (mainly represented by Philippe Derchain and Roland Tefnini) that the specific vocabulary pertaining to semiotics and rhetoric was added to the Egyptological analytic arsenal. Such a methodological approach brought very interesting results, proved efficient, and open to new perspectives. However, the newness of semiotics, its specific and complex lingo, as well as its way of disrupting the traditional approach of understanding Egyptian images in a non-art historical and descriptive fashion, sometimes granted semiotics a lukewarm reception among Egyptologists. For the last forty years, various “schools” of Egyptology (e.g., in Germany, France, Spain, Israel, USA, etc.), notably pleading a pluridisciplinary approach (cf. Fischer 1977), have published semiotically oriented studies using the vocabulary and methodological tools of a discipline that is now impacting on our field (e.g., Goldwasser 1995).

## *Relevance*

### *Text and image*

The narrow connection between text and image in ancient Egypt was often put forward, notably to defend a semiotic approach of its iconographic corpus (Vernus (1985), 46). If writing never lost its iconic features in spite of the development of cursive writing, images may partially work in a written, semiotic mode. The most striking example appears in the Old Kingdom tomb of Raemka (Fischer (1977), 4), that shows a composition accompanied by a text from which the three determinatives that it should have contained are missing (Figure 6.1). The reason is that these hieroglyphs (i.e., signs of a linguistic



**Figure 6.1** Scene from the tomb of Raemka and the economy between text and image (line drawing by Valérie Angenot).

system with iconic roots) have actually been fashioned into a coherent scene placed under the text per se, and have thus returned to what we would categorize the iconic rather than the linguistic side. Such an example shows how the Egyptians considered text and image as complementary and working on similar bases and principles, only producing full meaning when associated with each other (Angenot (2002), 11). Examples showing how writing signs and images worked together to produce meaning could be multiplied.

### *The couple: semiosis vs mimesis*

In her epilogue to Heinrich Schäfer's *Principles of Egyptian Art*, Emma Brunner-Traut described the depiction mode of the pre-Greek image in a term she calls *aspective*, as well as the philosophical and epistemological implications such a mode involves (Brunner-Traut (1974 [2002]), 421–446). We have preserved no metadiscourse or philosophical comment from the ancient Egyptians on their depiction code. But looking at the big picture, the philosophy underlying the construction of Egyptian image is—in many ways—close to Plato's concerns on the ontological status of image (Davis (1979), 121–127). Plato distinguishes the *eikastiké techné* or the art of representation, which is a true reflection of conceptual reality through the use of an image that renders the essence of things in true proportions (*semiosis*), from the *phantastiké techné* or the art of illusion and simulacra, which is to him a lie, a truncated and imperfect imitation of sensible reality (*mimesis*) (*The Sophist*, 235b–236c). Plato mentions Egypt on several occasions as the cradle of intelligible image-making which is based on rigorous proportions and transmission by law (Tefnin (2007), 157); an image that favors—according to epistemological context—the use of conceptual images as opposed to perceptual ones (for the opposition between the two terms, see Brunner-Traut (1974 [2002]), 423; Assmann (1996), 69; Laboury (1998), 5).

In the second half of Dynasty 18 (as well as at other time periods of the Egyptian history), Egyptian artists started to develop more naturalistic, more mimetic images, which slowly led toward the Amarna revolution in art (Laboury 2007), as a reflexion of epistemological changes. In a few decades only, the Egyptian image imperceptibly turned into a depiction system that was still deeply rooted in semiotics, but that gave more space to contingencies and less pertinent details (in terms of semiotical impact and efficiency, see Principles: Schematization and Density, below), as well as to what was perceived through the senses, as shown at Figures 6.2 and 6.3. Figure 6.2 shows how the general concept of a banquet was depicted in Egyptian art with clear-cut signs, characterized by a lack of naturalistic movement, the absence of variation (which paradoxically means variation, see Signifier and Signified, below), by the use of standardized, semiotic attitudes, colors (woman = yellow skin), and sizes (servant vs guests). The plain “classical” dresses and wigs place the actors of this banquet in an atemporal and conceptual dimension. Therefore, this banquet is signified rather than represented: it is semiotic.

In only a fifty-year time frame, the tomb of Nebamun (TT E2) signifies the same theme, but displays movement, variation in attitudes, nuances in colors, naturalistic poses, and fashionable elements that place human beings in a time-marked context (Figure 6.3). These extraneous and unnecessary elements—when considered from a purely semiotic viewpoint—relate to the degree of *density* of the image (Goodman (1968), chapter VI and Schematization and density, below). The whole composition leans toward *mimesis*,



**Figure 6.2** The semiotic depiction of a banquet in the tomb of Wah (TT 22), Thebes, New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, time of Thutmose III, 1479–1425 BCE. Reproduced by permission of the Department of Egyptology, University of Trier.



**Figure 6.3** The *densified* semiotic depiction of a banquet from the tomb of Nebamun (TT E2), New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, time of Amenhotep III, ca. 1350 BCE. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

its density is increased compared to Wah’s composition, yet Nebamun’s banquet scene does not cross into a realistic reproduction aimed at giving the *illusion* of the empirical world because it remains deeply semiotic in spite of its more naturalistic tendency.

## *A grammar of the Egyptian image?*

To talk about a “grammar of the Egyptian image” is, perhaps, going too far. If the “official image”—mainly temple images (Derchain (1962), 33) and, to some extent, tomb decoration—works on a syntagmatic and paradigmatic mode comparable to that of linguistic systems (see Syntagmatics and paradigmatics, below), the rules of image layout are not as strict as those of a grammar and cannot be applied to the whole iconic Egyptian corpus. Yet, no attempt has been made to define the grammar of the Egyptian image thoroughly, and it remains an interesting lead to follow up (Tefnin (1984), 61–64; (1994), 7–9). Nevertheless, the process of carrying meaning depends on the use of layout rules that would make us favor the term “code” rather than “grammar” to explain it. Some domains of Egyptian representations, such as the iconography of temples which is regulated and strictly conceived, lean on poor syntagmatics, declined in an extended set of paradigmatic variants (for a discussion on syntagmatics and paradigmatics, see below). But this principle gets scarcer as the discourse parts from central power regulation.

## *Principles*

### *Univalence*

One of the basic principles of semiotics is *univalence*. In purely semiotic systems, one sign should carry only one clear and straightforward meaning and be unambivalent. There are some rare exceptions to that principle. Some signs may indeed take on two meanings as long as this is meant in an aim of “economy of means” and as far as the two meanings do not interfere at the same level of communication (e.g., sign meaning + reading pattern, Angenot 2010). What follows are some of the main principles that contribute to univalence.

### *Typicality*

Taxonomy (or classification) is narrowly connected to semiotic thought. Semiotics leans on classes determined by taxonomy, which constitute the base of the determinative system in the three-fold structure of the Egyptian hieroglyphic writing (ideograms, phonograms and determinatives). Considering one signified the idea of a /bird/, they would not pick a kiwi or a penguin as being the most representative of its class. These animals belong to the bird classification, but do not hold enough characteristic features of a typical bird to represent them all. Yet, taxonomic rules are not universal and vary according to the geographical and epistemological contexts. The ancient Egyptians picked the duck as being the most representative of the class “birds”  in their writing system. They used the same determinative in images to signify /all kinds of birds/ as demonstrated in Plate 4 (see Signifier and signified, below).

Typicality may apply at different levels of the depiction. In an array of body positions meant to depict a ritual or performance, the Egyptians selected one gesture that stood for the whole ritual (called a synecdoche = “part for the whole.”) For a discussion on tropes and rhetorical figures of speech, see Symbol, below). To best convey meaning, the gesture and/or attitude had to be the most typical of the action signified. That principle may, for example, be observed in the choice of specific moments that mark the Heb-Sed festival to signify the entire ritual, such as its climax when the two figures embodying the king of Upper and Lower Egypt sit back to back in his kiosk (Angenot 2012).

Another example is the synecdochical depiction of the king and souls of Pe & Nekhen kneeling while beating their chest , that was used to signify the full *henu* jubilation sequence, as being the most typical moment of the whole ritual.

### *Readability*

Readability means adopting the point of view that will make a sign as readable and understandable as possible, and exclude other meanings. Readability works along with typicality and schematization. For example, the head was used in the hieroglyphic system to signify both /head/ and /face/. But the Egyptians used the frontal depiction  for the face and the profile one  for the head because each sign was more readable and representative in its respective meaning. In the name of the typicality and readability principles, the Egyptians mixed different points of view in one and the same image. For example, a human being is depicted with a profile head, but a frontal eye because it is more *readable* than an eye in profile view; a frontal torso and shoulders for living people (this is semiotically opposed to profile shoulders for statues to signify /immobility/, and folded forward shoulders to signify /effort/); a belly in three-quarters view to show belly button as a *typical* feature and for an easier transition between the figure’s shoulders and buttocks; and profile rear end, legs, and feet.

### *Schematization and density*

One of the conditions of univalence is the use of a set of recurrent signs that are directly recognizable and divested of any perturbing, extraneous or non-essential details (hence, for example, the use of clear-cut shadows in the *Highway Code*). The degree of details and precision used in a depiction is called “density” in semiotics (Goodman (1968), chapter VI). To some extent, as long as the object remains identifiable, schematization increases performance and readability of the object. However, the degree of schematization varied with time, as already mentioned above. Yet, in spite of some mimetic or mannerist tendencies, the semiotic signs pertaining to the Egyptian image remained identifiable through time.

Lack of movement and variation also pertains to the principle of schematization. The painter of Nebamun, who probably pushed perceptual naturalism to its highest point in Theban painting, never used all its possibilities at once, for it would have interfered with the principle of readability. Where he introduces almost illusionist tachism in the coat of bulls, for example, he depicts them as well-arranged, slightly staggered silhouettes; where he translates the turmoil of fauna in a papyrus bush, he represents the bush as a standardized, codified object with alternating open and closed stems with plain, unnaturalistic

umbels. This tendency to juxtapose semiotic and mimetic elements in the same composition was initiated a few years earlier by the painter of Nakht (Angenot 2012), revealing to what extent the Egyptians were conscious of using a semiotic depiction code on images that were tending, at the time, to become emancipated (although still modestly) from their codified canvas. Let us keep in mind, that the Egyptian image is not a purely semiotic system; it is also the expression of craftsmanship and art, which leaves room for variation of densification, unlike strictly semiotic systems such as the *Highway Code*.

The use of bold, distinct, basic colors is also a schematization typical of semiotic systems, such as the use of yellow ochre for the female skin and red ochre for the male skin. Women usually have a fairer skin tone than men, but their skin was not yellow. Their use of these skin colors is caricatural for semiotic sake. Hatshepsut alternatively played with a mix of both colors in her propagandistic self-portrayal in order to deliver specific messages about her political role (Tefnun 1979).

### *Functionality*

Functionality overcomes likeness in semiotic depictions. In the clapnet scene in the tomb of Nakht (Shedid (1991), 66), the papyrus bush shows the traditional, semiotically schematized alternation of open and closed umbels with voids in between them. The watchman of the hunt hides behind that bush, but only the half of his face that sticks out of the bush has been depicted, while the interstices between the stems have been left empty. In the empirical world, the clump would fully hide the man; in its conventional depiction, it preserves this function even though its schematization depicts openings that should have been filled (Angenot 2012), thus giving the illusion that one papyrus stem is sufficient to hide half the face of the watchman.

### *Durability*

The pharaonic authority well understood that the survival of its semiotic system (and thus its system of communication and propaganda) depended on its stability and durability. For a code to work, it has to endure in time. This is, along with philosophical and religious reasons, partly why its semiotic forms were maintained and imposed by law (Davis (1979), 123–124), and referenced again after periods of crisis. The cultural icon (see Icon, below) of the king smiting his enemies had a life of no less than thirty centuries, from earliest dynasties to the Roman period, with little variation. Other motifs were created through time, some of which could have become cultural icons and yet did not endure, mostly for political reasons, such as those created at the time of Tutankhamun (e.g., the king pouring water in the queen's hand, encompassing cosmical, mythical, and political allusions, and yet probably too narrowly connected to specific post-Amarna practices to endure. For a detailed analysis, see Angenot (2011), 255–286).

### *Signifier and signified*

- The signifier ( $S^{\text{cr}}$ ) is the material representation of an actual thing or concept.
- The signified ( $S^{\text{cd}}$ ) is the material or mental object that is meant through a material depiction. The  $S^{\text{cd}}$  is conventionally indicated by forward slashes (/signified/).

The above example of the banquet scene (Figures 6.2 and 6.3) illustrates the way one and the same  $S^{ed}$  may be rendered as different types of  $S^{er}$  according to epistemological variations. The observation of such variations in long-lived repetitive motifs may be used to determine the semiotic value of earlier motifs characterized by a lesser degree of density and a stricter application of semiotic precepts. For example, the depiction of the fowling scene in the British Museum tomb of Nebamun (TT E2), with its exceptionally rich variation of movement, bird species, colors and so on, indicates what was meant in earlier compositions such as the one in the tomb of Kenamun (Plate 4).

<u>(S<sup>er</sup>)</u>	<u>(S<sup>ed</sup>)</u>
Ducks	/All sorts of birds and species/
Three (or more) individuals	/Multiplicity/
Alternation of two colors (green/red)	/Variation in plumage/
Lack of variation in movement	/Variation of movements/

### In the tomb of Kenamun

Ducks are used to signify /all kinds of birds and species/, through taxonomic *typicality*. A conventional plural (three or a reduced number of objects) is sufficient to express /multiplicity/, by *schematization* through the use of a synecdoche (part for the whole).

A paradigmatic opposition between two or more colors will suggest, through *schematization*, /variation in plumage/.

The most paradoxical aspect probably lies in the fact that “lack of variation in movement” ( $S^{er}$ ) actually stands for /variety of movements/ ( $S^{ed}$ ), only because it uses, through a synecdochic transfer, the most *typical* and *readable* attitude that will stand for them all (see *Typicality*, above).

## *Types of signs*

Representing an empirical object may seem an easy task, yet its depiction is fashioned through the philosophical spectrum that lies behind the civilization that produced it. For example, the Egyptian image focuses on reproducing the idea, the concept and the essence of an object, along with its physical appearance. With abstract notions, concepts and ideas that do not own a material reality, symbolic tools must be used.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Charles S. Peirce established a formal classification of signs as the core of semiotics, that would account for all the systems of communication (including the non-deliberate and the non-human): the triad of “icon / symbol / index” (Peirce (1903), volume II). Their classification depends on the relationship existing between the sign ( $S^{er}$ ) and its object ( $S^{ed}$ ). Nevertheless, semiotics is a living discipline and its precepts and notions are still widely disputed by specialists. There is no clear-cut consensus on the definition of the terms, so what follows is a necessarily personal (and quite simplified) stance on the matter.

### *Icon*

Originally called “likenesses” (*eikón* in Greek) by Peirce, icons have a “topological similarity” to their object (Sebok (1990), 28), which means the  $S^r$  visually resembles its  $S^{ed}$ . This resemblance need not be tangible and may present any degree of schematization (dedensification). The figure of the incense burner  that appears in many offering scenes such as in the papyrus of Djedkhonsuiuesankh, for example, is an icon. Although highly schematized—just as its hieroglyphic equivalent—this icon still demonstrates a direct visual connexion with its empirical model. The term “icon” is problematic because it is also used in Egyptology and in art history to refer to another type of image, which is a recurrent, culturally marked scene, anchored in the iconic landscape of a given civilization (Hartwig (2004), 54), as is the figure of the king smiting his enemies to ancient Egypt. This chapter distinguishes them by calling the former “an icon” or an “iconic sign,” and the latter a “cultural icon.”

### *Symbols*

Symbols have a convention-based relationship with their object. Symbols are arbitrary and reliant on conventional usage in order to determine meaning. Unlike indices or icons, symbols are not signs without an interpreter. Obvious examples of symbols are the red crown  for Lower Egypt and the white crown  for Upper Egypt. The empirical object is a symbol but its depiction is the icon of a symbol, thus showing how the different types of signs intertwine. Overlap and ambiguity are indeed inherent to the system.

The appearance of a symbol is supposed to be unmotivated. Yet, in a number of cases, symbols were motivated in a distant time, their origin often lost or forgotten, which obscures the relationship between  $S^r$  and  $S^{ed}$ , as they no longer entertain an obvious relationship. Everyone knows that alphabets (which are symbol-based systems) were born from the iconic and then acronymic usage of the object they used to signify: a[leph] (=bull)  A, b[eth] (=house)  B etc. and so on (showing here the evolution from the iconic sign to the Hebrew script, then to the Latin letters).

Thus symbols may be partly motivated, as is the case for the *ankh* sign . It is usually admitted nowadays that the *ankh* sign was, at its origin, a penis-sheath (Baines 1975). It came to stand for the concept of /life/ through tropologization. Tropologization means the recourse to one of the tropes (figures of speech) of the classical rhetoric: metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche (and all their derived forms) (Dupriez 1984; on metaphor in Egyptian image, see Goldwasser 1995). The transfer of meaning in the *ankh* sign was carried out through the use of three successive types of metonymies: a metonymy [container for content]: “belt and sheath for penis”; another metonymy [instrument for action]: “male genitalia for procreation”; and by another metonymy [cause for effect]: “procreation for life” (Dupriez (1984), 290).

### *Index*

Indexes or indices are signs whose presence implies the occurrence of some other event or object. An index always points to, references, or suggests something other than itself. More simply put, indices indicate. Peirce outlined three types of index: tracks, symptoms, and designations (Johansen and Larsen (2002), 32).

The fact that depictions of geese in Theban tombs were hacked off the walls around the end of Dynasty 18, as was the goose depicted under Ramose's chair in his banquet scene, is a *track*-type of index (the hacking is, not the goose). It gives us priceless indications about the way the ancient Egyptians considered their own images. In this case, they did not feel the goose was the *icon* of an “innocent” pet, but rather the *symbolic depiction* of the god Amun, all of which had to be erased during the Atenist reform. Thus indexes may bring indications that were not meant to signify at first, but finally do, and give new insights on the artist's intention as well as on how to interpret the scenes (indexes, for example, play a great part in the interpretation of the so-called reserve heads by Tefnin 1991a). It is important to understand whether a sign was meant to be an *icon* or a *symbol*. This is the point at which the distinction between semiotics and hermeneutics lies (see Hermeneutics and Egyptology, below).

The footprints on the pedestal found inside the small golden shrine of Tutankhamun (Eaton-Krauss and Graefe (1986), pls. III–IV) are a *designation*-type of index. Depending on how one understands it, this index either indicates that a statue used to be standing there, or—more probably—it designates the in-the-flesh-Tutankhamun as the statue, the “living image” (*twt nh*) of the god, on whom daily rituals (adoration, unction, dressing, ...) were performed, as was usually done with the cult statue (Angenot (2011), 275, note 89).

## *Syntagmatics and paradigmatics*

There are two main axes around which linguistic systems are articulated. One is horizontal (syntagmatic: arrangement of terms), the other is vertical (paradigmatic: variation of terms). All terms are displayed and vary inside that structure. Egyptian temple depictions use a limited syntagmatics that may, in many occurrences, be summed up as follows: subject—action—object (direct)—object (indirect). It often translates as the *do ut des* principle: “I give you this so that you give me that,” the type of relationship that characterizes the exchanges between men and gods in Egypt. Quite often, the image shows the king's action in favor of the god while the text mentions the god's action in favour of the king, and *vice versa*. That type of dynamic shows once again the complementarity between text and image in ancient Egypt, and how the two work together to produce full meaning.

Syntagmatic axis:

<i>Subject</i>	<i>action</i>	<i>direct object</i>	<i>indirect object</i>
Thoth	gives	100,000s of years of Heb-Sed	to the king

The syntagmatic structure of images in temple (i.e., the arrangement of the items in a given scene) is so basic and repetitive, and the paradigmatic variation so rich, that one could almost talk about a “temple grammar” (Derchain (1962), 33). Yet, as the precepts of such a grammar have not yet been established and deepened we prefer to call it a code (see A grammar of the Egyptian image, above). In this basic scheme, the attributes to these syntagms (such as, for the subject, the crown, the kilt, the colors, the pose, etc.)

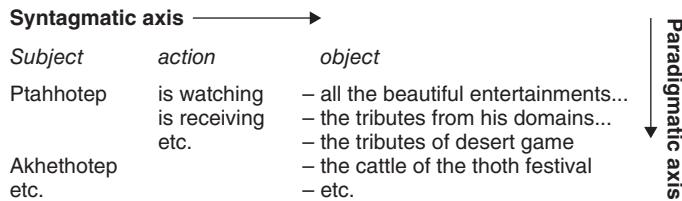


Figure 6.4 Syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes

could then be paralleled to adjectives, complements, or predicative formulas, varying at the paradigmatic level (Tefnin 1984, 1991a and b, 1994).

Such a structure may be found in the private tomb iconography as well (Tefnin (1991b), 70). In tombs, the paradigmatic variation of the actions performed by the deceased (the main and recurrent subject in the tomb) is very limited and reduced to less than ten possibilities of which the most frequent are *mʒʒ*, *šp*, *wdn* and *hsb* (to watch, to receive, to offer, and to count). But the objects of these actions vary a lot in the image, ranging from a single item to an extensive series of articles, as in the mastaba of Ptahhotep and Akhethotep (Tefnin (1984), 61–64; (1994), 7–9). On the eastern wall of Ptahhotep's chapel, we have yet another demonstration of the economy between text and image, as the object of viewing happens to be very generic in the text (*shmh-ib nb nfr irw m tʒ r dr=f* “all the beautiful entertainments performed around the world”), whereas it is extensively detailed in the image, with scenes ranging from papyrus collecting, fording a stream, children's games, winery, and so on (Figure 6.4).

All the terms that could replace a term inside the same syntactic category are called *paradigmatic variants*. They share a common “grammatical” position/status and their meaning may overlap to some extent. Fishing is a paradigmatic variant to fowling; field-work a paradigmatic variant to produces from the countryside; *šp* to *wdn*; Akhethotep to Ptahhotep, and so on.

## Hermeneutics

### *Definition and historiography*

Hermeneutics is the branch of discourse theory that deals with *interpretation* and the analysis of underlying layers of meaning that exceed the literal or obvious signification of textual and visual motifs. Hermeneutics also investigates the mechanisms operating to produce those underlying meanings (Angenot (2011), 255). Hermeneutics lies at the crossroads of philosophy (theory of knowledge), linguistics, semiotics, epistemology, religious studies (exegesis), as well as psychology, among others.

The history of hermeneutics finds its roots in first-century Egypt with the original attempt by Philo of Alexandria, a Platonist Jewish exegete of the Bible, to establish a methodology for the interpretation of the sacred texts (Nikiprowetzky 1977). Although there exists a plethora of works on interpretation in all sorts of literary and art historical domains, hermeneutics has for a long time focused on texts rather than images.

In spite of multiple works and articles on the topic, there is still no real synthesis on visual hermeneutics (Burwick (1999), 219).

## *Hermeneutics and Egyptology*

Although, for some types of scenes, everyone agrees on the necessity to go past the literal meaning, Egyptologists may sometimes demonstrate a strong resistance to the idea that there might be, for example, more to the so-called “daily life scenes” than what is actually depicted (Eaton-Krauss 1986; Feucht 1992; Van Walsem 1998). Yet, these scenes always appear in contexts where they should not be regarded as mere decorative items or informative depictions aimed at documenting—for our benefit—the ways and customs of the ancient Egyptians; but rather as contextually significant and performative images (e.g., in funerary, religious, propaganda contexts). One should not lose sight of the fact that if tomb scenes are likely to inform us about daily life in the time of the pharaohs, they are nonetheless mediated depictions of the metaphysical tools used to perform the resurrection of the deceased, and are in no way realistic documentaries. Why, in the vivid depictions of banquets in tombs, are children or the elderly never to be found, although one would theoretically expect everyone to take part (Manniche (1997), 29)? And why does no one ever appear to be actually eating at these banquets (Angenot, in press)? Meaning lies at another level than at face value.

There has been, for the last twenty years, an array of Egyptological works debating the distinction between *Sehbild*, the iconic image/sign (see Types of signs, above), and *Sinnbild*, an image that carries meaning that exceeds what is offered to sight, which is usually translated as “symbol” (Vernus (2009–2010), 69–70, notes 9–12, and Icon, above), but which can also designate iconic images that should not be taken at face value but rather read at a metaphorical level. This is actually the point at which the nuance between semiotics and hermeneutics lies. Nowadays, most analyses in Egyptology have moved toward viewing the so-called “daily life scenes” through the spectrum of interpretative mechanisms as implying deeper meaning than what appears to lie at the surface (Manniche 1997; Kamrin 1999; Angenot 2005, 2011).

## *Pertinence*

### *Kheperu*

One of the principles of hermeneutics is *overdetermination* (see Overdetermination, below). One of the most characteristic features of the Egyptian civilization is *analogy* (Servajean (2007), 17). All divine instances, all transcendent phenomena, are revealed to human knowledge through many names, many forms, many manifestations (*kheperu*). Every immanent phenomenon is thus likely to evoke a transcendent one and vice versa (Assmann (1994), 108), just as objects with analogical features, shapes, or even similar names within the same “realm” may also refer back to one another (it is also the principle lying behind the construction of some Egyptian linguistic formations based on homophony (Vernus (2003), 62)). The Egyptians constantly drew parallels between

the world that surrounded them and their mental conception of transcendence. It is obvious that earthly considerations are necessarily at the origin of the rendition of transcendent episodes into images. In fact, their visual likeness means that they may refer to one another at any time, as do, for example, the “daily life”—yet funerary—scene of weighing metal in the private tombs of the New Kingdom and the psychostasy scene (weighing the deceased’s heart by Thoth and Anubis in front of Osiris) in Book of the Dead papyri (Angenot (2011), pl. 4 a and b).

In the sphere of official discourse that emanates from religious and political powers and withholds all literary and iconographic rights, clear equivalence can be drawn between empirical phenomena and their transcendent counterparts. For instance, the *Dramatic Ramesseum Papyrus* celebrating Senwosret’s accession to the throne underlines equivalences with the aim of ascertaining the king’s role as the new Horus on earth (Lorand (2009), 150), by drawing an analogy between the historical event and its mythical archetype.

Throughout the accession ceremony, daily life events are staged and explicitly connected to their transcendent and mythical counterparts, of which they are identified as earthly manifestations.

It happened that barley was put on the threshing floor

It happened that male animals were brought to trample it

*That means* Horus avenging his father

Horus speaks to the followers of Seth:

“Do not beat this my father”

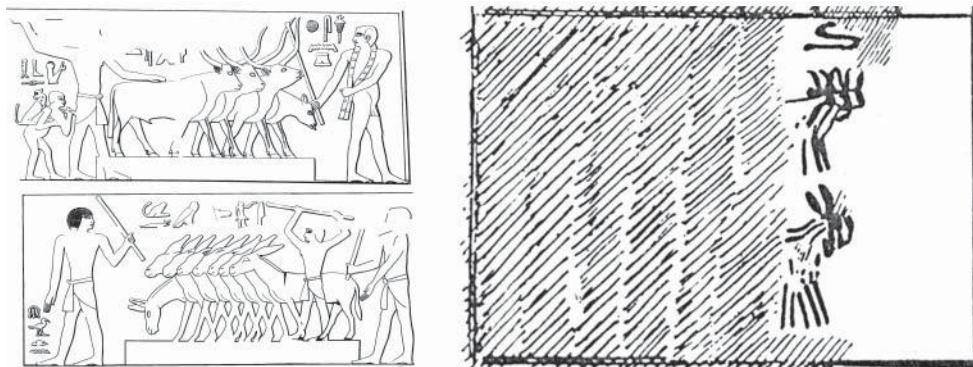
Beating Osiris (=) cutting up the god-barley (Frankfort (1948), 127)

This is how a daily life scene of threshing grain is likely to be reinterpreted at the light of a mythical episode, here, in a context of kingship renewal. But this essential activity in the agricultural cycle, and the parallelism between Osiris and barley, can be matched and transferred to funerary context as well.

For common people who were restrained in their iconographic rights but nevertheless aspired to be reborn, “daily life scenes” appear as valid analogical palliatives, likely to act, in these tombs, as the mythical episodes connected to the universe and to cosmic cycles, without transgressing any iconographic taboo (Figure 6.5). It is, indeed, in private tombs that the largest array of “daily life scenes” is to be found. These empirical episodes would perform there, to a suitable degree, as their transcendent equivalents and help the deceased be reborn in the beyond as an Osiris (Altenmüller 1973).

### *Constraints and taboos*

All civilizations have issued cultural constraints and privileges that prevent part of the society from openly saying or depicting different kinds of things. The mysteries of the divine realm were only known to the king and some initiated priests. Common people could not pretend, as the king, to be reborn as Re and take an active role in the cosmic



**Figure 6.5** Donkeys and oxen brought to the threshing floor in the mastaba of Ptahhotep (after Davies 1901) and in the Dramatic Ramesseum Papyrus (after Sethe (1928), pl. 5).

process. With time, however, royal prerogatives were introduced into the iconography of the elite in a process usually called the “democratization of the afterlife” (Sørensen 1989; *contra* Hays 2011). This right did not trespass earthly considerations (with the notable exception of the gods of the necropolis: Hathor, Osiris, and Anubis), at least until the Ramesside period, after the spiritual trauma that marked the Amarna period, which allowed the mysteries of the divine to enter private tomb iconography. Until then, the right to use specific iconographic motifs was limited for those who wanted to be reborn like the king but could not attain his prerogative.

There are other types of constraints that characterize human societies, such as taboos. Although there does not appear to be a taboo connected to sexuality, in Egypt, when dealing with myths and divine entities however, the mysteries of creation were not on display to everyone but remained concealed in the depths of the king’s funeral chamber or in the dark and hidden parts of temples, only accessible to some initiated priests; when it comes to human beings, and especially to the royal family and the elite, sexuality seems to be taboo (only in official discourses, not in popular culture). Yet, sexuality played an important role and had to be *signified* in different contexts. For example, in the royal sphere, sexuality had to be signified in the ideological scenes of hierogamy; it had to be evoked as playing a part in the maintenance of cosmic order by the royal couple; it was also essential to post-mortem resurrection in the funerary sphere. Therefore, the ancient Egyptians used hermeneutical tricks to circumvent this taboo and signify sexuality without mentioning or depicting it per se.

One of the ways to achieve that circumvention was to utilize—in a fashion similar to the hieroglyphic system (Vernus 2003)—the phonetic value of what was signified, and suggest it through homonymic/homophonic puns. For example:

- *s̥tj* “to ejaculate” is suggested in fishing and fowling scenes, through its homonym *s̥tj* “to spear with the harpoon” (Westendorf (1967), 141). That meaning was reinforced by the overly sensual depiction of the spouse, donning a wig, a dress of ethereal linen and carrying Hathoric symbols (Angenot (2005), 21) belonging to the goddess of love.

- *hnp mw* “to receive semen” is suggested, on the small golden shrine of Tutankhamun (Eaton-Krauss and Graefe 1986), through its homonymic expression *hnp mw* “to drink water” (Angenot (2011), 271).

### *Economy and edification*

Yet cultural constraints were not the only reason for the use of hermeneutical depictions. The Neoplatonists remind us of how the wise of ancient Egypt would accumulate all knowledge and wisdom in one single image, thus recreating “a world” in itself:

Similarly, as it seems to me, *the wise of Egypt*—whether in precise knowledge or by a prompting of nature—indicated the truth where, *in their effort towards philosophical statement*, they *left aside the writing-forms* that take in the *detail of words* and sentences—those characters that represent sounds and convey the propositions of *reasoning*—*and drew pictures instead*, engraving in the temple-inscriptions a separate image for every separate item: thus they exhibited the mode in which the supreme goes forth.

*For each manifestation of knowledge and wisdom is a distinct image, an object in itself, an immediate unity*, not as aggregate of discursive reasoning and detailed willing. Later, from this wisdom in unity, there appears, in another *form of being*, *an image*, already less compact, which announces the original in an outward stage and seeks the causes by which things are such that the wonder rises how *a generated world* can be so excellent. (Plotinus, *Enneads* V, 8, 6)

The principle of economy consists of conveying, with one single and striking image, the most complete array of meaning as well as the many aspects and layers that a concept encompassed. This corresponded in the writing-forms to “an aggregate of discursive reasoning and detailed willing.” For example, there were many requirements needed for rebirth in the hereafter. One must recreate oneself through sexual activity, one has to keep the *ka* vivid, one must produce or receive food to sustain the soul in the hereafter, one has to ward off the chaotic forces to prevent them from jeopardizing the new life cycle (like Re), and one must be granted divine protection.

The fishing and fowling scene is the visual motif that expresses these different aspects of rebirth, all at once in a single coherent scene (see, Figure 3.3, Hartwig, “Style,” this volume). Thus, this scene carried the specific “wisdom in unity” that would render an account of all the aspects that encompassed the idea of rebirth:

- Sexuality is expressed through a pun on *st̄i* “to harpoon” and *st̄i* “to ejaculate” (see Constraints and taboos above).
- Re-creation is expressed through a pun on *km̄* “to throw the stick” and *km̄* “to create.”
- Vitalization of the *ka* is revealed through recreation. Fishing and fowling are entertaining sports (*shmh-ib*) that stimulate the *ka* (*n k̄ n*) as mentioned in the text (Assmann (1991), 218–220).
- Food production: hunting produces game and food for the deceased.
- Repel chaos: fish and fowl, as disorganized and seething populations, are a metaphor for the chaotic forces the deceased must master and repel.

- *Imitatio solis*: the act of harpooning allows a visual similitude with Re's daily fight against Apes who tries every night to prevent him from rising again in the morning and beginning a new cycle.
- Divine presence: the marsh isotopy allows the god Amun to be introduced in the picture under his avataric form of a goose, without looking incongruous.

The fishing and fowling scene may thus be read as an assemblage of different layers of a coherent discourse in which all parts contribute to the whole, that is rebirth (Angenot (2011), 269). As Plotinus wrote in the *Enneads* V 6, 3: "A manifold is impossible without a unity for its source or ground." Thus the fishing and fowling topic was the best motif that encompassed and unified all the wisdom needing to be expressed: sexual meaning, re-creational/recreational meanings, trophic meaning, apotropaic meaning, mythical meaning, divine presence.

### *Polyvalence*

Unlike purely semiotic systems such as the *Highway Code*, in which the signs lead to a single clear-cut meaning, one of the characteristics of hermeneutical depictions is *polyvalence*, that is to present at least one literal meaning at face-value and one derived or hidden meaning. However, semiotic devices are used to convey derived meaning(s) through specific associations and rules, just as language (semiotic system) is used to pass on innuendos (hermeneutic mechanism). In Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and especially in Christian exegesis, scholars working on hermeneutical systems noticed that one motif could sometimes operate on more than two levels, and present more than one coherent and homogeneous interpretation. For example, Dante Alighieri, in his Letter 13, defines four levels to Christian exegesis and the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures: literal, allegorical, moral, anagogical (Eco (1965), 19). Polyvalence is a consequence of overdetermination which is at the base of hermeneutical systems (see below).

### *Overdetermination*

Overdetermination (*Überdeterminierung*) is a term borrowed from psychoanalysis. It was first used by Freud to render an account of the way dreams were elaborated by the human mind in manifold layers determined by multiple factors (Freud 1900). In this way, dreams were built up by the accumulation of multiple causes of different natures (such as ancient traumas, residues of the day, latent wishes ...) that combine to deliver a common motif. By this accumulation of eclectic sources, the coherence of the motif may appear to lack consistency at some point, turning a dream that was coherent at first into a surrealistic setting. Dreams and psychology are domains of hermeneutic application. As the human mind is built as such, it is not surprising that similar patterns could emerge in different cultures (Vernus (1983), 28), in the passage from internal representation to external representation (Dilworth 2004).

Fishing and fowling scenes are, again, one of the best examples to illustrate such an analogy because their form was set early in the Old Kingdom, and yet never stopped evolving until the reign of Amenhotep III. Some nuances, additional meanings, and symbolisms

were attached to the scene over time, as thought and society advanced, or were reinforced to make the scene more efficient and complete. Some of the features of fishing and fowling scenes were intensified (such as the overall sensuality of the wife during the New Kingdom), some of them were eliminated (such as the reference to royal rituals through the wearing of the royal *shendit*-apron) (Angenot (2005), 22). Meaning was constantly reinforced and adapted to epistemological contexts, but did not change fundamentally so the motif remained valid for hundreds of years.

In ancient Egypt, the more determined the motif (that is motivated by numerous factors), the more valid it appears. This is how different meanings coexist in one picture without the necessity of a choice or the requirement of an absolute *coherence*. Ancient Egyptian thought was not Cartesian (i.e., defined by finitely complete and coherent categories). All the meanings appear as valid as the others. This is all the more true in a civilization where analogy is the keystone of thought (Hornung 1982; and Kheperu, above). The Egyptians thus sought motifs that were saturated with analogical meaning as demonstrated by the analysis of the different layers of signification in the fishing and fowling scene. Each phenomenon may always feed back to others, as they display an analogical shape, sound (such as word puns), or an association of ideas, and so on. Resemblance, on all levels, “is efficacious in establishing real relations between the objects involved” (Frankfort (1948), 124); it reflects a deep affinity between the designated motifs.

Although coherence is not a goal per se, association of motifs will appear more valid if the motivations add up and intersect with each other. Hathor was known to be the goddess of motherhood, sexuality, necropolis, and drunkenness, among others. These attributions sound eclectic, yet they intersect with each other at each analogical step. Sexuality leads to motherhood; the dead needs a maternal matrix to be reborn in the beyond, a role played by the tomb in the necropolis; drunkenness helps the transformation from one state to another (sober to drunk, death to rebirth) and abolishes the boundaries between the three realms (divine, earthly, the beyond) (Angenot, in press). Apart from these sociological connections, there is also a linguistic argument as the words for “begetting” and “drunkenness” present a homophonic analogy that makes Hathor the *nbt nwh*, an expression that could be read both as “lady of begetting” and “lady of drunkenness” (Angenot (2011), 271), while sensuality and inebriation became characteristic of her necropolis festivals (Herodotus, *The Histories* II, 60).

## *Interpretative methodology*

### *A theory of anomaly*

As mentioned in the previous section, *overdetermination* may create inconsistencies and anomalies to the coherence of a motif when considered from a realistic and Cartesian point of view. This section has thus based hermeneutical theory on the idea that interpreters should rely on inconsistency to reach the underlying layers of signification (Angenot (2011), 258), because anomalies in the coherence of a discourse always reveal the presence of derived meaning(s). Once the norm is defined inside the specific genre,

the anomalies may take the following forms (the list is not exhaustive) (Angenot (2011), 259–263):

- Presence of preternatural elements, or elements that place the scene on a non-earthly level.
- Rupture of isotopy such as garments, animals, attributes, crowns, etc., that are not justified within the face-value context of the scene (=inner contextualization).
- Use of tropes: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, metalepsis (Angenot (2005), 17), syllepsis (Angenot (2010), 20), and so on.
- Forced symmetry (=inner simile) (Angenot 2012).
- Use of symbols and the presence of indices (in Peirce's definition).
- Anomalies in the accompanying text such as words missing, discrepancy with the image, and so on.
- Unusual use of a motif or a formula, and the remotivation of these elements (Angenot, in press; Angenot (2005), 34).
- Puns and visual word play.

### *A theory of contextualization*

In semiotics, some signs may *belong to different codes* produced by the same civilization and thus hold different meanings. The correct interpretation can only be extrapolated from their context of production and display. Hence, a red rectangular piece of cloth, if attached to a pole on a beach, signifies “no swimming”; if placed on the roof of the Communist Party building, it signals the political affiliation of the building; if waved on a Formula 1 circuit, it means “interruption of the session”; if placed on a table in a living room, it constitutes a decorative item that does not signal itself as a *seme* requiring an interpretation. This is the reason why determining the context of enunciation of semiotic contents is fundamental to define their modality of interpretation and the type of codification they depend upon.

In hermeneutics, opposite meanings may also emerge *from the same semiotic code* (language, writing, image ...), and here too, interpretation depends on context. For example, if a frogman says to his fellow diver “We need to go deeper,” it will be understood at face value as physically going deeper into the water. If the same man tells his best friend about his new girlfriend using the same words, the intents and interpretation will be different. In the latter context, there can be two coherent interpretations, the sentimental one and the sexual one, both valid using the literal motif as a metaphorical basis. To assure the right interpretation, the man would, for example, signify a sexual innuendo by accompanying his sentence with quick eyebrow movements, blink, or a knowing smile. Images work in similar ways and may use interpreters to assure meaning when ambiguous.

The width of contextualization includes the dimensions of space and time, ranging from the narrowest spatial context (e.g., the object on which an image is depicted) to its largest understanding, that is *episteme* (term used by Michel Foucault to designate the state of knowledge of the world a civilization has reached at a given point; Foucault (1996), 45). The array of contexts is:

- a) Spatial
  - Surrounding texts/titles/rubric/formulas that can be used as interpretants and point to the meaning of the scene which is not obvious.
  - Surrounding images that may work as interpretants (e.g., looking at all the panels of the golden shrine of Tutankhamun when interpreting one of them) (Angenot (2011), 275).
  - Context of production to define the genre as popular, funerary, religious, secular, and so on.
  - Context of display. Museum artifacts are often displayed to suit the public's view, but this change in contextualization may sometimes be prejudicial to the understanding of the artifact. For example, the odd facial features of the colossal statues of Akhenaten, as viewed in museums or in photographs, vanish when considered from the point of view in which they were designed (around 11 cubits high). Viewing them in their original spatial context thoroughly changes the interpretation of Akhenaten's particular features (Angenot (2008), 33).
  - Context of discovery.
- b) Temporal
  - Philosophical context which is lacking in ancient Egypt, and often has to be reconstructed at the light of later writings of philosophers who were influenced by ancient Egypt, such as Plato and the Neoplatonists.
  - Cultural context which is fundamental, especially for the identification of cultural icons that may be alluded to in an outer simile. Forced correspondence with otherwise culturally known motifs/icons (e.g., the king smiting enemies // fishing and fowling) imply at least a partial common meaning, most of the time (Angenot 2012).
  - Epistemological context as it constitutes the state, nature, scope and limitation of knowledge, and understanding of the world of a given civilization that produced the object of study. Epistemological context should be relied on to assess the validity of an interpretation in the specific cultural state in which the object was originally designed and should prevent the interpreter from projecting his own *episteme* into the interpretation.

Once (1) the norm, (2) the anomalies, and (3) the context have been defined, the interpretation should be coherent in order to render an account of every single element, including the anomalies, which would no longer be regarded as anomalies but would unify at a higher level of meaning, matching the genre for which the motif was produced within its array of contexts.

## Conclusion – Conception vs Reception: The Role of the Interpreter

In the philosophy of hermeneutics, the role of the interpreter may be defined in different ways, sometimes considering that the heuristic approach ought not focus on the original intention of the “conceptor” (which may be regarded as not fundamental), for the way a work is received. So in this case, no matter what Shakespeare had in mind when he wrote Hamlet, what would count is how the play speaks and appeals to us today.

It surely is invaluable that an Egyptian artwork keeps the ability to speak to us and to enlighten our concerns 5,000 years after it was conceived. Yet, our task as historians and art historians is to reconstruct, as faithfully as possible, the *intents* of the conceptron and endeavor to put aside what defines us as modern individuals, so that artifact interpretation does not appear as some huge Rorschach Test on which everyone projects their own pathos, their own taboos, their own expectations, their own *episteme*, and their own psychology. This is a hard task to achieve, as a researcher cannot be dissociated from what (s)he is. It is fundamentally difficult not to project our own way of knowing the world in order to attain pure objectivity. *Episteme* and *psyche* stick to the *self*; they are the non-physical channels through which we are able to understand the world. As no Egyptian will probably ever come back to confirm our interpretation of artifacts, the only indication that we might have reached their true intent is when anomalies cease to be such and make sense together with their connected genre and contexts. And semiotics offers ready-to-use tools to achieve that goal, that have proved efficient in other domains of art history, dealing with other time periods, and for different types of image production such as those connected to religious exegesis, folk tales, publicity, cinema, comics, or political propaganda, among others.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Ancient Egyptian visual semiotics and hermeneutics have not been the object of a thorough synthesis so far. Roland Tefnин edited a compilation of his articles dealing with Egyptian semiotics, which was about to be published before he passed away in 2006, but has not been since; see *inter alia* (1991b, 1994). As regards hermeneutics, only a few articles tackle the mechanisms of non-literal meaning production in images, among which must be cited the pioneering study by Westendorf of the golden shrine of Tutankhamun (1967), Philippe Derchain's article in *RAIN* (1976), as well as, more recently and more synthetically, Valérie Angenot's articles (2005, 2011, 2012), the second of which is a fundamental methodology aimed at helping uncover the devices that produce underlying layers of signification, especially in the so-called "daily-life scenes."

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## CHAPTER 7

# Gender and Sexuality

*Gay Robins*

## What Are Gender and Sexuality?

Theories of gender and sexuality are relatively recent, developing in the second half of the twentieth century as a result of the feminist movement in western societies and the subsequent development of feminist scholarship and queer theory that seek to challenge the normative male-dominated, heterosexual structure of modern societies and scholarly thinking. Although arising out of modern social concerns and formulated in a way that had no correlate in ancient societies, these theories have become useful tools in analyzing and understanding the social structures and cultural norms of non-modern societies. Further, by making scholars aware of the structures and norms of their own societies, they help them to look beyond their biases as to what is normative and to understand other societies on their own terms, not as exotic, distorted, inverted, or perverted reflections of the “correct” order of the scholars’ societies.

According to gender theory, gender as a concept has its origins in the sex assigned to an individual at birth on the basis of the visible genitalia. In most cases, individuals are either obviously female, with a clitoris and vagina, or male, with a penis and testes. A small percentage of children are born with indeterminate genitalia arising from various genetic and hormonal causes. In societies where the dichotomy between male and female sex is taken as normative, these latter individuals are usually assigned to the sex they most closely resemble. In other societies, they may be placed in a separate category as a distinct sex. Although based on assigned sex, gender goes far beyond any biological differences that may be thought to dictate the way individuals of different sexes are supposed to behave, thus expanding the differences into areas where they become completely artificial. Gender is not, therefore, a biological outcome, but a social construct that must be learned from birth. It is created through performance by and between individuals, and is only meaningful when enacted in relation to other individuals within a social context in which all the actors are participants. Socially acceptable presentations

of gender construct, maintain, and reinforce a culture's gender system, while through such enactments the individual learns how to act in a range of contexts, usually without seriously questioning the reasons why. Thus, the ways in which gender is performed in any given society are accepted as how things are, becoming the "natural order" of the way things work. Gender, however, is just one aspect of an individual's constructed identity, which also encompasses social status, age, kin relationships, ritual and social roles, and ethnicity, all of which may change according to context or over time. All these constituents of identity impinge on and interact with each other, so that the performance of gender will be different in different contexts, at different ages, and at different levels of status (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003), 9–51).

Sexuality is a broad and sometimes vaguely used term referring to ideas about sexual physiology, the ability to arouse and be aroused sexually, sexual pleasure, desire, orientation, emotion, attractiveness, and reproduction. Like gender, ideas of sexuality are based on, but go beyond, biological sex. Although sexuality is to some extent biologically driven, the results of this drive can be constructed into a system of socially acceptable sexual behavior, so that some categories of behavior become normative while others are viewed less favorably or proscribed. As a result, sexuality is enacted differently in different contexts and across different cultures, and what may be highly sexual in one culture may have no such connotations in another. Thus, much to do with ideas of sexuality and its performance is learned not innate. Sexuality and gender are closely intertwined, and the norms of the former may be dictated by the constructions of the latter. Therefore, such questions as what it means to be male or female can be answered in terms of both gender and sexuality. Gender may dictate appropriate behavior, activities, dress, and ideal body form, but conformity with such gender norms on the part of individuals may also increase their sexual attractiveness and desirability.

## Gender in Ancient Egyptian Art

Gender can be used as a tool to analyze the structure of ancient Egyptian society as presented in surviving evidence including visual material. It has to be remembered, however, that evidence relating to ancient Egypt covers over three millennia from the founding of the state around 3000 BCE to the conversion to Christianity in the late third century CE. Although ancient Egypt is often characterized as unchanging, this was not in fact the case, so that most statements are unlikely to hold true across all periods of Egyptian history.

Nevertheless, fundamental ideas about the creation, structure, and maintenance of the cosmos remain remarkably similar throughout Egyptian history and show that the Egyptians saw the world as consisting of a series of dualities: order (*maat*) and chaos (*isfet*), Egypt and foreign lands, the fertile agricultural land and the sterile desert, Upper and Lower Egypt. Thus, duality was part of the cosmic structure, leading to a tendency to think in pairs. In fact, the Creator God, when he first became self-aware amidst the uncreated primordial waters, set in motion the creation of the ordered world by separating out from himself two deities, Shu and Tefnut, one male and one female, who by their sexual interaction produced a second male and female pair, Geb (earth) and Nut (sky), who formed the framework of the created world (Allen 1988). The duality of male and female

probably seemed an obvious reflection of cosmic structure. The standard writing of the word for people (*remetj*) usually concludes with two hieroglyphs, a squatting man and woman, in that order, suggesting that people could be divided into two categories, male and female, with the male given precedence over the female. Nevertheless, there is some textual evidence of terms that might refer to individuals that did not accord with the ideals of male and female, including eunuchs and possible castrates (Vittmann 2000; Depauw 2003; Parkinson 2008; Sweeney 2011). It is unclear whether these formed a separate sex and/or gender category or categories, or whether they were simply considered as men and women who deviated from sex and/or gender norms. Such categories are not obviously identifiable in surviving visual material.

The main patrons and commissioners of art were the king and his elite officials, all of whom were male, as were artists. The elite consisted of government officials together with their families. As a group, they made up no more than 5 percent of the population and probably less, but were basically self-perpetuating, since an education was generally available only to members of elite families. Office-holders had to be both male and literate, so that, although some women were probably also literate, this did not make them eligible for government office. Art depicting the elite is known mainly from funerary material: tombs, statues, stelae, coffins, and funerary papyri, but also from statues and stelae set up in temples and chapels. Far fewer monuments were owned by women than men, although women often appear on monuments of their relatives, particularly their husbands and sons. Further, the types of monuments owned by women were greatly restricted compared to those available to men. Block statues, kneeling statues, and scribe statues were almost totally limited to men, and few statues of women were set up in temples. Most funerary stelae and the majority of tombs with decorated tomb chapels belonged to men and seldom commemorate a woman as the primary subject in their decoration. Only when burial customs became more diverse during the Third Intermediate Period, when decorated tomb chapels virtually disappeared, did this change. At Thebes, brightly painted wooden stelae were placed in burials along with individual coffins and usually show only the deceased, whether male or female (Saleh 2007). Votive stelae dedicated by women are not uncommon, although the numbers are small compared to those dedicated by men, and they did not develop forms distinct from those found on stelae belonging to men (Tosi and Roccati 1972; Robins 1994a; DuQuesne 2008).

## **Elite Male and Female Figures**

Images of elite men and women are distinguished in a number of ways, by skin color, proportions, relative size, compositional placement, pose, objects held, clothes, hairstyles, and some items of jewelry. Male figures are usually shown with darker skin than female ones. Most frequently the opposition is between reddish-brown and a lighter brownish-yellow, although variations in color tones frequently occur and, in some periods, the difference between male and female decreases or disappears altogether. Nevertheless, the general distinction established by the Old Kingdom continues into the Greco-Roman Period. Whatever its significance (Robins 2001), the darker, more vibrant color has the visual effect of making male figures more prominent than female ones (see Plate 2). Variations in body proportions occur at different periods, but a

distinction is usually maintained between the proportions of male and female figures (Robins 1994b). The former usually have broader shoulders and limbs, a lower small of the back, and shorter legs than the latter. Male and female couples, usually husband and wife but sometimes adult son and mother, are shown the same size or the female figure is shorter, sometimes even on a miniature scale compared to the man. Two-dimensional art overwhelmingly places the female figure in a compositionally subordinate position (Fischer 2000; Robins 1994a; see Figures 12.4 and 12.6 in Woods, this volume).

Male standing figures are constructed with one leg forward (the far leg in two, and the left leg in three dimensions), leaving a considerable space between the heel of the forward foot and the toe of the rear one (see Figure 12.2 in Woods, this volume). Female figures stand with their feet together or with one foot slightly advanced, but not enough to leave a gap between the two feet. Male figures, therefore, occupy more space than female ones, making them visually more prominent within the composition (see Figure 12.4 in Woods, this volume). This is enhanced when standing male figures carry a tall staff in their forward hand with the end placed on the baseline in front of the forward foot. The staff is often combined with a cloth in the rear hand. This image is simply an enlarged version of the hieroglyph writing the word *ser* “official,” thus emphasizing the official status of the depicted man. In some images, a scepter is substituted for the cloth. As a hieroglyph, the scepter is used to write *kherep* “to control” and *sekhem* “power, authority.” While women sometimes carry the cloth, it is highly exceptional to find them with either the staff or scepter (Robins 2008). Very often, especially in the Old and Middle Kingdoms and early Dynasty 18, the hands of female figures hang open at the side of the body, reducing even further the amount of space occupied in comparison to male figures. During the New Kingdom, it became common for elite females to hold or shake a sistrum, a ritual instrument associated with the goddess Hathor that refers to the role of the bearers as chantresses in the temple (Onstine 2005). The sistrum was not normally carried by male officials. Thus, the female image placed women in a different sphere of action from men, whose image was constructed to show their authority as government officials.

The basic depicted male garment is an opaque, white, knee-length kilt that leaves the body bare except for any jewelry (Figure 12.2 in Woods, this volume). By the Middle Kingdom, a longer, mid-calf-length kilt was often worn over the knee-length one, and later still, a bag tunic belted at the waist and covering the torso could be added. Both secondary garments were painted white except where they covered bare skin, when the color was changed to pink to represent the skin showing through the fine linen. From later Dynasty 18 onward, figures began to be shown swathed in more and more complex layers of garments, including a sash kilt tied at the waist so that the two long ends fall down at the front over all the other layers.

Until later Dynasty 18, elite female figures were depicted wearing a garment that wrapped around the body and followed its contours from just below the breasts to just above the ankles. One or two straps run from the top of the dress over the shoulders. In two-dimensional figures, the profile breast placed on the forward outline of the body is revealed, but statues show a strap covering each breast. The relationship between the depicted “sheath” dress and actual garments is unclear, but the sheath dress as depicted cannot have existed in reality, because it clings tightly to the body whether the figure is standing, sitting, or kneeling. From the middle of Dynasty 18, depictions of the sheath dress began to be replaced by a loose-fitting, pleated, wrap-around garment, knotted

together in the breast region and falling away from the body to the ground. A second layer was often added by a large shawl worn over the dress. Although these garments do not cling to the body, the outline of the body is often shown as though seen through the fabric, especially in relief-cut figures, where the cutting and modeling of the body in the stone remains visible even after the garments are painted (see Figure 12.5 in Woods, this volume).

Various hairstyles are associated with elite figures. The commonest male style, often called a round wig, curves around the back of the head to meet the front of the wig at shoulder level (see Plate 2). The hair is often arranged in rows of short locks, and the ear is usually covered. In other male styles, the hair falls on to the shoulders, but seldom below, except at the end of Dynasty 18 and during the Ramesside Period. Detailed examples show that the hair was elaborately arranged in a series of braids and curls. Finally, the hair may be cut close to the head or, especially from later Dynasty 18 onward, completely shaved. Overall trends in the representation of these styles suggest that they were not randomly depicted but embody social significance, which varies according to context (Robins 1999a).

Elite female hairstyles tend in general to be longer than male ones, but there are many exceptions. The most common one, in use from the Early Dynastic Period into the Greco-Roman, is the so-called tripartite, where the hair is divided into three parts with two falling to breast level either side of the face and one down the back. During the second half of Dynasty 18, it is almost completely replaced by the “enveloping,” which is undivided and covers the shoulders. Detailed examples show that the hair of both styles consists of a mass of thin braids or ringlets, often with three thicker braids at the back of the head. When male hairstyles lengthened during the New Kingdom to fall below the shoulder, female hairstyles also lengthened and could fall as low as waist level (Haynes 1977). Short hairstyles, resembling the male round wig, also occurred at all periods, although overall they were far less common. Their significance has not been studied in detail, but, in some contexts, they may relate to a ritual role played by the wearer. In the Old Kingdom, figures of some high-status women, usually wives of the tomb owner, are shown with very short hair often, although by no means always, with a fillet tied round the head. The style follows the contours of the head, just as it does in male figures with close-cropped hair, so it appears to lack gender differentiation. Nevertheless, in many, although not all, examples of couples where the woman wears this style, the man wears the shoulder-length wig, so that within the group the two are mostly differentiated. A similar short style is also found on figures of the tomb owner’s daughters and on non-elite women, such as music makers and dancers, although usually without the fillet. In later periods, this style is worn by female figures playing ritual roles in the temple or at funerals (Robins 1999a, 67–68).

Both male and female figures wear jewelry and eye makeup. Broad collars, armlets, and bracelets are common with both genders. Anklets are mainly worn by female figures in conjunction with the sheath dress, but examples also occur occasionally on male figures. Earrings were introduced in the late Middle Kingdom (Bourriau (1988), 124) and became part of elite female dress from Dynasty 18 on. They are seldom worn by adult males, although there are exceptions, most notably in the burial chamber of Sennefer’s tomb at Thebes (TT 96, Eggebrecht 1991); their significance in this context is uncertain. Bracelets on the lower arm between the elbow and the wrist, introduced in the second half of Dynasty 18, seem to be confined to female figures. Items making up

the Gold of Honor given by the king to favored officials are restricted to men (Binder 2008). Any gender distinction in the use of makeup that surrounds and outlines the eye, often with a thick line running back from the outer corner of the eye towards the hair, is not apparent.

## Non-elite Figures

Images of the non-elite appear in a number of scene types in elite tombs, especially those showing activities in the fields and marshes or relating to food production. Household servants are also shown in Dynasty 18 “banquet” scenes. How close these images come to reality is uncertain, but presumably they show the ideal elite view of the non-elite. No images have survived, if they ever existed, to show how the non-elite imagined themselves. The majority of non-elite figures are male, although some activities, such as bread making, weaving, and some work in the fields (although not plowing or reaping) involve females. Workers in the marshes and in workshops, other than weaving, are exclusively male. This suggests that in the ideal world of the elite, certain tasks were considered more appropriate to one or other gender, with the majority being assigned to men (Robins 2001). Like elite figures, male and female non-elite are divided by their skin color, hairstyles, and clothes, although the latter are far less elaborate, marking the lack of status of the non-elite in comparison with the elite. Male figures wear a knee-length kilt, a loin cloth, a kilt that opens at the front often revealing the genitalia, or a sash that does not cover the genitalia; some are completely naked (see Figure 12.1 in Woods, this volume). Although the kilt is often similar to the basic elite kilt, a lack of jewelry and the small scale of the figures distinguish them from elite males. Further, figures of elite men never reveal their genitals, except in one statue type that is chronologically confined to the 5th and 6th Dynasties (Robins (1997), 21, 25, 67). Non-elite female figures often wear a version of the sheath dress, but are also shown in a knee- or calf-length skirt that leaves the upper torso bare. They are seldom shown naked, except when depicted as servants, musicians, and dancers in the “banquet” scenes dating to the reigns of Thutmose IV and Amenhotep III, and even then they wear elaborate jewelry (see Plate 2). In other contexts, jewelry is not depicted on non-elite female figures.

Non-elite men wear their hair short, and some figures exhibit male pattern baldness, never found with elite figures (see Figure 12.3 in Woods, this volume). In some periods, non-elite males are depicted with unkempt hair and with stubble on their cheeks, in contrast to the well-groomed appearance of the elite male. Male household servants waiting on the elite are shown with close-cropped hair or a shaved head and are not given the unkempt appearance of laborers, perhaps because of their close proximity to the elite (Robins 1999a). Female figures are less likely to be shown with unkempt hair, although examples can be found. In many contexts, non-elite women wear the tripartite hairstyle, but other styles not associated with elite women occur.

## Figures of Children

Images of elite children are often shown naked, so, unlike adults, these children are not marked for gender by their clothes (Robins 2008). They are, however, shown with the same pattern of skin coloring as used for adult figures. In standing figures, the genitalia

are clearly shown, marking their male or female sex, although in other poses they are often obscured. Their heads are usually shaved except for a braided lock of hair. In the Old Kingdom, the braid usually falls at the side of the head for boys, but frequently at the back of the head for girls. Figures of boys are more likely than those of girls to be shown wearing a necklace with an amulet and grasping their father's staff. Figures of girls, by contrast, are more likely to combine the lock of hair with adult dress, perhaps indicative of an age between childhood and full adulthood. By mid Dynasty 18, the lock is no longer braided but hangs loose, and this is sometimes combined with a fringe in images of girls. Images of boys occasionally wear earrings, rarely found on adult male figures. Non-elite children are usually depicted with close-cropped hair or a shaven head, and completely naked without any body adornment. The lack of a child's lock or adornment marks their low status in comparison with elite children.

## **Figures of the King and Royal Women**

Kingship was the central institution in the cosmic, social, and administrative structure, and the role of king was essentially a male one with few women ascending the throne. A number of women, however, surrounded the king: his mother, wives, sisters, and daughters. Figures of the king and royal women follow the gender conventions found with elite figures, and they are further distinguished by the different items of insignia appropriate to each (Troy 1986; Robins 1993a; Goebs 2001). Moreover, figures of the king vastly outnumber those of royal women. Of particular interest in relation to gender are the images of Hatshepsut, and those of Akhenaten and his queen Nefertiti.

Hatshepsut was one of the few women who ascended the throne as king (ca.1479–1458 BCE), and her monuments show the transformation of her image from female to male (see Figure 11.6 in Hartwig, “Sculpture,” this volume). Born the daughter of Thutmose I, she married her half-brother, Thutmose II and, after his death, became regent for his son, Thutmose III. Her images are constructed according to female gender conventions with the insignia of a king’s wife. In year 7 of Thutmose III’s reign, she took the titles of king and began to reign jointly with Thutmose. Her earliest images as king still show her according to female gender conventions, but with kingly titles and insignia (Tefnun 1979). Later images, however, depict her as male and some of her early female depictions were changed to reflect her adoption of male gender conventions (Gabolde and Rondot 1996; Dorman 2005). Such images can tell us little about how Hatshepsut performed the male role of king in life, and it is unlikely that we will ever know how she actually negotiated between her female sex and male gender role. That she was not attempting to hide the former is made clear by texts, which often refer to her with grammatically feminine forms. In fact, the names she adopted as king were constructed to take advantage of feminine forms, so that each name referred to a goddess and suggested an identification with that deity. This was in contrast to the masculine forms used by male kings, which did not have the effect of referring to male deities (Robins 1999b).

Akhenaten (ca. 1353–1336 BCE) ascended the throne as Amenhotep IV and changed his name to honor the Aten or sun disk, the god with whom he replaced the traditional pantheon of deities. Alongside his religious changes, the king sponsored a new artistic style that included profound changes in the proportions of the human figure (Robins 1994b). Images of the king appear with a long neck, narrow shoulders, short

lower legs, high waist, sagging belly, sizable buttocks, and large thighs (see Figure 11.7 in Hartwig, “Sculpture,” this volume). Further, the distance between the heel and toes of the forward and rear feet respectively was greatly reduced in the king’s (and other male) figures, and in some cases the two feet actually overlap, as they do on both traditional and Amarna female figures (Robins 2008). Not only were narrow shoulders, a high waist, and pronounced buttocks and thighs characteristic of traditional female figures, but the change in the king’s standing pose further reduced the distinction between his figures and female ones. To ancient Egyptian eyes, it seems likely, then, that the king’s image appeared to some degree feminized (Robins 1993b). In contrast to this, the figures of Queen Nefertiti are frequently painted with the same reddish-brown skin color as those of the king, suggesting a certain degree of masculinization of the queen’s figure. Nevertheless, total similarity between the figures of the king and queen was prevented by their clothes, rendering of the pubic area, and relative sizes. Although on occasion the king may be represented with a long draped garment knotted at breast level that somewhat resembles the long draped female dress, he always wears it over a version of the traditional male kilt. The queen, on the other hand, is shown wearing nothing under her transparently rendered garment, so that her body, including her stomach, pubic area, and thighs, is visible, and the forward line of the near thigh can be seen to curve back to form one side of the pubic triangle. Uniquely for male figures, the king’s image shows the forward line of the near thigh under the kilt, as though the latter were transparent. This line runs upward to join the forward line of the rear thigh where it touches the line of the stomach fold. Akhenaten’s and Nefertiti’s pubic regions are thus very differently rendered (Robins 1993b). Contrary to traditional art, where depictions of royal couples often show the king and queen the same size, Nefertiti’s figure is always smaller than the king’s, rendering the similarity between some of their bodily proportions far less obvious.

The significance of these proportional and stylistic changes is uncertain. Based on a literal reading of the king’s image, Akhenaten has been diagnosed with various conditions, including Fröhlich’s syndrome (Aldred and Sandison 1962) and Marfan’s syndrome (Burridge 1993). There is, however, little reason to think that Akhenaten’s images were intended to be realistic, as realism was never an aim of ancient Egyptian art (Robins 2003). Instead, they should probably be related to the king’s new religious ideas. Since the Aten, as Creator God, combined male and female principles, and Akhenaten was the god’s child and image on earth, the king’s figure was probably constructed to display both male and female elements (Robins 1993b, 2003). The style and proportions of the king’s image were then adapted for elite male figures and a corresponding female form was developed for Nefertiti and elite women (Arnold 1997).

## Figures of Male and Female Deities

Like the human world, the divine world was also divided by gender into male and female deities, whose images are differentiated using conventions of skin color, pose, compositional placement, and dress similar to those employed for elite figures. In addition, some male deities, such as Osiris, Ptah, and Khonsu, are depicted wrapped in a cloth with their legs and feet undifferentiated, although their hands usually emerge from the wrappings. This is also the standard image for the god Min with the addition of an erect phallus. The same image is used for Amun, although he is also regularly shown in the standard bipedal

form. Goddesses are only occasionally depicted in wrapped form (Wahlberg 2003). Their standard costume is the sheath dress, which continues in use even after the depicted dress of elite women changes. Adult deities are seldom portrayed unclothed except for the sky goddess Nut, who is usually naked in scenes depicting her arched over the earth in her role as the sky. Child gods, most notably Horus, but also the young sun god and Ihy, the personified sistrum and son of Hathor, are usually shown naked with a braided sidelock. Goddesses, like most gods, are rarely, if ever, represented as children.

## **Gender Structure and Organization in Ancient Egyptian Society**

Although some elements of the adorned body are common to male and female figures, the overall combination clearly distinguishes between male and female gender, a division that is projected into the divine world. These distinctions can tell us something about social attitudes regarding the relationship of men and women, and how each category was perceived. The fact that most owners of tombs and other monuments were elite men sets up a fundamental gender inequality with elite women that was probably rooted in differing access to economic resources, relating to the employment of men in government office from which women were excluded. In addition, the conventional images used to represent the two genders give more prominence visually to the male owner, since his broader and often larger figure occupies more space than that of his wife/mother and is placed nearer the center of the scene. This prominence is confirmed by the greater amount of text usually associated with the male figure, and the fact that scenes in tombs generally relate to a man's activities rather than to a woman's (Robins 1989, 1990). It is also noticeable at many periods that two distinct images are used for male figures but only one for female ones. Men may be shown with a youthful, taut-muscled body or a heavier, more mature one with slacker muscles and rolls of fat. The latter probably represents the man as a successful, wealthy official, who eats well and has no need to exert himself physically (see Figure 11.2 in Hartwig, "Sculpture," this volume). Women, on the other hand, are almost always shown with a youthful body lacking signs of aging (Sweeney 2004). One might argue that, while physical maturity was a sign of status and success for men and therefore desirable for the male tomb owner to display, there was little interest in the depiction of female figures affected by the processes of childbearing and aging.

In the elite world, society was divided by gender, dictating what was appropriate for men and women, and this division applied not just to the elite, but also to the non-elite. Gender is never, however, independent of status and age, and these also played major roles in structuring society and defining an individual's identity and place within that social structure.

## **Sexuality**

Sexuality is a more nebulous concept than gender. In modern western societies, it is often understood as sexual orientation, divided into various categories, such as homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual, and considered part of an individual's identity. It is unlikely

that any of these categories would have been meaningful in ancient Egypt, which is not to say that same-sex desire and relationships did not exist in addition to other-sex attraction, but that they were not thought of according to modern categories (Parkinson 2008). Heterosexual marriage seems to have been the normal expectation for elite men and women, but this need not have precluded same-sex desire and relationships for either. Nevertheless, texts with references to male same-sex relationships seem to have regarded them negatively (Parkinson 1995). Although the reasons for this are not clear, it may have been partly because such relationships were seen as antisocial in not producing children. If both partners were also married with offspring, any same-sex relationship engaged in by either might have been regarded less negatively. Secure evidence for same-sex relationships is lacking in Egyptian art (Montserrat 2000; Reeder 2000, 2008; Parkinson 2008). To examine sexuality in art, we must go beyond the current western fixation on sexual orientation to look at all aspects of sexual experience: attractiveness, desire, arousal, physical sex, conception, pregnancy, and childbirth. We also need to understand the role of sex in ideas about the creation and maintenance of the cosmos.

Sexuality was a dynamic, cosmic force underlying the creation and constant regeneration of the universe, the regular renewal of the divine aspect of the king, birth into this world, and rebirth into the next. Originally, the Creator God contained the whole of the created cosmos within himself, including the duality of male and female, so that he both engenders and gives birth (Zandee 1992). The world was brought into being by a male sex act, when the Creator God masturbated, but he then swallowed his ejaculated semen and gave birth to the male Shu and female Tefnut. The first divine couple continued the creation of the world through heterosexual reproduction. Images explicitly illustrating the creation and birth of Shu and Tefnut do not occur, but a frequently used image for Amun, who took on the role of Creator God at Thebes, shows him holding his erect phallus. Although creation, "the first occasion," was a single event, it was also constantly repeated, yearly by the regenerative waters of the inundation, monthly by the waxing moon, and daily by the rebirth of the sun. Without constant cyclical regeneration, the ordered world could not be maintained, and male creative and regenerative powers were woven into the fabric of the universe. The sun god impregnated the sky goddess at night and was born from her again in the morning. After the murder of Osiris, his return to life is signaled by the achievement of an erection that led to the conception of his son Horus by his consort Isis. The male dead expected to regain their potency after passing through death (Faulkner (1977), 181), and a scene on the ceiling in the tomb of Ramesses IX shows them with erections (Hornung (1990), 137). Conversely, figures in the underworld representing enemies of the sun god are often shown naked without genitalia, thus depriving them of any power to do harm or achieve rebirth (Hornung (1990), 161–162).

If male sexuality was responsible for creation and regeneration, female sexuality may have related to the role of the feminine hand, personified as a goddess, that stimulated the Creator God and caused him to ejaculate (Vandier 1964, 1965, 1966). According to this model, the function of female sexuality was to arouse the male sexually. It has been suggested that the capacity for creation lay only with the male, and that the female body was merely the vessel for the development of the male seed (Roth 2000). While at first sight such a view might appear to downplay the female role in reproduction, this cannot

in fact be the case, since, without the female body, the creative abilities of the male could not come to fruition.

Since male and female were only separated with the first act of creation, the Creator God combined both. Nevertheless, the Creator God was normally depicted as male and referred to by masculine grammatical forms. There is, however, some evidence that goddesses could also take on the role of creator, and late sources suggest that, in this role, they combined male and female aspects. Neith is called “the man who acts as a woman, the woman who acts as a man,” and both Neith and Hathor are described as two-thirds masculine and one-third feminine, while the goddess Mut is shown in ithyphallic form in the temple of Hibis and in Chapter 164 of the Book of the Dead (Depauw 2003; Wahlberg 2003).

Although all goddesses have a sexual aspect, perhaps the one most closely concerned with sexuality was Hathor, who by the Middle Kingdom was identified with the hand of the Creator God. She is invoked in love poetry (Landgráfová and Navrátilová 2009) and in ritual recitations for safe childbirth (Borghouts 1978), and votive offerings left at her temples were often of a sexual nature (Pinch 1993). Since passage through death into the next life could be conceptualized as rebirth, she is also important in a funerary context. In the royal sphere, she is closely associated with the queen who represents the feminine aspect of divine kingship responsible for the constant renewal of the divine aspect of the mortal king (Troy 1986; Robins 2010). She is also associated with music, dance, and ritual drunkenness (Depauw and Smith 2004), and images of music-making, dancing, and drinking evoke her presence even when the goddess herself is not shown, suggesting an underlying sexual significance in scenes where they occur (Robins (1997), 138–139; see also Plate 2).

Sexual intercourse is rarely shown in formal art, but it is often alluded to through coded symbols, and many scenes and images cannot be fully understood without realizing this (O’Connor 1996, 2001). In the cycle of images showing the divine birth of the king, the scene where the future king is conceived shows the king’s mother and the god Amun-Re seated side by side, legs overlapping and hands touching, while the god holds out an *ankh*-sign, the hieroglyph for life, to the queen as a signifier of the new life that she conceives through intercourse with the god (Brunner 1964). Activities of pouring, spearing, harpooning, and shooting arrows all pun with the word *seti* “to ejaculate/impregnate.” In royal contexts, such activities refer to the sexual renewal of the divine aspect of the king (Robins 2010), while in funerary contexts they signify the rebirth of the deceased (Robins 1988; Manniche 1997; Hartwig 2004). The original act of creation was referenced by images of the tilapia fish, which became an important symbol of creation, fertility, birth, and rebirth, because the fish broods its eggs in its mouth and spits the young out after they hatch, just as the Creator God spat out Shu and Tefnut (Zandee 1992).

## Sexuality and Elite Figures

The word for male is written with a hieroglyph depicting an erect, often ejaculating, phallus, suggesting that the erect phallus lay at the heart of what it meant to be masculine. In elite and royal male figures, however, the genitalia are almost always covered. Figures are not shown with erections, but neither are they shown with a flaccid penis,

which appears only on disempowered, non-elite male figures or figures of male children who are not yet empowered as adults. Yet, although the erect phallus is not depicted, it is perhaps alluded to. Many standing images of men hold a straight scepter at their side that embodies notions of power and authority through its use as a hieroglyph; its stiff protruding form visually references an erect phallus (see Figure 12.2 in Woods, this volume). Further, while the simplest form of the kilt wraps around the body, it is also common in two-dimensional art for the front of the kilt to take on a pointed, triangular form that juts out rigidly in front of the body, suggesting the stiffness of the erect phallus. As depicted male garments became more and more elaborate from the second half of Dynasty 18 onward, the layers of cloth falling at the front of the body over the genital area not only hide and protect it but, by their very extravagance, call attention to the region (Robins 2008).

Representations of the ideal elite male figure varied from period to period, oscillating between two main body types (Robins 1994b). All are physically perfect and well-groomed, and not only mark status, but suggest that the groomed, adorned body was in itself sexually attractive. At many periods, the male youthful figure is shown as broad-shouldered, low-waisted, thick-limbed, and well-muscled, displaying the sort of strength that was a turn-on for the unfaithful wife at the beginning of *The Two Brothers* (Lichtheim (1976), 204). The elite male figure often wears no more than a knee-length kilt, broad-collar, and bracelets, leaving the rest of the body uncovered and displayed. Even when other garments are worn in addition to the kilt, the shape of the body is usually visible through them. Although the opaque kilt completely conceals the genitalia and any hint of their presence, it hugs and outlines the shape of the small, tight buttocks, which may well have been a focus of sexual attraction and desire, since Seth says to Horus, when he seduces him: “How lovely your backside is!” (Parkinson (1991), 120).

At other periods, the ideal, youthful male body is represented by an image with a higher waist, narrower shoulders, and less musculature (see Figure 12.4 in Woods, this volume). While to our eyes, these features may appear feminizing, the Egyptians continued to differentiate between male and female bodies by constructing the female figure with even narrower shoulders and higher waist, so that the two images remained distinct (Robins 1994b). If the first male body type emphasizes physical strength, the second one often seems to deny it. Possibly this was deliberately done to stress the fact that the elite official did not have to engage in heavy physical labor; he was the one who gave orders, but others carried them out (Lichtheim (1976), 171). Such an interpretation might seem to embody status rather than sexuality, but the two cannot be separated, since status, authority, and wealth are often components of sexual attraction and desire.

If ideas of masculinity centered on the erect phallus that ultimately recalled the initial creative act of the Creator God, ideas of female sexuality probably related to the role of the feminine hand that stimulated the god and caused him to ejaculate. According to this model, the feminine ideal should arouse and stimulate the male, but would not itself have the creative force of the male phallus (Roth 2008). This is made clear by the frequent display of the female pubic region that is revealed to lack a phallus (Robins 2008; and see Figure 12.6 in Woods, this volume). In *The Two Brothers*, Bata cuts off his penis and later says to his wife, “I am a woman like you” (Lichtheim (1976), 207). On the other hand, the ideal female body should provoke sexual desire and arousal, and provide an effective vessel for childbearing. In a Middle Kingdom story, the bored king Sneferu says: “Let

there be brought to me twenty women with beautiful bodies, having breasts and braided hair, who have not yet given birth" (P. Berlin 3033, 5.9–10; Bagnato 2006). The women are probably to be understood as pubescent, since they have developed breasts but not born a child. This association between youth and sexual attractiveness may lie behind the young-looking images of elite women that, in general, make no distinction between different generations, in contrast to males who may be shown as youthful or mature. The typical female image is slender and high-waisted with buttocks that spread vertically between the waist and thighs and are often more prominent with a less clearly marked lower border than the small tight buttocks of the male. This body form echoes the New Kingdom poetic description of the beloved as "wide of hips, slim of waist" (Landgráfová and Navrátilová (2009), 96).

Like elite male figures, those of elite women are impeccably groomed, and the elaborate hairstyles of both genders mark the wearers' status. Beyond this, texts suggest that female sexuality was closely linked to hair, which may explain why, overall, elite women are less likely to be shown with short hair than men (Derchain 1975b, 1976; Robins (1999a), 63). In Dynasty 18 banquet scenes, where male guests are frequently shown with the short round wig, close-cropped hair, or a shaven head, female guests wear the tripartite or enveloping wig, a distinction also found among the non-elite servants waiting on the guests. Even in the fields, where men often appear with short hair, balding, or with no hair at all, women are normally shown with longer hair.

Funerary monuments, such as tomb chapels, statues, and stelae, memorialize the dead, display their status and identity, mark the place where the living should perform the offering ritual, and aid the passage of the deceased through death into the afterlife. The patron wanted to present his status as a high-achieving official in order to show his worthiness to receive offerings, and part of his status included presenting himself according to the ideals of masculine authority and sexuality. Since the passage into the afterlife was viewed as similar to birth into this life, sexuality also formed an important aspect of regeneration after death, whereby the male deceased is stimulated by the female to bring about his own rebirth, as the sun god brings about his rebirth through the agency of Nut, and Osiris recovers his potency through the agency of Isis. The women in his family are thus depicted so as to embody notions of sexual attractiveness and potential childbearing capabilities.

Much of the decoration in tomb chapels, therefore, was intended to create an environment conducive to the owner's rebirth in which the sexualization of male and female figures played an important part. The deceased, male or female, is identified with Osiris by placing the name of Osiris before his or her name, so he or she becomes a form of Osiris. When the deceased is a woman, she has to cross the lines of sex and gender to become a male Osiris in order to ensure her rebirth into the afterlife (Roth (1999), 51; McCarthy 2002, 2008; Cooney 2008). She does not, however, lose her female identity, and once in the next world appears fully female as one of the transformed dead, being referred to as *akhet*, the grammatically feminine form of the male *akh*.

## Nude Female Images

During the reigns of Thutmose IV and Amenhotep III (1400–1353 BCE), images of unnamed, nude, female adolescents appear in banquet scenes as musicians, dancers, and

servants waiting on guests (Robins 1996; Manniche 1997; Hartwig 2004; Asher-Greve and Sweeney 2006). They are usually adorned with jewelry, including a strand of beads worn around the hips. Such girdles have been found in royal and elite female burials (Wilkinson (1971), 80–83, 134–135; Andrews (1990), 140–143), although women from these social groups are not depicted wearing them any more than they are shown wearing loincloths. The beads in actual examples are often in the form of cowrie shells that resemble the female genitalia, and it is probable that the girdles were intended to enhance and protect the pubic region. The figures depicted in banquet scenes represent females who have reached puberty, since they usually have breasts and the pubic triangle is painted black to represent hair, but one might suggest that, like Sneferu's women, they have not yet given birth. Given the funerary context in which they occur, these images can be understood as deliberately sexual.

Similarly youthful figures are found on cosmetic objects from the same period (Robins (1995), 116–123; Wallert 1967). Eye makeup, perfumed substances, and mirrors were used by both sexes as part of their grooming, whereby the raw disorder of the natural body was tamed and turned into the perfectly groomed, sexually attractive, elite body (O'Connor 2010). These female figures are combined with depictions of music-making, marsh plants, and other motifs that relate to Hathor, creation, and life (*ankh*), and express a concern both with fertility and procreation in this life, and with rebirth into the next, since many of these objects were found in burials where they must have been placed after their owner's death.

Three-dimensional figures of nude women, often with long hair, jewelry including hip girdles, and a clearly marked pubic region, including the vulva, have been found in domestic settings, temple precincts, and burials of men, women, and children (Pinch 1993; Waraksa 2009; Teeter 2010). They are made in various materials including wood, stone, faience, and baked clay, and in a variety of styles, some of which are very different from female figures on formal monuments (Hayes (1953), figures 135, 137; Robins (1993), figures 17, 18; Robins (1995), 69–71, 110, 124–125; Robins (1997), figure 125; Teeter (2010), 61–67). On many examples, multiple strands of long thick hair made from strung beads of mud were added separately. Some figurines include a child, and, from Dynasty 18, the figures may be placed on beds (Figure 7.1). Their skin is often painted red, rather than the normal yellow of female figures.

The nude image suggests a connection to female sexuality, fertility, and childbearing, and this is supported by the presence of the bed that signifies the site of sexual intercourse (O'Connor 1996, 2001; Teeter (2010), 168). Many of the figurines, but by no means all, seem to have been deliberately broken, suggesting that they were part of a ritual performance that required them to be destroyed on completion. Such an idea might be supported by the red skin coloring, since red was a powerful color frequently used in ritual and magic (Waraksa 2009). The figurines were probably most often concerned with the fertility of the family and ensuring a safe birth for mother and child. One figurine associated with a tomb has a text on it that says: "May a birth be granted to your daughter Seh," suggesting that it was a votive offering with the request aimed at the tomb owner, probably Seh's father or grandfather, who, as a successfully transformed being in the afterlife, had the power to grant the petition (Schott 1930). Another example says: "An offering which the king gives to the *ka* of Khonsu: a child for Tita" (Teeter (2010), n.43). The connection of the figurines to fertility and birth would also explain their presence in



**Figure 7.1** Fertility figurine in the form of a nude woman lying on a bed with a child by her side, Dynasties 19 to 20, painted limestone. © Trustees of the British Museum.

burials as part of the burial goods, where they would help in the rebirth of the deceased into the afterlife. Waraksa (2010) uses evidence from healing texts to suggest that the figures were also used more broadly in a variety of healing rituals, whereby threats to an individual's well-being were transferred to the image, which was then destroyed to render the threat harmless.

Perhaps related to the female figurines are two-dimensional images that show a woman with a newborn child, often clearly male, seated either on a bed or a stool, found among



**Figure 7.2** Fragmentary ostrakon showing a woman suckling a child, probably from Deir el-Medina, Dynasties 19 to 20, painted limestone. © Trustees of the British Museum.

the large number of limestone flakes discarded by the artists living in the village of Deir el-Medina (Pinch 1983) (Figure 7.2). Although there is evidence from one house that a similar scene decorated the wall of the front room (Brunner-Traut 1955), it seems unlikely that the numerous examples recovered from the site were all preparatory sketches for wall decoration. More probably the images formed a visual component in rituals for safe childbirth, and were then thrown away when the time of crisis was over.

During Dynasty 22 baked clay votive beds and stelae incorporated mold-made decoration that included figures of nude women, sometimes shown frontally like fertility figurines, and sometimes seated in profile playing a lute. The women are in a boat surrounded by papyrus, whose stems they may grasp. The music-making and papyrus invoke Hathor, and the marsh setting, creation. Like fertility figurines, they have been found in houses, temples, and tombs. Although the exact function of the objects is uncertain, the sexual nature of the imagery is clear, and relates them to notions of successful birth into this life and rebirth into the next (Teeter (2010), 159–166).

Although sexual intercourse is rarely depicted in formal art, there are graffiti and sketches on ostraka that show couples having sex, sometimes with other figures present as well (Manniche 1977). Few of these are carefully drawn, and sometimes even the sex of the figures is unclear. Far better executed is a section of a papyrus now in the Egyptian Museum in Turin that shows a series of scenes with male and female figures having intercourse (Omlin 1971; O'Connor (2001), 44, 46; Landgráfová and Navrátilová 2009). The female figures are youthful and naked except for jewelry and a hip girdle. They appear to be well groomed and one woman is applying makeup. By contrast the male figures hardly conform to the ideal elite image of masculinity, since they are somewhat flabby and rather scruffy. They are mostly bald or balding with unkempt hair, and some have stubble along the jaw line. Although they wear kilts, these are open at the front to reveal an enormous erect phallus and testicles, clearly breaking the rules of decorum found in formal art. Since nothing else like this is known to us today, it is impossible to say what the purpose of these images was or for whom they were intended.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

In this chapter, I concentrate on the analysis of visual material through the lens of gender and sexuality. Issues of gender and sexuality in texts, art, and material culture only became of concern to Egyptologists relatively recently, first surfacing in the late 1980s (Manniche 1987; Robins 1989, 1990), followed a decade later by the groundbreaking work of Meskell (1997, 1999, 2000, 2002). A good overview of the state of the question is to be found in Sweeney (2011). Studies of gender in art have often concentrated on the position of women within society (Fischer 1987, 2000; Robins 1989, 1990, 1994a) and more recently the problems of female rebirth and regeneration in a funerary context (Roth 1999, 2000; McCarthy 2002, 2008; Cooney 2008). Examination of the construction of masculinity in text and image has lagged behind the interest in female gender and sexuality. Here the work of Hare (1999), Robins (1996, 1999a, 2008), Ridealgh (2008) and Parkinson (2008) is important. Male same-sex desire was studied by Parkinson (1995) in the context of Middle Kingdom literature and by Reeder (2000, 2008) with the focus on the Old Kingdom tomb of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep. A comprehensive discussion of sex and sexuality in relation to love poetry is found in Landgráfová and Navrátilová (2009). Sexuality encompassed the cosmic as well as social sphere with the two being inextricably linked (Roth 2000), and here the cosmic role of the king and the renewal of his divine aspect through royal women is significant (Troy 1986; Robins 2010). Early proponents of the notion that sexual meaning was frequently embedded in scenes and motifs were Westendorf (1967) and Derchain (1975a, 1975b, 1976). Although it has not been universally accepted (Eaton-Krauss and Graefe 1985), scholars have increasingly subscribed to the idea (Robins 1988, 2010; O'Connor 1996; Manniche 1997), and it is fair to say that it has now entered mainstream scholarship (O'Connor 2001; Hartwig 2004; Angenot 2011).

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## CHAPTER 8

# Reception and Perception

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## Reception and Perception of Art

Reception and perception are complex biological processes of cognition. In the framework of art and its research, reception means the cognitive comprehension of an artwork by a beholder including the communication processes between users of art, creative forces, artists, their products, and so on. The investigation of perception focuses on sensory stimuli and how they are treated by the body and mind. The reception and perception of art are very complex phenomena, and have occupied generations of art historians, psychologists, and philosophers. A number of approaches have arisen from this field of research, but their ambiguity and high degree of speculation complicate their use.

Art experience is influenced by different factors. This experience depends on the beholder, the artwork, the cultural context and so forth, and varies to a great degree. In *The Psychology of Art Appreciation* Bjarne Sode Funch (1997) identified five different types of art appreciation that might give a basic insight into this sophisticated discussion. In the psycho-physical school of thought, *aesthetic pleasure* is a principal phenomenological characteristic of art appreciation (Funch (1997), 11–72, 269). This feeling of pleasure is to be considered as an independent non-cognitive personal sensitivity which responds to formal qualities in visual designs and works of art. According to the psycho-physical approach, this disposition enables the individual to decide whether an object is beautiful or ugly. By contrast, the cognitive approach sees cognitive capacities as the crucial factor in *art understanding* (Funch (1997), 74–141, 270). Here, the intentional activation of cognitive abilities like visual examination, interpretation, thinking, and judging are regarded as the essential preconditions of pleasure in art appreciation. Emotional reactions to art also play an important role in this regard, especially in theories of expression and empathy (Funch (1997), 133–137, 270–271). Some theories of *emotional appreciation* emphasize the expressiveness of an artwork that evokes emotions

in the beholder; others consider the artwork as an expression of emotions. In a different way from the psycho-physical tradition or cognitive approaches, questions like “how a recipient feels when he looks at an artwork” or “whether an artist provides a picture with expressive qualities” are essential for emotional appreciation. Psychoanalytic studies represent a fourth type of art appreciation (Funch (1997), 141–184, 271). Their main focus is on the *aesthetic experience* and *aesthetic fascination* as an exceptional personal condition and its impact on the psyche. A fifth type of art appreciation has been identified by existential-phenomenological theories (Funch (1997), 187–268, 275). Its central point is art experience as the living stream of consciousness. It refers to the individual’s existence and the subjective aspects of experience. It is based on the assumption that any work of art can affect individual people in different ways due to their own specific individuality.

Even though it is not the aim of this chapter to demonstrate all these approaches by means of examples from ancient Egyptian art, many impulses can be taken from them. In the following, these approaches are highlighted from different perspectives which seem to be relevant in terms of the visual reception and perception of Egyptian art.

## Reception and Perception of Ancient Egyptian Art

In the standard work *Art and Illusion* Ernst Gombrich (2002) turns his attention to the psychology of pictorial representation. In many places in his study, he refers to Egyptian art. In the introduction, he even asks the following questions concerning the different characteristics of art in different cultures or civilizations:

Why is it that different ages and different nations have represented the visible world in such different ways? Will the paintings we accept as true to life look as unconvincing to future generations as Egyptian paintings look to us? Is everything concerned with art entirely subjective, or are there objective standards in such matters? If there are, if the methods taught in the life class today result in more faithful imitations of nature than the conventions adopted by the Egyptians, why did the Egyptians fail to adopt them? Is it possible ... that they perceived nature in a different way? (Gombrich 2002, 3)

Even though we are still not able to respond to these questions fully, we can follow two analytical pathways in order to approximate the visual reception and perception of Egyptian art. First, we should try to define the factors that mainly influence the reception and perception of Egyptian art or, in other words, determine which aspects of Egyptian art evoke which reactions and why. Second, we have to find out more about the Egyptian recipients or percipients, whether there is any evidence for cognitive, emotional or other kinds of perception, and if there is actually a chance to reconstruct the “aesthetic pleasure” felt by the Egyptians when looking at an artwork.

In his article “Egyptian Images: Percept and Concept,” Whitney Davis (1983, 85) provides a first approach to these ideas. Taking the questions “how the artist knew that he had finished a work, what his standards of well-formedness in art might have been, and how he acquired or how the culture evolved the cognitive and social skills for production in the first place” as his starting point, he assembles some important thoughts and

comments. He refers to Heinrich Schäfer's *Principles of Egyptian Art* (first German edition 1919; here quoting from the first English edition (1974); on the different editions see Baines (2007a), 207, n. 1) as the detailed standard work on the visual and technical conventions that governed the production of an Egyptian image. Davis calls for continuing Heinrich Schäfer's groundbreaking thesis by investigating how the principles of Egyptian art came into being, what purposes they served and why they were maintained for such a long time (Davis (1983), 86). On the other hand he does not settle for his short explanation of the "perceptual attitude of Egyptian culture" (Davis (1983), 86) and he does not follow Henrietta Groenewegen-Frankfort's (1951) argumentation that "temporal progression or nature of the spatial continuum structured the conception of Egyptian images" (Davis (1983), 87). He rather points out

that the structure of visual perception and the maturation of sensorimotor, logical, and representational competences of all kinds are probably unvarying in the human species—and therefore an account of a culture's distinctive intellectual practices ... must show, specifically, how social and ideological determinants inflect the psychobiological trajectory. (Davis (1983), 87)

He assents to Maurice Pirenne's suggestion (1970) that graphic representation, including canonical Egyptian representation, was the site of cultural reflection on the nature of phenomenological experience (Davis (1983), 88). According to Pirenne, an Egyptian image is a type of axiomatic projection, a kind of "perspective" representation to some degree. Based on this, Davis argues that perception of art is generally a conceptual act, as representation itself is determined by culture and consciousness.

Although it would be important to develop theoretical discussions further, we will now focus on the characteristic features of reception and perception in ancient Egyptian art. In doing so, I will give an overview of current approaches including former discussions and more recent ideas as well. This chapter will address a group of questions and topics that are not only characteristic of Egyptian art but also of Egyptological discourse.

## *Form and structure*

The form and structure of Egyptian art seem to be very clear, conceptual, and constant. Nevertheless, Egyptian art has remained the focus of various discussions for a long time. Most of the questions and the thinking to do with its form and structure concern the specific Egyptian system of rules—rules that were essential for the functioning and agency of this art. These rules may also be the cause of the fascination that Egyptian art exerts, even in the eyes of the modern beholder. Reception and perception of Egyptian art depend on several aspects. We cannot say whether the ancient Egyptians, people in antiquity, and modern-day scientists all experience Egyptian art in the same way. But we can determine which parameters influence its reception and perception.

## *Space*

One of these parameters is the composition of space in Egyptian art. There are two main aspects to be considered. First, the way space, for example, architecture, was used

for the integration of sculptures, reliefs, paintings, and so forth; second, the way space is represented in Egyptian images itself. For the first point, we get a distinct view of the places where the Egyptians made use of art, especially of images. Temples, palaces, tombs, or objects like coffins, furniture, and so on were not simply media for images but were directly connected with them and did not function independently. Alongside texts, Egyptian images played a most significant role in the performances of Egyptian rituals and cultic acts, for example. They were viewed as agents that became operative within funerary, sacred, or official actions.

Architecture or objects featured with images could—in a broader context—be integrated into comprehensive landscape conceptions which provide specific ways of viewing or axes of perception. So, for example, the alleys of sphinxes were visibly associated with particular buildings, assigned cult axes, and aligned the way toward temple entrances. At the front of the temples, monumental statues unmistakably defined the passage into the sacred area wherein iconographic programs (sculptures, reliefs, paintings—see, e.g., Loeben 2001) created a world of their own. They guided actions and gave orientation within rooms. Their application followed specific patterns that are in many cases difficult to reconstruct (e.g., Seidel 1996). Consequently, we can say that images were generally an essential part of the cognizant structuring and generating of space or spatial forms in ancient Egypt.

Furthermore, images were linked to specific places, for example, in funerary spaces. They were related to a particular direction, area of the wall or connected composition, a special point or level of a tomb (e.g., Fitzenreiter 1995). As well as the images attached to temples, images in tombs not only structured but also redefined space and generated sense. They formed a unit that guided the perception of potential recipients in a way that is specific to Egyptian culture (Fitzenreiter (2011), 23, esp. fn. 47). This is not only given by aesthetic criteria but by the performative and lively agency the Egyptians credited to images.

In addition, space is part of the images itself. It is hardly ever the central theme, but realized and therefore immanent in the specific conventions of Egyptian art. In his article on space in Egyptian relief, Abdel Ghaffar Shedid (1995) summarizes the most important aspects. He emphasizes the absence of perspective in Egyptian art, which results from the idea that there is no need to picture space because it is part of the conception that included the beholder, the owner of the tomb, and other persons represented (Shedid (1995), 363, 368). Nevertheless, Egyptian images feature spatiality, rooms, or places in diverse ways. They are, for example, denoted by inscriptions, colors, specific motifs that can have a perspective or spatial effect, such as indications of direction, movement, framing, semantic relations or references, and so on (Shedid (1995), 364–368). Images can show spaces/rooms (as well as spaces of time) side by side that are not connected in reality. Egyptian sculptures create for themselves a virtual space by their specific use of bases, back pillars, and similar structural elements (e.g., Wildung (2006), 171). Visual axes evoke a virtual reception of space that can give the impression of dynamic, spatial, or other effects.

## *Composition*

The composition of Egyptian images is generally subject to a number of constant principles. One of the main principles is a system of rules that determined the way

images were arranged, especially on tomb walls. Jan Assmann recognized this system in the aesthetic and logical order, or hierarchy of elements, within the whole composition (Assmann (1987), 20). Each Egyptian image combines abstract and iconic elements. Abstract elements like the division of the image area into scenes and registers or the use of the “neutralized baseline” (Assmann (1987), 27) are part of the semantic hierarchy that organizes Egyptian pictorial compositions (Assmann (1987), 25). Furthermore, there is a syntax Assmann calls “hierotaxis” (Assmann (1987), 28–36), which is traceable in two ways. First, in the forms of coordination: Egyptian images are organized thematically, for instance, when several scenes express one common topic, when motifs denote anti-*th*etic/opposite contents or temporal courses of action (see also Fischer-Elfert (2000), 69–70). Second, in the forms of subordination: the so-called *Bedeutungsmaßstab* (“equivalence of size and importance”) (Assmann (1987), 30–31) of Egyptian images “guides” the beholder so the images can be read, such as when important elements are emphasized by “enlargement” or when one motif (e.g., the tomb owner) parenthesizes subordinate scenes (in order to differentiate between main and subordinate acts/agents).

This specific form of pictorial composition has various consequences for the recipients of Egyptian art: for those who are “culturally and socially skillful,” it works as a guiding system. The recipients obtain information from the images on the order in which they are to be read (Angenot 2000; Fischer-Elfert 2000), as well as the meaning and importance of motifs (e.g., Weeks 1979), the cultic or ritual function of images, and so forth. Sometimes we can even consider that sophisticated recipients—in contrast to a broader reception (Fitzenreiter (2011), esp. 21–24 and n. 40)—were encouraged to find out intentional compositional elements, for example, by iconographic parallelization, a special coordination of pictorial and textual elements, or something similar. This seems to indicate “an ancient artistic practice which determined aesthetic reception, inspired artistic invention and influenced social interaction between artists and clients” (Fitzenreiter (2011), 7–30).

## Colors

Colors also have a special meaning with regard to the conception, and thus the reception, of Egyptian art. This was essential not only for the canonical coloring of Egyptian art and architecture in terms of a theoretical thinking, but especially for its practical use (e.g., “magic”). The immanent sense and metaphoric value of the colors reflected the characteristic thinking and apperception of the Egyptians that was mainly affected by the scenery of the Nile valley.

The Egyptian color scale was essentially reduced to six base colors: black, blue, green, red, yellow, and white. Mixed or graded color shades were used to a lesser extent, at least up to the New Kingdom (Blom-Böer (1994), 58). There is an intense discussion about color terms in the ancient Egyptian language (e.g., Warburton 2004; Schenkel 2007, with further references) that shows the complexity of visual and mental color perception in the Egyptian world as well as the difficulty of its comprehension in modern times. The close correlation between the perception of colors and their application are concretized in the terms *jwn* and *jnm*, that denote both the noun “color” and other abstractions such as “visible appearance” (Quirke (2001), 187–188). In Egyptian art we often find

that “color changes”: characters, creatures, or objects are not necessarily the same color as their natural original (Blom-Böer (1994), 58), neither are they always converted into the same color or combination of colors. Each color could, in principle, be exchanged for another and was definitely the result of a conscious act, not a reception disposition characteristic of the ancient Egyptians (Schenkel (1963), 132–133).

Regardless of the apparent choice, the colors used in Egyptian art possess a specific imagery. For instance, the word for green, written with the papyrus-hieroglyph, was also used for plants, vegetables, freshness, vegetation, prosperity, some minerals, eye makeup, waterfowl, the sea (“great green”), the Nile, and so on. White, as an expression of ritual purity and sacredness, could be the color of sacred or divine animals, for instance, the “Big White One” (a baboon god), or a white female hippopotamus. Blue as the color of water could be used for the symbolic circumscription of cosmic phenomena and processes of creation. Red is a color with both positive and negative aspects. It designates the desert—the “red land”—as a sphere of danger and threatening creatures. It is used to describe undesirable emotional states like pain, anger, aggression, and so on (Pinch (2001), 182–185). The mostly negative connoted color black can refer to the dead and transience on the one hand (in symbolic opposition to green as the giver of life) and to fecundity on the other. This association results from observation of the yearly inundation and the cycle of growth, evolution/development, and death. As part of the conception, the reception of colors played an important role in the way Egyptian art worked. Within the “canonical system,” the choice of color was definitely an intentional act that codetermined the clearness of the images’ semantic function.

### *“Aspektive,” non-perspective, and perspective*

With the same consciousness, the Egyptians conceptualized a system of pictorial conventions that was tailored to their particular cultural needs. One part of this system is the so-called *Aspektive*—labeled with a neologism coined by Emma Brunner-Traut (Brunner-Traut (1963), 396)—that describes the specific manner in which the Egyptians devised their two-dimensional images, namely “non-perspective.” Brunner-Traut assumed that Egyptian representations were composed “aspect by aspect” and that the Egyptians consequently received them “aspect by aspect.” In addition, “*Aspektive*,” which means “free of inspection,” or “freedom from a single viewpoint,” refers to the opposite of perspective, which stands for the realization of an optical spatial impression on a flat surface (for the Egyptological background see Shedid (1995), 356–358 and Vomberg (2004), 33–56; see also Peck, this volume). In perspectival images, the use of specific formal means suggests a third dimension—an impression of spatial depth—where there are just two dimensions. Motifs are represented in accordance with our viewing and not with our imagination.

*Aspektive* replaced Heinrich Schäfers’ *Geradvorstelligkeit* (“based on frontal images,” where “frontal” means “unaffected by foreshortening” and the images are mental or memory images (Baines (2007a), 209)), a concept created to explain Egyptian representations by mental storage mechanisms. Heinrich Schäfer, who was inspired by the psychology of perception of his time, compared the Egyptian formal vocabulary with that of children, mentally ill persons, “primitive people,” and pre-Greek cultures (e.g., Schäfer

(1938), 35–41). This view soon attracted criticism (for an overview of the relevant arguments of this discussion and the mechanisms of perception in general, see Baines 2007a).

The Egyptian pictorial system Heinrich Schäfer dealt with in detail in his work *Principles of Egyptian Art* (1919, 1974), is as complex as it is simple: Images combine all the important aspects that are necessary to read and understand them, but they are not a copy of their natural archetype (e.g., Schäfer (1974), fig. 263). Thus it is possible to join more than one view (e.g., Schäfer (1974), fig. 241), a sequence of actions (e.g., Schäfer (1974), fig. 244) or different places (e.g., Schäfer (1974), fig. 151) “in one image.” The beholder receives the image sequentially (Vomberg (2004), 36)—as opposed to the “selective seeing” that is characteristic of perspective or central perspective—because the reading order and the statement of the image are predetermined.

## *Sehbild and Sinnbild*

In this context we have to talk briefly about the *Sehbild/Sinnbild* (visual image/symbolic image) discussion. In 1987 Dieter Kessler published the first part of a study on the so-called “scenes of daily life” in private tombs. In his introduction, he demonstrated the set of problems connected with the question as to which way Egyptian images are to be read or interpreted (Kessler (1987), 59–66). At the time that this study was published, the “scenes of daily life” were considered as pictures of reality, a kind of snap-shot of the tomb owner’s life that had to be read by the later visitors to the site. If a representation showed images that were less true to life or not true to life at all, this was explained by the “way of making art” in Egypt: it was assumed that the artists did not use pattern-books. The Egyptians supposedly created the artwork from their imagination and hence reconstructed motifs wrongly sometimes (for the so-called *Denkbilder* (“mental images”) see Wolf (1957), 203).

The most telling arguments against the *Sehbild* approach are the captions that are applied to the images (Kessler (1987), 65). There is often a considerable difference between the viewer’s first pictorial impression and the content of the captions. Hence the short descriptions, speeches, and declarations speak in favor of a “deeper connotation.” Based on the assumption that image and text worked together as correlated signs with the purpose of a broader pictorial message, the representations in Egyptian tombs, temples, and so on, must have been *Sinnbilder*, namely pictorial instruments with a specific, mostly religious function within their particular contexts (for this relation, see also van Walsem 1998). One of the most popular examples illustrating the *Sehbild/Sinnbild* controversy is the small golden shrine of Tutankhamun. An analysis approximating to the *Sehbild* approach was given by Marianne Eaton-Krauss and Erhart Graefe in 1985, which was followed by a *Sinnbild* interpretation by Kessler in 1986 along with a very recent study of Valérie Angenot (2011) using a hermeneutical method that deals with the underlying layers of meaning (see also Angenot, this volume).

## Aesthetics

The wide field of aesthetics mainly deals with sensory perception, especially with the perception of pleasure and beauty that is evoked by viewing an artwork, for example. It is

a theoretical approach within philosophy that tries to carve out the conditions, catalysts, and agency of sensory perception, as well as the reception behavior of the beholder, the influence of socialization, and so on.

One of the most important questions within aesthetics is whether there is a universal ideal of beauty that appeals to anyone at any time in any culture. This consideration and other general issues have also been applied to Egyptian art in certain cases (see, e.g., Junge 1990; Müller 1998, 2001). Studies have developed from it, but the discussion is still under way. To sum up, we might say that the aesthetic of Egyptian art is one element among others that mainly contributes to the efficiency of the respective image. It is not the only element but an important one, because it captures the attention of the beholder by a harmonious design of forms and pleasing compositions (for some examples see Backes 2007). Specific triggers like harmonious forms in general, the representation of youthful, firm, muscular male bodies, the enhancement of female attributes, the expert realization of the requirements (“canon” and “decorum”), the use of precious materials (Baines 2007b) and strong colors, and so on evoke a perceptual impulse—a sensation of pleasure and delight—in the addressee and thus support a “message” intended by those who defined the cultural standards, needs, and norms.

Since this is not the place to discuss the subject *in extenso*, only two branches of this field, which have recently been added to the Egyptological debate, will be covered: the aesthetics of perception (e.g., Verbovsek (2006a), 151) and neuroaesthetics (Schulz (2011), 350–356; Verbovsek (2011), 384–385).

### *Aesthetics of perception and neuroaesthetics*

The aesthetics of perception, a specific methodical approach, challenges the constructive role of the recipient within the creative and aesthetic processes of artistic work (Kemp (1996), 244ff.). Its central focus is the relationship between, and conditions of, the client, the producer, the artwork and its receiver, as well as their expectations and strategies of pictorial communication. The aesthetics of perception tries to find out how these instances communicate and why artworks are made as they are. Their main aim is to determine “the immanent beholder.” The latter can be proved by the way the artwork is designed. Specific signs and meanings immanently instruct the beholder’s orientation by guiding him through the message of the image.

For Egyptology, the aesthetics of perception is particularly relevant to the reception of spatial and contextual relations, as well as the comprehension of the production processes of Egyptian art (Schulz (2011), 353). Maya Müller collected numerous textual references that mention or describe these connections in the Middle Kingdom (Müller (2006), 27–49). On the basis of these references she was able to determine that there were two concepts of art creation including the “immanent beholder” (Müller (2006), 47): First, the intuition speech of creation, spoken and performed by the king as the divine creator who virtually designed the artwork. And second, the “secret knowledge,” a highly specialized, “magical” expertise that was necessary for the creation of an Egyptian artwork. Both concepts “guarantee” the image’s potency in the eyes of the Egyptian beholder or recipient, hence they coincide with their cultural demands in the religious, social, or individual contexts. In a recent article on “discourses about works

of art in ancient and modern times,” Müller assembles further examples (differentiating between an “aesthetic,” “emotional,” and “intellectual-analytical” approach) that especially emphasize the sensation of beauty as well as the emotional impulse perceived by modern and ancient beholders of Egyptian art (Müller 2012).

Another important item in the discussion of the reception and perception of Egyptian art is the so-called “portrait-debate.” In Egyptology, the question of whether we are permitted to refer to images as “portraits” is problematic (Verbovsek (2011), 372, n. 65). To date, we do not know exactly why some of the Egyptian representations, especially the images of the kings of late Dynasty 12, seem to be more individual, more expressive, and more emotional than others which appear more “standardized.” It is still unclear whether they are effigies of the individual’s real faces or not, even if we can suppose that the individual’s features at least provided an impulse for the creative process. Generally speaking, the representation of Egyptian individuals ranges between reality and truth, between beauty and functionality as the Egyptians defined them.

These questions have also been studied in detail by Maya Müller. She has dealt with the sculpture of the Middle Kingdom, notably within the parameters of its creators, its beholders, and the written sources. Furthermore, she took into consideration the sculptures themselves in search of their message and impact as well as their “mimetic properties” (Müller (2009), 1). As the main argument for the “changed representation” of Senwosret III, for example, she concludes from archaeological and textual sources that the king perceived himself in a different way, and that the artist of the royal sculpture thus perceived the king differently. The message of the image is expressed in a more direct and concrete way. In consequence, “portraits” of the king could be identified by the beholders easily without reading his name (Müller (2009), 18; and see Bryan, this volume). On the one hand, the portraits touched recipients by means of their individual or emotional expression, and provoked a personal response on the other.

Neuroaesthetics, a neurophysiological approach, examines those structures and activities of the brain that evoke the aesthetic sensation in perceptive and creative processes (Verbovsek (2011), 385), based on the assumption that creative processes are expressions of brain or neural functions. From this it follows that the perception of art, the aesthetic sensation, or the creation of beauty can be made “visible” (Schulz (2011), 354–356; Spitzer 2008), and that there might be a universal code of aesthetic sensation. For Egyptology, the difficulty is that we are not able to prove what the ancient Egyptians felt when perceiving images, sculptures, architecture, and so on. Furthermore, we cannot ignore the influence of socialization on sensation, appreciation, and exposure to art. Thus, neuroaesthetics is of limited suitability for Egyptology or the history of Egyptian art, but it is important to know its potential.

## Conditions of Reception and Perception

There are many different conditions that influence the reception and perception of art. As mentioned already, the socialization of the recipient plays a substantial role. The beholder needs to know how to see or to read an image in order to understand it. Depending on his or her education, intellectual background or familiarity with the cultural conventions, standards, and “secrets,” a particular beholder may receive or recognize the message of

an image individually, using common sense, or may not understand it at all. It goes beyond the scope of this chapter to compile all these different layers, but at least we can acknowledge that there were different “types of recipients,” even for Egyptian art.

### *Types of recipients*

For the making of Egyptian artworks, different types of recipients have been considered and “addressed,” depending on the respective context and function: human beings or gods, dead or living persons, individuals or groups, literate and non-literate men and women (Hartwig (2004), 47), high-ranking people and, more rarely, individuals of lower status (e.g., Müller (2006), 42–44), even though a large proportion of Egyptians had no (intellectual) access to representations (e.g., Baines 2007c, 2007d). In most cases, the addressee seems obvious, either by the location of the object or by captions, but sometimes there may have been different types of recipients to be addressed, there were different messages conveyed by the images (e.g., Hartwig (2004), 47–49; Verbovsek (2006a), 119–120), or different viewers would have understood the message of the images to varying degrees, based on their literacy and level of cultural knowledge (Hartwig (2003), 299). Thus we are confronted with the problem that only a small percentage of Egyptians “were able to decode, interpret and understand the ‘whole meaning’ of the represented scenes (text and images) and comprehend the symbolic system” (Den Doncker (2012), 23). On the other hand, we have to decide whether it was actually intended that every beholder of the images should receive their entire message(s).

### *Comments of recipients*

Melinda Hartwig discusses in detail the visitors of New Kingdom tombs who can be identified by archaeological, textual, and artistic data (Hartwig (2003), 299, (2004), 43–49). There are “family members, priests, professional colleagues of the tomb owner, other tomb owners who came for ideas for their own tomb, artists in search of models, tutors and pupils of scribal schools, and random visitors, as performers of the deceased’s cult” who left graffiti describing how they appreciated their aesthetic impressions. Referring to Maya Müller (1990), who examined a group of visitor graffiti, Melinda Hartwig also highlights the fact that the Egyptians had an aesthetic sense (Hartwig (2004), 44) based on a “nexus of piety, beauty, and pleasure.” The different layers of aesthetic appreciation amalgamated in the expression *nfr* that was often used as a keyword in the stereotype phrases of the graffiti (for a compilation, see Den Doncker (2012), 27).

Alexis Den Doncker focuses on these questions in his dissertation project and in two articles that have already arisen out of it (Den Doncker 2010, 2012). Also using the example of visitor graffiti in private tombs, he examines the “mechanics of the reception by ancient Egyptians in specific contexts” (Den Doncker (2012), 23), the reactions of these recipients, and the general processes surrounding the reception and perception of images in the ancient Egyptian context. One important issue is that the graffiti are often placed strategically (Den Doncker (2012), 24, 29), for instance in response to the *Blickpunktbilder* (“focal point representations,” see Hartwig (2003), 298), in order to

profit from the images' "magical" benefits or to respond to the tomb owner's message (Den Doncker (2012), 29). From several graffiti Den Doncker cites, one striking example can be used to finish my explanations. The graffito G.60.33 consigned by the scribe Amenemhet in the tomb of Intefoker and Senet (TT 60) refers to the aesthetic reception of the tomb's decorative programs or particular motifs (Den Doncker 2010, (2012), 27, 30). This short extract from a longer inscription serves as a contrast to our actual position within the Egyptological examination of the reception and perception of Egyptian art, which is scientifically unsatisfactory as yet and maintains many options for analysis in the coming years: "Then it was beautiful/good (*nfr*) in his heart ... and efficient to all eternity" (translation: Den Doncker (2012), 27).

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

For a general introduction, there are two classics on the subject of art perception: Rudolf Arnheim (1974) and Ernst Gombrich (2002). For different aspects of art appreciation, Bjarne Sode Funch (1997) offers a good starting point. A must-have read for everybody interested in the composition of Egyptian art is also Heinrich Schäfer (1974, most recent English edition 2002). On the theory of reception, Melinda Hartwig (2004) presents a set of important approaches that are useful for Egyptology. A comprehensive study on the reception and perception of Egyptian art is not yet available, but there are several articles dealing with questions around this field. Foremost is John Baines' recent publication on *Visual and Written Culture in Ancient Egypt* (2007e) that collects his most important contributions to date and offers a long list of further reading in Egyptology and other fields. In addition, the studies of Maya Müller and Alexis Den Doncker are essential for the examination of this topic.

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## CHAPTER 9

# Representing the Other

## *Non-Egyptians in Pharaonic Iconography*

*Ann Macy Roth*

### The Other

In representing the world, a cultural group often emphasizes the characteristics it values in itself by contrasting its members with people outside the group, defining them as the “Other.” Representations of the Other in its art can thus offer useful insights into the group’s values, beliefs, and assumptions. In ancient Egypt, representational art was produced for the elite: literate, adult men who did not produce food or utilitarian craft goods and who had connections to political and religious institutions. These elite men saw many of their Egyptian compatriots as Others—women, children, servants, craftsmen, and peasants—and had them differentiated from themselves by their smaller scale and more active roles: wives were shown embracing their husbands; children playing; and craftsmen, servants, and peasants at work. In contrast, elite men were represented as passive observers, except in scenes with royal antecedents.

Beyond the circle of Egyptian Others, however, lay the endless sea of foreign peoples, differing from the Egyptians in their language, dress, customs, and beliefs. The conventions developed to represent these foreign Others illuminate elite Egyptians’ views of themselves and their roles, as well as the way these views changed over time.

### The Cosmological Role of Foreigners

Cut off from surrounding populations by seas, deserts, and dangerous rapids, the Egyptians were unusually insulated from their neighbors. Although these barriers were far from impenetrable, the arduousness of crossing them ensured that most Egyptians would have encountered foreigners only rarely, particularly in the earlier part of Egypt’s history. During the Old and Middle Kingdoms, contacts with non-Egyptians would largely have been restricted to residents of border areas and the center of government, as well as to those particularly involved with foreign trade and diplomacy.

Yet, from the very earliest periods until the advent of Christianity, the subjugation of foreigners formed an extremely common theme in Egyptian art. Representations of non-Egyptians covered large spaces in temples and palaces, and appeared on royal statues, furniture, architectural elements, and luxury cosmetic containers. In the earliest periods, images of subjugated foreigners adorned numerous Egyptian artifacts, such as decorated slate palettes of the late Predynastic Period (Davis (1992), figs. 33, 37, and 38) and the furniture inlays found in the royal tombs of Dynasty 1 (Petrie (1902), pl. 4).

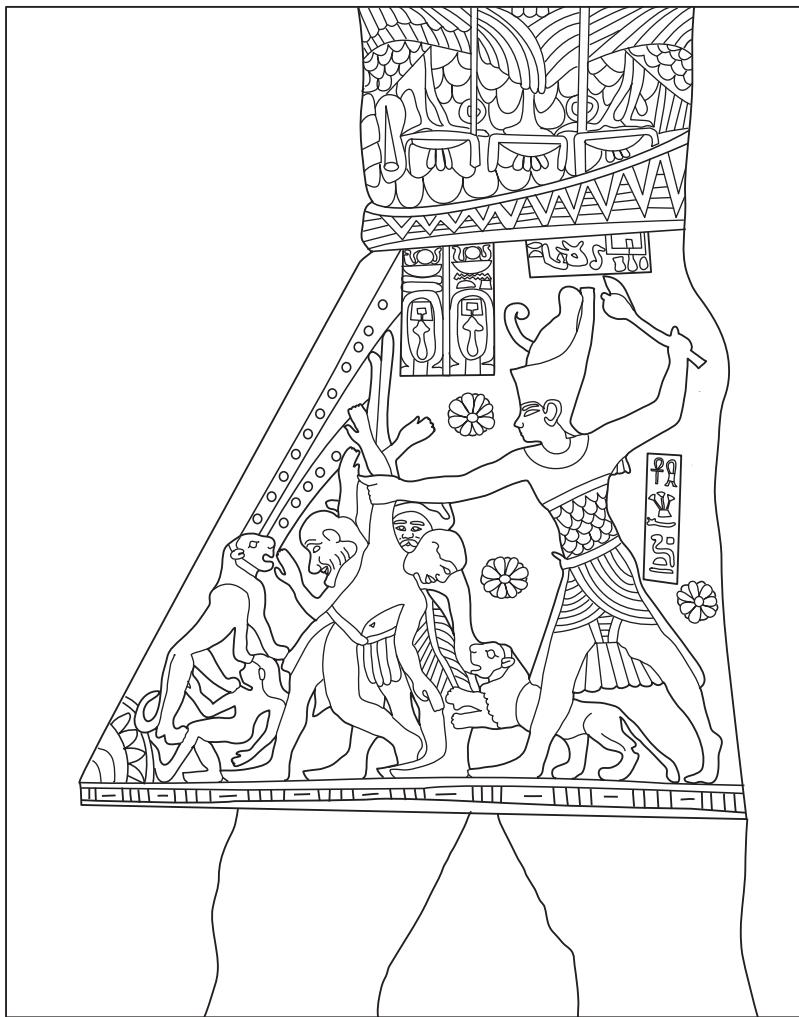
The prominence of foreigners in Egyptian art was due to the cosmological role they played. They were seen as the metaphorical embodiment of the undifferentiated chaos of non-existence (Hornung (1982), 172–185), predating creation and afterwards surrounding and sometimes penetrating it, threatening the ordered world of Egypt. The Egyptians' civilized existence had emerged from this chaos, and it might easily be again reabsorbed into it, should the king fail to counterbalance it with sufficient *Ma'at*. *Ma'at* was the antithesis and complement of this chaos: a composite of order, justice, peace, right action, and tradition; a knowable world properly named and categorized, which could be maintained by the actions of the king and his people. The chaotic non-existence beyond it, however, was a necessary component of Egyptian life, because it was the source of all fertility and renewal, as it was for the creation itself.

Lurking beyond the boundaries of the ordered Egyptian state, foreigners were thus seen as an undifferentiated mass, all alike, threatening not so much to attack but to engulf and re-absorb its orderly distinctions. In their external location, their uncountable numbers, and their interchangeable nature, foreigners resembled the fish, birds, and wild animals of the desert and the Egyptian marshes, which also represented non-existence and had to be subdued and controlled to maintain *Ma'at*. Like the subjugation of foreigners, the hunting of wild animals, birds, and fish was an important theme in Egyptian iconography. This parallel makes it clear that the way the Egyptians depicted foreigners did not imply xenophobic hatred or fear, any more than hunting scenes implied hatred or fear of gazelles, ducks, or fish. Literary texts and biographies of officials, in fact, often show elite Egyptians interacting peacefully with non-Egyptians both within and outside Egypt. Royal texts, like royal art, are more bellicose, presumably because the magical and ritual subjugation of these representatives of the chaos on the borders of ordered existence was necessary to maintain the Egyptian state; to subdue them was a particular duty of the king.

## Foreigners and Kingship

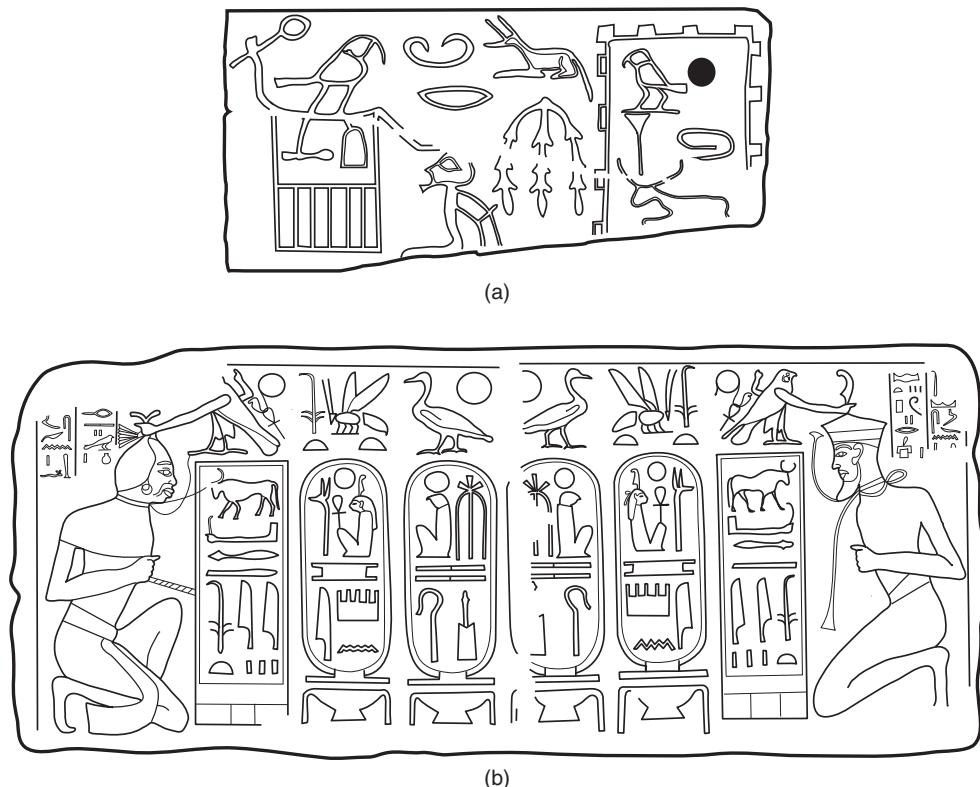
Throughout Egyptian history, then, the depiction of foreigners was closely bound to the representation of Egyptian kingship. One of the most common contexts in which foreigners were shown was the smiting scene, in which the king holds the hair of a kneeling captive and with his other hand raises a weapon in preparation for executing him (Hall 1986; Schoske 1994 [1982]). While many examples show only a single foreign captive, multiple superimposed captives could also be shown, their arms raised in identical supplication to the king, who grasps them all simultaneously by the hair. Both their seemingly infinite number and their identical appearance and pose add to their equation with undifferentiated chaos.

Attested even before the beginning of Egyptian history, from the Hierakonpolis Painted Tomb (Quibell and Green (1902), pls. 67 and 75–79) and from the Narmer Palette



**Figure 9.1** The kilt of a king decorated with a smiting scene; exterior east screen wall, northern panel, Roman mammisi, Dendera Temple. Drawn from Daumas (1959), pl. 53A. Drawing: Ann Macy Roth.

(Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), cat. 8; Davis (1992) fig. 38), the smiting scene may have represented the ceremonial execution of a foreign captive or a ritual in which a piece of sculpture was attacked rather than a living foe, as suggested by the decapitated sculptures of bound captives found at the mortuary complex of Pepi II (Jéquier (1940), 27–29) and elsewhere (Metropolitan Museum of Art (1999), 441 n.3). The motif endured through the centuries to the last Egyptian temples. The Roman emperors Domitian and Trajan were shown incongruously smiting foreigners on the exterior walls of Esna temple (Sauneron and Hallof (2009), 60–64, 189–194), and there are examples from even later periods (Hall 1983). The scene became such an icon of kingship that it was represented as a design on the king's kilt (Daumas (1959), pls. 50A, 53A) (see Figure 9.1). Unlike the scenes of fishing and fowling and hunting wild animals, however, officials never took on



**Figure 9.2** Names of (a) King ‘Aha smiting a generic enemy, and (b) Ramesses III smiting a Nubian and one of the Sea Peoples. Drawn (a) from Petrie (1902), pl. 3; and (b) from a photograph by the author. Drawing: Ann Macy Roth.

this role in their monuments, although the scene occurred in New Kingdom non-royal monuments with the king as the actor (Schulman 1988).

Even the king’s name could be depicted smiting foreigners: on an ivory label and on a decorated handle of Narmer, the catfish hieroglyph that begins his name smites his enemies (Wengrow (2006), 205); and on a label, the *serekh* of the Dynasty 1 king ‘Aha has arms sprouting from its corners to grasp and smite his foe (see Figure 9.2a) (Petrie (1902), pl. 3). This conceit recurs almost two millennia later, on engaged statue bases in the first court of Medinet Habu, where the falcons atop the *serekh* of Ramesses III and his cartouches hold his captives with human arms (Epigraphic Survey (1957), 353 shows the sides and backs of these bases, but the south faces were apparently not recorded).

A related royal motif was the depiction of foreigners crushed and trampled under the feet of the king, who might be shown either in his human form or as a human-headed or falcon-headed sphinx. In fact, this may have been one of the principal roles of the sphinx, since it occurs in such a scene in the mortuary temple of Sahure very soon after the creation of the sphinx form. This motif was probably previewed as early as the late Predynastic Period, on the Battlefield Palette (Davis (1992), fig. 33), where a lion tramples fallen captives, and on the Bull Palette (Davis (1992), fig. 37), where a fallen enemy

is trampled by a bull, since lions and bulls presumably already represented the ruler. A bull also is shown trampling a fallen foe on the lowest register of the recto of the Narmer Palette (Davis (1992), fig. 38), corresponding to the same register on the verso, where fallen captives are shown beneath the feet of the king in the smiting scene above.

Similarly, foreigners were depicted on the bases of royal statues, from the silhouettes on the statues of the Dynasty 2 king, Khasekhemwy (Egyptian Museum Cairo, Journal d'entrée 32161; Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), cat. 14; and Ashmolean Museum Oxford E 517; Teeter (2011), 224–225) to the beautifully carved limestone heads of foreigners carved to serve as the base of a statue and found at the Dynasty 3 Step Pyramid complex of Djoser (Firth and Quibell (1935), pl. 57). The trampling of the foreign foe was also implied by the later depiction of bound foreigners on the upper soles of the royal sandals and the tops of the king's footrests, preserved in the tomb of Tutankhamun (Ritner (1993), 113–136) and on the painted “captive pathways” on the floors at the ceremonial royal palace at Amarna (Weatherhead 2007). Like the smiting scene, this motif was limited to royal contexts throughout most of Egyptian history. The only apparent exception is the frequent depiction of two sandal shapes, each containing a bound foreigner (for example, D'Auria, Lacovara, and Roehrig (1989), 208), on the bottom of cartonnage footcases in the mummy trappings of the Greco-Roman period. These images showed the deceased's triumph over the non-existence of death, and as with other usurpations of royal prerogatives in the mortuary realm, were presumably allowed because the owners were dead and thereby identified with the dead god-king, Osiris.

One rather paradoxical characteristic of the representation of foreigners in Egyptian art is their passivity. As noted above, Egyptian “Others”—women, children, craftsmen, and peasants—tended to be shown actively in scenes with elite males, even if their action is merely an embrace of the principal figure. Foreigners, on the other hand, if they are not simply lying dead in the wake of the Egyptian king's fearsome attacks, are generally shown passively standing or kneeling, raising their hands in submission and supplication, walking only when pulled by ropes. In non-royal tombs of the New Kingdom, foreigners accompany the products of their countries to the Egyptian court, but these processions do not occur in royal contexts, except for the group of foreigners shown walking freely with Egyptians in the Fifth Hour of the Book of Gates (Hornung (1999), 62), probably to illustrate the strange reversals of the Netherworld. The general passivity of foreigners otherwise is probably a function of the presence of the king, who was actively subduing them; their passivity emphasized and enhanced his strenuous efforts to create *Ma‘at*. The bodies of the foreigners are merely passive props in scenes where the action of the king contrasts with the approving presence (sometimes only implied) of the gods.

## Internal Divisions among Foreigners

Despite their cosmological role as stand-ins for undifferentiated non-existence, foreigners were normally differentiated into distinct groups. The Egyptians' love of taxonomy and dualistic oppositions apparently outweighed the theoretical homogeneity of foreign peoples. Just as the ordered Egyptian world consisted of oppositions between the east and west, the desert and the cultivated land, and the Nile Valley to the south and the

Nile Delta to the north, so too were the peoples outside Egypt distinguished and shown in opposition to each other.

Most commonly, Nubians from the upper Nile Valley south of Egypt were contrasted with Asiatics from the northern and eastern lands beyond the Sinai Peninsula. (The term “Asiatic” is used in Egyptology to designate the catch-all category into which the Egyptians placed denizens of the Levant and Mesopotamia, although the Egyptian category was somewhat elastic, ultimately including parts of southern Europe.) In New Kingdom temples, Nubians were often shown being subdued by the king wearing his white southern crown on the southern wing of temple pylons, sometimes fancifully bound with the stems of the heraldic flower of the south. Asiatics, in contrast, were subdued by the king in his red northern crown on the northern wing of pylons, and even more improbably bound by papyrus stems. The third group, perhaps less commonly represented because it had no neat polar opposite, was the Libyans, from the deserts and oases west of Egypt. Libyans were most often substituted for Asiatics, or all three ethnicities could be grouped as a triad of foreign peoples—appropriate, since the Egyptians used triads to indicate multiplicity.

These generic groups were augmented by more specific representations of groups of foreigners in specific historical contexts, for example, the peoples of Punt in the reliefs of Sahure (El Awady (2009), pl. 5) and Hatshepsut (Naville (1898), pls. 69–86), or the group of Levantine traders shown in the tomb of Khnumhotep II at Beni Hasan (Newberry (1893), pl. 30), or the broad array of ethnic groups represented in battle scenes of the New Kingdom. Serving as a cautionary example, however, is the “historical” scene of captive Libyans in the Dynasty 5 mortuary temple of Sahure, which carefully names captive Libyans (Borchardt (1913), pl. 1 and figs. 11 and 12). The same scene, with the same Libyans named, is repeated in the temple of Pepy II at the end of the following dynasty (Jéquier (1938), pls. 8 and 11), and yet again almost two millennia later in a temple of a Dynasty 25 king, Taharka, at Kawa (Macadam (1955), pls. ix(b) and xlix, and p. 65). This repetition warns us that even apparently circumstantial and detailed historical representations may be nothing of the sort. The famine scenes on the causeways of Sahure (El Awady (2009), pl. 9 and fig. 93 on p. 203) and Unas (Labrousse and Moussa (2004), figs. 117 and 118), showing emaciated people often identified as desert Bedouin, may be another example. The same caveat applies equally to conclusions about the dress and appearance of foreigners in other scenes: It cannot be assumed that representations of foreigners were based on contemporary observations rather than lost precursors. In fact, archaic foreign clothing styles may have been used consciously to make political points (O’Connor (1990), 68–73).

## **The Nine Bows and “Egyptian Foreigners”**

In addition to the dual and triple divisions of generic foreigners and “historical” references to more specific ethnic groups, foreign enemies were from the earliest period of Egyptian history represented as a group of nine bows. These nine bows probably did not initially represent nine individual groups of foreigners. The number three represents multiplicity, and three threes signify totality, so that the grouping of nine bows represents all the enemies of the king and of Egypt. Just as trampled captives were often depicted on

the sides of statue bases, their upper surfaces often showed a group of nine bows under the king's feet, a practice dating from Dynasty 3 (Egyptian Museum Cairo JE 49889; Firth 1926; Firth and Quibell (1935), pl. 58). Later, the nine bows also occur on sandals, footrests, and painted floors, sometimes alone and sometimes in combination with the foreigners that they represent. In smiting scenes, the king may hold a bow or the captive may raise a bow to the king, its string turned toward him in a gesture of submission and supplication (Wilkinson 1988). This basic weapon of armed conflict implies that the captives had rebelled against the king, thereby violating *Ma'at*. Foreigners are thus not being subjugated merely because they are foreign, but because their subjugation is necessary to reestablish *Ma'at*.

The earliest use of bows to represent enemies is known from the Nagada III/Dynasty 0 ceremonial mace-head of King Scorpion (Millet (1991), 225). A fragment of its upper frieze shows three standards that probably represent towns or clans supporting the king, and suspended by a rope from each is a bow. On the larger fragment of the mace-head, in this same frieze, are seven standards that instead support lapwings, the bird that later represents the common people of Egypt (*rekhyt*). The lapwings hang from the upper platforms of the standards by ropes around their necks. Clearly both the bows and the lapwings here represent inimical (but generic) foreign and domestic foes that have been subdued and perhaps executed by the people associated with the standards. Throughout Egyptian history, lapwings continue to occur in some of the same places that bound foreigners or the nine bows appear and often in opposition to them, for example on throne platforms (e.g., Epigraphic Survey (1980), pls. 26 and 49), statue bases (Firth 1926; Firth and Quibell (1935), pl. 58), and royal footrests (e.g., Griffith Institute (2000–2004), no. 90 = Egyptian Museum Cairo JE 62046). The lapwings are often given human hands, raised toward the king or his name in the same gesture used by foreigners. Unlike foreigners, however, lapwings never appear in smiting scenes, nor are they bound with ropes after the Narmer mace-head, although their wings are usually hooked one over the other to prevent them from flying away.

This inclusion of rebellious Egyptians among Egypt's enemies is not unparalleled. In the New Kingdom, when the nine bows began to be identified as nine particular ethnic groups, two of those groups were Upper and Lower Egyptians, demonstrating that the universe of dangerous Others does not consist solely of foreigners, but was a mixture of foreigners who threaten Egypt and of Egyptians from both parts of the country who disturb the established order by violating its norms and laws, placing themselves with foreign enemies, outside the protection of the state and the king. The inclusion of rebellious Egyptians among the nine bows in the Dynasty 18 lists, like the lapwings hanging from standards on the Scorpion mace-head centuries earlier, suggests that the imagining of the Other always included disruptive Egyptians as well as foreigners.

In addition to the Upper Egyptians and Lower Egyptians, the nine bows included the three traditional enemies—Libyans (*ȝhnw*), Nubians (*jwntjw-ztj*), and Asiatics (*mntjw-nw-s̄t*)—but the remaining four are more difficult to identify: *h̄w-nbw*, *š̄tjw*, *shtjw-jm*, and *pdtjw-šw*. Wildung (1982) suggested (in German) the translations: people of Mediterranean lands, Upper Nubians (?), oasis dwellers, and Eastern Desert nomads (?); while O'Connor and Quirke (2003, 12) offered the more tentative identifications: people of Hau-nebu, people of Shat, Marshlanders of Iamu, and Bow People of Shu (or the feather). In the tomb of Kheruef, where the nine bows are shown on the base of the

king's throne as captured cities, the bound captives associated with these four peoples are all identical to captives associated with Asiatics (Epigraphic Survey (1980), pl. 49).

Interestingly, the Lower Egyptian enemy is also shown as an Asiatic, but with a much shorter beard, and the Upper Egyptian is shown as identical to the Nubian, suggesting a discomfort with representing Egyptians in this motif. Similarly, during the Greco-Roman period, the glossing of Upper Egyptians as "Easterners" and of Lower Egyptians as "Syrians" in the listing of the nine bows at Edfu temple (O'Connor and Quirke (2003), 12) suggests that when Egypt was actually ruled by foreigners, it was felt necessary to explain away the potential scenario in which a non-Egyptian king subdued Egyptians. Nonetheless, these Egyptians were clearly viewed as having alienated themselves from Egyptian society, literally having made themselves into foreigners by their crimes.

## The Old and Middle Kingdoms

Because the Egyptians' representations of foreigners changed somewhat as a result of the more international climate of the New Kingdom and later, it is best to consider such representations separately for the earlier and later periods.

The connection of foreigners with kingship was particularly strong in the Archaic (2950–2545 BCE) and Old Kingdom (2543–2120 BCE) periods, when foreigners were represented exclusively in royal contexts. Despite the fact that we have decorated tombs of several officials such Weni and Harkhuf, whose autobiographical texts describe interactions with foreigners, there are no depictions of foreigners in the tombs of these men. Non-Egyptians are also entirely absent from the tombs of the elite of Elephantine, a border town whose elite were often involved with foreign trade. Like the representation of gods and kings who are similarly limited to textual references in non-royal tombs during the Old and Middle Kingdoms, decorum clearly prevented the representation of foreigners in non-royal monuments.

During the social turmoil of the First Intermediate Period (2118–1980 BCE), however, people of foreign ethnicities begin to be shown in provincial tomb chapels, usually in the context of military activity. Like the brief appearance of royal iconography in a few tombs of the period, this usurpation of royal prerogatives by provincial rulers reflected the general breakdown of the institution of the kingship. After its restoration in the Middle Kingdom (1980–1760 BCE), representations again become rare in non-royal contexts, as is clear from the mastaba of Khnumhotep at Dahshur, which contains a long text about its owner's experiences in the Levant but is completely without images of foreigners (Allen 2008). The exceptions tend to be provincial, most notably the tomb of Khnumhotep II at the cemetery of Beni Hasan (Newberry (1893), pl. 30), which shows a procession of Levantine eye-paint traders. That these Khnumhoteps may be members of the same family (Franke 1991) only strengthens the contrast between the restraint required in a royal cemetery and the freedom allowed in the decoration of provincial tombs.

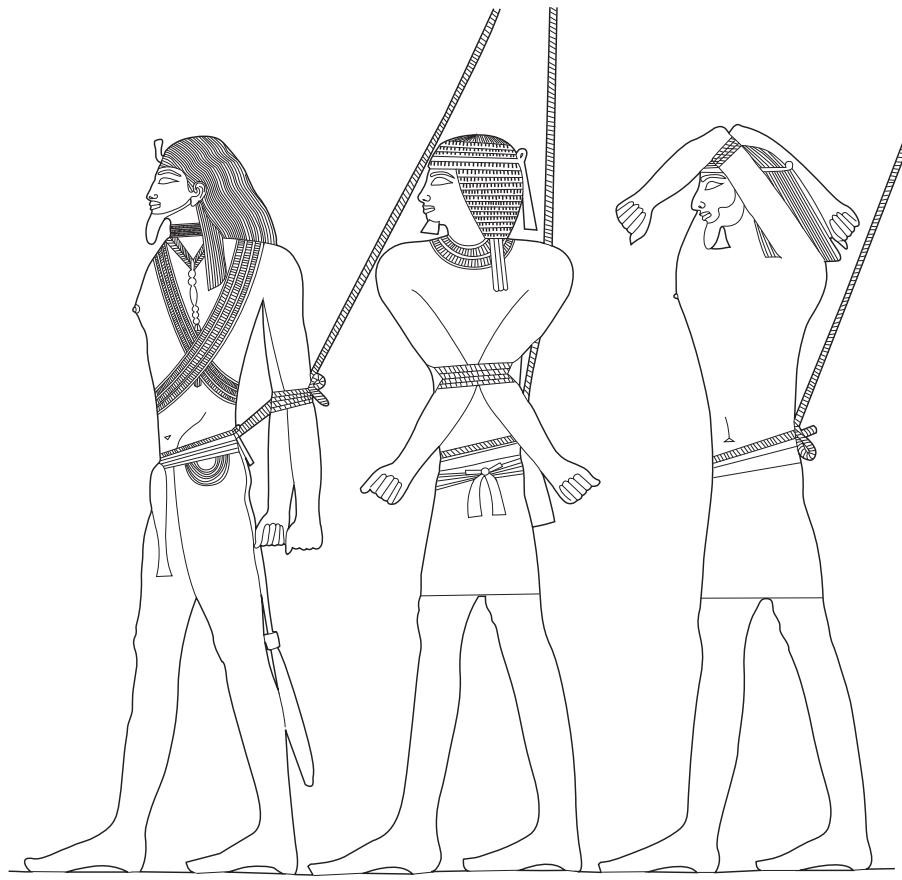
One interesting exception to the absence of foreigners in non-royal monuments in the Old and Middle Kingdoms is the representation of a Bedouin herdsman leading a bull (e.g., Quibell, et al. (1898), pl. 31, in the Old Kingdom; and Blackman (1914), pl. 25, 2–3, in the Middle Kingdom). Naked or almost so, and often skeletally thin with a leg

bent backwards and extremely tangled hair, these isolated Bedouin occur in non-royal decorated tomb chapels of these periods in the capital region as well as the provinces. Given the otherwise clear taboo on representations of non-Egyptians, their appearance suggests that the Bedouin were not viewed as a foreign group during these periods. Since the oases, which must have been inhabited largely by Bedouin, were governed by Egyptian officials, perhaps such inhabitants were considered as a subset of the Egyptian population. They never occur in smiting scenes and the other contexts in which foreigners appear in the Old and Middle Kingdoms.

The early depictions of foreigners are remarkable for their lack of physical distinctions between the foreigner and the Egyptian in facial features. This is clearest in relief sculpture, where their features are normally identical to those of Egyptians in the same scene. For example, the foes depicted on the Narmer palette have faces that are quite similar in shape and proportion to the king's, although their beards are fuller. In the rare three-dimensional depictions of captives, such as the various statue base fragments from the Step Pyramid complex (Firth and Quibell (1935), pl. 57; Metropolitan Museum of Art (1999), 174) and the bound prisoner sculptures from the Pepy II complex (Jéquier (1940), 27–29), the features have sometimes been described as foreign (Metropolitan Museum of Art (1999), 174), but the characteristics noted (wrinkles and facial creases, overly large noses, and angled eyes) differ from the bland features of officials and kings during these periods only in being less idealized. The same features (without their distinctive beards and hairstyles) would not surprise us on the statues of Egyptian officials during the periods when non-idealizing statues were in vogue. Given Egypt's geographical situation near the meeting places of Africa, Asia, and Europe, external populations were always represented among its people, and even such idealizing sculpture as the reserve heads of Dynasty 4, now generally believed to represent elite Egyptian tomb owners, were often identified as foreign by early scholars (Roehrig (1999), 73). The sculpted faces of captives were not idealized, but it is difficult to say whether features were seen as non-Egyptian or simply unattractive. Certainly there was none of the obvious exaggeration of non-Egyptian features, almost amounting to racial caricature, known from the New Kingdom.

The other principal physical distinguishing characteristic of non-Egyptians, skin color, is not attested before Dynasty 11. A relief fragment thought to come from the mortuary temple of Mentuhotep II (Metropolitan Museum of Art 2003.434) shows a row of prisoners' heads, marked as foreigners by their fillets, with skin colors alternating between yellow (Asiatic) and black (Nubian). This coloring for Nubians is also attested in the wooden model of a troop of Nubian archers from the tomb of Meskhti at Asyut in the early Middle Kingdom (Bietak 1985). The lack of earlier examples may be largely due to the fact that royal monuments of the Old Kingdom where foreigners were represented tend to have lost their paint in most cases.

The dress, beard shape, and hairstyles of foreigners are more distinctive, but nonetheless remain more similar to Egyptians' than they were in later periods. Asiatics and Nubians are often represented in the same simple wrapped kilts that Egyptians wear, and Nubians, additionally, often wear the short curled hairstyle, broad collar, and short, slightly flaring goatee that can be seen on Egyptian officials. Ethnic distinctions were made, however, in beards, costumes, and hairstyles. Part of a register from the Dynasty 5 mortuary temple



**Figure 9.3** A scene depicting a Libyan, a Nubian, and an Asiatic captive from the mortuary temple of Sahure at Abu Sir. Drawn from a photograph, in consultation with Borchardt (1913), pl. 6, and better-preserved representations on the same wall. Drawing: Ann Macy Roth.

of Sahure showing bound captives (see Figure 9.3) exemplifies the manner in which the three typical ethnic groups are depicted in this period (Borchardt (1913), pl. 6).

In the Sahure relief, the Libyan captive who leads the procession is the most distinctive. He wears his hair straight and unbound, and long enough that a lappet covers the upper half of his chest. A tuft of hair rises vertically from the top of the forehead, curving back towards the top of the head, and superficially resembles an Egyptian royal uraeus. His beard is long and thin and curves back towards his throat. He wears a high collar, below which hangs a Y-shaped necklace from which a string of large beads falls, tucking under the woven or beaded bands that cross his chest and presumably tie behind his back. His penis sheath is supported only by a waistband, with a pendant loop falling over his thigh and a long tassel or tail hanging down the back.

In the same temple, a Libyan woman and two boys are depicted (Borchardt (1913), pl. 1 and figs. 11 and 12). The woman, surprisingly, also wears a penis sheath with the

loop over the hip, but not the tassel/tail. She likewise wears the two straps crossed over her breast, the high collar, the Y-shaped necklace, and the tuft at her forehead. Like male Libyans, her hair is worn long, tucked behind her ears, with a lappet in front. The two boys also share the upper part of the costume, but are naked below the waist. Their hair is very short or shaved, although they may also wear the tuft of hair at their foreheads.

In the parallel example from the temple of Pepi II (Jéquier (1938), pls. 8 and 11), all three figures had inlaid crystal eyes, now lost, as did the very fragmentary scene of foreigners being trampled by the royal sphinx in the pyramid complex of Niuserre (Borchardt (1907), pl. 12). This technique, which adds a more lifelike quality to the figures, is attested in relief only in royal mortuary temples, although it occurs in both royal and non-royal statues. The use of these inlays for representations of foreigners again suggests the importance of lending these images additional realism and effectiveness.

It is interesting that several elements of the Libyan costume are paralleled by more specialized, often royal, elements in Egyptian costume. The penis sheath is known from late Predynastic iconography and continues to be shown on gods into the Archaic Period (Brooklyn Museum 58. 192). The tassel, if it is actually a tail, is paralleled by the bull's tail worn by the king and the tuft on the forehead may have been an inspiration for the Egyptian royal uraeus. Finally, the beaded bands crossed over the chest are often worn by male and female dancers of the Old Kingdom and by jubilee dancers in later periods. Another Libyan style, the lock of hair, braided and curled back towards the nape of the neck, is worn by Egyptian children as early as the Old Kingdom. Although this hairstyle is not worn by Libyans in pre-New Kingdom representations, its association with New Kingdom adult royal children might suggest that it, too, formed part of the complex of Libyan elements that distinguished royal costume.

The Nubian captive in the middle of Figure 9.3 is less clearly distinguished from contemporary Egyptians than his Libyan counterpart. He wears short plaited or curled hair, distinguished from the short style worn by Egyptian men only by a few short braids at the back of the head hanging below his shoulders and the fact that his hair is bound by a fillet, tied at the back of the head. He wears the same short beard and broad collar often worn by officials of the period; in other examples Nubians also wear chevron-shaped bracelets on their upper arms (Borchardt (1913), pls. 7 and 8). In many examples, the kilt has an extra sash binding the hips a short distance below the waistband, but this is not always the case.

Somewhat later, in the early Middle Kingdom model of Nubian archers from the tomb of Mesehti, the clothing of Nubians is more clearly distinguished. A second model from the same tomb represented Egyptian soldiers carrying spears, making a direct comparison possible (Bietak 1985). The Nubians are distinguished from the Egyptians by their greater variation in height and a very dark brown skin color, while the Egyptians are shown as uniform in height (perhaps an allusion to the order within Egypt) and typical reddish brown skin. The Nubians' kilts are shorter than the Egyptians' and sometimes red rather than white, or white with a red border. The waistbands and sashes are also often red, sometimes decorated with a lozenge pattern in black and white that is strikingly similar to the lozenge pattern often found on contemporary C-Group pottery. Their hair is short but covers their ears, ending in a blunt horizontal line level with their earlobes, and they wear thin white fillets around their heads, tied with a loop in back, a

style they share with their Egyptian colleagues. One of the men wears a short plaited Egyptian wig. Like the Egyptians, the Nubians are shown with a noticeable cosmetic line extending from the outer corners of their eyes, and their facial features are indistinguishable from those of the Egyptian spearmen. The distinguishing features here are thus quite different from those in the Sahure reliefs and suggest that the increased number of Nubians living in Egypt in the late First Intermediate Period may have made the cultural markers associated with them more fluid than those associated with other groups (cf. Fischer 1961).

Asiatics in the mortuary temple of Sahure, exemplified by the third man in Figure 9.3, wear full, often pointed, beards and long, loose, sometimes wavy hair, bound by fillets worn around the forehead and tied at the back. Bangs may cover the forehead, as here, but more often the hair is parted in the center, leaving the forehead bare. Asiatics wear short kilts, indistinguishable from those worn by Egyptians and Nubians.

Depictions of Asiatics also seem to acquire different markers between the Old and Middle Kingdom. In the late Middle Kingdom tomb of Khnumhotep II at Beni Hasan where a procession of visiting traders is shown (Newberry (1893), pl. 30; Shedit (1994), 60–61), the men wear full beards and a shorter, somewhat bouffant hairstyle. They wear sandals and either kilts or garments wrapping over one shoulder, vertically striped with geometrical patterns in red or pale green. The two men leading the procession wear garments with much more elaborate geometric patterns in the same colors, still characterized by vertical stripes. The women accompanying them have long hair, tied by a white fillet, and also wear garments that cover one shoulder, vertically striped with dots and meander patterns between the stripes. They wear ankle boots or stockings, as do the children, who wear short red kilts. This perhaps marks a change in the northern groups with which the Egyptian had the most contact. It may also result from the artists' opportunity to observe an actual visit, although as noted above, the reality of such "historical" representations cannot be taken for granted.

The minimal ethnic markers used in these examples and the prevalence of general characteristics shared with the Egyptians suggest that the principal identifier of foreign enemies during the early periods was the context in which they appeared. Since the Egyptians had fewer contacts with foreigners than was later the case, and since many foreigners were from foreign lands near Egypt or even from Egypt itself, their ethnic and physiognomic differences from the Egyptians were less noticeable and thus less stressed by Egyptian artists.

The contexts in which foreigners were represented in the Old and Middle Kingdoms were few and stereotyped: they could be shown kneeling, hands raised in supplication and held by the hair as they were executed in the standard smiting scene, or they could be trampled by the king in his human or sphinx form, or they could be cruelly bound, their arms behind them or over their heads, and led by ropes to be presented to the king or the gods. The scenes that appear to show a specific historical encounter (but which clearly do not always do so) may represent foreigners of more specific ethnicities bringing trade goods. Such scenes include encounters with the peoples of Punt (indistinguishable from Nubians), the Levant, and Libya in the mortuary complex of Sahure, and the scenes of Libyans from Niuserre's and Pepy II's complexes, as well as the famine-ravaged Bedouin from the causeways of Sahure and Unas, if these people represent Bedouins and if the Bedouin were considered to be foreigners.

## The New Kingdom and Later

In the wake of the Hyksos conquest in the early Second Intermediate Period (1759–1539 BCE) and the consequent expansion of Egyptian power into Western Asia and Nubia, Egyptians encountered foreigners in greater numbers and variety than in the previous periods. While the Egyptians of earlier periods knew Nubians from Lower Nubia and Punt, and Asiatics from the Sinai region or the Levant, the armies and diplomats of the New Kingdom (1539–1077 BCE) met with more exotic populations, from the Fourth Cataract of the Nile to the great cities of Babylon, Washukkanni, Hattusas, and Assur, and probably Knossos and Mycenae as well. Foreigners traveled to Egypt and settled in the capital and elsewhere, where Egyptians no doubt took note of their languages, customs, and characteristic dress. These new residents of Egypt, when represented monumentally, are normally only distinguishable by their foreign names, but they are occasionally shown with the relevant ethnic markers, most noticeably in the stela of a Syrian in the Egyptian Museum, Berlin (Spiegelberg 1898).

Paradoxically, although foreigners were clearly better known and more accurately distinguished in this period, the generic representations grew increasingly formulaic and stereotyped, depicting Libyans, Nubians, and Asiatics almost as caricatures. As in earlier periods, the generic royal contexts in which foreigners appear include smiting and trampling scenes, scenes of foreign captives bound and led by ropes, and bound foreigners on the bases of royal statues. Such depictions of bound foreigners are now also attested for the first time on the king's footstools, the soles of his sandals, the floors of his palace, and the hooks of his walking sticks, but perhaps only because such royal artifacts are unattested in earlier periods.

Tutankhamun's burial furnishings offer the widest array of these new examples. On one of his chariots (Littauer and Crouwel (1985), pls. 15–21), images of bound and subdued foreigners are embossed on the inner surfaces of the car, so that the king's body leaned against them as he rode. That they were not on the exterior to intimidate his opponents, suggests that to touch the images gave the king power, a supposition that is reinforced by the observation that such images were placed on the upper face of the soles of the king's sandals, directly under his bare feet (Reeves (1990), 155), and not on the underside, where they would be trampled into the dirt. The important message was not that the foreigners were trampled, subdued, and humiliated, but that it was the king who trampled, subdued, and humiliated them. The artists clearly considered the direct role of the king in their humiliation as paramount, even if a different placement might have resulted in a more humiliating and degrading position.

Similarly, the throne arms from the tomb of Thutmose IV (Carter (1904), 20–32) show a trampling sphinx on one side and the king with the god Thoth and a lioness-headed goddess *Weret-Heka* on the other; it is generally assumed that the sphinxes were on the exterior faces, but the two slots cut behind the sphinx scene in one of the panels (Metropolitan Museum of Art 30.8.45a-c; Carter (1904), pl. 7) probably supported the back of the throne, which would again place the trampling scene inside, where it would touch the body of the king.

In addition to the stereotypical generic scenes, there is also a broadening of the category of (possible) historical scenes that depict foreigners. In addition to the scenes

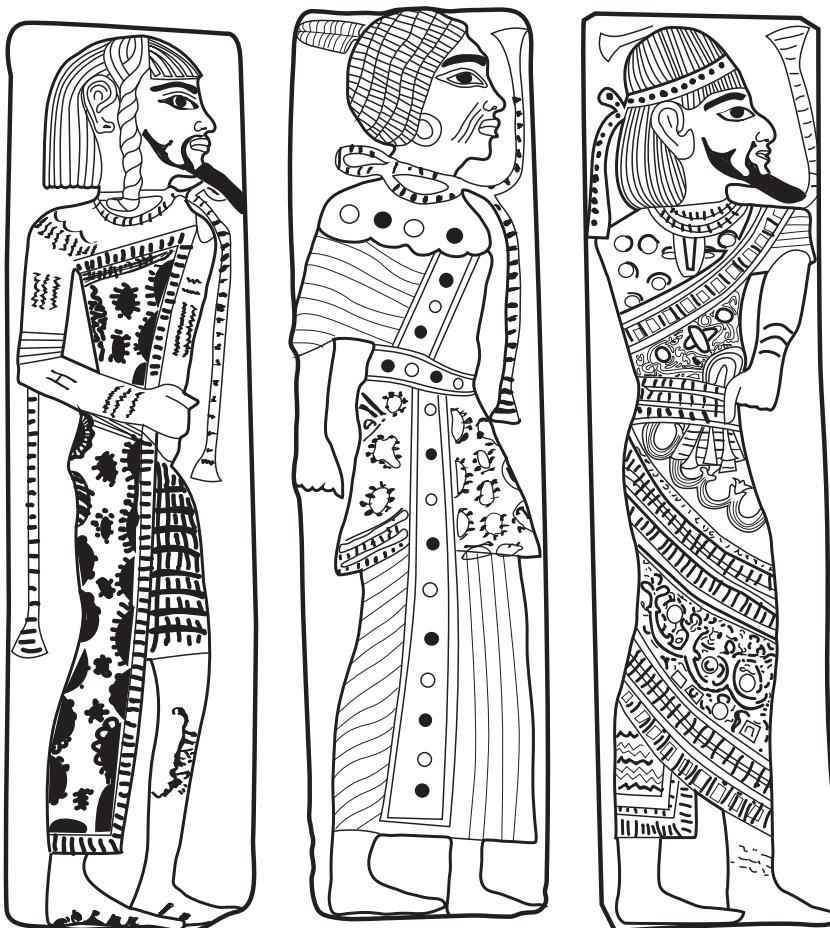
of trading expeditions (such as the Punt reliefs in Hatshepsut's Deir el-Bahari temple (Naville (1898), pls. 69–86) and the scenes showing the presentation of foreign tribute to Akhenaten (Davies (1905a), pl. 37, (1905b), pls. 11–12), artists now depict battles with foreigners, a new genre of scenes that apparently began as early as Ahmose, to judge from the relief fragments recently discovered at Abydos (Harvey 2001), although such compositions may perhaps have existed as early as Mentuhotep II (British Museum EA 732; Robins (1987), 95 fig. 95). The multiple representations of Ramesses II's battle of Kadesh (Breasted 1903) and the battles with Libyans and the Peoples of the Sea represented on Ramesses III's temple at Medinet Habu (Epigraphic Survey 1930; Epigraphic Survey 1932) represent specific labeled groups of foreigners with distinctive dress and appearances. As with the Old Kingdom scenes, these historical scenes are not necessarily accurate representations of real battles or of the appearance of the foreigners fought. These more specialized forms of foreigners occasionally made their way into the cosmological contexts (for example, various of the Peoples of the Sea in the more generic Medinet Habu scenes), but the Libyans, Nubians, and Asiatics remain the foreign victims *par excellence*.

One New Kingdom innovation that shares characteristics with both historical scenes and the more generic representations of foreigners is the geographical lists of conquered towns, with their names framed by ovals showing crenelated borders, topped by the head and bound arms of a foreign inhabitant, sometimes called "captive ovals" (Redford (1983), 362). The hieroglyphic names written in these ovals give the appearance (probably spurious) of historical fact, but the bound foreigners tend to be highly generic, and offer little information about the dress and appearance of the people of these towns.

Another significant change in New Kingdom representations is the appearance of foreigners in non-royal contexts, probably due to the king's appearance in non-royal tomb decoration. He was often shown enthroned in a canopied kiosk, and both his throne and the kiosk were often decorated with images of subjugated foreigners. Apart from the representation of the king, non-royal tombs could now also contain additional images of foreigners, most often walking freely, bringing the products of their lands to Egypt and Egypt's king under the tomb owner's supervision, a scene resembling the royal historical scenes. While Egyptians could be shown managing such processions, and foreigners were sometimes shown bound or wearing wooden handcuffs (a flat ellipse with pointed ends), the owner of the tomb was never shown subduing them, a role that continued to be a royal prerogative.

Representations of foreigners' dress and hairstyles are quite different from those of earlier periods, although they probably continue to be influenced by the older depictions. However, New Kingdom depictions of foreigners are distinguished from Egyptians not only by their labels and distinct ethnic clothing and hairstyles, but also by characteristic facial features. The following descriptions are based upon a synthesis of private tombs at Thebes and Saqqara, depictions of foreigners from the tomb of Tutankhamun (Desroches-Noblecourt (1963), pls. 11, 18, and 90, among others) and the Ramesside faience tiles, among them those from Medinet Habu temple (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 36457 a, b, and d; Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), cat. 226) drawn in Figure 9.4.

Libyans continue to be distinguished by the most complexity in dress and hairstyle (Figure 9.4, left). Although they are sometimes shown wearing kilts (patterned in black



**Figure 9.4** Three tiles from Medinet Habu temple (Dynasty 20, reign of Ramesses III) showing a Libyan, a Nubian, and an Asiatic prisoner. Drawn from Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), cat. 226. Drawing: Ann Macy Roth.

and white checks on one tile from Medinet Habu), they are more often shown wearing the penis sheath and waistband with a loop of cloth over one hip, similar to their clothing as seen in the earlier periods. They can also be shown with the crossed sashes and long Y-shaped necklace of the earlier period, probably an archaism. More often they wear a brightly colored cloak, patterned in stripes or lozenges, and open at the front. It covers or folds under one arm and is tied at the opposite shoulder. Their skin is pale yellow or cream, and marked with multiple black tattoos on the legs and arms. The hairstyle is quite elaborate, with a long plait of hair falling in front of the ear and curling back at collarbone. The forehead and the back of the head to the nape are covered with short vertical plaits, and feathers often decorate the coiffure. A long goatee is worn, sometimes curling back as in earlier periods, with shorter hair extending along the jawbones and up to meet in a moustache beneath the nose. The eyes are squinting and sharply angled, and

the nose is long and sometimes hooked. The naso-labial folds are emphasized, as are the hollows below the high cheekbones.

The stereotypical depiction of Nubians illustrates the adoption by many Nubians of New Kingdom Egyptian dress (Figure 9.4, center). While captive Nubians in historical scenes wear plain short kilts, more generic, cosmological scenes often depict Nubians wearing a longer, somewhat billowing kilt of pleated diaphanous linen over a short white kilt, sometimes accompanied by a shirt with pleated sleeves. That these garments, which indicate elite status when worn by Egyptians, should be worn by bound captives suggests that the captives in these generic scenes represent the king's elite counterparts in these foreign cultures rather than ordinary soldiers. A more consistent element of dress is the belt and sash known from Middle Kingdom representations, which when painted is normally red with a gold and black lozenge pattern. This sash often wraps diagonally over one shoulder as well, resembling the sash of an Egyptian lector priest. A broad collar, scalloped at its base and decorated with a row of large dots sometimes occurs with the pleated costume, as does a colored overskirt.

Nubians are shown with very dark skin. They are universally beardless, with small rounded chins, and they normally wear gold loop earrings. Their hair, often tinted red, is plaited in layers, somewhat shorter than in earlier periods, and is sometimes adorned with feathers. They are shown with large, round eyes, often deep-set with heavy lids and bags beneath them. Their noses are short and stubby, beginning low on their faces and showing large wings at the base, and their lips are thick. Wavy lines angle down from the wings of their noses towards their jaws, perhaps representing scarification.

Asiatics can be shown wearing short kilts, often colored, patterned, and ornamented at the bottom with fringe or tassels. In Dynasty 18 (e.g., in the tombs of Rekhmire, Theban Tomb 100, and Sobekhotep, Theban Tomb 63), they are often shown wearing a long white tunic, with long narrow sleeves and contrasting trim. This garment may be wrapped diagonally at the hips with a strip of white cloth, trimmed at its edges. In later periods (Figure 9.4, right), this diagonal wrapping becomes multicolored and elaborately patterned, and continues above the waist to cover the upper part of one or both arms, and the underlying tunic may have striped sleeves. Both the kilt and the wrapped garment are secured by a wide sash, looped and knotted in front with tassles on its short ends.

Asiatics are most often shown with long, slightly wavy hair, tied by a white fillet. Occasionally they are shown bald, but they are invariably bearded, sometimes with a long pointed beard but more often with a full beard that covers the line of the jaw. Both beard types extend up to include a moustache. Full beards are sometimes horizontally striated, indicating that they were wavy. Their eyes are heavy-lidded, but less rounded than those of the Nubians, and their brows are heavy, often protruding in a lump above the nose. The nose itself is often hooked, and may be long or short. As with other groups, the cheekbones are high and the naso-labial fold is often shown.

Women are more rarely shown. In the tomb of Rekhmire (Theban Tomb 100), Asiatic women wear tiered, slightly billowing skirts over the same tunic the men wear, and carry children in baskets on their backs. Elite Nubian women in the tomb of Huy (Theban Tomb 40) are shown dressed in the same fashion as elite Egyptian women of the period. An interesting development at the end of Dynasty 18 is the female smiting scene: the queen is shown smiting foreign women or trampling them in the form of a sphinx. On Queen Tiye's throne in the tomb chapel of Kheruef (Epigraphic Survey (1980), pl. 52a),

she is shown as a sphinx trampling women on the armrest of her throne, and a Nubian and an Asiatic woman are shown bound to the throne's supports. The Nubian woman wears an ankle-length kilt and short hair, while the Asiatic woman wears her hair in a waist-length braid, and seems to wear the same diagonally wrapped garment as male Asiatics, with bands of red and blue.

## Conclusion

While the representations of the non-Egyptian Other in art can be divided into royal and non-royal, schematic and realistic, historical and generically propagandistic, allusions to foreigners in textual sources tend to be almost uniformly realistic, whether the texts purport to record actual historical events or are cast as literature. Even a New Kingdom military story, “The Capture of Joppa” (Simpson (2003), 73–74), shows the foreign ruler as merely foolish, and other stories are almost laudatory, referring to foreigners’ generosity and assistance when the Egyptian hero is abroad, as in the stories of the Shipwrecked Sailor (Simpson (2003), 47–53), Sinhue (Simpson (2003), 55–66), and the Doomed Prince (Simpson (2003), 76–79). Only in royal inscriptions, often accompanying propagandistic battle scenes, and in lamentations, where they represent disorder and the reversal of the ideal, do foreigners take on the schematic, stereotypical roles that correspond to the most prevalent form of artistic representations.

In general, then, the distinctions in the visual and literary representations of foreigners are similar: they do not vary so much over time as they do between royal and non-royal representations. Representations of the non-Egyptian Other in non-royal contexts tend to be positive, focusing on their assistance to Egyptians abroad in literature and, in art, the wonderful things they bring to Egypt. By contrast, in royal texts and representations they are regarded as a “vile” and “wretched” cosmological opponent, the smiting and subjugation of which was required of the king for the stability and endurance of Egypt.

Chronological distinctions are surprisingly few. New types of costume and hairstyle are added to the repertoire in the later periods, when Egypt had more contact with the peoples beyond her borders, but older costumes clearly retained their associations and continued to be used in later periods. New Kingdom contact with more genetically distant populations added distinctions in facial features to the generic representations, but, beyond the addition of battle scenes, the main change in New Kingdom representations of foreigners is their appearance in non-royal contexts, probably a side-effect of the inclusion in tomb chapels of scenes of the king and of the tomb owner’s professional life.

Conventions for the representations of the subjugated Other were formulated at the very earliest period of Egyptian history. These conventions, closely tied to royal power and the maintenance of *Ma‘at*, served their purpose so well that they were maintained even after the foreign cultures they depicted—first the Libyans, then the Nubians, and finally the Asiatics—took power in Egypt in the later dynasties. Displaying a surprising prescience, the authors of the Fifth Hour of the Book of Gates and many New Kingdom enumerations of the nine bows listed these three foreign groups in the same order in which they eventually conquered the Egyptians. Despite the ethnic background of these new kings, however, the bound bodies of their generic compatriots continued to function magically to support their kingship and maintain the order of the Egyptian world.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

There are many general studies of the role of foreigners in ancient Egypt, most of which deal at least secondarily with their cosmological role and their representation. An extensive series of entries under the rubric “Fremde” and its variants in the *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* (Helck and Westendorff 1977) covers many topics including the representation of foreigners in Egyptian art. Most of the work on the subject has, however, been based on texts. Loprieno’s study (1988) represents the classic analysis of the literary depiction of foreigners, and Bresciani (1997) examined a variety of textual sources to illuminate the role of foreigners and the conception of the foreign and summarized much of the earlier work. More recent, and more inclusive of non-textual evidence, is a volume of essays in the *Encounters with Ancient Egypt* series edited by O’Connor and Quirke (2003), which includes essays on individual foreign groups as well as essays dealing with the Egyptians’ attitudes towards the non-Egyptian world in general. Wachsmann (1987) raises the question of hybridism (the mixing of details from different ethnicities) in his study of Aegeans in Theban tombs. Questions of identity and ethnicity in Egyptian society have been addressed in seminal articles by Assmann (1996) and Baines (1996) and more recently, with an emphasis on the archaeological evidence, by Schneider (2010).

Studies dealing specifically with the foreigners in Egyptian art are somewhat rarer. Two of them, Schoske (1994) and Hall (1986), have focused on the smiting scene and its variants. Ritner’s survey of Egyptian magical practice (1993) offers numerous examples of images of foreigners intended to have magical effects and analyzes the various theories behind their use. Broader treatments are in the offing: Mark Janzen, a doctoral student at the University of Memphis, is currently completing a dissertation entitled “The Iconography of Humiliation: The Depiction and Treatment of Foreign Captives in New Kingdom Egypt,” and David O’Connor is working on a book dealing with the representation of foreigners in Egyptian art.

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## CHAPTER 10

# Interpreting Ancient Egyptian Material Culture

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*Salima Ikram*

Material culture is the bedrock of our understanding of ancient Egypt as every artifact, whether large or small, forms part of a wider narrative. Each artifact is a part of the enormous jigsaw puzzle of ancient Egyptian culture whose reconstruction depends not just on the object, but all that is allied to it, its “backstory” (Appadurai 1986; Hodder 1989; Miller 1997; Schiffer and Miller 1999). The holistic interpretation of Egypt’s material culture, as has been traditional in Egyptian archaeology and Egyptology, allows scholars to extract information from an object itself that relates to its form, function, material, manufacturing technology, and economic value. By extrapolation, this leads to a broader understanding of different aspects of ancient Egyptian culture and society such as social organization, history, economy, trade, politics, diplomacy, ideologies, religion, and aesthetics. Thus, in the study of Egyptian art, what the art historian and curator, Jules D. Prown (1996) calls “the farmers and the cowmen” can indeed be friends. Prown identifies the farmers with investigators more concerned with the “material” aspect of objects: provenance, age, substance, technology; the cowmen are those who focus more on the cultural aspect: the meanings embedded in an object or/and transmitted by it. Broadly speaking, in contemporary art history a combination of these modes of analysis is meant when the phrase “visual culture” is used, that is, a focus on the cultural meaning of a work of art or an artifact, rather than just its aesthetic or material value. This type of interdisciplinary analysis with a pronounced bias toward lateral thinking has a long-standing tradition in Egyptology.

## The Parameters of Ancient Egyptian Material Culture

The definitions of material culture are many and diverse. In its most encompassing sense, it can be said to include all objects produced by humankind (Miller 1997; Auslander

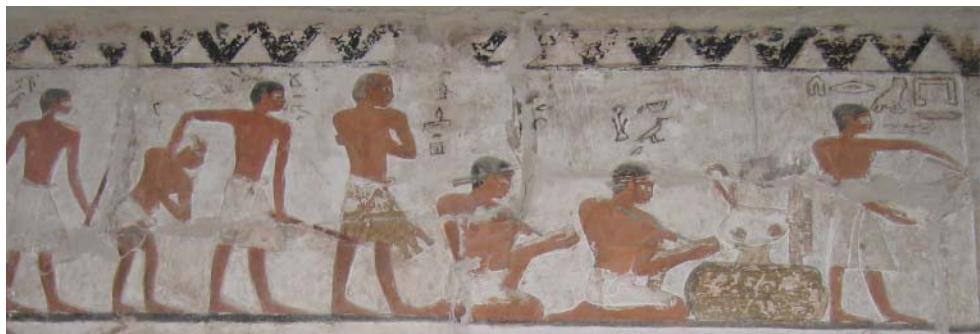
(2005), 1015). Fortunately for the scholars of ancient Egypt, the country's arid climate has preserved vast amounts of the ancient Egyptians' material culture for us to study, ranging from the contents of trash heaps to temple treasures. In terms of structures for the living and the dead, the Egyptians left houses, palaces, tents, temples, chapels, tombs, cemeteries, quays, workshops, and stables. Tools of different sorts, whether for scribes, doctors, jewelers, carpenters, potters, weavers, stone-workers, farmers, soldiers, and sailors, as well as the accoutrements of the minutiae of daily life make up a considerable part of Egyptian material culture. Two- and three-dimensional representations and texts are a rich source of information and most traditionally the focus of art historical study. It should be understood, however, that for the ancient Egyptians these might not have been "art" in the way that it is currently understood; rather, many of these monuments and images played a critical role in religious thought and belief, as well as in the sphere of politics. The mummies and skeletal remains of humans and animals together with their containers also yield evidence for the study of ancient Egypt. Thus, scholars of ancient Egypt can use a myriad of sources in order to construct their individual, and often very personal, visions of ancient Egypt (Kemp 1991), while bearing in mind that, despite the wealth of material culture that has been excavated from Egypt, not all types of objects or buildings have been found, and not all strata of society are equally represented.

Of course, some objects might be more informative than others, or might reveal different sets of information as well as appeal to different aesthetic standards, depending on their purpose. Two very different examples of material culture will serve to elucidate the range of information that pertains to Egyptian art, culture, technology, and religion and can be derived from a careful study of its artifacts. For example, from a pot made of Nile silt, we can learn its date based on its shape and decoration, as well as on the technology used to produce it (Figure 10.1). Both the form and decoration contribute to its aesthetic evaluation. The shape together with its material might also suggest a region of manufacture, which might inform our understanding of trade networks and the regional production of ceramic vessels. The pot's form could suggest a possible function for the vessel. Its material, decoration, and shape provide some indication of its intrinsic economic worth at the time it was produced, while analysis of its contents might provide further information regarding its economic role. All of these factors reflect the social and economic status of the vessel's owner, although revealing little about the vessel's maker.

A carved and painted limestone relief fragment yields a slightly different set of data (Figure 10.2). The material itself is expensive and the quality of the carving and the paint further indicates the degree of cost, and thus, by extension, the wealth and rank of its owner. If the white paint was made from a rare imported material such as huntite, this mineral may have been imported from as far afield as the desert near modern Tunisia (Lee and Quirke 2000; Heywood 2001). Thus, the use of huntite indicates a higher material cost and provides evidence for far-reaching international exchange. A close examination of the carving can establish the methods and tools employed in its manufacture. The style of the relief helps to date it to a particular period and place: in this case from an Old Kingdom (Dynasty 5), Memphite (here specifically Saqqara) necropolis. The quality and subject matter and decorum of the representation further indicate that it must have come from an elite tomb. The images and text carved on it provide yet another level of information. In this case, the image carved in low relief shows a seated man with pens, rolls of papyrus, and ink, identifying him as a scribe at work, with another standing



**Figure 10.1** Nile silt vessel with painted decorations, Nagada II. Photograph: Salima Ikram.



**Figure 10.2** Scene from the Tomb of Nefer (ca. 2452–2385 BCE) at Saqqara showing the collection of taxes. Photograph: Salima Ikram.

man, presumably a more important scribe, reading from a papyrus. The image allows the viewer to gather a wide range of data. The accoutrements of the scribes are clearly recognizable, and their presence and number indicate that the tomb owner holds a very high rank, permitting him to employ several literate (and therefore elite) people. Brief inscriptions are written above the heads of the men using the same black ink but different

styles of writing. The caption above the standing scribe is written in formal (monumental) hieroglyphs, and emphasizes that he is the most important man on the register; a message that is reinforced by the content of the inscription that describes him as an overseer. By comparison, the inscription above the seated scribe is more sketchy and informal, using a cursive form of writing rather than the more formal style used above the overseer. The fact that the inscriptions are not carved, as is the rest of the register, suggests that the work was unfinished. The tomb owner or his heirs may have run out of time due to an untimely death, or of the funds to complete the tomb to a high standard, and thus some of the decoration was completed hastily in ink.

## **Problems in the Interpretation of Ancient Egyptian Material Culture, General and Specific**

Before addressing some of the problems of interpreting material culture, one basic fact to bear in mind concerns what can be termed “the accident of archaeology.” Art historians and archaeologists simply do not have all the specimens of material culture created by the ancient Egyptians. Only a selection of sites have been excavated, and many early archaeologists did not take requisite care when digging or finding artifacts, which resulted in many of them being broken or even discarded. The fragile and ephemeral nature of many objects ensured that they could not have survived the processes of decay, and so our data has been skewed from the start.

Interpreting the material culture that survives from any ancient civilization has numerous pitfalls. Some of these are general, while others are more specific to a genre (artifact or monument). Primary amongst these is the subjective way in which we view and interpret the material today. Filters of time, place, gender, social conditioning, religion, and life-experience all influence the analysis and interpretation of material objects, and most particularly, their iconography. Thus, the interpretation of an object and its symbolism (through visual literacy) might be different depending on whether it was being examined by a twenty-first-century banker who had grown up in the United States, an impoverished peasant from twentieth-century revolutionary China, or a member of the scientific establishment from nineteenth-century England: it is all a matter of perspective. So, the image of a dung-beetle, which for the Egyptians symbolized the god Khepri (the newly born sun) and meant “to come into being,” might be seen variously by a modern viewer with loathing as an image of an unclean pest to be squashed, with longing as a source of protein, or with interest as a specimen of a rare species.

The subjective categorization of objects can also prove to be problematic since, by the mere act of creating categories, we are imposing our ideas onto the data. This is particularly true for objects that are deprived of their original context. Context or provenance is one of the most important tools for the interpretation of an object to define its purpose and meaning in antiquity. Although the basic function of a pot is to contain something, its context further defines its cultural role. A ceramic pot found in the kitchen of a house can be interpreted as a cooking or storage vessel. If the same pot were found in the inner sanctum of a temple, it might still be regarded as a storage vessel, but it would possess an added level of meaning as a ritual vessel used for sacred purposes. Thus, it would claim a different value and place in our interpretation of both the object and the role that it

played in Egyptian culture and society. The use of simulacra (things that replace reality with representation) offers an even deeper scope for symbolic interpretation. A statue found in a tomb was not only meant to represent the deceased, but also to act as a conduit for his or her soul. An image of a person in a temple acted as an eternal worshipper gaining divine protection. Effigies of gods, both in homes and temples, were objects of veneration and also served an apotropaic function. All ancient Egyptian statues, however, share the idea that they are a symbol/likeness of an individual, and are a conduit for a life force or “essence” of that person.

Yet another general issue in the interpretation of material culture is also associated with provenance. Were objects of “daily life” that are routinely found in tombs, such as furniture, clothing, jewelry, and containers, actually used by the deceased prior to being placed in the tomb, or were they specially fabricated as grave goods? In some instances, when signs of wear exist such as sweat stains on clothing or repairs to ceramic or metal vessels, it is obvious that these are objects with a personal history, reflective of the deceased and his or her times, with an intrinsic narrative. At other times, it is less clear if an object was manufactured exclusively for use in the afterlife, because it lacks evidence of ever having been used. In this case, we can only interpret the material, technological, and aesthetic aspects of the object itself together with the belief systems, economic and social values associated with it, and to some extent (what might be termed its associative individual history), the object in relation to the deceased.

The bias towards the visual culture of the elites, particularly from tombs and temples, which represents a “high” form of this, furnishes an additional interpretative difficulty. Indeed, for many today it may seem that the ancient Egyptians spent their time only in prayer before dying—far from the reality! One reason for this bias is the physical durability of many of their monuments that were constructed from rock or stone masonry at the desert margins, or in the deserts themselves where they were well preserved by the hot, dry sand of Egypt. This situation does not apply to most domestic or industrial structures that were built of mud bricks with a high organic component. Furthermore, areas that had been attractive for settlement in antiquity continued to be so, and thus many ancient towns and cities, and all that they contained, are buried deep below modern settlements, and are thus less accessible to archaeologists. If not covered by later developments, many of the mud brick walls from which ancient buildings were made have been quarried away over the centuries by the *sebbakhin* (the diggers of fertilizer, *sebbakh*), who used the crushed bricks to increase the agricultural productivity of their land.

The choices made historically by antiquarians and archaeologists are also a major cause for the bias we have toward the material culture of the elite. Indeed, only certain aspects of elite existence related to worship and death. When antiquarians and archaeologists started excavating in Egypt and studying its culture, particularly from the nineteenth century onward, they focused on collecting and recording impressive objects: large statues, dramatic architectural fragments, beautifully painted and carved inscriptions and scenes, gold statues and jewelry, exquisitely fashioned containers, and highly decorated papyri. The obvious reason for this was that such objects held a strong aesthetic appeal. They also satisfied both personal and national pride as many expeditions to collect Egyptian antiquities were carried out competitively as demonstrations of imperial and/or colonial power as well as for personal gain or ostentatious display (Greener 1966; Fagan 2004). All these impressive objects belonged to the elites; commoners, it was assumed, possessed

little of material value, save for some pots and baskets, and could not contribute anything of interest to an understanding of the history, society, and culture of the ancient Egyptians. As is often the case in scholarship, the lives of the poor were valued less than those of the rich. Thus, the details of non-elite Egyptians' material, social, and religious lives were largely ignored, with only occasional mention made of them (Wilkinson 1878; Petrie, in passing in many of his works), giving an unbalanced view of ancient Egyptian society.

It is only recently that the study of non-elites has become a major focus of Egyptology—and such study is difficult as their material culture is indeed less in volume and variety. Their habitations together with their contents and any decoration are, for the most part, buried beneath those of the modern Egyptians and well nigh impossible to access. Their graves contain few if any grave goods. This increases the need for a thorough scientific analysis of what little has been recovered, in an effort to determine what sorts of lives the non-elites led and the role that they played in Egyptian society. The study of human, animal, and organic remains contributes to such an investigation (for very recent work, see articles by Kemp et al. (2006–2014) in *Horizon* on the Amarna Trust website; Rose and Zabecki 2009). Examining and interpreting the visual culture of the non-elites helps us to reconstruct their religious beliefs, the details of their daily lives, and their aesthetics. Until the study of non-elites progresses further, however, our interpretation of ancient Egypt remains skewed in favor of the high-ranking people and their material culture. Indeed, to some extent Egyptologists, by using only “official” elite monuments to reconstruct Egyptian political and social orders and religion, have been manipulated by the ancient Egyptian elite to reconstruct a worldview that possibly favors them far more than actually was the case.

An absence or change in the patterns of distribution of certain types of objects or materials in an archaeological setting also contributes to our understanding of a particular site or period, as the configuration of material culture helps to define a site's function and economic level. On a broader scale, the presence or absence of specific materials or objects are indicative of historic, political, and economic change. So, we might ask, what does the lack of large-scale temples during a specific period tell us? What do we learn from the absence of individual tombs in favor of group burials? A dearth of precious objects, such as lapis lazuli or carnelian or gold, in a particular period contributes directly to our knowledge of ancient Egypt through its material culture as it denotes an absence of trade and a decrease in wealth, with all its attendant political ramifications. Of course, one must be cautious and keep the “accident of archaeology” in mind: negative evidence is not always absolute, as excavators might have missed finding something by digging in the wrong place.

In some cases, different groups of artifacts have more specific issues associated with their interpretation. Prime amongst these are those objects that have traditionally been studied as “art”: representations on tomb and temple walls, and statuary of wood, bone, ivory, ceramic, and stone. What we call Egyptian art was not just an aesthetic expression, however, but also a mode of representing an ideal: a magical reality often charged with symbolism that it is difficult for us to interpret, and is dependent, in part, on styles and trends of the time. This is illustrated most clearly by the art of the Amarna Period. As this subject has been fully dealt with elsewhere in this volume, it is only mentioned in passing here.

Textual representation also poses specific interpretative difficulties (Baines (2007), 7–10 in particular; see also Baines and Yoffee 1998; Friedman and Fiske (2011),

1099–1218). Hieroglyphic writing, the monumental formal script of ancient Egypt, consists of a series of images that were chosen and laid out not only for their aesthetic appeal and meaning, but also to create an eternal verity. The sentences formed by the script, with their literary and poetical rhythms, could only be read by the very few literate members of society, and therefore would not convey the same information to the non-literate of antiquity, or even to modern scholars with an imperfect understanding of the Egyptian language. However, a partial comprehension by the non-literate is possible, based on a few recognizable signs (e.g., a pair of legs indicates movement or walking, an arm waving a mace suggests battle or victory). Additionally, the images accompanying the text could be “read” as giant hieroglyphs that expressed the essence of the complex meaning of the text in shorthand, rendering the image accessible even to the non-literate.

Regardless, these formal inscriptions have a visual impact that emphasizes the importance of the message that they contain. More significantly, they often accompanied, or were an integral part of, painted and/or carved scenes. Thus, ideally text and image should not be divorced from one another when being studied, but should be treated together as a graphic unit as well as a single cognitive group, in relation to the architecture that they adorn. Particularly in the minor arts, this could extend to the form of the object and the material of its manufacture. Of course, one should bear in mind, particularly with regard to texts and images dealing with political ideology, that these do not necessarily show historic truths, but rather perpetuate an ideology and an ideal. Hence, texts and images relating to a king attacking Egypt’s enemy and emerging victorious do not necessarily mean that that particular king literally fought that particular enemy, but, rather, that the king was depicted using the iconography of kingship, and as such was shown as the ideal of a warlike and victorious ruler.

On a more pragmatic level, text can also obfuscate rather than elucidate, particularly when establishing the ownership/authorship of objects and their chronology. In some cases, statues or entire temple walls that were made by one king were usurped by a later one. All that the later one did was to remove the name of his predecessor and insert his own, thereby rendering the object his creation or possession. Sometimes usurpation was done to eradicate all memory (*damnatio memoriae*) of an earlier ruler, as was the case with King Akhenaten (1353–1336 BCE), and at other times, it was an expedient way to achieve maximal self-publicity at a minimal expense, as is seen by the many usurpations of King Ramesses II (1279–1213 BCE). How can one establish the originator of such a piece of material culture? In some cases, the original inscription was not sufficiently well erased and is still discernible; in others the old text was so thoroughly removed that the new text appears in a depression, which indicates that a change has taken place, although what the original was is not always easy to establish. Some objects, such as the sphinxes of Amenemhet III (1818–1773 BCE) were inscribed and reinscribed by several kings and moved from one part of the country to another, creating a great deal of confusion as to how they should be interpreted, what date they are, and how they fit into the broader narrative of Egyptian (art) history (Habachi 1978). Ultimately, the issue for such statues, as well as other objects suffering from usurpation can be solved by a close study of style (see Hartwig, “Style,” this volume), first to help situate the object chronologically, so that it can be interpreted with regard to its role in cultural history.

Even when texts are original, they can create confusion similar to that engendered by usurpation inscriptions. For instance, the dating of the statue of the dwarf Seneb and his family that was found in his mastaba at Giza is problematic. The statue is inscribed with the name and titles of Seneb, listing the fact that he was a priest serving the cult of Khufu (2509–2483 BCE). Initially, the name of the king on the statue was used by scholars to date the piece and thus place Seneb into a particular historic period. However, the position of his tomb, far from that of the king he purportedly served, its plan and the style of the statues argue for a later date (Bolshakov (1994), 10 n.1; Cherpion 1998; Woods 2010). Now, the majority of scholars believe that the name of Khufu on the statue indicates that Seneb worked for the cult of that king long after his death. Based on the style of his sculpture, tomb position and its decoration, Seneb probably lived and died after the reign of Khufu, perhaps in Dynasty 5 (2435–2306 BCE).

## **Ways of Looking, or Methodologies of Interpretation**

Ancient Egyptian material culture has been subjected to a variety of modes of analysis, and, to some extent, this has influenced the way in which the study of Egyptian art has evolved. Although the genres and corpus of material culture are fairly constant, the ways of interpreting it are myriad. By imposing different theoretical constructs on the material, one can alter the understanding of objects and their meaning independently, and within a culture (Renfrew and Bahn 2005). More than any other ancient Mediterranean culture, the material remains from Egypt, in terms of objects and iconography, have been analyzed through the lenses of archaeology and anthropology (Petrie 1901, 1920; Weeks 1979; Trigger et al. 1996; Lustig 1997; Richards and Van Buren 2000; Richards 2005; much of the work of B.J. Kemp and J. Baines). Thus, while the more traditional art historical methods of study, such as connoisseurship and style, have been applied to Egyptian art, a significant degree of anthropological theory (gender and sexuality, views of the “other,” reception and perception, mortuary values, to name but a few; see other chapters in Part I, this volume) has been used in interpreting material culture. As one might expect, each theoretical perspective has extracted different information from the material under study. At various times, different avenues of inquiry have been privileged. Thus both Prown’s farmers and cowmen, and more frequently now a combination of the two, have held sway over Egypt’s visual culture.

A particularly fruitful use of anthropological theory has been in the interpretation of tombs and cemeteries. By employing the value systems derived from anthropological and archaeological studies, tombs and cemeteries can reveal aspects of social and political organization (Richards 2005; Trigger et al. 1996; Cooney 2007; Petrie, in passing in several works). Examining the location of a tomb, its size, the materials from which it was made, the type and quality of decoration, and its inscriptions, can elucidate social and political organizations in addition to diachronic changes in both architectural and artistic styles.

One of the earliest uses of objects by scholars was to derive a chronological basis for them. This “vertical history” of an object is one of the most basic ways of using and viewing objects within the context of a chronological framework. William Matthew Flinders Petrie, the “father” of Egyptian archaeology, established the dating of the Predynastic

Period by seriation or sequence/relative dating (Petrie 1901, 1920). This is a form of relative dating that provides a chronological sequence of objects based on their style. The governing idea is that styles of objects evolve in particular ways; by documenting their evolution, objects can be placed within a relative chronological framework. Later on, more precise dates can be given to the sequence through further excavations where more or different examples might be found. Petrie established his sequence dates by studying groups of grave goods from a huge number of burials, paying special attention to specific objects that were common to all the internments. He established typologies of pottery, figurines, slate palettes, and flint tools, and studied their groupings, focusing particularly on the most numerous—ceramics. Petrie arranged these in a relative sequence, assigning to the styles that he could distinguish numbers ranging from 30 (oldest) to 80 (most recent), and leaving numbers free in case more objects needed to be inserted later at the beginning or end of the sequence. Petrie held the basic assumption that parts of certain pots changed from functional to decorative over time. One of the key ceramic types he used to establish his dating was the wavy-handled (W-ware) jar. In its earliest form it was large and had a sizeable and usable handle. Over time, it reduced in size and the handle shrank, until eventually it appeared without any functional aspect, just an undulating line along the upper part of the body (Figure 10.3). Although this mode of dating is not fail-safe, and works on the (to some extent, incorrect) assumption that style evolves in a linear fashion, Petrie's system has been proven by later scholars to be, for the most part, dependable. This sort of relative dating is still used today; often using tiny details to provide a chronology for a single type of object. Thus in sculpture, changes in the depiction of the eye and eyebrow, a royal or divine beard, or the way in which nipples are shown, can be used to date a piece.

Studies concentrating on technologies used to produce artifacts and monuments (such as Nicholson and Shaw 2000; Kemp and Vogelsang-Eastwood 2001; Lucas 1989; Arnold 1991) provide a different lens through which to examine visual culture. These give a



**Figure 10.3** Pottery vessels illustrating Petrie's sequence dating. © Brian Alm.

more “horizontal history” of an object, focusing on its materiality, as well as exploring how its production might provide evidence for trade networks. Changes in methods of production can be used to document advances or shifts in technology. The identification of the source of raw materials is a key factor in understanding trade and economy. The importation of different forms, materials, or tools, also acts as a chronological indicator. For example, pottery can be dated to some extent, by whether it was hand- or wheel-made, and whether it was a slow or fast wheel, influenced by those of the Near East (Hope 1987). Innovations in gold work (for example the use of guttae or tiny drops applied in a decorative pattern on a plain surface) and other metals attest to artistic and technological influence from the Levant (Ogden 2000). Technological studies involving experimental archaeology or ethnoarchaeology also help explain how objects were produced, the organization of production, and sometimes even why they took a particular form. For example, experiments in basketry, stone and wood working, and even mummification have explained specifics on tool-use and established ways in which one can calculate how long it might have taken to produce different items. The debris that these activities leave behind is also useful as it can be used to identify similar activities in the archaeological record (Wendrich 1991; Killen 1994; Stocks 2003; Ikram 2005; Graves-Brown, in press).

Sometimes, close study of how an object is made can even identify certain artists or ateliers. The way in which a detail, such as a thumbnail or finger joint is painted or carved, can identify the hand of a specific artisan (Keller 2001; Bryan 2001), while the handwriting of particular scribes can be identified by how they form certain letters. Chemical analysis of paints might also be able to identify the pigment recipe favored by a particular workshop, or indicate the time period when the materials used for it were available (see below). Such information might lead to a better understanding of the large-scale production of tomb or temple scenes, as well as inscribed papyrus scrolls.

Obviously, material culture can be used to answer a variety of questions and to elucidate diverse aspects of Egyptian culture—it just depends on what sort of information is the focus for study. Possibly the most rewarding approach is what can be termed “biographical” or “holistic.” This combines a study of the materiality of the object (material, technology, influences on production), its (perceived) value (see Cooney, this volume, for more details), its chronological place, its social context, and the role it played in a particular person’s life.

## Potential Avenues for Exploration

Surprisingly, certain forms of Egyptian material culture such as rock art, have, until now, received little attention. This form of visual culture is of extreme importance, as the origins of all later art as well as of political and religious iconography can be traced back to it. Some examples are found on the rocks bordering the Nile, particularly in the areas from Armant to Aswan, with a dense concentration in the Eastern and Western deserts. Recently some scholars have started on the documentation and analysis of rock art (Huyge 2003) and subsequent works (see issue 19 (2009) of the journal *Archéo-Nil*; see also Winkler 1938–1939; Morrow and Morrow 2002), showing that this source is a rich vein of information waiting to be mined.

Higher standards of display and conservation are crucial to our understanding of visual culture. Since the first time it was put on display, possibly, the carved surface of the Rosetta Stone had been blackened and the inscription highlighted in powdered chalk for better visibility (Parkinson 2005). This not only might have adverse effects for the long-term preservation of the artifact, but has also led to scholars misinterpreting the piece as made of basalt brought from near the Fayum. It was only after the recent conservation and study of the Rosetta Stone that its original material was revealed as granite, with a dramatic pink streak running through it, brought from distant Aswan (Parkinson 2005).

Improving and standardizing the documentation and recording of objects is also an avenue that should be pursued. For example, the publications of the tombs at Beni Hasan (Newberry 1893–1900) show all the scenes in black silhouette. Although the outlines of the images are clear, the details, colors, and nuanced representations of the ancient Egyptian artisans are completely missing, rendering the publication useless on many levels. Nowadays, there is more attention paid to proper photography as well as other forms of depicting objects, ranging from traditional drawings to sophisticated laser copies or Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) of both two- and three-dimensional objects. Although the very complex forms of recording are not available to everyone, in part due to issues of cost and efficiency in the field, a standardization of conventions for illustration and an emphasis on accuracy would contribute to a better understanding of visual culture.

The study of visual culture is becoming increasingly rich, complex, and integrated with methodologies derived from other disciplines. These combined methods of seeing and interpreting allow us to extract far more information from each object or monument than any single method used in isolation. Even more data pertinent to understanding and interpreting material culture is now being provided through the application of methods from hard sciences, many of which are used on objects during the process of conservation. Indeed, conservation studies are revealing a wealth of information about visual culture (Parkinson 2005, 2008; Middleton and Uprichards 2008). Chemical or physical analyses of the different materials used to make an object are providing fresh avenues of inquiry and new data about objects that have been studied for many years. Such tests are also useful in establishing the authenticity of objects in museums or the art market, as one can now determine whether the technology or the material used to fabricate the piece is ancient or modern. The sole use of Carbon 14 (C-14) analysis for dating organic materials has now been supplemented by potassium-argon dating for ancient minerals, thermoluminescence (TL) and archaeomagnetic dating for ceramics, as well as other tests for different materials. Thin sectioning is used to shed light on pottery production, while X-rays and other forms of imaging also permit the non-destructive study of technologies used to make wood, metal, and bone artifacts. Paints, resins, oils, metals, and other substances can be chemically analyzed and studied using Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM), X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF), X-Ray Defraction (XRD), Fourier-transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR), Gas Spectrometry, Polarized Light Microscopy (PLM), ultraviolet light (UV), and other archaeometric tools (see Newman, this volume). All these methods serve to shed further light on the technology, trade and economy of ancient Egypt.

An example of the use of such scientific techniques in the study of visual culture is the analysis of paint from Theban tombs (Lee and Quirke (2000), 104–120; see also Blom-Böer 1994; Middleton and Uprichards 2008; Vandenabeele, et al. 2009; Hartwig

2013). Using a variety of tools, the components of different paints have been identified, including orpiment. This material is an arsenic sulfide that yields a yellow color and seems, in its pure form, to have primarily been used in Dynasty 18 and 19 objects and tomb decoration, although a (thus far) unique example from Dynasty 2 has been documented (Pagès-Camagna and Guichard 2010). Even during the New Kingdom it appears to have been relatively rarely employed in comparison with the more common yellow ochre, and might well have been imported. Thus, the discovery of its use explains the reason for the particularly intense shade of this color in certain tombs, and informs one of an aesthetic decision made by the Egyptians. It is also indicative of a whole network of trade and exchange, and attests to the higher wealth and status of the individual using the paint. Similarly, the use of UV light in examining a papyrus or a wall painting can often show earlier versions of decoration (Vandenabeele et al. 2009; Hartwig 2013). Thus, changes in the schema of decoration, the hands of different artists, and changes in inscriptive content all become visible, and contribute to a better understanding of the history and development of the object itself.

Future scientific methods of analysis doubtless will be linked successfully to theoretical models in order to obtain even more data from Egyptian material culture. It is increasingly clear that interdisciplinary teams of archaeologists, philologists, and scientists, working together, can derive significant amounts of information from Egypt's material culture, enabling objects and monuments to contribute to a deeper understanding of ancient Egyptian culture, history, society, technology, religion, ideologies, and aesthetics.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

There are no particular texts within Egyptology that focus exclusively on the uses and interpretation of material culture. There are several artifact-specific books, however, that deal with genres of objects (e.g., shabtis, statues, stelae, and mummies). The works of certain authors, such as B.J. Kemp and J. Baines in particular, use a variety of practical and theoretical models in their interpretation of the material evidence and serve as exemplary models for ways of interpreting and presenting material culture. More general theoretical works from the disciplines of art history and archaeology deal with visual culture. Some are listed in the bibliography below: Appadurai (1986), Hodder (1989), Miller (1997), Schiffer and Miller (1999). Other works by Daniel Miller are also of interest. For an overview of the study of material culture, see Buchli (2007), and also of interest, Lemonnier (1986).

For different modes of perception, several articles in the following book are of use: Nelson (2000). Currently, several books in the field of art history deal with a holistic interpretation of visual culture; among these, see: Plate (2002), Cartwright (2007), Holly and Moxey (2002).

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PART II

## Materials and Mediums

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## CHAPTER 11

# Sculpture

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## Introduction

Sculpture is the most representative form of ancient Egyptian art. Spanning thousands of years, it characterized ancient Egyptian cultural beliefs. Ancient Egyptian statuary was primarily functional and meant to be inhabited by the deity, person, animal, or object it represented for eternity. In the earthly realm, statuary was the focus of cults and as such, acted as a bridge between the terrestrial and divine realms. Statues participated in ritual, were commemorative, and acted as substitutes for the deceased's life support system. All of these characteristics dictated the form statuary took, how it was manufactured, and what influences were present at the time of its creation. Given sculpture's importance as a receptacle of ancient Egyptian thought, a number of theoretical frameworks are applied with which to understand its significance. This chapter will first examine statuary basics (statue types, materials, manufacturing techniques, contexts) and then present a synthesis of its development from the Predynastic through Late Periods, by examining its forms and styles. The chapter will end with a discussion about how statues are studied in art historical literature with attention to the advantages and disadvantages of these methods.

Certain codes and conventions underlie the forms statuary took. The first is the concept of frontality. Statues were intended to receive offerings (seated) or perform ceremonies (standing or kneeling), and as such, were depicted facing forward. Generally, the person could be standing, seated, sitting cross-legged, squatting, kneeling, or in a group, in addition to other postures. Standing, the male subject advanced his left foot while women were shown with their feet together or left foot slightly advanced with both arms falling along the torso. If seated, both hands could be on the thigh with the right clenched or holding a handkerchief, or the right hand could be raised crossing the chest. Women were often shown with their hands flat against their sides, on their lap, or wrapped around their husband's body if in a group. Wooden and metal statuary allowed for more negative space since certain parts of the body were fitted together from separate pieces. In these statues,

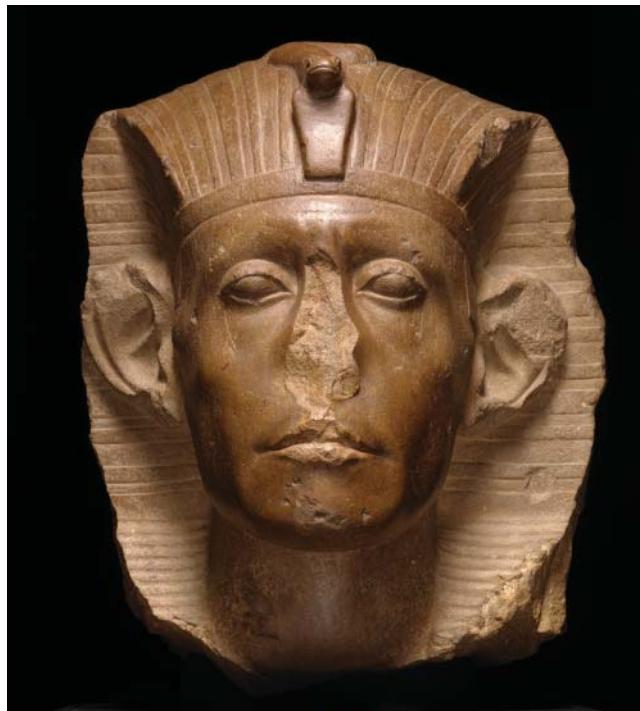
the right arm could be shown thrust forward holding a staff with the other clenched at the side. However, it is important to note that as Egyptian sculpture progressed so did the number of statue types and many were a reflection of the conventions of the time (see Hornemann 1951–1969; Wildung 1982). In the royal sphere, the head of the king (and sometimes royal women) was attached to the body of a lion in a form known as a sphinx statue, or depicted as a mummy with both arms crossed across the chest bearing the insignia of the underworld god, Osiris. Given the importance of the face to the ancient Egyptians as the seat of identity, certain statues take the form of busts or “Reserve Heads.” In the case of block statues, the figure was represented squatting, with both legs drawn toward the torso and the arms crossed on the top of the legs. In statuary where the actions depicted were magically important such as servant statues, the concept of frontality was abandoned.

Given the purpose of the statue as an eternal vessel for the soul, the subject often appeared in the prime of life, fit and muscular with an unlined face. However, this concept changed during certain periods, for example in Dynasty 4 when mature and portly male forms were preferred. All types of materials were cut or molded including wood, metal, clay, faience, bone, ivory, and precious and semi-precious gems. Stones ranged from soft limestone and alabaster (Egyptian calcite) to hard stones such as greywacke, quartzite, granite, diorite, and basalt. Statues were cut from rectangular blocks harvested from quarries. First the figure was drawn on the block’s faces according to the Egyptian proportional canon (see Peck, this volume), and then the stone was cut away. Tools included copper and stone chisels of varying hardness, and later, bronze or iron. The figure was roughed out and then polished with rubbing stones and an abrasive such as sand. Statues were enlivened by pigment, although in a number of cases the color of the stone was chosen to enhance the subject. Metal statues were hammered in sheets over a core of wood and fixed to one another by nails. Later, the lost wax method was used. Wooden statues were composed of separate pieces fastened together by the use of tenons and mortises.

Sculptors were affiliated with royal and temple workshops and some large private estates. Apparently, royal sculptors had a slightly higher status than those from other spheres (Vlčková 2013). All artists were trained to reproduce certain general characteristics in a workshop system that streamlined manufacturing techniques. This is immortalized in the Middle Kingdom stela of the sculptor Irtisen:

“I am a craftsman who excels at his art and has a superior level of knowledge; I know how to estimate dimensions ... I know the posture of the male statue and the appearance of the female ... I know how to make pigments, and products that melt without fire burning them and are moreover insoluble in water.” (Louvre, Paris, C14)

Statues were often carved with offering texts that included the subject’s name and titles. However, when the subject was not identified by inscription, the likeness or portrait of the model would perpetuate his or her identity. Portraiture is treated elsewhere in this volume (see Bryan) but some comments are mentioned here. Whether sculpture faithfully depicted its model cannot be answered definitively since the original models do not exist for comparison. In a rather gruesome twist, we do have the mummies of a few pharaohs with which to compare their images. For example, the rather large, rounded nose of Thutmose III is echoed in his statuary as is Seti I’s aquiline nose (Spaniel (1988) 2). Each pharaoh had an official likeness that identified him to the



**Figure 11.1** Head of Senuseret III, Egyptian, Middle Kingdom, Dynasty 12, ca. 1837–1819 BCE. Yellow quartzite,  $17\frac{3}{4} \times 13\frac{1}{2} \times 17$  in. (45.1 x 34.3 x 43.2 cm). The Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 62-11. Photograph: Jamison Miller.

population (Kozloff and Bryan (1992), 125–129). To some extent, officials were sculpted in the style of the king under whom they served, perhaps to illustrate the individual's conformity to *Ma'at* (the order of the universe) that the ruler embodied (Spaniel (1988), 15) (compare Figure 11.1, here labeled Senuseret III, with Josephson Figure 4.3, this volume). Moreover, this stylistic overlay may reflect the sculpture's origin in a particular pharaoh's workshop. Within these conventions, unique representations can be found, for example, in the statue of Hemiunu, the overseer of works for Khufu (Figure 11.2), or the bust of Ankhaf (see Figure 20.6, Bryan, this volume). Although we cannot prove definitively that these are portraits, their specific characteristics are not repeated again exactly in Egyptian sculpture. The individual's likeness, in the absence of text, allowed the *ka* (the soul of sustenance) and the *ba* (the soul of mobility) to recognize themselves, and “... alight on my images in the monument I have made” (*Urk.* IV, 1526).

## Development of Sculpture

### *Predynastic Period*

In ancient Egypt, statuary was primarily found in temples and tombs. The first statues were made in clay and fired, such as the head of a man from the Delta settlement



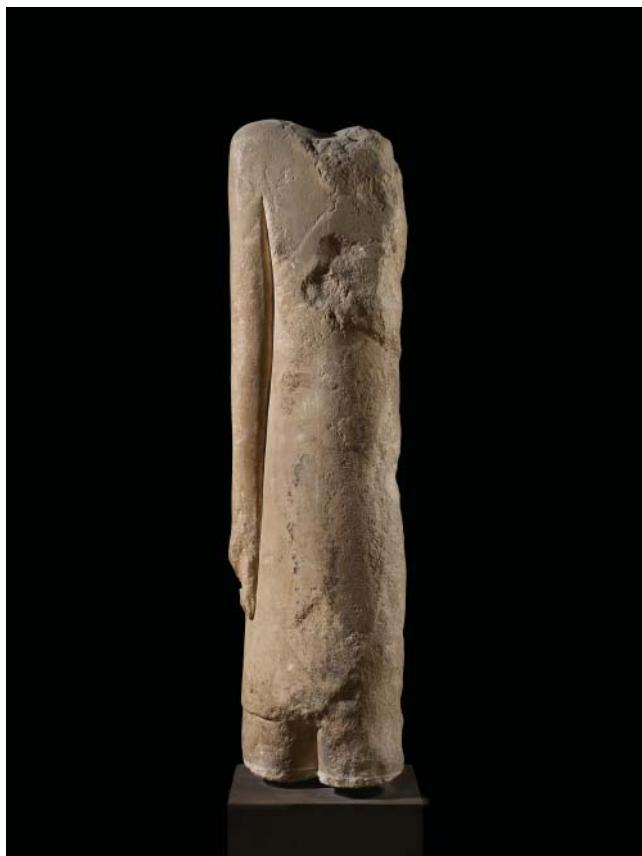
**Figure 11.2** Seated Statue of Hemiunu, Old Kingdom, Dynasty 4, ca. 2530 BC, Giza, Western Cemetery, G 4000. Limestone, traces of paint, height 5½ in. Roemer- und Pelizaeus-Museum, Hildesheim, inv. no. 1962. Courtesy of the Roemer- und Pelizaeus-Museum.

of Merimda-Benisalama, dating to the end of the fifth millennium (Egyptian Museum, Cairo JE 97472; Saleh and Sourouzian 1987, no. 1). This head is the first human representation that displays the red skin tone that distinguished male figurines in art. Originally mounted on a pole by means of a hole under the chin, the head participated in cultic processions although its identity as a god or ancestor figure is not known (Patch (2011), 97–98). Occurring at roughly the same time in the south of Egypt are a series of ivory female figurines with accentuated breasts and pubic triangles. Although excavated from tombs, the scarcity of these figurines suggests their exact function was not yet fixed, although many scholars think they acted to regenerate the dead sexually (Midant-Reynes (2000) 176). Statuettes of animals, celebratory “bird women” (Brooklyn Museum of Art 07.447.505, from el-Ma’mariya; Fazzini, Romano, and Cody (1999), 36–37), servant figures, male figures, dwarves, tag and tusk figurines follow. From temple contexts, votive statuettes range from crouching baboons, fantastic animals, prisoners, and dwarves to females with or without children and male figurines (for instance, Tell el-Farkha in the Delta; Ciałowicz (2012), 73–88). Large-scale sculpture begins with the fragmentary

statue, found in tomb 23 at Hierakonpolis dated to Nagada IIB (Harrington 2004), and from Nagada III, the Coptos colossus believed to be the god Min (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, AN1894.105b; Hendrickx (2010) 842–843), and two hammered gold statues from Tell el-Farkha. The latter statue pair, measuring 60 cm and 30 cm, may belong to a ruler and his son, or perhaps a ruler and his *ka* (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, R-486; Ciałowicz (2012), 88–92). It is during the late Predynastic Period that several important features of sculpture are codified: the advanced left leg, the arm bent across the chest, and large-scale sculpture (Eaton-Krauss (2011), 180–181). This transition to the formal dynastic style is seen in the large torso of a striding man wearing a short kilt, also called the Hierakonpolis Torso (Figure 11.3).

### *Early Dynastic*

At the beginning of the Early Dynastic Period (ca. 2950 BCE), the iconography and general statue types of established gods and rulers are represented standing or seated,



**Figure 11.3** Large statue of a striding man (the Hierakonpolis Torso), from Hierakonpolis, northern gateway of the town wall, Nagada III–early Dynasty 1. Limestone, height 120 cm (47 $\frac{1}{4}$  in.). Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, Oxford AN1896-1908.E.3925.

and their subjects are shown kneeling or squatting, followed gradually by seated and standing attitudes (Sourouzian (2013b), 6092). Top-heavy proportions with large heads and short necks, and at times, heavy volumes, characterize human statues. By Dynasty 0, sculptors pay particular attention to the face by including distinguishing features such as mustaches and inlaid eyes. Meanwhile, deities evolve gradually from inanimate to animal and human form, and display their insignia on their head or hold it in their hands (Roth 2011). Royalty begin to wear the *nemes* (a striped head cloth pulled tight around the forehead and tied into a tail in the back with two lappets in the front), the royal kilt, and the enveloping jubilee cloak (although the latter could also be worn by high dignitaries and gods) (Dreyer and Josephson 2011). Now both hands are crossed with one holding the crook or scepter and the other grasping the flail or flywhisk, the two insignia of kingship. Women wear the tight-fitting sheath dress that, in reality, was probably quite baggy; the idea was to accentuate the underlying female body (see Robins, this volume). Identifying texts appear in Dynasty 2, oriented toward the subject such as the statue of Khasekhem (Egyptian Museum, Cairo JE 32161; Tiradritti (2001), 39), and by Dynasty 3, these texts are oriented toward the viewer, which becomes the norm. It is also at this time that the back slab/pillar and identifying insignia appear, and stone is cut to form voids, or negative space (e.g., Brooklyn Museum of Art, 58.192; Fazzini, Romano and Cody (1999), 43). The ungainly bodies and expressionless faces of early royal sculpture develop into well-proportioned bodies with more realistic faces in Dynasty 3, and usher in the technical achievement and innovation that is associated with the royal sculpture of the Old Kingdom (Dreyer and Josephson 2011).

## *Old Kingdom*

With the arrival of the Old Kingdom, there is an explosion of new statue representations in a variety of materials. Most royal statues were part of statuary programs in the kings' funerary temples in the Memphite area, although a few were found in the temples of local gods. Seated statues were the most common, followed by standing statues. The striding statue appears in the reign of Sneferu (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 98943; Stadelmann (1995), 165–166; pls. 60–61). Statue groups known as dyads (two figures) and triads (three figures) emerge during the reign of Djoser in Dynasty 3 and are perhaps best typified by the Menkaure triads (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 40678, JE 40679, JE 46499; Tiradritti (2001), 52–53). These statue groups depict the ruler in the company of the gods or family members.

Monumental sculpture gradually becomes the preferred form for royalty as seen in a statue of Djoser from the statue chamber on the N. side of his step pyramid (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 49158; Sourouzian (1995), 149–152, fig. 8b; Tiradritti (2001), 49). The best-known colossal statue is the monumental sphinx (human-headed lion) that crouches at the entrance to the Giza plateau. The identity of the sphinx is hotly contested but most scholars agree the features resemble either of the two rulers Khufu or Khafre (Lehner 2003 and Stadelmann 2003). The only inscribed statue that remains of Khufu, the builder of the Great Pyramid, is a 3-inch ivory showing him wearing the red crown and the royal kilt with his right hand holding the flail against his chest (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 36143; Tiradritti (1999), 66). Royal statuary moves away from the

thick archaic volumes in the seated statue of Khafre that expresses the iconography of absolute power (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 10062; Tiradritti (2001), 68–69).

George Ander Reisner (Reisner (1931), 127–129) was the first to posit the existence of two royal sculptors in Dynasty 4: Sculptor A who worked in an earlier “severe” style seen in the larger statues of Khafre, and Sculptor B who carved softer facial contours on almost all the statues belonging to Menkaure. This was later refined by William Stevenson Smith who saw the sculptors as part of two different traditions, the traditional style of Sculptor A that extended back to Sneferu and a new school of naturalism that took hold during the reign of Djedefre that was typified by the bust of Ankhaf (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 27.442; see Figure 20.6, Bryan, this volume) and the statue of Hemiunu (Roemer- und Pelizaeus-Museum, no. 1962; Figure 11.2). The difficulty of assigning works to sculptors or schools will be discussed below in the section on the sculpture of Senwosret I.

In Dynasties 5 and 6, royal sculpture becomes smaller and more varied. By the end of Dynasty 5 and in Dynasty 6, sculptures are reaching back to earlier epochs for inspiration (Romano 1998). This practice is termed “archaism,” the imitation or emulation of older works to create a link with the greatness of their past. Compare the seated limestone statue of Raneferef with that of Khafre; the former is roughly a foot high while the latter is five and a half feet. Also, the falcon symbolizing Horus is much better integrated in the statue of Khafre mentioned above; in the sculpture of Raneferef, the falcon looks as if it could lose its grip and fall backward at any moment (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 98171; Tiradritti (1999), 73; (2001), 54). However, some large-scale sculpture is produced such as two copper statues belonging to Pepy I, the first standing copper statues (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 33034-33035; Tiradritti (1999), 89; (2001) 84–85). Kings are now depicted kneeling and offering two wine-jars as in the schist statue of Pepy I (Brooklyn Museum of Art 39.121; MMA (1999), 435, no. 170); as a naked, squatting child in the alabaster figure of Pepy II (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 50616; Tiradritti (1999), 89); or as a miniature adult on the lap of his mother (Brooklyn Museum of Art, 39.119; Fazzini, Romano and Cody (1999), 54–55, no. 15). The former sculpture is characteristic of an expressive and mannered style that begins with royal sculpture in Dynasty 5 and extends into private sculpture of Dynasty 6, when it takes hold in the provinces and becomes the foundation for the style of the First Intermediate Period. Called the “Second Style,” it is typified by large heads, nipped-in waists and elongated proportions as seen in the kneeling statue of Pepy I (Figure 11.4). The impetus for this change, perhaps the first deliberate stylistic change in history, may stem from a cultural/religious shift (Russmann 1995) or the impact of an Upper Egyptian artistic tradition in statuary (Wildung 1999).

In the private sphere, the development of new statue types during the Old Kingdom (e.g., scribes, striding figures with protruding kilts, figure groups, servant figures) can be correlated with the establishment and importance of officials’ new social positions (Fitzenreiter 2006). Early statues such as Sepa and Nesa from the Third Dynasty depict Sepa with his left foot forward, and Nesa standing (Louvre N 37–39; Ziegler (1997), 112–115, 141–147). While Sepa and Nesa can be considered masterpieces of their time, the majority of Dynasty 3 sculpture retains the archaic volumes with broad faces, short necks, and summarily rendered anatomy. In Dynasty 4, scribal (subject seated cross-legged with a papyrus scroll unfurled on his lap, e.g., Louvre E 3023; Ziegler



**Figure 11.4** Kneeling statue of Pepy I, Old Kingdom, Dynasty 6, Brooklyn Museum, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 39.121. © Brooklyn Museum photograph.

(1997), 204–208) and striding poses are introduced. Private statuary of Dynasty 4 tends to individualize the facial features of the owner and vary clothing and attributes (Sourouzian (2010), 872). Hemiunu, the overseer of works for Khufu's pyramid, is a remarkable statue that depicts a mature, heavy-set man instead of the usual young, muscular body (Figure 11.2). Perhaps he sought to be represented at the height of his power and carry his status into the afterlife. Other unusual statue types occur during Dynasty 4 such as the bust of Ankhaf (see above), a rare sculptural form that isn't seen again until the bust of Nefertiti in the New Kingdom and the enigmatic “Reserve Heads.” Of the latter, thirty-six are preserved, and come mainly from Dynasty

4 mastabas in the western cemetery of Giza that contained no additional sculptural types or decoration. Of these, only one was found in its original context in the subterranean burial chamber next to the sarcophagus (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 46217; Roehrig (1999), 74–75; 234–235, no. 46, fig. 111). All bear traces of intentional destruction to the ears and from the crown of the neck down to the neck. It has been theorized that these heads were intended as replacements, prototypes of mummy masks, sculptor's models, solar symbols, early forms of the *ba*, or as heads to be resurrected with the body to follow the deified Khufu as the sun (see summary in Nuzzolo (2011), 205–215).

In statuary of Dynasty 5 and 6, officials follow royal examples and are depicted with signs of rank and specific insignia that relate to their position. These statues derive from niches, floors, and *serdabs* (statue rooms) in their mastaba burials near the capital, and later, in the provinces. By the end of Dynasty 5, Egypt became an increasingly administrative society with an appetite for funerary equipment. Now, statues did not depend on royal permission or workshops (Freed (2006), 155). Officials imitate statues of the royal sphere by depicting themselves alone or with their family members. Individuals now include a number of statues in their funerary complexes, some representing the subject two or three times, grouped together on a common base. Known as pseudo-groups, they represent the unity and multiplicity of the deceased's *ka* by means of substitute bodies that could include not only the owner but possibly his ancestors and descendants as well (Rzepka 1996). Stylistically, the demand for statues results in more standardized depictions that rely on inscriptions to identify the subjects. Servant statues that appeared in Dynasty 4 multiply as well and are buried with their owner, a practice that will develop into the wooden models of the First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom.

## *First Intermediate Period and early Dynasty 11*

The First Intermediate Period is characterized by local workshops that produced statues of varying quality. The “Second Style” of the Old Kingdom ends up in the provinces where, isolated from its original ideological context, it expresses innovation and local experimentation. Powerful nomarchs or local governors place their statues in temples to participate in the cult of the local god (Kahl (2007), 35–58). Some nomarchs go on to become saints and are venerated later, such as Heqaib in his sanctuary at Elephantine. Here, local patrons left statues of themselves from Dynasties 6–13 (Habachi 1985).

Under the patronage of the Dynasty 11 king Mentuhotep Nebhepetre, the First Intermediate provincial Upper Egyptian style is elevated to the official state-sanctioned art. His reign is typified by two styles: the pre-reunification Upper Egyptian style and the post-reunification style when Egypt was once again unified and artists from the once inaccessible north found employment in Thebes (Freed (2010), 886–889). Instead of a pyramid, Mentuhotep II chose a tiered monument (begun before Egypt was unified) with an open court, colonnades, and a forecourt situated in Deir el-Bahri that he decorated with standing statues of himself wearing a Heb-Sed cloak (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 26.3.29; Robins (1997), 87–96). In the reign of his successor, Mentuhotep III, Osiride statues appear in which the king was represented wrapped like a mummy holding the implements of Osiris (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 36195; Sourouzian (2013b), 6094). By the latter's reign, the remnants of the First Intermediate Period style

disappear due to the centralization and standardization of the country's artistic workshops. Amenemhet I's statues consciously copy Old Kingdom models as he moves the capital north again, this time to a site called Itj-tawy.

## *Middle Kingdom*

Middle Kingdom royal statuary is some of the finest ever sculpted in Egypt. Dynasty 12 rulers seem to prefer images of power—colossal statues and sphinxes dominate the Middle Kingdom repertoire. A plethora of temple and funerary statues exist for these kings. For example, seventy-three known statues of Senwosret I remain from his 45-year reign but none of them have a year date. Noting the wide variety of styles belonging to this king, Jacques Vandier grouped thirty-six of these statues into four schools: the Fayum School that displayed an idealized style; the Delta School with its conventional style; the Memphite School and its realistic style; and the Southern School which remains undefined (Vandier (1958), 173–179). A reassessment of these groupings was undertaken by David Lorand (2012) who argues that stylistic criteria is not static: one must take into account the date or architectural context of the statue, the possibility that artists moved from commission to commission, and the ruler's 45-year reign that corresponds to several generations in ancient Egypt. The results must then be crosschecked with the ruler's predecessor and successor to understand the evolution of stylistic patterns. From this, he arrives at a nuanced diachronic and synchronic understanding of Senwosret's sculpture: a stylistic evolution from massive yet rounded geometric statues at the beginning of Senwosret I's reign to more subtle and naturalistic works at the end that were the product of several workshops instead of four schools.

In the middle of Dynasty 12, a new royal sculptural style begins with Amenemhet II and reaches maturity during the reigns of Senwosret III and Amenemhet III (Freed (2010), 895–905). Characterized by faces with drawn brows, heavy-lidded eyes, deep naso-labial folds, down-turned mouths and large ears, the style of these sculptures is termed “realistic” in the scholarship (Figure 11.1 also called Senuseret). Examining the heads of a number of royal sculptures, Cyril Aldred traced a stylistic development from an early “idealistic mortuary tradition of the characteristic physiognomy of Senwosret III as a young man,” to “a brooding, latent power … a haunting portrait of an autocrat” and later “the careworn shepherd of his people” (Aldred (1970), 17–19). However, a larger sampling of Senwosret III's statuary by Felicitas Polz found, in fact, little change in the king's realistic style over the period of his reign. On the other hand, Amenemhet III's sculptures show him with a noticeable underbite, and are more tempered than those of his father (e.g., Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 37400; Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), no. 105). Amenemhet III also appears to become younger as his reign progresses (Polz 1995). Together, these kings' corpus provides fertile ground for socio-psychological interpretation. The king's distinctive countenance is seen as an expression of the “burden of kingship” evoked in the Wisdom Literature of the time (Bourriau (1988), 37; Assmann (1996), 76). Others note that these sculptures express a public message and impart a precise visual definition of royal ideology on the same level as contemporaneous propagandistic texts (Simpson (1982), 270; Tefnин 1992). Still others see in Senwosret

III's face evidence of his self-perception that betrays specific qualities of his inner character (Müller 2009). But do these sculptures reflect the actual man as the term "realism" would suggest? Certainly the bodies to which these worldly heads are fastened are still the strong and perfect physiques seen in royal portraiture for the previous thousand years. The distinctive countenances of Senwosret III and his son break with the royal imagery that went before, so much so, that this style becomes a kind of mirror, reflecting back what one wants to see, whether it be psychological, physiological, or emotional. Rather than split hairs over meaning, these various interpretations turn out to be similar: we may never know what these kings looked like in life, but their distinct style was recognizable, powerful, and evocative of the king and his office.

During the Middle Kingdom, temples served as the primary site for royal sculpture. Colossal statues depicting the king standing, seated, or as a sphinx dominated their surroundings, many of which were reused by later kings who lived in the Delta sites of Tanis and Bubastis. The preference for large-scale sculpture is typified by the quartzite Biahmu Colossi belonging to Amenemhet III (Figure 11.5). The tallest sculptures since the Giza Sphinx, these colossi were 59 feet high (only the pedestals remain today) and were preceded by open courts (Smith 1998). A masterpiece of propaganda, they served as landmarks for a new province in the Fayum that had been previously drained by Amenemhet II. Sculpted in quartzite, a stone with solar connotations, these statues would be partially submerged during the annual flooding of the Nile, an allusion to the act of creation when the sun rose from a mound above the primeval waters. Assuming Amenemhet's Biahmu statues were each carved from a single block of stone, Rita Freed suggests they served as the model for the famous Colossi of Memnon of Amenhotep III in the New Kingdom (Robins (1997), fig. 146; Freed (2002), 111–112). In the Middle Kingdom, royal dyads and triads appear in Upper Egyptian temples depicting the king with family members and various gods. Dyads that depict the king are popular during the Middle Kingdom, and signify Upper and Lower Egypt or the regenerative cycle of the king and his *ka*. At the advent of Dynasty 13, royal sculpture copies the works of the last great rulers, Senwosret III and Amenemhet III, but hardens the facial features. This style evolves into a type of bland copy in Dynasty 17.

In the private sphere, Dynasty 12 is also a time of innovation (see Figure 4.3, Josephson, this volume). Facial features of officials tend to reflect those of the king they serve. The block statue makes an appearance, depicting the subject in an attitude of humility toward god and king (for example, the Block Statue of Sahathor, British Museum, London, EA570; Schulz 1992). Found primarily in temple contexts, it was also chosen for its solidity and extensive surfaces for text. Monumental statues of women appear, as do statues placed along processional ways at Abydos as well as gates and courts of temples to partake of local ceremonies and offerings. Later in Dynasty 12 and 13, men wear enveloping cloaks over their shoulders or long kilts tied around their chests that fall almost to their ankles. Family group statues continue, sometimes with two wives depicted (Ukh-hotep Group Statue, Egyptian Museum Cairo, CG 459; Tiradritti (2001), 118) as well as small-scale tomb statues. In Dynasty 13, private statues proliferate in temples, tombs, and shrines, but their size and quality rapidly diminish, perhaps due to the number of artists and reduced royal commissions (Bourriau (1988), 53–54).

Roughly at the same time as the beginning of Dynasty 13, semitic people from western Asia gradually take control of Lower Egypt, and by Dynasty 15, are ruling from their capital Avaris (Tell el-Dab'a). As rulers, they are known as the Hyksos. During the

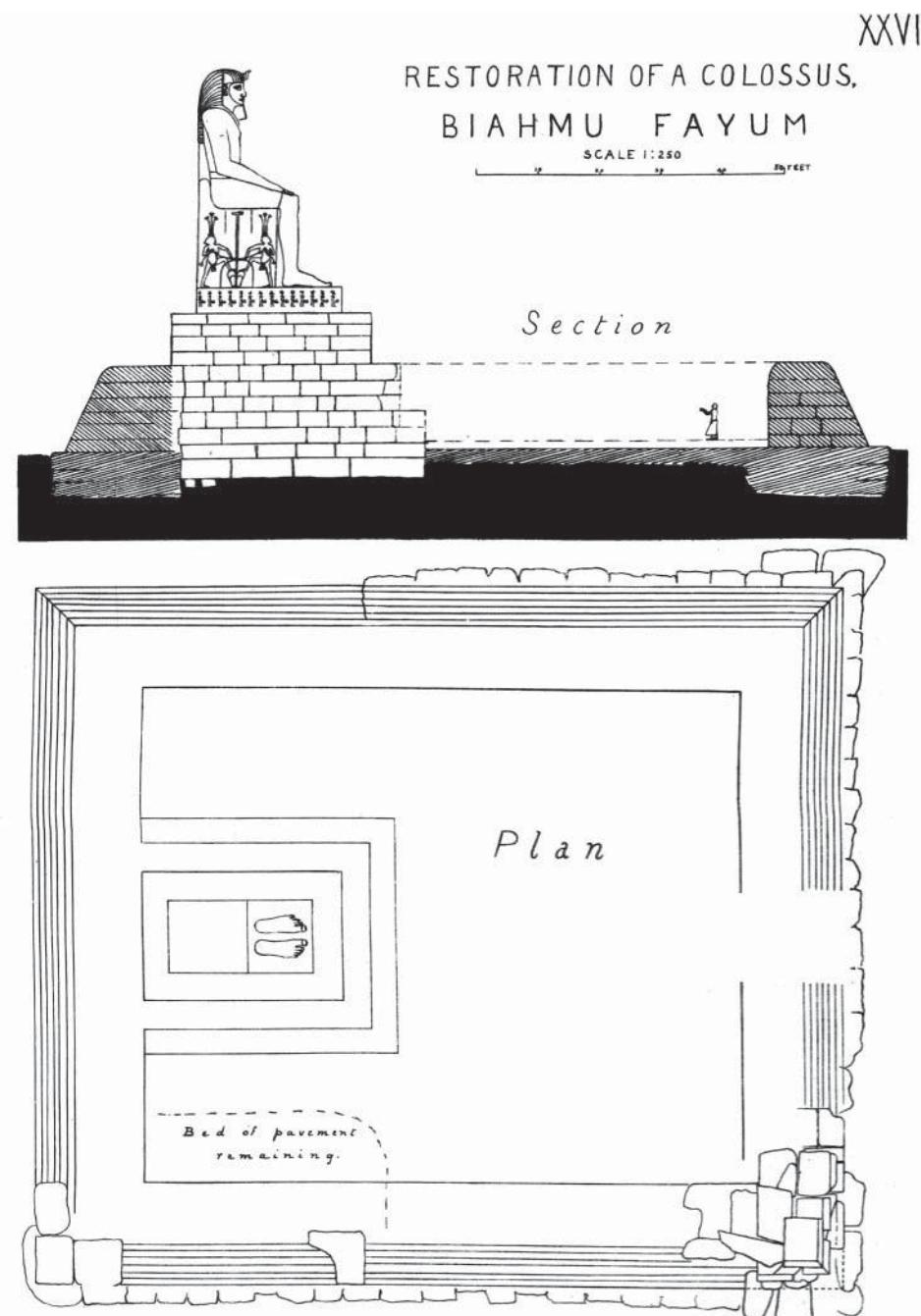


Figure 11.5 Drawing of Colossi of Amenemhet III at Biahmu. Petrie (1889), pl. 26.

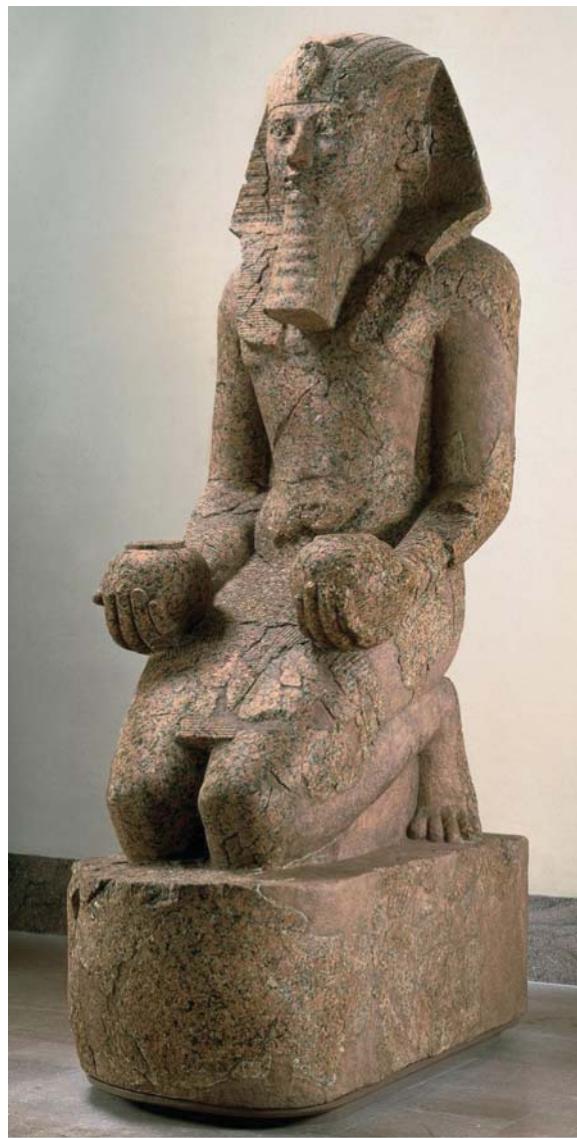
Second Intermediate Period (1759–1539), the Hyksos are known more for the looting and transfer of Middle Kingdom sculpture rather than the creation of their own (Bietak 2013). In Dynasty 17, the Hyksos are defeated and expelled by the first ruler of Dynasty 18, Ahmose, who ushers in the great international age called the New Kingdom.

## New Kingdom

Early New Kingdom royal statuary in Thebes was influenced by the works of Mentuhotep II and Senwosret I (Romano 1983). Edna Russmann traces the “proto-Thutmoside style” from the Dynasty 17 statue of Sobekemsaf I (British Museum EA871; Davies 1981) through the royal and non-royal coffins and sculpture of that dynasty (Russmann 2005). By the reign of Hatshepsut, the true Thutmoside style was in evidence; this style was slightly tweaked until the reign of Thutmose IV. In early Dynasty 18, royal statue forms include the king seated wearing the white crown and Heb-Sed robe, kneeling, Osiride, and sphinxes, which were all conventional representations. Innovations appear, however, in statues of non-royal women who adopt stances usually associated with male statuary (e.g., standing with their left foot forward) in a harbinger of things to come (Bryan (2010), 917).

Consideration of the statuary of queen/king Hatshepsut allows one to explore how gender ideals were visually constructed, performed, reinforced, and even subverted in ancient Egyptian art and architecture (see Robins, this volume). Since accession to the throne was passed from father to son in ancient Egypt, Hatshepsut’s gradual assumption of power is echoed by the gradual morphing of her female form in statuary into that of a male ruler with all its attributes (Tefnun 1979; Roehrig, Dreyfus, and Keller 2005; Figure 11.6). However, she kept the feminine endings in her titles, denoting she was a daughter and direct descent from the royal Thutmoside line. She also deftly weaves propaganda into her monuments by showing: 1), her divine birth as the legitimate heir and daughter of Amun-Re (and the son of Re); and, 2), the god’s decree that she would “exercise the function of kingship in this entire land” (Allen (2005) 83). During her reign, she added to the existing temples of Amun-Re that served as end points for festival processions at Deir el-Bahri, Karnak, Luxor, and Medinet Habu (Roth 2005). In so doing, her gender-bending statuary acknowledged the performance of kingship and reinforced her position to the gods and the elite. Thutmose III also goes through a transformation in his statuary moving away from the style of Hatshepsut to a youthful-look more reminiscent of his father, Thutmose I, thus establishing him as his father’s rightful heir (Laboury 2006).

The propagandistic sculpture of the Thutmosides heralds the introduction of new sculptural types that accentuate the role of the king as intercessor between god and man (offering and standard bearing statues) and his relationship with the divine (king-falcon statues and statue groups of the king protected by deities). Propaganda is also present in the private sphere, particularly in the sculptures of Senenmut, Hatshepsut’s steward and tutor of her daughter Neferure. Twenty-three new sculpture types were created to display Senenmut’s status, particularly with Neferure, and were set up in various temples as a sign of his power and favor (Keller 2005). In particular, the cryptographic statue of a crown-bearing cobra rearing up between *ka*-arm acts as a rebus for the spelling



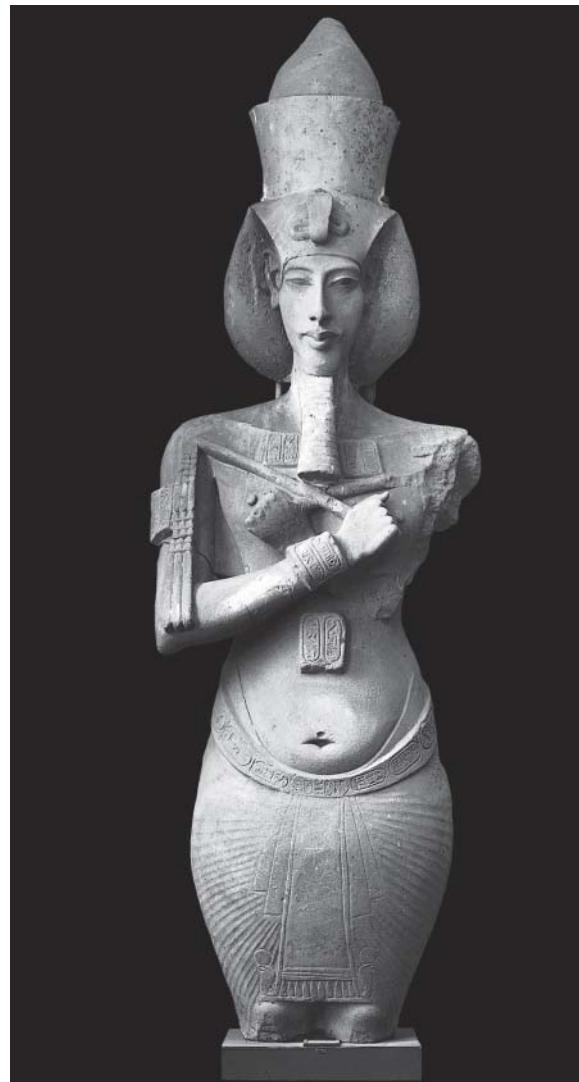
**Figure 11.6** Kneeling figure of Hatshepsut depicted in male garb offering *Ma‘at* to Amun, New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, from the Funerary Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1929 29.3.1. Photograph courtesy of Melinda Hartwig.

of Hatshepsut’s throne name *Ma‘at-ka-re* (Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 85.2; Roehrig, Dreyfus, and Keller (2005), no. 71). Other new statue types are introduced at this time such as the naophorus statue showing the dedicant presenting the image of a deity within a shrine, and the stelophorus statue that depicts the patron holding a stela with an invocation to the gods. Other officials also set up traditional statues of themselves, seated, standing, as a block statue or sitting cross-legged as a scribe along the

alleyways of temples as silent participants in divine ceremonies. Many were also inscribed with texts such as the “Appeal to the Living” and laudatory biographies to attract the attention of passers-by who might be encouraged to speak a prayer on behalf of the statue owner (on temple accessibility see Hartwig in press). When a more direct appeal was needed, begging statues appear that show one of the subject’s hands cupped under his mouth in a gesture intended to solicit offerings (British Museum EA501; Russmann (2001), 187–189). Private statuary adopts some of the intercessory characteristics of the statuary of Amenhotep III (see below). Statues of Amenhotep, son of Hapu (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 44861 and 38368; Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), nos. 148–149), and the Steward Neferrenpet (Louvre E 14241; Kozloff and Bryan (1992), 242–243) characterize their subjects as intercessors between the gods and the faithful. As in previous epochs, officials model their facial and figural characteristics on those of the king, but with less exaggeration.

The reign of Amenhotep III marks a turning point in Dynasty 18. This king’s massive statuary program aimed at his deification while alive and identified him visually and textually with all the major deities of Egypt with a particular focus on the sun god and his disc (the Aten) (Johnson 1999; for enumeration, see Kozloff and Bryan 1992). In so doing, “the Dazzling Sun Disk” Amenhotep III raises kingship to the level of the gods, in essence becoming the divine focus of all personal appeals. All it took was one small step for Amenhotep III’s son, Amenhotep IV, who changed his name to Akhenaten (“effective spirit of the Aten”), to subsume all the gods into the solar disk and proclaim the Aten as the sole god, with the king as the god’s sole prophet. Akhenaten’s statuary with its elongated proportions, bulging hips, and deep-cut surface details was enlivened and revealed by the rays of the sun (Bryan (2010), 929) (Figure 11.7). As the focus of a religious revolution, Akhenaten’s statuary program was unique and thus, a number of interpretations have been applied to it, an enumeration of which can be found in the chapter by Hartwig on “Style” in this volume. Akhenaten wrote about the Aten’s vision of the world, and it is the interpretation of that vision through the king’s writings that continues to inform our understanding of the king’s sculptural program today. The Amarna style persists for a short time after Akhenaten’s death and then veers back toward orthodoxy with numerous statues of Amun and the king, showing the god once again firmly in the role of conferring rulership. Particularly complicated is the plethora of styles in the reign of Tutankhamun, some with tempered Amarna features and others with a pre-Amarna look, as if artists are reaching back to the statuary of Amenhotep III in an attempt to “erase” the intervening Amarna period (Eaton-Krauss 2008). Despite this, Horemhab’s usurpation of his predecessor’s statues keeps some of the Amarna style alive until the Ramessides ascend the throne. Last, but not least, statues of royal women in active poses with left foot advanced is one of the great innovations of this period that continues through much of the New Kingdom (el-Masry 1998; Sourouzian et al. (2007), pl. 36; Bryan (2010), 927, 939).

Special mention must be made of the statuary of Tutankhamun. His tomb, KV62, is a treasure trove of novel sculptural types including the king standing on the back of a panther or raising a spear aloft on a papyrus skiff (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 60709), or his head emerging from an open lotus flower (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 60723). Another type of statue is a life-size mannequin of the king used to fit his clothes (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 60722). Most of Tutankhamun’s statues were fashioned out of wood,



**Figure 11.7** Colossal statue of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten, New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, Temple of Aten, Karnak. Sandstone, Egyptian Museum Cairo, JE 49529. Photograph courtesy of Melinda Hartwig.

and covered in gesso and gold leaf or painted. All of these statues present the figural type of the mature Amarna period (Reeves 1990).

With the reign of Sety I in Dynasty 19, royal sculpture is reinvigorated, and depicts the king with a hawkish profile (a characteristic that is repeated in his mummy) and delicate modeling. It is often stated that Sety I's reign was characterized by piety: this is largely fueled by the number of kneeling, offering statues of the king and statue groups in which his figure is much smaller than that of the gods (Sourouzian (1998), 281). The reign of his son produces one of the most ambitious building and sculptural programs Egypt had ever seen. Ramesses II, also known as Ramesses the Great, never achieved a



**Figure 11.8** Royal head, Egyptian. Late Dynasty 18–early Dynasty 19, red granite. 2003.56.1. Egyptian Purchase Fund. Courtesy of the Michael C. Carlos Museum of Emory University. Photograph by Bruce M. White, 2005.

truly cohesive style, and veered from his father's delicate style to one that was coarse and stocky. Ramesses II worked with volume, in both size and quantity. His figure could be slim or stocky, his face heart-shaped but with bulging eyes (Figure 11.8; Bryson 2008). In characterizing the sculpture of Ramesses II, Edna Russmann states that “the problem was not one of artistic competence … the lack of a clear stylistic direction thus seems to reflect a lack of direction from above” (Russmann (2001), 23). Despite this, the statuary of Ramesses II was the preferred model for the rest of the kings that followed in Dynasties 19 and 20. The sheer range of Ramesses II’s statue forms expresses the roles associated with kingship in the New Kingdom: the gods’ representative on earth, chief priest of all cults, and maintainer of order (Bryan (2010), 934). Ramesses II was particularly enamored of Amenhotep III and in many ways copied the latter’s deification program in the types and range of his sculptures (Bickel (2002), 81–82). Ramesses the Great was also a notorious usurper of earlier statues, particularly those of the “great” kings Senwosret I, Thutmose III, and Amenhotep III; the latter’s statuary was also “borrowed” by his son, Merenptah as well as by Ramesses III (Sourouzian 1988). In reinscribing and retouching their statues, Ramesses II may have chosen these kings to appropriate their greatness or

simply preferred the colossal statue forms favored by these earlier kings. Ramesses II was also a famous wielder of propaganda: the colossal figures of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel are not only the translation in rock of statues in front of a temple pylon, but they face southward to Nubia, acting as a billboard for the king's might for all to see (Simpson (1982), 266; Robins (1997) fig. 180). In terms of statue forms, Ramesses II continued the standard repertoire of striding, standing, sitting, kneeling, offering, carrying *nauis* and standards, and in the form of a sphinx. Dynasty 20 sees the continuation of the main statue types, but they become smaller as the New Kingdom winds down. These statues are known for reproducing imagery usually found in temple reliefs such as the king smiting a Libyan enemy (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 37175; Saleh and Sourouzian (1987), no. 227).

In the temple of Amun-Re at Karnak, the majority of the statues dedicated by officials show them presenting emblems of the god, stressing their piety and eternal participation in Amun's cult. Twenty-nine statues and statue fragments are associated with Ramesses II's son Khaemwaset, whom many consider to have been the first Egyptologist (British Museum, London, EA947). He restored the monuments of earlier kings and placed statues of himself in temples around the country, perhaps in an attempt to indicate stability of the royal lineage (Fisher (2001), 93–94). In homes, limestone ancestor busts were set up in shrines as the focus for the family's ancestor cult as well as a means of appealing for protection (Friedman 1985). In the later Ramesside era, the High Priest of Amun-Re, Ramessesnakht, depicts himself seated as a scribe with a baboon resting on his head (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, CG 42162; Tiradritti (2001), 205). During his tenure, Ramessesnakht took on many royal prerogatives and was the most powerful figure in Upper Egypt. This statue relays his extraordinary status by suggesting that the god Thoth, represented as a baboon, was within him.

Recently, the art of the lower or middle classes has received attention. From the New Kingdom to the ninth century BCE, clay figurines of humans, animal and cobra shapes, and votive beds were found at Medinet Habu (Teeter 2010), Memphis (Giddy 1999), and Akoris (Hanasaka 2011). These objects form a special kind of domestic votive or ritual art that were often overlooked by earlier excavators and art historians due to their "folk" quality, but reveal much about the belief systems of common Egyptians (see discussion in Ikram, this volume).

### ***Third Intermediate Period and the Late Period***

Royal metal sculpture flourished during the Third Intermediate Period (Hill (2004) 23–74), while stone sculpture reverted to earlier New Kingdom faces, forms, and costumes: Dynasties 21 and 24 copy Ramesside types; Dynasty 22 favors the Thutmoside period; and Dynasty 23 reaches back to Amarna (Myśliwiec 1988; Brandl 2008). This practice was assisted by the widespread reuse of statues from these earlier periods. Whether it was to link themselves with the past or update old statue models is unknown. Royal statues repeat themes seen in temple relief such as the king Osorkon III presenting a sacred bark (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, CG 42197; Tiradritti (2001), 216). The most popular private form was the block statue, now extensively inscribed with texts and illustrations (Statue of Nebnetjeru, Egyptian Museum, Cairo, CG 42225; Russmann

(1989), 160–163). High quality inlaid bronze statues also flourish at this time such as the figure of the Divine Consort Karomama (Louvre N 500; Andreu et al. (1997), no. 86, 176–178) using casting techniques developed during the New Kingdom. Small-scale bronze statues continue through Dynasties 21–24, representing private people whose clothing is often decorated with reliefs of gods (Taylor (2008), 76–77).

Dynasty 25 ushers in a period of Nubian rule of Egypt. Often known as the Kushite Period, its rulers originated in what is today Northern Sudan. Their sculpture is a mixture of styles: strong bodies, costumes, and poses derived from the Old Kingdom with distinctive faces that attest to their ethnicity with broad noses, large, almond-shaped eyes, full mouths, and the distinctive “Kushite folds.” In sculpture, the Kushites wore close-cropped hair, a pair of cobras (*uraei*) on the front of their diadem, and ram-headed amulet necklaces (see Figures 23.2 and 23.6, Lacovara, this volume). Later statuary gave way to a more indigenous style that depicted a sterner, fuller face (e.g., British Museum, EA 1770), and appears in sculptures of Taharqa from Kush (Russmann (2010), 950). Dynasty 26 Saite sculpture is of extremely high quality done in softly polished and fine-grain hard stone. Bodies continue to be modeled after Old Kingdom torsos and often show a vertical depression (bipartition) or the breast, ribcage, and waist divided into three horizontals (tripartition). Saite royal sculpture rejects Kushite sculpture’s distinctive accessories and style. Only two Saite heads are inscribed, and both exhibit high-set slanted eyes and a long face, thus, complicating the dating of uninscribed Dynasty 26 heads. During the long first and second Persian occupations, there is a hiatus in the tradition of Egyptian royal portraits (Josephson (1997), 10). The last indigenous Egyptian rulers in Dynasty 30 preferred to model their sculpture on the Saite style, in a more stylized manner with a tripartite division to the sculpture’s torso. And likewise, the statuary style of Dynasty 30 kings inspired Ptolemaic statuary, perhaps because, as did the Egyptians before them, this Greek dynasty sought to associate itself visually with the last native Egyptian dynasty (see Mendoza, this volume).

During Dynasties 25 and 26, female sculpture flourishes under the patronage of the God’s Wives of Amun. Royal princesses were appointed as Divine Consorts of the god Amun-Re at Thebes. These unmarried women were the god’s wife on earth but also served as a political presence for the kings ruling in the north. Their statues hearken back to the long female forms of the Middle Kingdom with rounded hips or the Third Intermediate Period Libyan ideal of feminine beauty. Divine Consorts either wore the vulture headdress with a double ureaus in Dynasty 25 or a short, bobbed wig (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 3420 and CG 42205).

Private sculpture in Dynasties 25 and 26 displays the same archaism of royal sculpture; instead of utilizing a pose or feature from one period, sometimes as many as three periods are combined in a single statue. Such is the case with the nearly life-size statue of Mentuemhat that depicts him with a mature face drawn from Dynasty 25 Kushite features, a double wig derived from the New Kingdom, and a vigorous Old Kingdom body (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 36933; Robins (1997), fig. 273). Other statues of Mentuemhat utilize features from Saite Dynasty 26, possibly a sculptural attempt to show loyalty to the rulers under whom Mentuemhat served (Russmann (2010), 956–958; see also Figure 4.5, this volume). Private sculpture of the Saite period follow royal standards with torsos modeled after the Old Kingdom prototypes of fine-grained hard stones that were polished to a high sheen (e.g., Egyptian Museum, Cairo JE 36665; Russmann

(1989), 176–181). Officials in the ensuing Dynasty 27 Persian Period were often shown wearing a heavy wrapped garment that was fastened around the chest with a fold of cloth poking out underneath and another tucked over. This “Persian wrap” was often worn over a thin, long-sleeved V-neck shirt, as in the statue bust of Ankh-Hor (Cleveland Museum of Art, 1914.662; Bothmer (1960), 75–76). If one characteristic can be assigned to sculpture of the Persian Period, it is that its very uniqueness makes it difficult to group statues chronologically (Bothmer (1960), 67–69).

By the last native Dynasty 30, officials no longer attempt to copy the features of the king in their sculpture. However, this period hosts another renaissance by using “signs of age” in figures such as the Boston and Berlin green heads (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 04.1749 and the Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection, Berlin, Inv.-No. ÄM 12500, respectively; see, Fazzini, Josephson, and O’Rourke (2005), pls. 38b–c and 39a–b). Small-scale bronze statues of private individuals, typical of the Third Intermediate Period, continue to be made. The healing statue, also called a “cippus,” is also introduced during this period (e.g., Cippus of Horus on Crocodiles, Brooklyn Museum of Art, 60.73; Fazzini, et al. (1989), no. 88). This sculptural type depicts a seated or standing man holding a stela inscribed with protective spells with the image of the child god Horus holding or stepping on dangerous animals. The stela would be set up in a public place and people would pour water over the stela and catch the liquid in small basins to be used later, thereby acquiring magical power over evil.

## Methodological Analysis of Egyptian Sculpture

In the previous pages, the development of form and style over the course of Pharaonic history was briefly summarized. Inherent in this discussion is the assessment of style. As noted in the chapter on “Style” in this volume, stylistic analysis is used primarily as an archival tool with which to date and group sculpture. Often, the pitfall of such analysis is the subjectivity of the interpretations: a statue exhibits a “mournful countenance” or “naturalistic tendencies.” Words such as realism, naturalism, idealism often reflect the author’s assessment and have very little to do with what may have been intended by the ancient Egyptians. Instead, one must define the notions of “realism” and “idealism” that the works express. Also, stylistic analysis is often anchored in terms of quality: the better the quality, the more stable the government or the more important the patron. Also, most sculptures surveyed in the literature are elite and do not include small, non-elite objects such small clay figurines of geese, ducks, nude females and males, cobras, quadrupeds, and so on, that reveal much about non-elite religion and culture (e.g., Teeter 2011; Ciałowicz (2012), 73–88. For a cross-cultural synthesis, see: Morphy and Perkins 2006). As noted by Rita Freed, a number of excavated sculptures of “lesser” quality are found during Dynasty 5 at Giza, during a time when high quality large-scale sculpture was still being made. And, as discussed by Nicole Alexanian, the Vizier Hezi built a modest one-room tomb for his offering cult because of space issues and the desire to be buried close to his king in the Dynasty 6 Saqqara Teti cemetery (Alexanian (2006), 5–6). Often innovation is overlooked if a statue is deemed of low quality, when, in fact, it is the less skilled artist who attempted the innovations that his highly trained colleagues could or would not do. Here, perhaps, the importance lies in the statue’s function as a vehicle for the

deceased's *ka* and *ba*, or in the case of servant statues, to meet the tomb owner's needs. Often, disparaging remarks are made about the low quality of provincial statuary since it is far from statues produced in the royal workshops. But the statuary in the sanctuary of Heqaib includes some of the best pieces ever produced in Egypt, most likely by a school of local artists.

Iconography provides a means by which to date and arrange a group of statues (see Müller, this volume). Statues dated by inscription are always used as the starting point so that the specific iconographic details can be tabulated, and the undated works arranged accordingly. In this regard details such as eyebrows, eye shape, cosmetic lines, ears, hairstyles, costumes, insignia, type and color of stone, among others, allow statues to be grouped and dated. However, the assessment of style is far more nuanced than its static application in scholarship suggests. One must take into account the statue's owner, iconographic details, context (temple, tomb, and house), place (e.g., Giza, Saqqara, Thebes) and/or date or dateable inscription. Only then can the researcher make a realistic assessment regarding their placement in the corpus of Egyptian art (see studies by Verbovsek 2004; Kjölbjy 2009).

Archaeological and monumental context offer important clues about a sculpture's form or meaning. Block statues were solid forms not easily damaged by passers-by in temples but also contained abundant surfaces upon which to write texts that identified the owner and influence the literate to utter a prayer on his behalf. Statues enhanced two-dimensional representations in temples as a type of eternal reinforcement, as did tomb statues of the deceased, as part of his decorative program. Although uninscribed, "Reserve Heads" originated in the underground burial chamber which was shut away from visitors, and thus must have served a magical rather than a commemorative function. Found far from their home, Egyptian statues could also serve as stylistic carriers (see Vandebaele 2009; and Mendoza, this volume). But what of uninscribed sculptures that were bought from the market, with no evidence of their original archaeological context? Sometimes, a cache of objects appear for sale at the same time that an Egyptian archaeological site is found, which allows their origin to be traced. But this is not always possible. In such a case, a sculpture is attributed based on its style and conformity with a group of other sculptures. This is not possible when faced with a unique object, and one then must wait until another like it surfaces.

What of intentionality and meaning in sculptural studies? How do we know what the rulers or officials of Egypt intended? Here, we venture into the anthropological, textual and religious realms. The meaning of a specific body of texts is often helpful in revealing the underlying reasons for artistic change such as that of Senwosret III or Akhenaten. However, sometimes texts can be relatively vague. For example, the "Second Style" appears at the same time as the rise of Osirian worship in Dynasty 5 as indicated in the Pyramid Texts. How strong was its influence on royal sculpture or were other influences in play? And how do we interpret the intentionality of archaism? Is it consciously driven by the king to associate himself with a powerful king or period in the past? Or is it an aesthetic response to the lack of a recognizable royal style, as seen in private sculpture during the Late Period? Here researchers are at a disadvantage because the ancient Egyptians never wrote about their art in the way we do today. The question of intentionality remains wrapped in the precepts of ancient Egyptian art: it was functional, intended to

identify and perpetuate the essence of the person depicted; it was oriented both to this world and the eternal hereafter.

Texts indicate reception played an important role in ancient Egyptian sculpture, both in this world and the next. Through the “Opening of the Mouth” ceremony, we know that sculptures were creatively enlivened and therefore vehicles for the subject represented. The “Appeal to the Living” on sculptures indicates a need on behalf of the subject for recognition and offerings. Holding a shrine housing a figure of a god showed the statue owner’s piety *vis-à-vis* that god. When the sculpture was uninscribed, it was important to be identified with the features of the king, since the pharaoh would provide for you in death just as he did in life (see Bryan, this volume). Sculptures show that it was important to be carved with a perfect body, although some very high officials sought be represented in the prime of life such as Hemiunu (Figure 11.2), which suggests status and recognizability were considered part of the perfect form to be some.

Given the wide-ranging corpus of Egyptian sculpture, many modes of interpretation are available for use. The uses of stylistic and iconographic analyses are mentioned above. Semiotic theory is a profitable methodology to characterize and interpret sculpture from a particular time given that Egyptian images are large-scale hieroglyphs (and vice versa) (Angenot, this volume). Other theoretic models such as gender theory (see Robins, this volume), reception aesthetics (Verbovsek, this volume), social history (Ikram, this volume), performance theory (Baines, this volume), structuralism (Bachmann 1996), and post-structuralism (Hare 1999) have all been applied to Egyptian sculpture. With the plethora of approaches available to the researcher, it is always important to move from the sculpture outward. Egyptian sculpture is a repository of a great many influences; various methods can tease out sculptural attribution and meaning as long as the analysis remains grounded in the archaeology, culture, history, and texts of the object’s time.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

A number of books on Egyptian sculpture are available, so only the most pertinent will be mentioned here. Gay Robins (2001), Edna Russmann (1989, 2001), and Hourig Sourouzian (2013b) provide clear syntheses of Egyptian sculpture suitable for a general audience. Recently, a number of magisterial articles on sculpture that focus on the Early Dynastic (Hendrickx and Förster 2010; Dreyer and Josephson 2011), the Old Kingdom (Sourouzian 2010), the Middle Kingdom (Freed 2010), the New Kingdom (Bryan 2010), and the Late Period (Russmann 2010) have appeared that are extremely thorough. Earlier publications such as Altenmüller (1980), Kozloff (2001a–b), Myśliwiec (2001), Tefnun (2001), and Harvey (2001) explore sculpture materially and thematically. Exhibition and museum catalogs (e.g., Seipel 1992) also provide well-researched illustrated material on the Predynastic and Early Dynastic Period (Patch 2011; Teeter 2010), the Old Kingdom (Jaroš-Deckert and Rogge 1993; Ziegler 1997; Anonymous 1999), the Middle Kingdom (Delange 1987; Jaroš-Deckert 1987; Wildung 2000), the New Kingdom (Rogge 1990; Barbotin 2007), as well as a number of studies on specific periods within it (Roehrig, Dreyfus, and Keller 2005; Kozloff and Bryan 1992; Freed, Markowitz, and D’Auria 1999). The Third Intermediate Period (Brandl 2008; Fisher et al. 2012; Perdu 2012) is just beginning to get the attention it deserves while the Late Period is addressed by a number of benchmark publications (Bothmer 1960; Russmann 1974; Josephson 1997; Rogge 1992, 1999; Hill 2004). For the art of the “poor,” several reference works are available (Morphy and Perkins 2006; Mota 2012). Special mention should be made of Maya Müller’s (2013) extremely helpful compilation of the methods used in the field of Egyptian art

history. See also the chapter by Bergman in this volume for some of the older publications on Egyptian sculpture.

A number of museums have online databases to view Egyptian art, particularly the Global Egyptian Museum that includes the Egyptian Museum, Cairo: [www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/](http://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/). The sculptures mentioned in this chapter can be researched online using their accession numbers on their museum's collection website or by title on ARTstor (2003–).

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## CHAPTER 12

# Relief

*Alexandra Woods*

### Introduction

Sculpture in relief was a widespread artistic medium used by the ancient Egyptians from the prehistoric through to the Roman period. Combining superb aesthetic qualities, remarkable attention to detail and often enormous scale, the masterpieces of Egyptian art in relief and painting offer a unique glimpse into the Egyptians' natural and divine worlds. Egyptian relief has a distinctive appearance and is essentially a form of sculpture that projects in varying degrees from a background. There are three main types of relief utilized in Egyptian secular and non-secular contexts, which were frequently painted after completion: (1), Raised relief (*bas-relief*) in which the background was lowered, leaving the figures and objects raised from the field; (2), sunk relief (*relief en creux*) in which the outlines are deeply cut into the background and the subject is modeled within these contours; (3), engraved or incised relief that shows only the basic outline of the scenes without any modeling (Figures 12.1–12.2). For descriptions of all relief types (see Vandier (1964), 7–10; Schäfer (1974), 77–79; Aldred (1980), 26–28; Vander-sleyen (1984), 225). Paste-filled relief was a short-lived variation (utilized mostly during early Dynasty 4 at Meidum) where figures and hieroglyphs were carved into limestone blocks, which the artist filled with colored paste (Wildung 1982; Do. Arnold 1999).

Egyptian relief is attested on a wide range of surfaces/items made of stone, wood, ivory, ceramics, or metal, as seen, for example, on tomb/temple walls, ceramic vessels, palettes, knife handles, statuary, false doors, and stelae. Depending on the material being carved, a sharp instrument made of stone or metal was used to cut around a (preliminary) painted contour of a figure, object or hieroglyphic sign with varied degrees of interior detail and modeling applied within the outline (For general descriptions on the layout of scenes, techniques of carving, and work processes see: Teichmann (1971); Aldred (1975), 801–804; Bogoslovsky (1980), 91–93). The choice of relief as opposed to painted decoration or the selection of a specific type of relief within a tomb or temple complex



**Figure 12.1** Raised relief from the tomb of Ihy, reused by Idut, late Dynasty 5/reused early Dynasty 6, Saqqara, painted limestone. © Photograph by Effy Alexakis, Photowrite.

has often been attributed to practical or aesthetic reasons, in that relief was a means of making painting durable and allowed for detailed modeling of the physical human body (Russmann (2001), 30). The use of raised relief on softer materials, such as sandstone, limestone, and wood, has been thought to be due to the complex and laborious task of removing the background. By contrast, sunk relief is believed to have been an economical, speedy, and labor-saving technique required to complete large-scale decorative programs, as well as making the erasure or modification of a text and/or image significantly more difficult (Aldred (1980), 27–28; Vassilika (1989), 183–184). Such an interpretation for the adoption of sunk relief has often accounted for its extensive use at specific sites and during certain reigns, such as at Karnak and Amarna in the reign of Akhenaten or at Abydos in that of Ramesses II (Brand (2000), 28–29, 159, 214). Interestingly, a general bias exists in the literature toward raised relief, which is often perceived as being more refined and elegant. Sunk relief is at times considered to be crude and of an inferior quality, which is usually based on comparison of the elegant execution and style of reliefs of Sety I to those of his successor Ramesses II. Yet, negative remarks regarding the “crude” workmanship of the reliefs in the reign of Ramesses II are unsubstantiated, as relief-decorated monuments at this time illustrate significant innovation and delicate rendering of details that were often enriched by the use of paint (Vandersleyen 1979).

By the Early Dynastic Period, a distinctive set of conventions had emerged for the representation of figures and objects on a flat surface and will be briefly outlined below (see also Peck, this volume). The conventions of Egyptian art, or rules of decorum, conveyed the most characteristic or visually satisfying aspects of figures and objects, presented in



**Figure 12.2** Sunk relief on the facade of the tomb of Nikauisesti, early Dynasty 6, Saqqara, limestone. © Photograph by Effy Alexakis, Photowrite.

profile, full view, plan or elevation (Davis (1989), 10–15, 20–27). The mode of representation common to both painting and relief combines multiple view points within the one picture plane as a composite assemblage of encoded information, termed *aspective* (Brunner-Traut (1974), 421–446; (1975), 475), and is largely the same as those used for hieroglyphic writing, which is mostly composed of miniature pictograms (Tefnini 1984; Fischer (1986), 24–46; Assmann 1987a, (2002), 71). The composition of a scene is ordered by a system of horizontal registers and sub-registers that are neutral in space and time and act as the ground/base line for figures, animals, and objects (Schäfer (1974), 163–166). Although Egyptian artists were not concerned with creating the illusion of depth on a flat surface, spatial relationships are emphasized via overlapping, superimposing, and/or layering images (Schäfer (1974), 166–198). In addition, material is organized into a system of scale, which encodes the relative significance of the figure according to the context (Schäfer (1974), 234–238). Buildings and landscape features are depicted

as a combination of plan and elevation views (Doyan 1998; Russmann (2001), 29), while guidelines and proportional grids were introduced to assist in the accurate portrayal of the human figure and to arrange large compositions (Robins 1994).

Although Egyptian relief is found on a range of surfaces and objects, this chapter will discuss the art-historical methods used to analyze relief on a flat surface. Following an overview of the chronological development, particular attention will be given to the techniques and methods of examining relief. The most traditional is formalistic and/or stylistic analysis, which identifies similarities and differences in the rendering or style of a work of art. This method enables the relative dating of specific works and can identify the style of sculptors, as well as their work patterns and processes. Relief is also examined according to the function, the role of iconography and its communicative aspects within the context of sacred space (i.e., temple and tomb environment), while the relationship between text and image is also considered within the framework of literary theory.

## Chronological Development

The following section is an overview of the major chronological developments of Egyptian relief from the Predynastic to the end of the Roman Period (ca. 4000 BCE–395 AD). Particular attention is given to relief type, general scene arrangement, proportion and modeling of the human body, as well as style, which is defined here as the coherence of qualities in Egyptian relief during specific periods and/or reigns. Although the stylized representations of the Pre- and Early Dynastic Periods are open to various interpretations, dynastic relief adheres to basic principles and conventions. However, the execution, proportion, and style of relief was likely affected by several factors, which include: artisan/workshop organization and time available for a monument's completion, the work's context within the ritual landscape, religious movements, and political motivations of certain kings, as well as developments in the concept of self-presentation and identity.

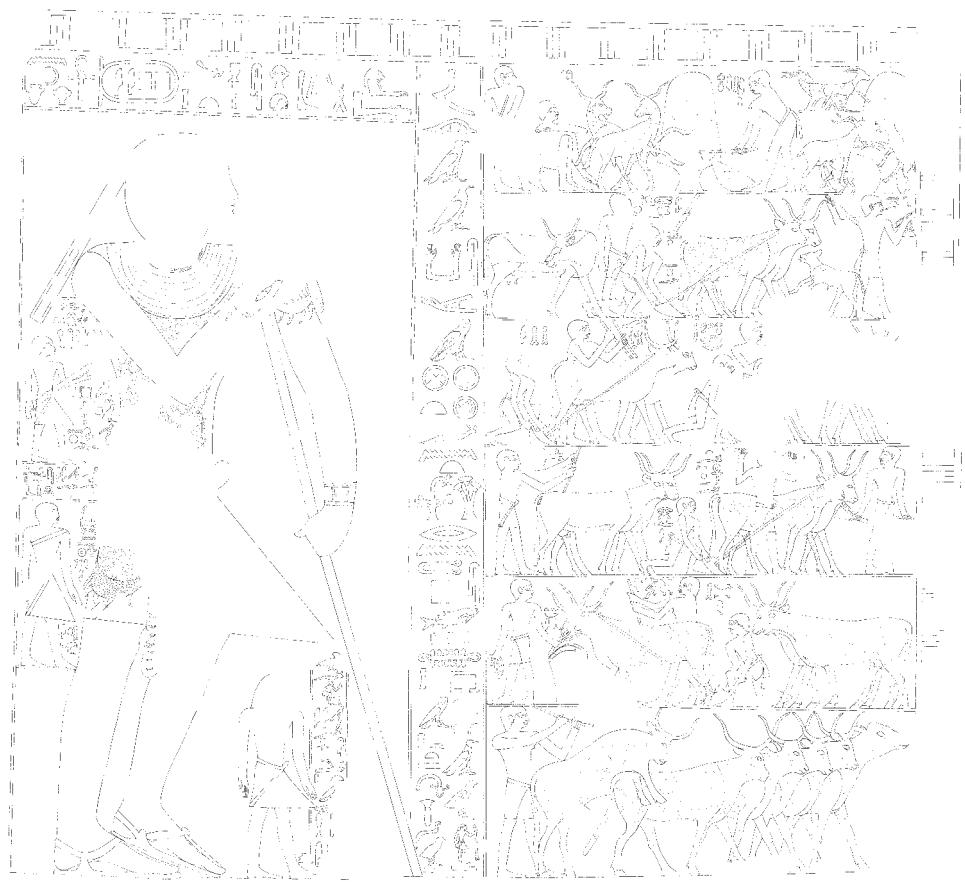
While simple incised designs, such as circles, strokes, or herringbone patterns are attested on early Neolithic pottery (Eiwanger (1992), 36–41) or stone palettes dating to the Nagada IIC–D period (Petrie 1953), the earliest form of relief is known from rock carved and etched images distributed across various sites in the southern Egyptian and northern Sudanese Nile Valley, the Eastern Desert, and parts of the Western Desert including most of the oases (Hendrickx 1995; Huyge 2009). The majority of Egyptian rock art and petroglyphs can be attributed to the Predynastic cultures immediately preceding Pharaonic civilization (mainly fourth millennium BCE), which represent hunting scenes with wild game and dogs, as well as river scenes involving groups of animals and fleets of boats (see, for example, Midant-Reynes 1994). The dating of such art is largely based on close similarity in technique, style, and subject matter to depictions on painted ceramics and other decorated artifacts from the Nile Valley. The style of representation is naturalistic and the method of carving is free and economical; figures are delineated by means of carved dots, joined dots, or continuous lines, and are often filled with hatched detail. The fluidity of decorative forms between mobile media (e.g., ceramic vessels, figurines, pendants, and palettes) is characteristic of Predynastic art, but frequent attempts to compare such items with Nilotc rock art remain inconclusive and do not necessarily provide a reliable method for dating (see Wengrow (2006), 99–123).

There are numerous luxury or votive items associated with elite tombs made of ivory and stone, such as palettes, knife handles and other ceremonial objects dating to the Naqada III period, which are mostly carved in raised relief (Ridley 1973; Wengrow (2006), 176–187).

The relief techniques of the Predynastic Period of rock or ivory carvings continued into the Early Dynastic Period when the canonical traditions of Egyptian art were first established (Smith (1949), 110–123, 131–144; Vandier (1964), 533–609). The sculptural technique of low-raised relief was adopted for the decoration of various luxury and ceremonial objects, knife handles, and funerary stelae made of stone, wood, or ivory, while incised decoration was preferred for plaques, tags, and labels. The earlier naturalistic representation of the human figure was superseded by more precise renderings to show a combination of frontal and profile views. Grouped figures were placed in a line or dispersed in overlapping registers and buildings were shown in plan. Images in Early Dynastic reliefs were supplemented with inscriptions in an early hieroglyphic script, similar to those already attested on the Coptos colossi dating to the early Naqada III period (Kemp 2000) as were seal impressions, tags, and specific commemorative documents including the Hunters, Cities, and Narmer palettes (Baines 2004). A small number of reliefs have survived from temple precincts, dating to Dynasties 2 and 3, that illustrate early iconography of rulership (Baines 1990a; Wilkinson (2000), 27–28). Examples include the complex relief composition executed on slabs of pink granite in the “Fort” at Hierakonpolis showing King Khasekhemwy wearing various forms of ceremonial costume (Alexanian 1998) or a series of Dynasty 3 raised reliefs carved into the native rock at Wadi Maghara in the Sinai Desert, depicting King Sanakht (who presumably reigned after King Khaba) smiting desert dwellers (Ziegler (1999), 176–177). Early Dynastic reliefs occasionally incorporate motifs from Mesopotamian art, such as winged griffins, lions with serpentine necks, or the “master of animals” (showing human interaction with wild animals). Such motifs reflect the growing influence of representational forms and techniques imported from Southwest Asia (Wengrow (2006), 141–142, 187–193).

During Dynasties 1 and 2, funerary stelae began to be associated with selected royal tombs as well as subsidiary graves (Wilkinson (1999), 230–246) and elite tomb structures at several sites in Egypt including Abydos, Saqqara, and Helwan (see, for example, Köhler and Jones 2009). Such stelae were the forerunners of stone stelae placed in cult rooms of Old Kingdom mastaba tombs, with the first attested example belonging to Merka dating to Dynasty 1 (Martin 2008). The limestone panels in the subterranean chambers of King Djoser’s Step Pyramid and the wooden panels in the tomb of Hesy-re at Saqqara illustrate the classical low relief of early Dynasty 3 (Smith (1949), 139–144; and see Figures 4.1–4.2 in Josephson, this volume), which moves away from the symmetry of the earlier carved representations and is largely concerned with representing figures in acute realism (Cherpion (1999), 104–107).

From early Dynasty 4, Egyptian relief is characterized by firmly established representational conventions, highly technical standards, and a naturalistic canon of proportion. With the exception of an unsuccessful attempt at the beginning of the Dynasty 4 to create permanent paintings by inlaying sunk relief with paste (Harpur (2001), 164–165), raised relief of varied heights was a medium frequently attested in temple and elite tomb decoration in the Memphite region during the Old Kingdom. By contrast, elite rock-cut tombs decorated in paint over plaster are more common in provincial cemeteries, especially in



**Figure 12.3** The tomb owner viewing (*m33*) various activities from the tomb of Pepyankh-heryib, Meir, late Dynasty 6. N. Kanawati (2012). Courtesy of Naguib Kanawati, the Australian Centre for Egyptology.

Middle and Upper Egypt. The decoration adopts a harmonious arrangement, where a major figure comprises one portion of the scene and is counterbalanced by registers of minor figures and objects at reduced scales; this becomes a standardized composition in two-dimensional art of the dynastic period (Figure 12.3).

Although the technique of low-raised relief carving was continued throughout the Old Kingdom, as seen on the Giza slab stela and the decorated mortuary temple of Sahure (Borchardt 1910, 1913; der Manuelian 2003), high and bold raised relief became particularly popular in Dynasty 4 and appears on selected royal monuments such as a stela fragment from the lower cult temple of Sneferu's Bent Pyramid at Dahshur as well as several elite tombs at Giza, Saqqara, and Dahshur (Smith (1949), 159–162, 361; Cherpion 1996, 1999). From Dynasty 4 onward, sunk-relief was often employed for exterior walls, stone sarcophagi, and false doors, a convention that continued in subsequent periods (Figure 12.2) (Lacau (1967), 39–50; Schäfer (1974), 77, n. 22; Strudwick (1985),

24; Chauvet (2011), 281–286). Early Dynasty 5 saw an increase in the size of the decorated areas within royal mortuary temples and elite tombs in the Memphite region and from mid-Dynasty 5 to early Dynasty 6 elite tomb relief is characterized by complex composition, an attention to detail and frequent emulation of royal decoration with regard to style, technique and subject matter (Harpur (1987), 106–110; Cherpon 1999; Bárta 2005; Flentye 2011). Within a drastically altered architectural context, the inscribed elements on the small free-standing chapels built at Saqqara from late Dynasty 6 are reduced to single stelae, false doors with side-panels and/or the walls of the burial chamber with an abbreviated repertoire of scenes with a ritual focus (Smith (1981), 80–81; Kanawati and Willoughby-Winlaw 2010).

Some aspects of Old Kingdom relief style were preserved in royal and elite contexts that date to the First Intermediate Period, especially in the region controlled by the Herakleopolitan kings. In general, late Old Kingdom elite tombs in Middle and Upper Egypt continue earlier scene arrangement and repertoire that is often executed in sunk relief with particular regional variation and innovation in style and composition as well as the rendering of the canon of proportions (see, e.g., Kanawati 1995). During late Dynasty 5/early Dynasty 6, the rendering of the human form in Egyptian relief and sculpture was modified to include attenuated figures with overlarge heads and eyes and little modeling of the musculature, which is labeled the “Second Style” of Egyptian art (Figure 12.2) (Russmann 1995a; Brovarski 2008; Myśliwiec 2008; see also discussion in Hartwig, “Style,” this volume). The form was introduced in the Memphite cemeteries and then spread to the provinces, particularly the Upper Egyptian sites of Meir, Asyut, El-Hagarsa, Thebes, Gebelein, Moalla, and Aswan, and continued into the First Intermediate Period.

Presumably as a result of Upper Egypt’s isolation from Memphis, trained artists during the First Intermediate Period developed a distinctive regional style in the south near Thebes, Dendera, and Naga ed-Deir, which illustrates remarkable innovation and experimentation (Dunham 1937; Fischer (1975), 294–295; Spanel (1990), 18). Characterized by either high raised relief or deep sunk relief with intricate incised details, the so-called “pre-unification style” is best evidenced in the early Dynasty 11 royal tombs at el-Tarif or elite stelae, such as that in the tomb of Tjetji at Thebes (Di. Arnold (1976), 19–22, 25–38, 50–59; Robins (1990a), 41–44). This style was elevated to state-sanctioned relief sculpture of the Theban Dynasty 11, as seen on the painted reliefs in King Mentuhotep II’s mortuary temple, as well as the monuments of several of his queens (Wildung (2003), 67–74), until late in the reign of Mentuhotep II when there is a reversion to the canonical artistic traditions and relief style of the late Old Kingdom (Fischer 1959; Freed (1997), 152–155). The royal and elite monuments of early Dynasty 12 successfully reproduced the essence of Old Kingdom Memphite artistic traditions, best exemplified by the arrangement and composition of the decorative program of Senwosret I’s funerary temple at Lisht (Goedicke (1971), 5–7; Smith (1981), 177; Freed (1981), 71–76, (2010), 889–892; Do. Arnold (2008), 5–8). Although the Old Kingdom system of proportional guidelines, featuring a central vertical axis and intersecting horizontal lines, remained in use in subsequent dynasties, unfinished scenes dating to Dynasty 12 indicate sketches were laid out on a squared grid (Robins (1994), 64–86). The new grid system with smaller divisions enabled artists to make copies of Old Kingdom examples (Freed (2010), 886–887). Elite tomb/stela

decoration illustrates significant innovation and creativity in relief work as well as regional variation in the proportion of figures and workmanship in Middle and Upper Egypt, which continued into the Third Intermediate Period (Freed 1996, (2000), 208–211; Marée 2009).

The majority of New Kingdom relief occurs on the walls of temples, tombs, and stelae in Upper Egypt and Nubia where numerous stages of development in iconography and style can be identified. In broad terms, the artists/sculptors of the early Dynasty 18 monuments sought models and inspiration in the surviving works of the Theban Dynasties 11 and 12 (and possibly of the Memphite region) to forge the characteristic “Thutmoside” style (Russmann (2001), 41–42, 2005; Morkot (2003), 95–99). The stylistic changes of the New Kingdom (based largely on Theban evidence) show a gradual development in style in addition to the introduction of new features, best illustrated during the reigns of Hatshepsut and Amenhotep III. The torso proportions of very early Dynasty 18 slim down, become more refined, and display a unique rendering of the facial features; however Hatshepsut’s proportions and facial features become increasingly masculine towards the end of her rule (Roehrig (2005), 4). Equally, the relief work completed in the reign of Amenhotep III displays innovation in iconography that reflects an increasing solarization of Egyptian cults, relating to his deification as well as differences in carving technique, proportion, relief type and style. This is particularly evident in the unique rendering of his facial features in relief and statuary (Johnson 1990, (1998), 80–94; Bryan 1992a; Bickel (2002), 67–72, 79–83; see also Bothmer 1990; Bryan (1992b), 127–131, 138–149). The diversity of artistic styles in elite tombs/stelae dating to the reign of Amenhotep III, such as those in the tombs of Kheruef and Ramose at Thebes or Horemheb and Maya at Saqqara, illustrate the complex relations of painting and relief, as well as the rapid evolution of relief carving, its function and modes of composition (Bryan 1990; Baines (1998), 303–305).

The art that developed during the reign of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten, known as “Amarna or Atenist” art, is characterized by its rejection of the traditional image-system of earlier Dynasty 18 royal representation. Atenist imagery is notably distinguished by its trend towards exaggerating the figure, with details such as over-elongated hands with an apparent extra phalange near the fingertips and elongation of the human body aided by the introduction of a new royal canon of proportion that also flowed to non-royal contexts (Robins (1994), 119–121, 139–143; Laboury 2008). The style of representation in temple decoration and other religious monuments, which previously was static and conventionalized, becomes fluid, dynamic and continues the pre-Amarna tendency to feminize male figures (and hyper-feminize female figures) in royal and elite works of art (Robins 1997a). The style presents a more naturalistic observation of details in the form and incorporates unique depictions of intimacy, age and emotion (Freed 1999a; Laboury 2008). There are several prevailing interpretations of Atenist art in the literature, including: (1), a “clinical” reading of royal iconography, based on the assumption that the imagery accurately reproduced the king’s physical appearance and led to the understanding that Akhenaten suffered from a physiological disorder (Burridge 1996); (2), the theory that several opposing styles can be attributed to specific points in Akhenaten’s reign, such as the exaggerated (or caricature) style found in the first half as opposed to the softer and realistic style seen in the latter half of his reign (Wenig (1975), 177–178); (3), or

the suggestion that the new artistic conception and pharaoh-centrism of Atenist iconography was actually rooted in a cultural evolution and by Akhenaten himself (Assmann 1995; Laboury (1998a), 74–77).

Although Atenist art, along with Atenism, disappeared progressively during the reigns of Tutankhamun, Aye, and Horemheb (Robins (1994), 148–159), post-Atenist art exhibits some of its innovations in composition and many of its naturalistic developments in representing the human body, which is particularly evident in the monuments at Saqqara (see, e.g., Freed 1999b). The beginning of the Ramesside era is marked by the classicism of the reliefs of Sety I, which were executed in raised relief with considerable detail and finesse, and overlaid by highly modeled details and unique rendering of facial features, as seen in the king's temples at Thebes and Abydos (Baines 1989a; 2001). By contrast, Ramesses II's monuments were almost exclusively carved in deep sunk relief, even on interior walls, in varying degrees of artistic standards (Brand (2000), especially 3–8, 37–38; Vandersleyen 1979). The art of the Ramesside Period exhibits a number of different stylistic trends where formal figural renderings are preferred over precise attention to naturalistic detail and illustrates a strong similarity with early Dynasty 18 Thutmoside relief style (Fazzini 1997; Myśliwiec (1976), 143).

In the few surviving examples of relief dating to Dynasty 21, the development of a Third Intermediate Period style can be observed in several ways, such as in the unique rendering of facial features (i.e., curved eyebrows and small almond-shaped eyes) and figural proportions that were generally fuller and less elongated than those of the Ramesside Period. A salient feature of the Third Intermediate and Late Period relief style is the extensive use of “archaism,” or a conscious return to styles and models from earlier periods. The trend was first adopted by Libyan rulers in the Delta in Dynasties 21 and 22, and drew on Old, Middle, and New Kingdom models of sculpture and relief, with distinct regional variations between the north and the south (Fazzini (1972), 64–68; 1988, (1997), especially 114–115; (2002), 352–354; Morkot (2003), 89–90). The Kushite Dynasty 25 reliefs revive the muscularity of Old Kingdom figures as well as the facial features characteristic of Dynasty 5 kings. The Dynasty 26 style, also known as the “Saite” style or “Saite Renaissance,” is also reminiscent of Old Kingdom raised relief and is characterized by delicate and stylized features, smiling faces, fleshy torsos, and unmuscular limbs. Representations of the Dynasty 25 and 26 kings and private individuals in relief and statuary return to “classic” Old Kingdom proportions, style and iconography that are largely based on monuments from the Memphite region or local Dynasty 18 painted tomb chapels (Fazzini (1972), 60–68; (1997), 115; Russmann (1983), 140–142, 144–145, figs. 1–3; 1994, 1995b, (1997), 28–30, fig. 4; Robins (1994), 256–257; der Manuelian (1994), 51–59). The “Saite style” becomes the dominant form of relief in later dynasties and forms the basis of the Dynasty 30 relief style. Often noted as being the most mannered and idealized of all Egyptian relief styles, it is characterized by smooth rounded modeling of the high raised relief and emphasized thin straight brows, plump cheeks, more pronounced smiles and fleshy modeling (Myśliwiec (1988), 73–83; Russmann (1996), 890–892; see also Bothmer (1960), xxxiv–xxxix).

During the Ptolemaic Period relief sculpture was limited to royal temples or elite stelae and developed an easily recognizable style that evolved from the trends established in Dynasty 30. The traditional principles of two-dimensional art were maintained, without

the attempt to render depth through foreshortening or perspective as in the Hellenistic tradition. There is also a trend towards increasing complexity in iconography and more extensive rendering of detail in relief (Finnestad (1997), 194–202). The rounded modeling of body and limbs already attested in Dynasty 30 is grossly exaggerated, which is seen in the elongation of the female breast (that bulges to overlap the upper arm) and clear distinctions in proportions between male and female figures (Daumas 1975; Myśliwiec (1988), 86–88; Vassilika (1989), 125–154, 207–209; Robins (1994), 257–258; Ashton 2003). Some monuments illustrate a combination of Egyptian and Hellenistic systems of representation, designated as the “double style” by L. Castiglione, which is best exemplified by the private funerary temple of Petosiris at Tuna el-Gebel (Castiglione 1961; Riggs (2005), 7–11; Cherpion, Corteggiani, and Gout 2007; Whitehouse (2010), 1011–1014; and see Figure 21.4 in Mendoza, this volume). The combination of Egyptian and Greek pictorial forms or motifs is not restricted to funerary art, as the iconography developed for a Ptolemaic and Roman ruler’s public and highly visible portraits were amalgamated with Egyptian temple relief imagery as well as statuary (von Lieven 2004; Riggs (2005), 12, 95–97, 173–174, 245–247).

## **Stylistic Analysis of Relief**

The traditional approach to Egyptian relief is the analysis of form and style, which essentially concerns the organization of composition and space, the color palette, line, proportion, subject matter, and the rendering of individual design elements in comparison to one another. In Egyptian relief, style has been considered primarily as a criterion to date or assign a provenance to works of art and to trace continuity or innovation in scene content or artistic technique. Similarities in carving style and technique have also been used to identify the “signature” of an artist, group, or workshop and their work processes. Such methods have frequently aimed to present conclusions on the significance and historical context of style, which have been explored particularly within overviews of Egyptian art.

W.M.F. Petrie was one of the earliest scholars to analyze the stylistic development of decorative forms on ceramic material, particularly the incised decoration on red-polished black-top ware, to establish a relative dating sequence (Petrie and Mace (1901), 14–15; Petrie (1921), 26–27). Subject matter, individual motifs, and relief style (by identifying small variations in the type and height of the relief) are utilized by scholars to place works of art in a sequence or typology for the purposes of dating, for example in royal and elite monuments, stelae or false doors (see, for example, Brovarski 1989, 2009; Cherpion 1989; Freed 1996). Surveys of development in relief style and content mainly focus on temple or tomb walls; however, other objects are also examined, such as palettes (Ciałowicz 1991), knife handles (Ridley 1973), mace-heads (Ciałowicz 1986), and sarcophagi (Hayes 1935; Buhl 1959; Lapp 1993). In addition, stylistic analysis of Egyptian relief has addressed the debate generated among scholars on the extent to which the human form was a “portrait” or “idealized” image in pharaonic two- and three-dimensional art (see for example, Vandersleyen 1975; Cherpion 1999; Russmann (2001), 32–39; Hema 2005; and Bryan, this volume). Equally, commentaries on characteristics or “archaizing features” in specific periods have focused on the identification and

discussion of the revival or continuity of earlier stylistic elements and/or iconography, as seen for instance in the literature on pre-Kushite art of the Third Intermediate Period (Fazzini (1997), 115).

Studies on Egyptian art use style to trace the development of relief in the Predynastic and Early Dynastic Period and Old Kingdom (Smith (1949), 110–123, 131–211; Altenmüller 1975; Harpur 1987; Brovarski 2008; Flentye 2011), First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom (Smith (1949), 216–243; Fischer 1975; Freed 1981, 1997, 2000, 2010; Robins 1990a) as well as the New Kingdom and Late Period (Fazzini (1972), 60–68; Assmann 1975; Myśliwiec 1988; Bryan 1990, 1992a, 1992b; Johnson (1998), 80–85; Brand 2000; Morkot 2003). A general survey of Ptolemaic and Roman Period artistic tradition, however, is absent in the literature as most studies examine specific sites and objects or aspects of a particular style (for discussion, see Riggs 2005).

One of the earliest works to employ stylistic analysis of Egyptian relief was by H. Junker, who examined the characteristics of Dynasty 4 slab stelae and wall reliefs at Giza to assist in the dating of tombs and understand the architectural development of the cemetery (Junker 1928, (1929), 32–34, 74–81). Comparing the style of the slab stelae with earlier objects at Saqqara and Dahshur, Junker identified the so-called “strict, strong or monumental” style specific to Giza and argued for a formal break from the developments of the preceding dynasty; a theory that has since been revised (for a discussion see Stadelmann (1995), 155–166; Jánosi (2005), 79–84; Flentye 2011). Combining stylistic and formalistic analysis, W.S. Smith’s work reveals the conventions and innovations of style and iconography in Egyptian sculpture, painting, and relief from the Predynastic to the end of the First Intermediate Period (Smith 1949). Smith was one of the first scholars to address systematically the quality of workmanship in Egyptian relief, suggesting that poor quality or crudely rendered artwork was the product of artists with no skill or training. He also asserted that unskilled work was evidence of an early work, illustrated “archaic trends,” was indicative of “provincial work” or even a “First Intermediate Period style” (Smith (1949), 142, 217–219, 226–227; see also Fischer (1968), 73, n. 297). Subsequent studies have used characteristics and compositional elements originally observed by Smith to date or attribute a work of art to a specific period or a regional center which has led to a general “down-dating” of selected Old Kingdom monuments. Features employed for dating include: the absence of perceived standardized iconography; poor workmanship or rendering of the canon of proportions; and the extent to which the work is a successful reproduction of Memphite models. In response to this trend, recent studies have attempted to date tomb structures using a variety of indicators (where preserved) such as the tomb’s archaeological context and associated finds, architectural design, ceramic and textual data, in addition to the style and presence, or absence, of certain iconographical features (see, for example, Strudwick (1985), 1–52; Harpur (1987), 35–36; Kanawati (1992), 29–45, 55–82, 93–125, 136–145, 152–173; Woods 2009; Myśliwiec 2011; Swinton 2014; on the problems of dating see Malek (1991), 91).

Studies seeking to identify Egyptian artisan workshops as well as specific artists/sculptors have employed visual examination to discover a “signature style” of an individual sculptor or group of sculptors in specific monuments or relief fragments. In such studies the sculptor’s manner of execution is analyzed in detail to note: the presence or absence of specific types of relief (raised/sunk/incised) within a monument or on an object; subtle changes in the carving technique (variation in relief height/depth)

or surface treatment (smoothed/polished); similarities or differences in the rendering of specific carved details or hieroglyphs within a wall, monument or region (see, for example, Jaroš-Deckert (1984), 102–138; Vassilika (1989), 155–197; Freed (2000), 207–214; Oppenheim 2006; Vischak (2006), 268–273). However, the application of such an approach to Egyptian relief poses significant problems as the vast majority of Egyptian sculptors remain anonymous. The nature of the workshop system—where several different sculptors worked simultaneously on a monument to provide stylistic uniformity—makes it difficult to assign an *individual* sculptor to a larger body of work (Eyre (1987a), 24; Davis (2003), 49–50; Oppenheim (2006), 116–118).

As mentioned earlier, frequent attention has been given to the techniques of relief carving and work processes of Egyptian sculptors based on examination of monuments in various stages of completion. Utilizing the earlier work of C. Williams (Williams (1932), 70–77), Smith first outlined in detail the technical methods employed in Old Kingdom relief (Smith (1949), 244–254). However, subsequent studies have expanded the work to include examination of proportional grid/guidelines, work patterns and spatial distribution of scenes (Robins 1994; Baines 1989a; Vassilika (1989), 175–183; Bryan (1992a), 78–79; Freed (2000), 214; Hofmann (2004), 149–157; Oppenheim (2006), 123–132). The best source of evidence for workshop organization is the workers' archive from Deir el-Medina, which provides important information on the specialized personnel who completed the cutting and relief decoration in royal Ramesside tombs. The workforce varied between 30 and 120 men and included scribes, outline draftsmen, relief-carvers, sculptors, and stonecutters; textual data suggests craft specialities were combined so that painters, sculptors, or stonecutters may have also been responsible for relief carving (Bogoslovsky (1980), 89, 93, 116; Eyre (1987b), 168–180; Černý (2001), 340).

Parallels in scene content, composition, individual motifs and style have led most scholars to suggest Egyptian painters and sculptors used “copybooks” as guides, which contained basic information on scene types and programs, color conventions, and proportional guides (Müller 1982; Beinlich-Seeber and Shedid (1987), 123–124; Van Walsem (2005), 51). Certainly, the design and execution of the decorative program in temple and tomb relief resulted in highly selective compositions, which depended upon a number of factors such as: variations in building materials and architectural design; the size, location, and orientation of the temple or tomb; the amount of resources available to the patron; access to specialized craftsmen; and systems of patronage among elite individuals (Schäfer (1974), 12, 17–18; Harpur (1987), 59–60, 110; van Walsem (2005), 51, 53–54; Vischak (2006), 257; Do. Arnold 2008). Accordingly, the process of selecting details gave scope for artistic creativity. Designers could experiment and innovate within the framework of artistic tradition and the production of *exact* copies of the same motif is rare (Harpur (1987), 110; Robins 1998).

Similarities in style and iconography in temple or tomb representations have also raised the question of the transmission of models in relief and the impact of the center on the periphery, a theory presented to understand the dynamics of cultural transfer (Rowlands (1987), 4–5). Apart from the practice of archaism mentioned previously, which accounted for the transference of artistic tradition in certain periods, artistic continuity between the Old and Middle Kingdoms has been linked to the establishment of scribal schools with formalized artisan training during the early Middle Kingdom (Robins (1990a), 43). Equally, stylistic and textual evidence indicates that in different periods,

artists traveled between the capital and outlying provincial centers to decorate tomb walls with state approval (see for example, Freed (2010), 887). Artists trained in the centers of Memphis and Thebes introduced motifs and details to outlying provincial monuments in the late Old Kingdom (Kanawati (2001), 74–75); early Middle Kingdom (Barta (1970), 128–129; Jaroš-Deckert (1984), 118–127; Robins (1990a), 42–43); Freed (1997), 154–155; New Kingdom (Manniche (1988), 85–86; Zivie 2003); and Third Intermediate Period (Morkot (2003), 84, 87). However, variation in artistic style and orientation or the adoption of specific iconography was prevalent in certain regions due to the tomb owner's strong connection to local culture (Vischak (2006), 273–276); his or her restricted access to artisans with centralized training in periods of political fragmentation (Robins (1990a), 39; Russmann (2001), 43–44) or foreign influences from established exchange networks with Southwest Asia (Moorey 2001; Wengrow (2006), 115, 141–142, 187–193; Counts and Arnold 2010).

The use of style as an interpretive tool is frequent in recent scholarship, where specific attributes and characteristics are connected with historical events to explain stylistic change (see discussion in Hartwig, "Style," this volume). An example can be seen in the interpretation of early Dynasty 18 "archaism," which has been viewed as partly style and partly manipulative propaganda. The Middle Kingdom relief and sculpture of Mentuhotep II in his temple at Deir el-Bahri and the Karnak reliefs of Senwosret I seem to have inspired several works during the reigns of the early Dynasty 18 kings Ahmose and Amenhotep I, respectively. While most scholars agree that earlier examples are a *source of inspiration* rather than exact copies, instances of such deliberate and intentional archaism have been attributed to political motivations, including the desire to emphasize the new regime's Theban heritage and proclaim pharaoh's status as the supreme ruler of Egypt by his or her link to the great ancestral kings (Russmann 2005; Morkot (2003), 95–99; on the problems of correctly dating "archaizing" works of art, see der Manuelian (1984), 51–59).

A criticism frequently leveled against formalistic and stylistic analysis is the writer's bias and subjectivity in identifying trends in iconography and characteristics of a particular style. Equally, the examination of form (system/convention of representation) and content (symbol, concept, or figure being portrayed) are frequently combined and do not necessarily offer criteria to distinguish deliberate and intentional use of style (for discussion see Davis (2003), 34–35). However, most studies overcome this issue by employing a quantitative approach, including the examination of specific data such as a monument's archaeological context, associations and assemblages, location, paleography, prosopographical information, work processes, as well as innovation and/or continuity of artistic convention and scene content (see, for example, Seidelmayer 1997; Hartwig (2004), 131–137; van Walsem 2005). Therefore, for identifying artistic connections between Egyptian reliefs, stylistic analysis provides a reasonably accurate means of dating and assessing a work of art.

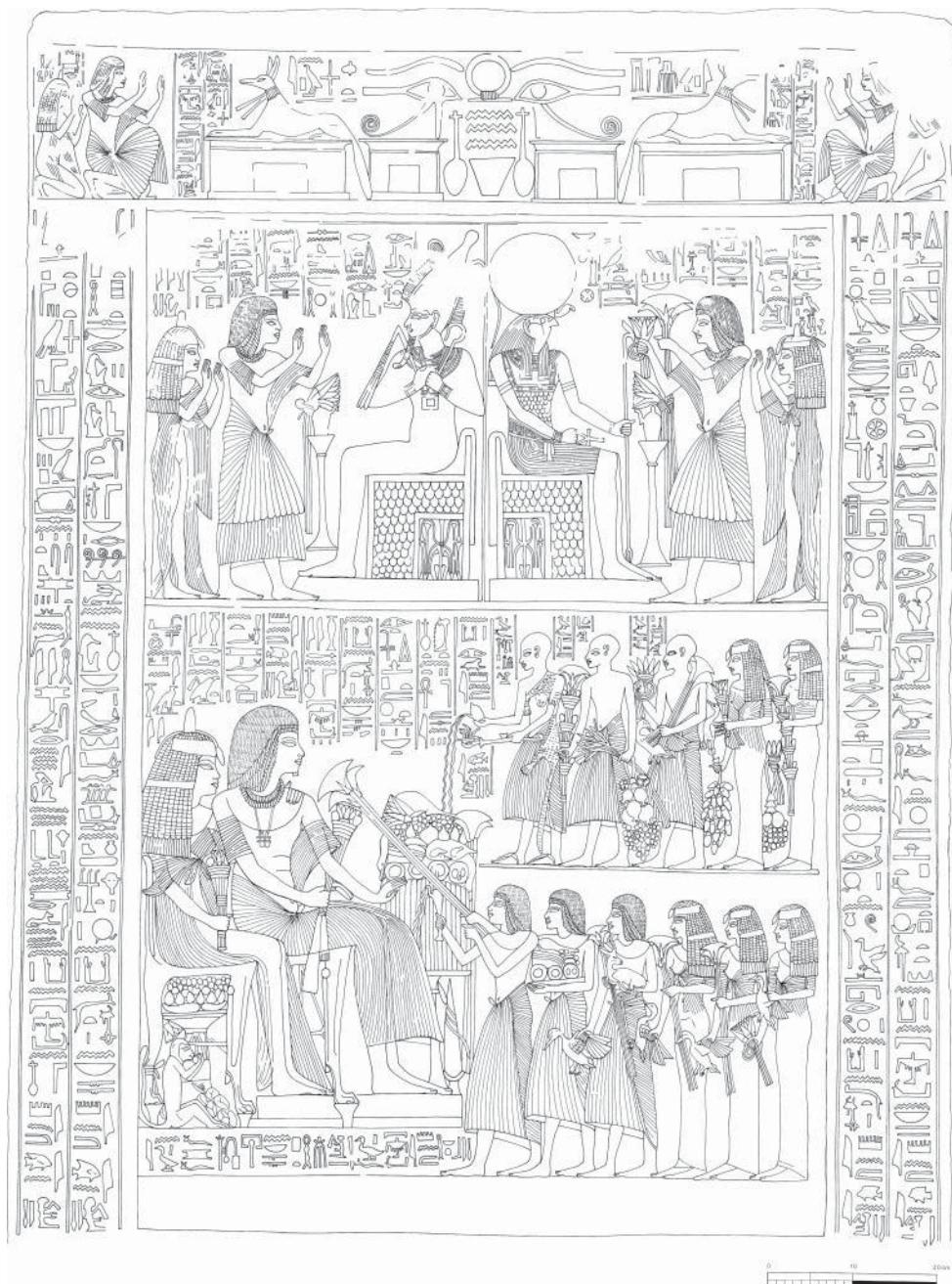
## Context and Function: Interpreting the Significance of Egyptian Relief

Egyptian relief is largely restricted to sacred space, namely in the temple or tomb environment (for an overview of contexts see Vandersleyen 1984; Müller 2001). Royal mortuary and cult temples were regarded as models of the cosmos at the time of creation as well

as houses for the gods and ritual spaces where the king or priests (as his designated substitutes) interacted with the deities (Baines 1976, 1997). Statuary and relief carving were harnessed to project an omnipotent and omniscient image of kingship. Likewise, royal iconography made full use of the symbolic importance of regalia to convey the monarch's divine authority (Wilkinson (1999), 186–199). Characteristics of the king and deities such as insignia, crowns, and elements of clothing occur in different combinations and form a complex system of symbols that reveal the character, rank, and function of the wearer in a specific context, in accordance with the established rules of decorum (Baines (1985), 277–305). Traditional temple wall imagery illustrates the ritual exchange between the king and the deity in a conceptual and generic form, without reference to a specific time or place; this was modified according to the function and location of the scene (i.e., in interior or exterior space) within the architectural design (Baines 1997; Di. Arnold 1962, 1999; Wilson 2010). However, during the Amarna period, there was an important iconographic shift to represent exclusively detailed aspects of the ritualized life of the pharaoh, with an emphasis on the solar gods (Vergnieux (1999), 193–194), which sees the representation of intimacy between the royal family on temple walls (Traunecker 1986) and other religious monuments (Stevens (2006), 133–136).

In elite tombs, relief occurs within a sacred space, and can be divided into two architecturally distinct areas: (1), the offering place or chapel (i.e., the superstructure) which contains a focal niche, stela, statue, or false door; and (2), the space associated with the actual burial of the body that usually occupied the substructure. The significance and function of these two spaces has been the subject of debate among scholars. The superstructure has been interpreted as an eternal dwelling place for the deceased, where the wall images created an ideal world for the tomb owner in the hereafter (Bolshakov (1997), 264–267, 279–280); as a space in which the worlds of the living and the dead intersected (Assmann (1983), 28–29); and as a place to enable the tomb owner to commemorate his or her earthly deeds and project aspects of his or her identity and status (Assmann (1991), 169–199; Kanawati (2001), 112–122). Although developments in the decorative repertoire according to developments in architectural design and religious practices cannot be outlined here in detail, specific scene types are consistently represented throughout the pharaonic era, such as the tomb owner seated before a table laden with food (Figure 12.4) (Vandier (1964), 81–102; Kaplony 1986) or scenes of “daily life” that concern the production, acquisition, and provision of foodstuffs (see Figures 12.1, 12.3, 12.6) (Harpur 1987; Cherpion (1996), 871–872). In specific periods, the focus of elite tomb decoration is broadened to include ritual elements, as seen for instance in the inclusion of scenes from the Book of the Dead in the post-Amarna period that were previously only suitable for the burial chamber (Strudwick 1994; Assmann 2003; Hofmann 2004).

Alongside stylistic analysis, the function of different types of relief, iconography and the layers of symbolism inherent within an image are often explored to understand the meaning and purpose of Egyptian art in specific contexts. As highlighted above, the choice of relief over a painted decorative scheme or a specific type of relief within a tomb or temple complex has often been credited as a practical or aesthetic measure. Raised relief and its frequent use on softer materials such as limestone, sandstone, and wood rather than harder stone is likely due to the labor-intensive task of removing the background, whereas the use of sunk relief is believed to have been a faster and more economical method of completing larger decorative programs, and may have discouraged



**Figure 12.4** The stela in the tomb of Amenemone, Saqqara, late Dynasty 18. Ockinga (2004), pl. 55. Courtesy of B.G. Ockinga.

the erasure or modification of a text and/or image. Certainly, a significant relationship exists between relief sculpture and wall painting, as there is an overlap in the methods of wall preparation and scene content, since it was the same skilled workers who executed both techniques of decoration. However, an additional factor in the Egyptians' choice of media may be that the role of painting and relief was fundamentally different, mainly pertaining to the use of color. Although the issue cannot be discussed in detail here, color represented the natural environment with impressive accuracy and also conveyed complex religious concepts and symbolism (Colinart, Delange, and Pagès 1996), 29–34; Aufrère 2001; Robins 2001; Hartwig 2013). The addition of color to relief created a covering for the images on the wall, and, even in the best preserved scenes, the paint is thick and nearly obscures the relief itself, frequently protruding outside the carved outlines (see for example Altenmüller (1998), pls. 100–101).

Analysis of temple and tomb decorative programs executed in paint and relief illustrates that the two media may have been chosen for certain contexts. Although variations and exceptions exist (see Schäfer (1974), 77, n. 22; Malek 1980; Hornung (1990), 208–210; Dodson 1999; Brand (2000), 22–26), raised relief is frequently attested on interior walls of temples or tombs as well as certain ceremonial items where the lighting is diffuse. For example, in the Naqada III period and within the context of emerging kingship, ceremonial objects such as palettes, knife handles, and mace heads were appropriated as vehicles to convey the ideology and iconography of the small ruling elite and were uniformly carved in raised relief (Baines (1995), 109–121; Wengrow (2006), 180–182). The interior walls of temples primarily depict temple ritual performed by the king or rarer aspects of kingship, such as the divine birth, coronation ceremonies, and occasional celebrations of the rejuvenating Heb-Sed Festival, to emphasize the king's ability as a functioning practitioner of cult and an effectively empowered ruler (Di. Arnold (1992), 40–49; Baines (1989a), 15, 24–28; Ćwiek (2003), 160–193, 225–249). By contrast, sunk relief is commonly attested on objects within a ritual or sacred funerary setting such as sarcophagi and false doors, in addition to façades, entrance thicknesses, and porticos where strong sunlight enhanced the sharp edges of the relief and the play of light and shadow (Schäfer (1974), 77, n. 22; Vandersleyen (1984), 227; Strudwick (1985), 24; Freed (2000), 212; Baines (2001), 148; Chauvet 2011). Reinforced by the use of sunk relief, external scenes in temple walls or those carved into the native rock along the borders of Egypt emphasize a ruler's effectiveness by depicting large-scale images of the king smiting or trampling enemies and engaging in battle, presumably with an apotropaic function (Baines (1976), 10–11; Hall 1986; Van Essche-Merchez 1994). In addition, certain stones such as red quartzite, sandstone, and granite used for the construction of temples, royal statuary, and sarcophagi were often combined with sunk relief to make religious statements and emphasize deities or connections to locations. Dark red quartzite was frequently used during the reigns of Djedefre and Amenhotep III, as well as that of Akhenaten, to indicate their solar devotion and association with Heliopolis, the cult center of the solar deity Atum, and the sun disk Aten respectively (Bryan (1992b), 133, 157; Robins (1997b), 24, 131; Hayes (1935), 32–33).

Decorative programs executed in paint and relief within temple and tombs and on cosmetic palettes, mace heads, coffins and sarcophagi, canopic equipment, and specific items of furniture greatly benefit from iconographic analysis when used in conjunction with a known archaeological context, provenance, and relative date. The analysis of subject

matter and objects within their historical context aims to identify themes and concepts, which inform the viewer about the meaning and content of the work of art. Iconographic analysis is based on the premise that symbols—overt or disguised—provide a mechanism for conveying meaning and significance. Likewise, pictorial symbolism is inextricably linked with the ‘transformation of state’ into something more desirable (Wilkinson (1994), 7, 16–17). The broad application of iconographic analysis reveals cultural dynamics in certain periods. Tomb and temple imagery provide codified representations, which when “decoded” reveal shifts in politics, religion, and ideology that permeated Egyptian society. Such changes can be seen in the altered decorative programs in Ramses-side elite tombs (Assmann 1987b, 2003; Strudwick 1994) or the extensive adoption of “archaism” at times of required artistic renewal (Fazzini (1972), 64–68, 1997; Morkot (2003), 89–90; Freed (2010), 886–887, 890–892).

The iconography and symbolism in temple and tomb reliefs or specific objects are routinely analyzed. Imagery from the royal sphere, such as temple and tomb reliefs or certain ceremonial items, is understood to emphasize aspects of the ruling elite, Egyptian kingship and the relationships with the divine world (Eaton-Krauss and Graefe 1985; Hornung 1990; Baines (1995), 109–121; O’Connor 2008). In the private arena, specific scenes and decorative programs within individual elite tombs are examined to understand the function and significance of the imagery represented, particularly in relation to certain scene types. These include: the funerary repast or offering table icon (see Figure 12.4, register 2) (Bárta 1995); the major figure smelling/receiving flowers (see Figure 12.5); the major figure “viewing” (*m33*) activities (see Figure 12.3) (Fitzenreiter (2001), 83–88, 129–140; Angenot 2005); or scenes depicting the natural world and “daily life” (Kamrin (1999), 41–51; Hartwig (2004), 49–50; Van Walsem (2005), 33–39). A criticism frequently leveled against iconographic analysis is the varied and often contradictory interpretations presented for each scene, which is best exemplified in examples of the major figure spear-fishing and fowling in the marshlands (see Figure 12.6). These depictions have been considered as a literal depiction of daily life, that is, a popular recreational sport undertaken by the elite (Harpur (1987), 181, n. 131; Kanawati (2001), 92–94); as a functioning image designed to satisfy the deceased’s need for sustenance in the next world (Feucht (1992), 168–169); and as a mechanism to ward off evil for the deceased in the afterlife and guarantee their successful rebirth after death (Tefnин 1984; Robins (1990b), 50, (1993), 187–189; Laboury (1997), 69–71; Hartwig (2004), 103–106). Iconographic analysis certainly enables a plurality of interpretations for a scene; however, decoding symbolism in Egyptian art should be founded on an understanding of various aspects of Egyptian culture including religion, language, artistic principles, mythology, and history in order to present a consistent meaning of the image.

The symbiotic relationship between text and image has frequently been noted by classical authors and modern scholars (Hartwig (2004), 45–49; Baines 2008), which has enabled the application of semiotic and reception theory to Egyptian art. Semiotics, defined as the study of signs and symbols as a means to understand cultural expression, highlights the organizing principles of two-dimensional art in terms of its levels of meaning and representation of the differing ‘spheres of reality’ (see Figure 12.3) (Tefnин 1991; Van Walsem (2005), 33–39, 49; Bolshakov (1997), 15–17). In order to interpret the function and meaning of text and image in Egyptian art, scholars have approached wall



**Figure 12.5** The tomb owner receiving a bouquet of flowers from the tomb of Anhurmose, El-Mashayikh, Dynasty 20. Courtesy of B.G. Ockinga.

scenes using semiological language such as subject–action–object, where the subject of the scene performs or contemplates an action in relation to the object. For instance, the king (subject) performs/overthrows (action) certain rituals/chaos (object); or the tomb owner (subject) views—*m33*—(action) scenes of daily life (object) depicting several registers of minor/subsidiary figures (Tefnin (1984), 62–64, 69–70; (1991), 70–71; Assmann 1987a, 1996a). However, there is debate on the extent to which extent the message inherent in the scene is dependent on interaction with the receiver (reader, hearer, viewer) who decodes the meaning (Jacobson 1987). For example, based on alternate systems of ordering the material, some scholars suggest the overall meaning of the work is focused toward the subject (i.e., deities/tomb owner) of the wall image only (Tefnin (1991), 60, 69; Laboury (1998b), 141, 146–147; Baines (2008), 100–101), while others believe the meaning is directed towards the viewer of the scene to provide a dialogue between the living and the dead and preserve Egyptian society's collective identity (Assmann (1991), 169–171; (2002), 70, 244–245). Despite such different interpretations,

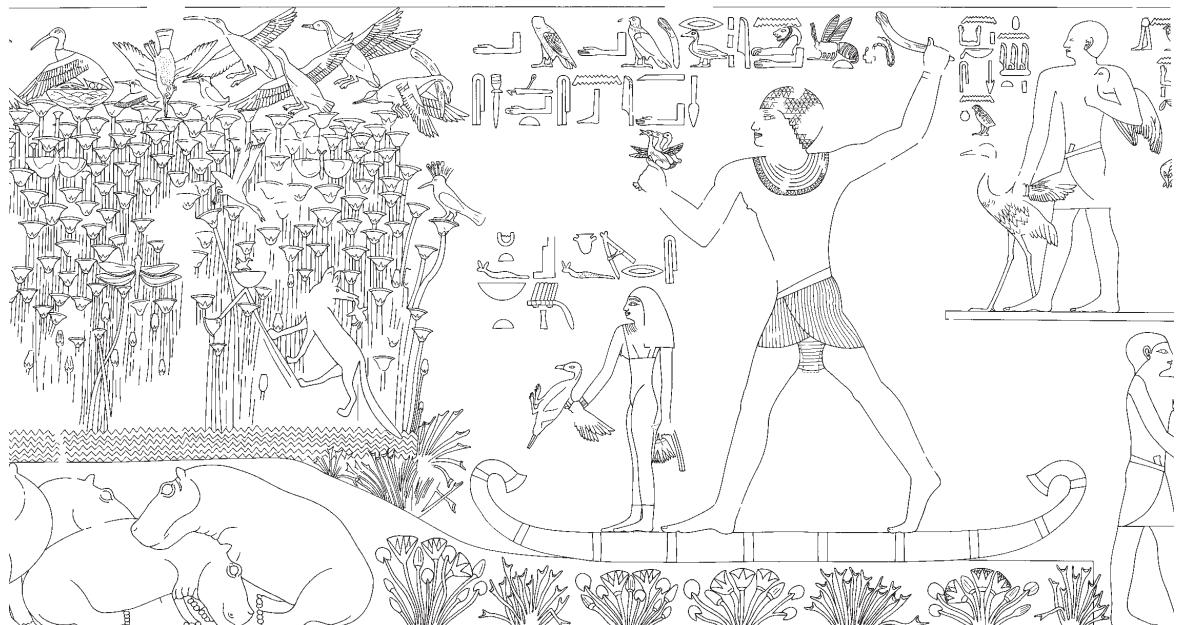


Figure 12.6 The major figure fowling in the marshlands in the tomb of Senbi (B1), Meir, early Dynasty 12. Courtesy of Naguib Kanawati, the Australian Centre for Egyptology.

the communicative aspects of Egyptian art can be gleaned from visitor inscriptions in tomb chapels that record the viewer's response to the aesthetic beauty and antiquity of the images as well as to the elite status of the owner (Müller 1998; Hartwig (2004), 43–46; Navrátilová (2007), 131–144). Recent scholarship argues that the language of images in painting and relief did not only have significance in the realm of the hereafter and for the literate informed viewer (Baines 1989b, 1990b), but could have been understood (to varying degrees) by all observers, i.e., the literate, semiliterate, and illiterate alike (Bryan 1996; Wildung (1997), 14–15; Hartwig (2004), 47). Accordingly, the combination of the text, iconography, and symbolism in the imagery, as well as the viewer's cultural knowledge would have informed their understanding of the work within the larger Egyptian worldview.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Egyptian relief and painted relief is an area of ongoing research, in terms of interpretation and synthesis using a variety of approaches. Outlines of royal and elite representational systems within their architectural setting are expertly provided by P. Wilson (2010) and A. Dodson (2010) with references, and can be supplemented by the collection of works edited by B.E. Shafer (1997) and S. Quirke (1997). Excellent outlines of artistic development and style in the Pharaonic era are presented by C. Aldred (1980, 1975), W.S. Smith (1981), and G. Robins (1997b). The art historical and technological methods used in Egyptian art are covered by M. Hartwig (forthcoming), while a review of scholarly approaches to the study of Egyptian art is provided by M. Müller (2013). Finally, the stylistic influences and possible political motivations of archaism have been discussed at length by B. Bothmer (1960, xxxvii–viii), R. Fazzini (1972), and P. der Manuelian (1994), J. Assmann (2002, Part 5), as well as in individual articles by W.M. Davis, D. Wildung, R. Morkot, and S.-A. Ashton.

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## CHAPTER 13

# Painting

*Francesco Tiradritti*

### Introduction

The analysis of Egyptian painting has always been based on data mainly derived from the New Kingdom Theban tombs. In recent years this situation underwent some changes, especially thanks to a greater attention to some aspects of this major topic. The interest of scholars has been attracted to the possibility of identifying individual styles and schools (Hartwig 2004) in the case of painting, since Egyptian art has always been considered anonymous. Special attention has been also devoted to the use and meaning of colors in ancient Egypt since the seminal publication by John Baines (1985) that opened the way to a debate on this topic from an anthropological point of view. In the last twenty years, several projects aimed at the analysis of pigments have been launched. Their purpose was mainly to find better methods of conservation for painted or written supports (Lee and Quirke 2000), but they also undertook a theoretical discussion of color in ancient Egypt (see Guide to Further Reading below). An attempt to write a history of Egyptian painting from the second half of the fourth to the early first millennium BCE can be found in the book on Egyptian wall painting by the author of the present contribution (Tiradritti 2008).

### The Early Steps of Egyptian Painting

The decoration found on Nagada I “White cross-lined” pottery (first half of the fourth millennium BCE) can be considered one of the earliest examples of Egyptian painting (Ciałowicz (2001), 152–166). The focus of the artist is on the surrounding world with a special stress on riverine scenery. The figures and the elements of the setting are stylized. On the flat surface of dishes, the different components of the landscape are either given by position (water at the center and desert closer to the rims) or by the particular animals

that are found in this context. The desert was sometimes represented by irregularities of the baseline over which the figures stood. This convention remained constant throughout Egyptian history. The decoration of some vases has been interpreted as scenes of military victory (Hendricks (2011), 76–77) where stylized horned human beings with maces grasp smaller figures whose arms are attached behind their backs.

During the Nagada II (3500–3350 BCE), the technique of vase decoration changed. Artists now preferred red painting on a pale pink background. There was also a shift of interest in themes. Deities made their appearance (although the Nagada I horned human beings could be considered to be divine figures) as emblems at the top of standards placed over boats with cabins. Boats appear also on some painted fragments of a linen shroud found in Gebelein (Egyptian Museum of Turin, S. 17138), which can be considered the earliest pictorial work of any importance in ancient Egypt. Unfortunately, the shroud is too fragmentary to allow an understanding of the whole decoration. Other than the boats, a circle of women with their arms raised over their heads (a gesture of mourning in later periods) is still visible, together with a depiction of a building and some men. The color palette at the disposal of the Nagada II artist is limited to the three basic hues: red, black, and white, with some touches of yellow.

The decoration of Tomb 100 at Hierakonpolis (HK Loc. 33; Ciałowicz (2001), 157–161), is the earliest example of wall painting known from ancient Egypt, and can be placed slightly later in the Nagada IIC (ca. 3400 BCE). On the southwest wall was painted a large scene almost totally devoted to six boats with cabins floating against a yellow ochre background. Secondary scenes of fighting were interspersed around and in between the boats. The meaning of the decoration has been widely discussed in the century that has elapsed since the discovery of the tomb. The main scene has been chiefly interpreted either as a riverine procession performed in honor of a deity or as the funeral of the local ruler who was allegedly buried inside the tomb.

It is indisputable that the secondary scenes of the Hierakonpolis wall painting were intended to add further meanings to the main decoration and may tell stories to enrich their narrative value. The naked man grasping the two rampant lions by the throat at the bottom left of the tableau gave rise to the hypothesis that at least this section of the decoration was related to some mythical or supernatural event. The idea is based on related imagery widely spread throughout the Mesopotamian world. This similarity has led some scholars to see the influence of Sumerian art in the decoration of Tomb 100. This theory is, however, not sustainable. It does not take into account that the Mesopotamian “naked hero” images occur later in the first half of the third millennium BCE (even if there have been some suggestions for antecedents in other images founded on an interaction between man and animals, see Costello (2010), 26–27), and that the theme spread well beyond the border of the Middle Eastern region, as is demonstrated by a Harappan seal with a man grasping two tigers found in Mohenjo Daro (Mohenjo-daro Museum, NMK 50.283).

The early phases of unified Egyptian history are lacking in almost any evidence of painting. The ostraca from the tomb of Hemaka in Saqqara (Egyptian Museum Cairo, JE 70149; Dynasty 1, ca. 2950–2730 BCE) is a unique document of that period. On a pink painted background are represented a bull and a baboon. The confidence of the drawing shows a high level of mastery of the art of painting, and makes one regret the severe loss of pictorial evidence for this epoch.

The painted decoration of the tomb of Hesire in Saqqara is paralleled by the use of painting in the contemporary funerary complex of Djoser (ca. 2592–2566 BCE). In both monuments, colors have been used to increase the impression that these structures were merely an imitation of buildings made of wood, papyri, and mats. In the corridor of the tomb of Hesire, the wall opposite the famous wooden panels depicting the owner (now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo; see Figures 4.1 and 4.2 in Josephson, this volume) was decorated with painted images representing various items of the burial furniture. The discovery of some pieces of decorated plaster attests to the presence of scenes referring to daily life on the walls of the entrance room.

Due to its poor state of preservation, the tomb of Hesire was covered with sand again and knowledge of it today is possible only through the watercolors executed by J.E. Quibell (1913) and his wife at the moment of the discovery. They show that the red and yellow predominated in the palette at the disposal of the Egyptian artists at the time because of the imitation of wooden structures, but that black, white, green, and blue are also found.

## The Innovative Strength of Dynasty 4

The mastaba of Nefermaat and Atet in Dahshur is representative of the innovative moment that marked the beginning of Dynasty 4 (ca. 2543–2436 BCE). A large part of the decoration was carried out using a peculiar technique. The images were deeply cut into the limestone slabs that covered the mud brick structure of the mastaba, and the hollow spaces were subsequently filled with colored pastes. Details were painted over once the surface of the paste dried. An inscription in front of a figure of Nefermaat proudly states that “it was him who made his own images in a writing that cannot be erased.” This technique has few parallels, perhaps because it was too expensive and required a long, time-consuming collaboration between sculptors and painters. Is it perhaps for this reason that part of the decoration in the mastaba of Nefer-maat was carried out only in painting? This is true especially in the case of the northern chapel dedicated to his wife Atet. A significant portion of the corridor’s northern wall was occupied by a large tableau devoted to the catching of birds by hexagonal net (above) and the plowing of the land (below). The two scenes were divided by the image of six geese now in the Egyptian Museum of Cairo (JE 34571 / CG 1742). The painting is known worldwide as “The Geese of Meidum” (Plate 5) and can be considered a “manifesto” of ancient Egyptian art because they correspond to an artistic sensibility and a way of describing reality that existed until the conquest of the Nile Valley by the Romans. In the painting can be detected the most distinctive elements of Egyptian two-dimensional art: naturalism and abstraction (every goose represents both a hieroglyph and the image of an actual bird), “avoided symmetry” (they are arranged in two almost identical groups but differ in several details), and spatial and temporal perspective. The latter effect was obtained by dividing the two groups, and making the external goose on either side both isolated and as large as the two other geese put together. This gives the impression that the geese at the two extremities are in the foreground and the four in the center are in background. Attributing a diachronic mark to the scene it can be understood as the depiction of only two geese taken in three

different moments of an outbound movement. Starting from the center they diverge to eventually bend and pick at the ground at the two extremities of the image.

Roughly contemporary with the “Geese of Meidum” are the seated statues of Rahotep and Nofret whose mastaba was next to Nefermaat’s. They can be listed among the most accomplished examples of Egyptian sculpture for their vividness. The red of Rahotep’s body and the yellow of Nofret’s not only respect the observation that the skin of a man is darker than that of a woman, but also reflect the different status between the two genders: men possessed more freedom of movement than women (and consequently went outside and got tanned). That contrast has often been taken as a difference in value between men and women within Egyptian society. However, yellow is also the skin color used for some officials in Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period paintings (Fischer 1963 and, for example, the man at right overseeing a scene of butchery from the Tomb of Iti in Gebelein, now in the Egyptian Museum, Turin, S 14354/12). In this case, the yellow pigmentation of the skin only indicated a life mainly spent inside administrative buildings. A devaluating connotation was connected to the darker hues of red. This skin color denoted individuals who carried out the most menial activities that were conducted under the sun without any possibility of shelter.

## **Painting as Alternative to Painted Relief**

During the Old Kingdom, the walls of private tombs were, for preference, decorated in delicate raised relief. Painting was mainly used as a means to complete the relief, or when particular effects were needed. This is the case of the scene of crossing of the ford in the mastaba of Ti (end of Dynasty 5) at Saqqara. The transparency of the water is indicated by incised zigzag lines over which the legs of the cows and shepherds were painted.

Painting was used as an alternative to relief when decoration had to be completed quickly, or in monuments of individuals who evidently did not have enough means to afford the more expensive relief decoration. Examples of tombs where painting is the main decorative medium are mostly attested in the necropolis of Memphis (Giza and Saqqara) between Dynasties 5 and 6, though parallels can be found in contemporary burials in the provinces outside Memphis. One of these Saqqara tombs belonged to the Overseer of the Goldsmiths Neferseshemtah and the Overseer of the Blacksmiths Sekhentyu (Moussa and Junge 1975) who were likely father and son and lived during the middle of Dynasty 5 (reigns of Niuserre and Menkauhor, ca. 2402–2366 BCE). The decoration is in a good state of preservation. The figures are painted in bright colors and stand out clearly against the gray-blue background. The northern wall to the left of the entrance is divided into three registers: canopied beds are depicted in the upper two registers, while in the lower register some servants are busy preparing another bed. The free disposition of the figures gives the idea of a joyful activity, which runs counter to the standards of the most classical Memphite art that favored an ordered and repetitive composition. The images of beds in the upper registers are reminiscent of the objects of furniture in the tomb of Hesire. In the tomb of Neferseshemtah and Sekhentyu the beds almost completely fill the space, are painted in bright and contrasting colors, and subdivide the scene into various polygonal surfaces making it difficult to get an overall understanding of the scene at first glance. It is as if the painter who worked on the

decoration intended to strike the observer with a strong and conflicting chromatic vision rather than to describe something. It is an artistic approach mainly aimed at catching the attention of the viewer through the immediacy of the colors. Despite the differences due to the large span of time, one can find some correspondence to Impressionism in the nineteenth century CE. The attitude displayed in the tomb of Neferseshemtah and Sekhentyu anticipates in some ways the art of the following First Intermediate Period. The same feeling can be found in the decoration of the Ka-em-anhk burial chamber at Giza (Kanawati (2010), 57–59). Russmann (1995) recognizes in it a new style that spread from Memphis to the south of the country. Other than the peculiar use of the colors, Russmann sees another distinctive characteristic of this artistic tendency in the enlargement of the eyes.

## **Painting as Incompleteness, and Incompleteness as an Expression of Eternity**

One of the most important functions of painting in ancient Egypt was that of giving a sense of incompleteness. This is clearer in Old Kingdom monuments where painting was used to complete relief decoration. It is difficult, if not impossible, to calculate the number of mastabas in which the painting phase, which theoretically should mark the end of the work, has already been attained. However, the tombs whose decoration can be considered complete are relatively few. In all of Egyptian history, the incompleteness of a monument does not appear to have been a problem either for the commissioner of the work or for the artists and the workers. This is the same idea as always enlarging a building as much as possible without being concerned about its actual completion. This peculiar attitude can perhaps be understood within Egyptian culture as a sort of challenge to death. Leaving a structure in an advanced phase of work that is both meaningfully complete and actually incomplete is a way of questioning the very limitations imposed by the human existence. The incompleteness of tombs was a way of describing the indefiniteness of endless time. Leaving even a small part of the decoration unfinished was intended to give the impression that the artists still had to come back in order to complete their work, and therefore the tomb was not yet ready to receive the body of the owner.

From this perspective, purely painted scenes in tombs in which the relief decoration was almost finished can be understood as having that meaning. It is the case, for example, in the mastaba of the vizier Akhethotep (dating to the reigns of Djekara Isesi and Unas, ca. 2321–2306 BCE; see Davies 1900–1901). This mastaba also hosted the chapel of Ptahhotep (II), Akhethotep's son who bore titles similar to his father. Akhethotep and Ptahhotep held prestigious positions that placed them in the highest reaches of the Egyptian administration, and their lifespans covered a period of about fifty years. Despite this, only the vestibule and the chapels of the mastaba were completed. The monument thus gives the impression of being incomplete while at the same time appearing entirely finished. This state cannot be explained by a sudden interruption of the work due to a lack of either time or means. Both Akhethotep and Ptahhotep had enough of each to finish their tomb, and so its incompleteness has to be attributed more to a deliberate choice than to any deficiency. Furthermore, the decoration is incomplete in the vestibule, the most

visible and visited part of the mastaba. This can only be interpreted as a clear statement that the work was unfinished and would always be so. In some scenes, the reliefs were rough-hewn; in others the figures were only painted; in some other areas the decoration had not progressed further than the preliminary sketches. The best example of this deliberate incompleteness is on the northeast corner of the longitudinal room in Akhethotep's chapel. Rows of offering-bearers are placed over each other and are in different stages of completion. The scenes in the lowest register are in painted relief. Painting replaces the painted relief on the register above, in which the figures are only outlined. Eventually the surface was filled only by the grid used by the artists to sketch out the images. The unfinished area has such limited dimensions that is inconceivable not to think that it was intentionally left in that incomplete state.

Painting allowed the completion of a carved image and, at the same time, attributed a sense of eternal incompleteness to it. Ending without ever completing. Deferring the end of the work to a never-coming day. The tomb was left unfinished and theoretically unsuitable to receive the deceased. This concept has the sense of postponing everything to a moment that would never come. It was a method to cheat death by delaying forever a meeting with it through the artistic paradox of completion without finishing.

## **The First Intermediate Period—Catching the Most Colorful Moments of Life**

The First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom are considered basic stages in the elaboration of ideas that had lasting influence in the following epochs, despite the fact that up to now, their pictorial achievements have received relatively little attention by scholars. The tombs of Beni Hasan are the most striking example. Although they can be considered masterpieces of Egyptian painting and fundamental for the understanding of late First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom art, their knowledge is still mainly based on the publication by Newberry (1893a, 1893b). The most recent studies by Shedid (1994), Kamrin (1999), and Kanawati and Woods (2010), are either too general or too focused on particular aspects and only partially supplement the evaluation of their artistic importance.

This is mainly due to the fact that the most distinctive monuments of the First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom lay in areas out of easy reach. This was more true in the last decades of the twentieth century when, despite the renewed interest demonstrated by Egyptologists for studies on painting, fear of terrorist attacks made it difficult to visit Middle Egypt where most of these monuments are.

The breakdown of the state at the end of the Old Kingdom brought the use of painted relief to an almost complete stop. This situation not only depended on a lack of economic resources but also corresponded to a shift of preferences expressed by both patrons and artists. The importance attributed to color to the detriment of form became the artistic trend that characterized the end of the third and the beginning of the second millennium BCE. In comparison with Memphite art, that of subsequent epochs showed a lack of interest in order, proportions, and elegance. As this art made an earlier appearance in the regional provinces that came in existence following the collapse of the central power, the style has been often dismissed as "provincial." This label corresponds to Russmann's

(1995) “Second Style.” According to her, certain features on some Old Kingdom statues spread from Memphis to the other parts of Egypt between the end of Dynasty 5 and the beginning of Dynasty 6. One of those characteristics—the disproportionate eyes—is shared by almost all First Intermediate Period and, to a lesser extent, by Middle Kingdom painting. Taking into consideration another group of statues, Wildung (1999) reaffirmed the existence of a different style, but denied its Memphite origin. He proposed rather the surfacing of an Upper Egyptian tradition that was influenced by this region’s proximity to Nubia (Wildung (1999), 344). Whatever the origin of this new artistic trend, it is already perceptible as early as Dynasties 5 and 6 in the contemporary tombs of Thebes (Unasankh, TT 413; Ihy, TT 186; and Khenti, TT 405; Saleh (1977), and Soliman (2009), 17–28) which are almost exclusively painted.

The increasing power of the provincial elite during the late Old Kingdom has been seen by Vischak (in press) as a reason for the greater freedom displayed by the artist Seni in the decoration of the tombs of Tjetjiiker (H26) and his son Kheni (H24) in the necropolis of Hawawish near Akhmim (Kanawati 1980–1992). Despite some innovations, especially in the alternate use of the color (Vischak in press) and the arrangement of figures in space, the art of Seni appears still bound to the ordered composition and proportional canons of the Memphite tombs and looks more similar to the early art of the Middle Kingdom when artists, enriched by the experience of the First Intermediate Period, aimed at recovering the Old Kingdom style of painting.

The new artistic trend can also be detected in the servant statuettes that started to appear among the other items of the burial furniture in Dynasty 6. This is the case, for example, with those that were found in the tomb of Niankhpepi Kem at Meir (tomb A.1, reign of Pepy I, ca. 2276–2228 BCE). The figurine of a man tilling the soil (Egyptian Museum Cairo, CG 249) is the most representative of the group. In this case, the interest of the artist was not only in the reproduction of the typical image of a peasant, but also in the depiction of the setting of the action in a precise spatial and temporal context. The man is shown tilling during the hottest hour of the day: the sun is at its zenith and the evaporation of the moist mud in which his feet sink creates waves of heat that both distort and elongate his figure. The sharp light darkens the color of the skin and makes his short skirt dazzling white. It is evident that the artist’s interest lies more in placing the image within a precise space and time context than in the proportional rendering of the figure of a man. With all the caution necessary because of the enormous intervening span of time, it is possible to suggest a parallel to the Impressionists and their research on light.

That statuette anticipated by a century solutions that had become common in the art of the First Intermediate Period (ca. 2118–1980 BCE). In this epoch, the figures were characterized by more or less elongated bodies that intentionally avoided the proportional canon of the Old Kingdom. Color and movement became the main concern of the artists with the aim of reproducing the world with as much verisimilitude as possible. This attitude is also noticeable in the disposition of the decoration inside the non-royal tomb that began to replicate the universe around the artist.

The tomb of Ankhtifi in Moalla (ca. 2050 BCE; Vandier 1950) can be considered the best example of this trend. The plan of the tomb is irregular and the interior space is encumbered by thirty columns, each one of them different in size and shape. The purpose was perhaps to give the idea of a thicket. The decoration on the walls was developed westward all around the room starting from the southern wall. First came the description

of the Nilotic landscape in which one of the most important religious events of the region is set: the riverine procession in honor of the hawk-god Hemen, who was worshipped in the region. The passage to the banks of the river is marked by a scene where Akhtifi is hunting and fishing in the marshlands (Plate 6). The entrance to the tomb separates this image from the scene on the north wall depicting inhabited and cultivated land where some men are busy working. On the upper registers of the east wall, rows of hunters accompanied by dogs head for the south wall. The latter is almost completely destroyed but it is likely that a scene of desert hunting was depicted on it. On the lowest register, heading in the opposite direction to the hunters, donkeys and cattle cross a ford and file back to the inhabited land. The “impressionistic” vein of the First Intermediate Period is mainly detectable in the use of the color. The decoration is dominated by the bright red of the men’s bodies that contrasts with the white of their skirts, and stands out against the cream color of the background.

A striking example of the indifference of the First Intermediate Period artist to form, considered of secondary importance to the expression of a precise moment, appears in the image of the man who is depicted in complete torsion on a column in front of the “Navigation of Hemen.” The unusual and deformed appearance of the figure derives from the intention of the artist to focus the attention on the festival dedicated to Hemen. The viewer is pushed to look at the wall by the description of the precise moment at which the man turns round to watch the ships passing on the river behind him. Similar intent is detectable in the image of the cow represented in full front view on the scene of the ford. The animal turns its head toward the facing column where a scene with a cow suckling a calf has been painted. In this case, the artist decided to catch the exact moment at which the cow stops walking to watch a scene worthy of attention (from its point of view as an animal).

The same feeling inspired the two butchery scenes in the tomb of Iti at Gebelein (Egyptian Museum of Turin, MET S 14354-8, and 14354-12; D’Amicone (2006), 72–73 and 68–69), close in time and space to that of Ankhtifi. In Iti, the grim detail of the blood gushing from the throat of the calf fixes forever the two images in a precise instant. In another painting (Egyptian Museum of Turin, S 14354-13; D’Amicone (2006), 74–75), the red color is used to emphasize the tenderness of the moment of a cow fondly licking its calf. The attention is focused on the tongue of the mother, whose red vividly catches the viewer’s eye.

Ankhtifi’s, Iti’s, and other decorated tombs of the First Intermediate Period sanctioned the triumph of painting that became, in this period, an independent and privileged means of expression through which artists freed themselves from the constraints imposed by relief. Despite the political division of the time, the new trend can be detected in necropolises of all regions in Egypt. This demonstrates that the country maintained a unique figurative language through the entire First Intermediate Period that eventually developed into the art of the Middle Kingdom without a real break.

## **The Middle Kingdom—the Province as a Center**

Until the reign of Senwosret III, nomarchs and provincial officials kept excavating their tombs on the rocky hills that bordered the Nile. As in the First Intermediate Period, the

decoration was mainly painted. The repertoire of figurative themes was directly inspired by that of the Old Kingdom. The actualization of classical scenes show peculiarities that change according to the site, thus demonstrating the existence of a common iconographic legacy that was modified by local artistic schools.

Among the few noteworthy painted monuments of Thebes in this period is the tomb of the Vizier Intefoker (TT 60; dating to the first half of the twentieth century BCE; Davies and Gardiner 1920). In keeping with the trend of the period, most of the scenes are inspired by the art of the Old Kingdom, even though the treatment of the subjects is freer than the static and ordered conventions of the former epoch. As in Theban monuments of the First Intermediate Period (for example, the Tomb of Djar (TT 366); dating to the reign of Mentuhotep II, ca. 2009–1959 BCE), the Tomb of Intefoker is characterized by the frequent omission of the register line between two scenes and by its substitution with elements that are an integral part of decoration. A skillful use of the latter practice is visible in the scene dedicated to hunting and fishing in the marshland. The fishermen are standing above the upper border of the same pool in which the hunters have thrown the hexagonal net. Thus two scenes are unified to create a new composition with a vertical and horizontal axis. Although close to each other, the two groups of men manifest two different artistic attitudes: the fishermen clustered in two symmetrical groups (three in the middle and the two at the extremities), are disposed according to postures that differentiate every man from the others; the three hunters are disposed in the same position. Only the slender proportions of their bodies and their wider spacing distinguish them from similar images of the Old Kingdom.

The Middle Kingdom tombs of Qubbet el-Hawa in Aswan have the peculiarity that only part of the monuments are decorated. Both painting and relief are used. This is the case with the Tomb of Sareneput I (tomb number 36; Müller (1940), 36–44). Despite the bad state of conservation, it is still possible to ascertain that the scenes painted on the lowermost register of the entrance pillared hall developed continuously from the southeast wall to the center of the north wall. The unifying motif is a water course that runs all along the wall: the zigzag describing the water changes progressively from dark and pale blue to black and gray. That difference marked a change in the landscape similar to that detectable in the tomb of Ankhtifi.

Completely different is the decoration in the Tomb of Sareneput II (tomb number 31; Müller (1940), 62–88), the grandson of the former official. The change in only two generations shows a lack of unity in the decorative choices that operated in the tombs of Qubbet el-Hawa, whose style appears more rooted in a reference to the art of the Old Kingdom than a continuation of the First Intermediate Period achievements.

Unlike the tombs of Qubbet el-Hawa, those of Beni Hasan display a continuity both in their architecture and decoration for more than a century (twenty-first to nineteenth centuries BCE). At Beni Hasan, the style of painting shows traces of the strong color contrast typical of the First Intermediate Period. The images of the owner and the members of his family have well-balanced proportions and are characterized by a type of hieratic austerity clearly influenced by Old Kingdom art. The secondary figures are more stylized and freely positioned in space. The use of dividing lines between registers is more accurate, and floating images (characteristic of the First Intermediate Period and still in use in the contemporary tombs at Thebes) are very limited.

Due to the fact that they cover about two centuries, the tomb paintings of Beni Hasan (BH) give us a unique opportunity to illustrate the development of the treatment of iconographic themes. This is the case, for example, with the hunting in the desert scene. A change is already perceptible between the tomb of Baket III (BH 15; end of the twenty-first century BCE) and Khety's (BH 17; early twentieth century BCE) where the desert is more defined and the number of animals decreases. In the tomb of Amenemhat (BH 2; reign of Senwosret I, ca. 1920–1875 BCE), the rocks become more prominent and the movement of men and animals is more vividly characterized. The more realistic rendering of the scene attained its peak in the tomb of Khnumhotep II (BH 3, early nineteenth century BCE). The wild bull shot by an arrow and dying is one of the most successful images of this naturalistic tendency. The figure of the animal can be compared with that of a man depicted in the act of holding an antelope at the bottom left of the same wall. To stress the difficulty of the action, he is represented with the upper part of the body in three-quarters view, unusual for the Egyptian art.

## **The Second Intermediate Period**

With the exception of some stelae, there are few examples of painted monuments that can be safely dated to the Second Intermediate Period. Among those are the rock tombs of Horemkhauef at Hierakonpolis and the Governor Sobeknakht at El-Kab that can be roughly dated to the beginning of the sixteenth century BCE (Davies 2001a). Their decoration is reminiscent of the First Intermediate Period, although the human figures have more elegant proportions and remind one of the Middle Kingdom. The two tombs were carried out by the artist Sedjemnetjeru (Davies (2001a), 119–120) whose figure was depicted on the walls of both monuments. He, probably, has to be credited with the integration of painting and architectural context detectable in some parts of the monument. That tendency, with its antecedent in the tomb of Ankhtifi at El-Moalla, resulted in the image of the stone-cutter depicted in the act of removing a boulder that actually protrudes from the rock (Davies (2001a), 120, pl. 41.3). A similar scene is repeated in the tomb of Sobeknakht at El-Kab where the first of four stonecutters painted on the west wall, is depicted in the act of completing the rock corner in front of him; the second raises his chisel as he gives the final touch to the upper register line (Davies (2001a) 120, pl. 45.1).

The New Kingdom's early painted tombs in Thebes (Tetyky, TT 15; User, TT 21; and Amenemhat, TT 340) can be considered a continuation of the previous epoch's achievements. That peculiarity is still detectable in the tomb of Ineni (TT 81), that dates to the early fifteenth century BCE.

## **The “Minoan Painting” of Palace F at Tell el-Dab'a**

The unnumbered fragments of painted plaster found in the debris covering the remains of Palace F at Ezbet Helmy (the western edge of the site of Tell el-Dab'a, ancient Avaris) in the eastern Delta (Bietak 1992) are considered to be more or less contemporary. Their discovery has brought an unexpected element into the evaluation of the history

of ancient Egyptian painting. Basing his hypothesis mainly on stylistic similarities, Bietak has suggested that the palace paintings had a Minoan origin and that the decoration of Palace F was executed by artists from Crete (Bietak (1999), 37–38). The theory has found fertile ground in a field of research already dominated by ideas based on the presumed detection of Minoan influences on several of the paintings discovered in the Near East and Egypt. The consequence has been a further *a posteriori* “Aegeanization” of the painted decoration found in sites like Mari, Qatna, Alalakh, and Tell Kabri and in Egyptian monuments, especially tombs of and palaces of the middle of Dynasty 18.

The pictorial technique of the Tell el-Dab'a fragments has been compared with the Minoan and East Mediterranean “frescos” (Brynsbaert (2007), 160) without taking into account that a similar technique is also attested for the floor paintings of Tell el-Amarna palaces (Weatherhead (2007), 365). The fact that the Tell el-Dab'a decorative maze motif was also intended for a floor (Bietak, Marinatos, and Palivou (2007), 43) made room for the explanation that such technical correspondence lies in the direct intervention of skilled Minoan workers. In both cases, the “fresco-effect” could rather depend on the use of a plaster with a high concentration of lime (more porous and consequently more permeable to the penetration of pigments) motivated by the necessity of having a resistant surface on which people could walk without damaging the paintings.

Another proof of the Minoan origin of these fragments has been found in the peculiar color palette used for the Tell el-Dab'a paintings that, according to Bietak, has more parallels in Minoan than in Egyptian art. That is true when the comparison is limited to tomb decoration. Once it is extended to palaces (Malkata, for example), the Tell el-Dab'a red and yellow backgrounds have many parallels. A similar shade of red, for instance, had already been used as a background for painting as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century BCE in the palace of Yarim-Lim at Alalakh.

Among the proposed reconstructions of the Tell el-Dab'a paintings that have attracted the attention of the scholars are the so-called “Taureador Scenes” (Bietak, Marinatos and Palivou 2007) considered quintessential to Minoan culture between the seventeenth and fifteenth centuries BCE (see Figure 21.2 in Mendoza, this volume) since Evans's excavations at Knossos. Images of men who appear to be somersaulting over bulls, however, are already attested on Syrian cylinder seals of the eighteenth century BCE (Collon (1994), 86, pls. 1.1–4). The same objects also evidence figures of animals in the so-called “flying gallop pose,” which, along with the images of griffins that reoccur among the Tell el-Dab'a paintings, are considered to be other distinctive features of Minoan art. Some of the men somersaulting over the bulls on the cylinder seals are dressed in a short kilt similar to the clothing attested in the Knossos and Tell el-Dab'a paintings. The image of the “Taureadors” is also characterized by long, curly hair and ankle-boots. Similar attire distinguishes some of the northern foreigners whose images appear in a group of non-royal Theban tombs that are roughly contemporary with the period between the reigns of Hatshepsut and Amenhotep II (ca. 1479–1400 BCE). On the basis of the similarity of the attire and of the products the foreigners are bearing, the ethnicity of these people has been identified as Minoan.

Although the striking similarities between the Syrian seals, the Minoan paintings, the Tell el-Dab'a plaster fragments and in the private Theban tombs are undeniable, the style of the treatment of the human figure in all these monuments is quite different. From this point of view, the Tell el-Dab'a figures look closer to Egyptian figures than to those in the

Syrian and Minoan repertoires where the human body has an exaggerated slenderness of the limbs. Furthermore, on the Ezbet Helmy fragments, the bodies are not outlined and are reminiscent of the secondary figures of the First Intermediate Period. Similar images are also found on the northern wall of the Tomb of Amenemhat at Deir el-Medina (TT 340; Cherpion (1999), 21–23, 34–35), which is only a little earlier than the Tell el-Dab'a paintings. Despite these parallels, the position of the limbs and a certain rigidity in the figural treatment displayed by the Tell el-Dab'a fragments, however, would point to a non-Egyptian artistic milieu.

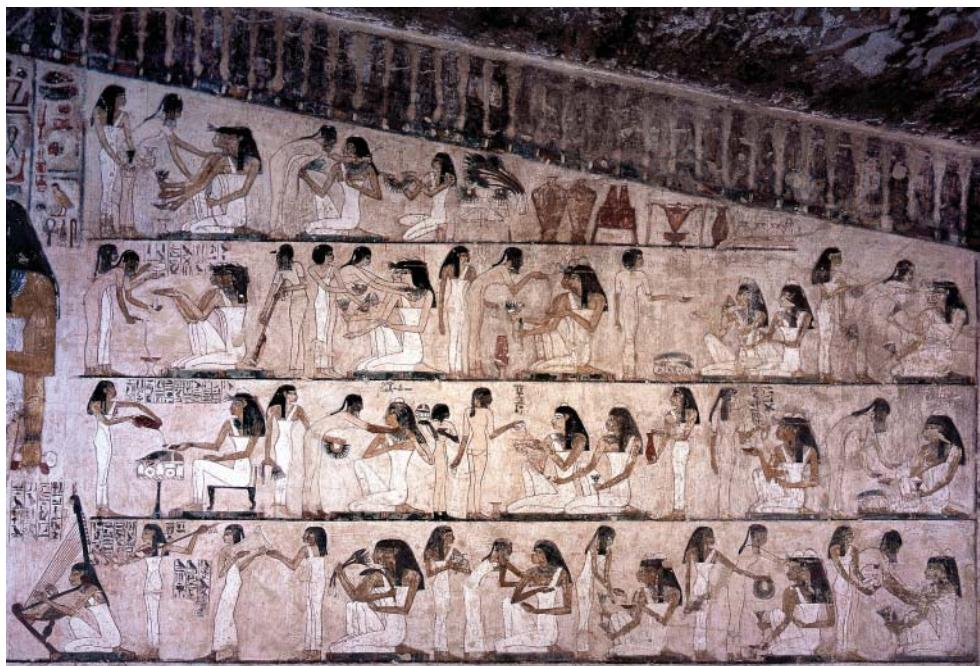
In light of these observations, the plaster fragments from Tell el-Dab'a appear more the product of a contemporary artistic vocabulary than of a given culture. They display more elements that trace back to Syro-Palestinian and Egyptian cultures than features attributable exclusively to the Minoan world. There is no need to assume that a group of artists traveled from Crete as far as the boundaries of Egypt (Bietak (2005), 79). It is simpler to attribute these extraordinary works to local artists, belonging perhaps more to a Semitic than an Egyptian milieu. That attribution only means to recognize the autonomy and creativity of the pictorial art produced in the Syro-Palestinian region (also comprising the Eastern Egyptian Delta), which has too often been considered either a land of conquest or an enormous emporium without taking into account its typical culture, which is hastily dismissed as borderline in comparison with that of the great civilizations of the Aegean, Mesopotamia, and Egypt. The existence of a cultural *koiné* that unified the Aegean, the Near East, and Egypt has been already offered by Smith (1965) who postulated the existence of an “International Style.” That idea has been recently reproposed by Crowley ((1989), 192–201, 297, Table 2 and (1998), 177) under the label of an “International Repertoire.”

## The New Kingdom and the Peak of Egyptian Painting

The century that spans roughly the reigns between Thutmose III and Amenhotep III (ca. 1479–1353 BCE) can be considered the peak of the Egyptian painting. Not only did artists reach an unrivalled formal perfection, but they also demonstrated a fertile innovation that resulted in the creation of real masterpieces that still excite universal admiration. The conspicuous number of decorated Theban tombs and the outstanding preservation of their decoration have motivated a fair number of studies about them.

The incompleteness of the decoration in the tomb of Suemniwet (TT 92; dating to the reigns of Thutmose III/Amenhotep II) allowed Betsy Bryan (1995, 2001) to make interesting observations on the organization of the artistic workforce and the different painting methods used. The late Roland Tefnин started the study and conservation of the chapel of the Tomb of Sennefer (TT 96) together with that of his cousin Amenemopet (TT 29) a decade ago (Tefnин and Perier-d'Ieteren 2002). His untimely death did not allow him to complete the work, which was carried on by his pupils (Angenot 2007; Laboury and Tavier 2010). Among the other Theban tombs that recently received particular attention from the point of view of the artistic evaluation of the painting are those of Sennefri (TT 99; Strudwick 2000 and in press) and Menna (TT 69; Hartwig 2013a).

The decoration of the private tombs carried out between the reigns of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II shows a fertile creativeness that brought a wave of innovation into



**Figure 13.1** Banquet, tomb of Rekhmire (TT 100), New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, Thebes. Photograph: MAIL (Italian Archaeological Mission to Luxor); © Ass. Cult. Per lo Studio dell'Egitto e Sudan NGO.

a crystalized iconographic repertoire. In every monument it is possible to find some invention that makes it different from the others. In the crypt of the tomb of Sennefer (TT 96B) the idea is to take advantage of the particular hardness of the limestone and, instead of flattening the surface, to leave the ceiling uneven to create two levels differentiated through the painting that transforms the lowermost into a canopy of colorful mats and the uppermost into a pergola of vine plants, visible only in the north and west sides of the room. In the tomb of Rekhmire (TT 100), the invention is more subtle and is detectable in the scene of the funerary banquet of the women (Figure 13.1). At the center is a young naked girl who is pouring a drink into the cup of a lady. She presents her back to the viewer and turns her head to the right; her unusual pose attracts attention and makes the stereotypical image of the banquet look as if it were alive.

An important study that brought a better understanding of the painting of this period is by Melinda Hartwig (2004), who focused on the decoration of the Theban tomb chapels dated between the reigns of Thutmose IV and Amenhotep III. Hartwig's accurate analysis of several decorative themes in connection with the titles of the tombs' owners convincingly demonstrated the existence of workshops connected either to the religious (Temple Style) or the civil (Court Style) administration.

Recent discoveries hint at a possible relationship between the artists who worked on the decoration of a few Saqqara tombs dated to the first part of Dynasty 18 (Tomb Bub. I.19) and those who lived in the village of Deir el-Medina (Zivie (2010), 187). There are striking similarities between the vine pergola motif painted on the ceilings of the

Tomb Bub. II.x (Zivie (2010), pl. 48) and Amenemhat's (TT 340) at Deir el-Medina (Cherpion (1999), pl. 23).

A revival of decoration in relief brought to an almost complete halt the use of painting in the decoration of Theban tombs during the reign of Amenhotep III (ca. 1390–1353 BCE). The funeral scene in the tomb of Ramose (TT 55), with the group of mourning women, is one of the last images belonging to the funerary painted repertoire of that epoch in which, once again, the artists demonstrated an innovative vitality.

## The Palatine Painting of Mid Dynasty 18

On the site of Malkata are still visible the remains of the huge palace that Amenhotep III decided to build on the West Bank at Thebes. Several painting fragments that once embellished the mud-brick structures were recovered during the excavations. Some belonged to the ceilings and give the idea that the room was open to the sky. Flights of ducks and doves (Metropolitan Museum of New York, 12.180.258 and 12.180.257) are painted against a yellow background, which reproduces the light of the sun. Their arrangement within the figurative space avoids any symmetry or repetition, and tries to convey the impression that they have just spread their wings, frightened by whoever entered the room. Most of the decoration of the buildings in Malkata was aimed at the reproduction of nature and the same inspiration is found in the later palace of Akhenaten (ca. 1353–1336 BCE) at Tell el-Amarna where the painted floors were mainly inspired by scenes of the life in lakes and marshlands. In that specific case, the painting is spread on plaster with a high concentration of lime. That expedient could have been adopted to get a stronger decorated surface on which people walked. The deeper penetration of some pigments gave room to the hypothesis of the use of an *a fresco* technique (Weatherhead (2007), 366–371). Weatherhead has corrected that idea by asserting that it is more likely only areas with white painting were *a fresco*, taking into account that the pigment was already present in the plaster layer.

The wall decoration of the Tell el-Amarna walls is less preserved than that of the floors. Furthermore many fragments of painted plaster were taken away and dispersed among several Egyptian collections all over the world. Thus, most of the Tell el-Amarna painted decoration is nowadays known only through facsimile paintings. Copies are almost the only testimony to the Northern Palace “Green Room” decoration (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 30.4.136) considered a masterpiece of the painting of the period. It describes the landscape at the rim of a watercourse. On the plinth, two dark brown bands crossed by a pale blue stripe (with black zigzag lines) define the aquatic space over which float some water lilies. Above the plinth, a multitude of large leaves pour out a tangle of vegetation, painted in green, red, and white against a green background. Interspersed among the plants are birds whose plumage is meticulously painted.

## The Royal Tombs of the New Kingdom

The period subsequent to Amarna is marked by the carrying out of three royal tombs over a period of few years. The tombs of Tutankhamun (KV 62) and Ay (KV 23) have

completely painted decoration whose simplicity has to be attributed to a certain haste in completing the monuments. Figures that are strongly reminiscent of Amarna proportions stand against a yellow surface similar to that used in the tomb of Thutmose IV (KV 43). In the tomb of Ay, the hunting in the marshland scene is clearly inspired by the decorative tradition of the private tombs and its selection has certainly to be attributed to the non-royal origins of the owner. The decoration of the tomb of Horemheb (KV 57) shows the intention of re-establishing a connection with the royal tombs of the pre-Amarna period.

Since the beginning of Dynasty 18, the decoration of the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings had always followed rules established by protocol and tradition, and artists enjoyed less freedom of expression than in the private tombs. In the tomb of Thutmose III (KV 34) transforming the walls into a sheet of a papyrus on which to reproduce the Book of the Amduat can be considered to a certain degree an artistic act.

Starting with Horemheb's (KV 57), royal tomb decoration became uniform, and was carried out in gaudy painted sunk relief. Before reaching standardization, however, royal funerary art produced in the tomb of Sety I (KV 17) an unrivaled masterpiece where painting harmoniously completed the reliefs. The tomb of Nefertari (QV 66) was in the same artistic stream, even if its paintings demonstrate a loss in softness and liveliness.

## Ramesside Painting

The Ramesside Period is characterized by painted reliefs often used to express bombastic propaganda especially on the temples built by the kings of Dynasties 19 and 20 (ca. 1292–1077 BCE). Decoration exclusively in painting is mainly used in the workmen's tombs of Deir el-Medina. Those monuments evidently reflected what was happening in the royal necropolis and display a progressive standardization. The figurative repertory is mainly based on the Book of the Dead and, to a minor extent, on the Book of the Gates. In the tombs of Deir el-Medina, the creative impulse of Dynasty 18 is almost absent. The painted walls of the tombs of the most prominent members of the community are remarkable more for the choice of brilliant colors (the background is almost exclusively yellow) than for artistic inventions. During Dynasty 19, some tombs display decoration based on what has been called the "Monochromatic Style" (Bruyère 1952). Several hypotheses have been formulated about this kind of painting, which made an extensive and almost exclusive use of yellow (some details of the figure are in black and the outlines in red) on a white background. The most convincing hypothesis concerns the existence of a specific artistic school mainly active in the reign of Ramesses II.

The tomb of Inherkhau (TT 359) is almost the exception for its quality among the tombs of the Deir el-Medina. It dates to Dynasty 20 and its decoration has been attributed to the artist-brothers Nebnefer and Hormin (Keller 2001). An indisputable mastery is detectable in the image of Inherkhau who is depicted with his spouse and their children in what reminds some of an Amarna royal family domestic scene. The illustration where the cat kills the snake under the shadow of the Ished-tree (Book of the Dead, Chapter 17; Figure 13.2) is permeated by a strong liveliness and also shows a certain irony: the artist clearly took the side of the poor reptile that bloodily succumbs under the knife of the monstrous animal that is only vaguely reminiscent of a real cat.



**Figure 13.2** A cat killing a snake under the shadow of the Ished-tree (Book of the Dead, Chapter 17), tomb of Inher-khau (TT 359), New Kingdom, Dynasty 20, Deir el-Medina. Photograph: MAIL (Italian Archaeological Mission to Luxor); © Ass. Cult. Per lo Studio dell'Egitto e Sudan NGO.

The reuse of earlier monuments is typical of the Ramesside period. It is the case of the tomb of Imiseba (TT 65) who lived in the second half of the twelfth century BCE, and usurped the tomb of Nebamun (dated to the first half of the fifteenth century BCE), modifying and readapting the decoration to fit his own needs (Bács 2011). The figurative repertory of the transverse hall describes some important Theban liturgical festivals that were slavishly copied (most probably by Hormin, the same artist who worked in the tomb of Inher-khau) from the decoration of temples. Támas Bács (2001) 97 has demonstrated that the Amun boat painted on the north wall is an exact copy of the image that Sety I (ca. 1290–1279 BCE) had carved in the Great Hypostyle Hall of the Temple of Amun-Re at Karnak.

## The First Millennium BCE

With the end of the New Kingdom, the dead started to be buried in coffins in common graves. Their painted surfaces summarized all the ritual funerary imagery the deceased needed in the Netherworld. Other than on coffins, painting mainly appears on other items of the burial furniture that are almost always mass-produced. Some artistic ambitions are noticeable on the stelae that, in some cases, were placed together with the dead. That of Taperet (Musée du Louvre, Paris, E 52) is often mentioned for its formal beauty,

but it also holds a certain interest because of its peculiar visual rendering of the sunlight. The artist materialized the sun's rays into lotus flowers, painted in yellow, red, green, and blue. It is as if his eye acted as a sort of prism that, through the dispersion of light, broke down the rays into their basic chromatic components. The visual description of the "Taperet artist" demonstrates a clear and advanced knowledge of light: before Epicurus (341–270 BCE) the rainbow colors were considered to be three, and blue was added only in modern times (Pastoureau (2000), 30–31).

The celebration of the dead took a gigantic form at the beginning of the seventh century BCE with the cenotaphs that high officials decided to prepare for themselves in the necropolis of the Assasif. These monuments were decorated with painted relief with a palette reduced to the almost exclusive use of blue and red (Plate 7). That bichromatic selection corresponds more to semantic exigencies than to artistic expression. For Egyptian culture, blue and red could be placed in meaningful opposition more than other hues: darkness and light, water and earth, humidity and dryness, divine and human, death and life. Since that period and until the arrival of Romans, Egyptian civilization often indulged in this two-color scheme with the insertion of white and yellow starting from Ptolemaic times.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Excellent and updated summaries, useful as an introduction to the study of painting in Ancient Egypt, can be found in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (Redford, 2001, see especially Hartwig 2001 and Robins 2001). A volume completely focused on wall painting but that can be considered a first attempt at analyzing the work of more than two millennia is the book on Egyptian wall painting by the author of the present contribution (Tiradritti 2008). Painting is one of the fields of study that has most aroused Egyptologists' interest in the last two decades and has been subject of some international colloquia mainly focused on color (Colinart and Menu 1998; Davies 2001b; Angenot and Tiradritti in press). On the perception and terminology of colors the study by Baines (1985) can be considered seminal. In recent years other scholars have devoted their researches on that topic (Mysliwiec 2006; Cwiek 2007; Warburton 2007, 2008; Tiradritti (2008), 24–62; Mathieu 2009).

Another topic greatly debated in recent years has been the possibility of ascertaining the identity of the artists in ancient Egypt. Although some sporadic attempts have already been made since the 1950s (Mekhitarian 1956, 1957; Kozloff 1979), the discussion on this topic has followed the new trend of interest in painting and has been the focus of several researches centered on the monuments of Beni Hasan (Shedid (1994), 87–93), Thebes (Shedid 1988; Keller (1993), 63–67), and Amarna (Owen and Kemp 2004) necropolis. Substantial progress in this direction has been also made by Melinda Hartwig (2004) through the study dedicated to the decoration of the Theban Tombs in the late fifteenth and the early fourteenth centuries BCE.

For the knowledge of painting materials, see the basic study by Lee and Quirke (2000) that has greatly profited by the British Museum project of pigment analysis aimed at the conservation and treatment of painted papyri.

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## CHAPTER 14

# Coffins, Cartonnage, and Sarcophagi

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Beginning with the first complex civilization in Egypt in the mid fourth millennium BCE to the last days of paganism in the third and fourth centuries CE, ancient people crafted decorated coffins, cartonnages, and sarcophagi. These body containers served broad religious, social, and practical functions for their ancient Egyptian owners, and were created to enclose, display, protect, and transform a human corpse. The inclusion of human flesh and bone into a work of crafted visual art adds an additional layer of complexity to the object's functional meaning. Therefore, coffins, sarcophagi, and cartonnage must always be interpreted with reference to the corpse inside; they acted as shelters, homes, or even as secondary bodies made of imperishable material like wood or stone. From the Pre-dynastic to the Middle Kingdom, when body containers were rectangular in shape, the coffin was crafted as a kind of architectural element—a house for the dead person inside. From the New Kingdom onwards, when coffins took on an anthropomorphic shape, they functioned as a replacement body for the dead, meant to refashion him or her into an idealized and youthful form.

No matter what time period, the Egyptian body container was treated multi-dimensionally. Almost all ancient Egyptian body containers include external decoration that identifies the deceased on the inside by means of inscriptions with the name, titles, and some indication of the gender of the dead, as well as depictions of the deceased in an idealized human form. The inside of the container often contained representations of the realm of the dead as well as the tools and nourishment required to survive the journey there. Middle Kingdom coffins, for example, include labeled maps to guide the dead to their destination (Hermsen 1991; Backes 2003), in addition to lengthy text spells allowing the deceased to take on alternative forms, find loved ones, and provide protection from dangerous demons (Faulkner 1973–1978; Willems 1996a).

It is important to remember that the ancient Egyptians meant these body containers to have multiple viewers—first, the living audience left behind who viewed the coffin from

the outside during funerary rituals, and second, the deceased who the Egyptians believed was looking at the object from the space inside the coffin. These various perspectives encouraged careful decoration of the coffin interior that it was impossible for the living to see once the mummy was placed inside. Having said this, coffin decoration varies through the millennia, and there are periods when it was considered fashionable to leave the coffin interior unadorned. During the New Kingdom, for example, the interior of an anthropoid coffin was painted only with a shiny black resin, representative of the rich black earth of regeneration and the dark void of the underworld space.

## The Function of the Body Container

Because an ancient Egyptian body container was understood to protect and transform the dead, most people were keen to acquire one if they could afford it. While it is impossible to get an exact count of all the surviving coffins, sarcophagi, and cartonnages from ancient Egypt, it would be safe to say that tens of thousands of them endure, including some high-quality examples preserved in museums around the world and thousands more left in Egypt's graveyards, complete or in pieces. The sheer numbers of body containers are a testament to the ancient Egyptian belief in a kind of functional materialism—that a *physical* and *crafted* object could act for the deceased in a number of ways (Cooney 2008a).

First, the Egyptians believed the body container could protect the body of the dead, creating a material perimeter of sorts and keeping the delicate corpse intact. For example, coffins from Dynasties 18 to 21 usually include depictions of the goddess Nut on the chest of an anthropoid coffin, the four Sons of Horus, Thoth, and Anubis on the case sides, Isis at the feet, and Nephthys at the coffin's head, all of whom provided a kind of force-field against the powers of malice in the afterlife.

The Egyptian body container was also meant to magically provide for the dead in the afterlife by means of pictures of food, oils, linens, and other objects which could become real; also by means of inscriptions that included lists of offerings for the dead or magical spells which were thought to bring actual food, drink, and other luxuries into being.

Another of the body container's functions was to act as a physical portal between the worlds of the living and the dead. Most coffins have some means of connection placed on its surface such as a pair of *udjat*-eyes, which were painted on the exterior of coffins throughout Egyptian history. During the Old and Middle Kingdom, they were placed at one end of the rectangular coffin so that the dead could see out if laid on his or her side. According to Egyptian belief, these hieroglyphic eyes allowed the dead to see and move beyond the coffin space. A false door was often painted on the interior of such coffins right in front of the face of the deceased to provide a passage through which the soul could travel.

On anthropoid coffins of the New Kingdom and thereafter, *udjat*-eyes were retained on the coffin sides and front. However, the depiction of the deceased's face—with open eyes, nose, and mouth carved from wood—was understood to be the means of access between the worlds of the living and the dead. The mummy's actual face would have been directly

behind this ideal representation when the corpse was placed into the coffin, and the painting of facial features onto the coffin's surface allowed the dead to see, taste, and smell the living world. The *physical presence* of coffins, sarcophagi, and cartonnage allowed the spirit of the dead to come into the world of the living, and likewise for the living to commune with the dead. The coffin was therefore used as a tool of communication, made of materials from this world but containing the body of the dead.

The body container was also believed to have transformative abilities. The coffin was meant to change the dead into a kind of divinity, into an *akh*-soul that had successfully passed into the afterlife unscathed. The deceased individual was equated with the god of the underworld Osiris and the sun god, because of these gods' ability to raise themselves from the dead. From Dynasty 6 on, the deceased's name and titles are written with that of Osiris in hieroglyphs on the coffin (Assmann (2005), 33, 74), essentially renaming the dead as an Osiris figure capable of rebirth. Spells invoking Osiris and the sun god were inscribed onto the body container enveloping the dead. During the New Kingdom, images of Osirian and solar divinities were painted onto the surface of the body container, creating a new reality for the dead man or woman in which he or she could dwell with these gods in the afterlife. On many Egyptian coffins, the deceased is pictured receiving offerings in the afterlife, seated before a table overflowing with food and drink. In later dynasties the dead appear in a pure white garment in the company of the gods, with hands raised in worship. From the ancient Egyptian point of view, to depict the dead in this way was to create such an actuality, The coffin's physical presence and decoration not only allowed the transformation of the dead into an eternal being, it depicted this state as a *fait accompli*.

The body container was also a physical entrance into the afterlife itself, a space that the Egyptians called the *duat*, believed to be inside the body of the sky goddess Nut, the mother of Osiris and the sun god (Allen 1988). Placing the dead into the coffin interior was therefore akin to putting him or her onto a fast track to the parts of the *duat* where the Blessed Dead dwelled. From the perspective of the deceased inside the coffin, he or she was believed to be inside Nut (Assmann (2005), 168–172). The coffin was therefore a kind of womb, which is reflected in the Old Kingdom word for sarcophagus *mwt* or "mother." In later periods, inner body containers were often called *sukhet* or "egg," equating the body container with this holder of new life (Cooney (2007), 17–43). In the New Kingdom and later, the most important text on the coffin lid read, "Words spoken by the Osiris NN, 'Oh my mother Nut, stretch yourself over me that I may be placed among the Imperishable Stars.'" Late Period coffins often included the figure of the sky goddess on the interior lid stretched out over the deceased in a kind of embrace. Sometimes her body was decorated with five-pointed stars, representing the constellations of the night sky.

Body containers served a variety of religious purposes for the deceased, but we should not forget that coffins were also meant to perform social functions as the focus of public funerary rituals. Body containers were ideally commissioned and created during the lifetime of the deceased, who would have taken great care to put the best foot forward into the afterlife. The coffin displayed the social and economic situation of the dead man or woman, but it was also a reflection on the status of his or her family. In social terms,

ancient Egyptian body containers can be categorized as objects of conspicuous display meant to claim social status in this life and the next. They were luxury items that could be embellished with painting, relief, or even inlay and gilding.

Coffin ownership was reserved for the elite who could afford to buy and bury them in the ground, thus taking the wealth of wood, inlay, and gilding out of economic circulation. The creation of richly decorated body containers was a clever way of magically catapulting one's wealth into the afterlife. Not only did the coffin showcase the status of the dead in life, it enabled him or her to continue in an elite position in the afterlife. If we accept that only a small minority, perhaps less than 5 percent of ancient Egyptians, could afford a coffin of their very own, it is still likely that non-elites would have desired the protection, transformation, and communication provided by a coffin even though they could not afford their own discrete object. It is possible, therefore, that many body containers were used temporarily within ritual practice but were not buried with the deceased (Cooney (2007), 275–279).

## Coffin Types

While the poor made do with simple textiles like palm-rib matting, roughly woven linen shrouds, or were simply interred in a pit in the sand (Grajetzki 2003), elite ancient Egyptians purchased all kinds of body containers such as coffins, cartonnages, and sarcophagi to surround and protect the deceased. The word “coffin” is generally used in current Egyptology to describe a wooden container that held the corpse, while the “sarcophagus” usually describes an object made of stone that was big enough to contain one or more coffins. For example, during the Old and Middle Kingdoms, it was common for a high elite individual to be buried in an inner rectangular coffin made of decorated wood which fit into an outer rectangular sarcophagus made of stone. The distinction between “coffin” and “sarcophagus” can be complicated, particularly because Egyptologists specializing in the New Kingdom and later often refer to an outer rectangular container as a “sarcophagus” even if it was made out of wood.

Some anthropoid wooden covers are called “mummy boards” by Egyptologists because they do not enclose the corpse but instead lie on top of it. The “cartonnage” usually refers to an innermost piece that enveloped the body, and is differentiated by its material, a kind of *papier maché* made of linen and plaster. “Cartonnage” can describe a mummy mask which covered the head and upper chest, a mummy board which covered the top of the body, or a shell which fit tightly around the entire corpse. There are still many disagreements about appropriate terms for body containers. For instance, many older publications used the word “sarcophagus” for what would now be called a “coffin.” It should also be noted that the term “coffin studies” is often used by Egyptologists to describe the study of all body containers, including sarcophagi and cartonnage.

The words used by western Egyptologists are not always appropriate in meaning from the Egyptian perspective. For example, the Greek word “sarcophagus” meaning “flesh-eater” does not fit with an Egyptian mindset of bodily preservation. The ancient Egyptians naturally had their own specialized vocabulary for different body containers, and these changed and developed over the 3,000 plus years of coffin use. The word *qerset* denotes the “burial” in a general sense, but it could also be used to describe a

rectangular sarcophagus with a vaulted lid. The word *afdet* means “chest” and seems to have denoted a wooden box-like container for the dead. The word *djebat* means “shrine” and described the rectangular outer sarcophagus of the New Kingdom. The word *wet* referred to the coffin or to the embalmed body inside, depending on how it was written, and during the New Kingdom it described the wooden coffin which took on bodily form. Another word for a coffin was *neb ankh* or “lord of life,” which seemed to refer to the potential of the container to transform the deceased into a form of Osiris. The word *sukhet* or “egg” usually denotes a mummy board or cartonnage piece that contains the dead like a cocoon, preparing him or her for rebirth. There are dozens of Egyptian terms for different body containers, and most end in a *-t*, indicating a feminine word, thus fitting with the Egyptian understanding of the body container as a womb-like enclosure or the body of Nut (Cooney 2008b).

## Coffins and Ancient Egyptian Society

The ancient Egyptians crafted their body containers to nest inside one another to make a set that could fit into a tomb in a spatially efficient way. Wealthy Egyptians tried to include as many pieces in their coffin set as possible (Bettum 2013). During the later Middle Kingdom, a rich official might have owned a stone sarcophagus, inside of which were a wooden rectangular coffin and a mummy mask covering his corpse. During the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period, wealthy individuals commissioned nested wooden anthropoid coffin sets of three to five pieces, including as many as three coffins, plus a mummy board and mask. Lesser elites could usually afford only one coffin, maybe with an additional mummy mask of cartonnage. The ancient Egyptians who could afford to commission and bury coffins in their tombs were of elite status. In fact, a coffin buried in a tomb was clear evidence of disposable income. The vast majority of ancient Egyptians could not afford any kind of coffin, making do instead with simple wrappings for the body.

Despite the great expense of coffins, they were far more affordable than the decorated tombs, stone relief, or statuary of the wealthiest Egyptians. Coffins were accessible to a broad swath of society, which resulted in significant variations from coffin to coffin in the quality of materials and craftsmanship. Many ancient Egyptian coffins were poorly painted and constructed. However, a tiny minority of body containers display impeccable craftsmanship, made from precious metals with delicate inlay work like the golden coffin set of King Tutankhamun. Nonetheless, every single coffin is indicative of an exclusive place in society that most Egyptians could not attain.

For the Egyptologist, coffins, sarcophagi, and cartonnage are precious clues to the place of a given individual within elite society. For example, when archaeologists uncovered the tomb of Iurudef, a semi-intact tomb of the New Kingdom used until the Third Intermediate Period in Saqqara, they found only a few wooden coffins among dozens of other corpses buried only in textile wrappings. The researchers were quickly able to conclude that those individuals with coffins had the highest social status among their social group (Raven 1991). In the same way, Egyptologists can assume that if an individual owned a sarcophagus of hard stone like granite, as we often see at the Old Kingdom necropolis of Giza, then the owners were of very high status because granite found its source in the



**Figure 14.1** Old Kingdom red granite sarcophagus from Giza with palace facade decoration, British Museum EA 71620. © Trustees of the British Museum.

royal monopoly of state quarries (Figure 14.1). In comparison, limestone was cheaper, more readily available and easier to cut. In the same way, a coffin of imported cedar from the Levant, such as the early Middle Kingdom coffin of Djehutynakht (Freed et al. 2009; see Plate 3), also falls into a higher value category compared to another coffin of the same date made of local sycamore, tamarisk, or acacia wood. Cedar had a pleasant aroma and an even grain, allowing the carpenter to use large planks, while local Egyptian wood was knotty and had to be pieced together from small scraps (Nicholson and Shaw 2000).

## Coffin Studies Methodologies

Coffin studies are invariably very specialized, making it difficult for the non-Egyptologist art historian or anthropologist to participate in the discourse. It requires time and training for a researcher to understand the visual differences between coffins of Dynasties 11 and 12 or between mummy masks of Dynasties 18 and 19, for instance, and dating disagreements will always haunt the discipline. In addition, the sheer number of body containers turns many potential researchers away. There are thousands upon thousands of coffins, sarcophagi, and cartonnage objects spread about hundreds of institutions in Egypt, Europe, the Americas, and Asia, necessitating an encyclopedic approach and further specialization *within* the field of Egyptian coffin studies. In fact, the study of body containers is generally divided into chronological divisions to which researchers devote their energies: (1), Archaic Period and Old Kingdom; (2), First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom; (3), Second Intermediate Period and New Kingdom; (4), Third Intermediate Period; (5), Late Period; (6), Ptolemaic Period; and (7), the Roman Period. Most studies are limited to one period, and it is rare that a scholar can master the visual markers, typology, and meaning of body containers throughout all of the different time periods.

Provenance issues are a constant worry to Egyptian coffin specialists, partly because coffins were so portable and reusable. Tomb robbery and usurpation were common practices in the ancient world (Baines and Lacovara 2002; Cooney 2011). Adding to those issues, every Egyptologist has heard tales of early nineteenth-century campfires made of ancient coffins or even mummies (Ikram and Dodson 1998). From the eighteenth century until quite recently, coffins, sarcophagi, and cartonnage considered aesthetically pleasing or materially valuable were taken from their tombs and shipped off to collectors all over the world with no thought of recording a findspot or other associated objects. Not only have we lost provenance information for many of the coffins in institutions around the world, but this kind of collecting has ignored the coffins and containers of lower elites. Any funerary objects considered ugly, provincial, or poorly made were passed over by collectors or even used for other purposes, thus removing them from the archaeological and scholarly record (Grajetzki 2003). Even when coffins were found intact, like the caches of Dynasty 21 coffins belonging to the Amun priesthood in western Thebes (Niwinski 1988) or the Dynasty 19 tomb of Sennedjem at Deir el-Medina (Shedid and Shedid 1994), objects were not removed by controlled excavations. Exact findspots and associations were usually not recorded by nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century archaeologists. Additionally, these coffins were then sold off to dozens of different collections, splitting up each burial deposit. Coffins from intact tombs were also lost or sold to a buyer with no interest in showing the piece to the public. Occasionally, a coffin will pop up in a very unlikely place, such as in the private museum of landed gentry in a castle basement or in the living room of a private collector in a large city. Egyptian coffins are still traded on the antiquities market and, for most of them, there is little information about their original provenance in Egypt beyond the general region.

The problem of provenance demands that Egyptologists use other clues to establish a coffin's origin, including decorative styles, individuals' names and titles, or even the past history of divisions and sales. For example, if the deceased's title was connected to the court of King Khufu, then his sarcophagus likely comes from the Old Kingdom necropolis of Giza. Or, if a coffin has the name and title of a High Priest of Amun, it is likely from Dynasty 21 Thebes (Figure 14.2). Likewise, if that coffin entered a museum collection in 1893, then it probably belonged to the Bab el-Gassus cache in Deir el-Bahri found in 1891. Still, without controlled excavations and recorded data about its findspot and association with other objects, a body container becomes an isolated piece of data without the tomb in which it was interred, without the other coffins and objects that were there, and even without the deceased individual that once inhabited it. In fact, many institutions have removed (and even de-accessioned) the mummies from the coffins they own, because it was determined that human bodies do not fit with museum aesthetics or missions. Thus, not only have coffins been removed from their tombs, but they have also been separated from their very reason for being, from the dead owner him or herself. The mummy is an essential part of the coffin ensemble, allowing a researcher to work with forensic specialists, determining health, gender, age of death, cause of death, and reuse, all invaluable information for researchers with an interest in the social circumstances of a given coffin (e.g., David 2008).

The field of coffin studies is also complicated by issues of ownership in ancient times, particularly reuse and theft. Because coffins and sarcophagi were in such short supply



**Figure 14.2** Yellow coffin set of Masaharta, from the Deir el-Bahari cache DB 320, Dynasty 21, Egyptian Museum Cairo, CG 61027 (after Daressy (1909), pl. XXXVI).

for the ancient Egyptians, they were often reused during times of economic stress and upheaval (Cooney 2011). Sometimes the names and titles of the original owner were rubbed out to make room for the identifying information of a usurping owner, or the entire surface was replastered and repainted, covering all trace of the painting underneath. In other cases, there was little attention paid to matching or keeping up with current styles when reusing coffins, and coffin sets were pieced together from a number of different pieces such as a mummy board from one previous owner, a coffin from another, and a mummy mask from a third. Even the Dynasty 21 royal burial of King Psusennes included a reused granite sarcophagus once belonging to King Merneptah of Dynasty 19 (Montet 1951). And the hastily assembled burial of King Tutankhamun of Dynasty 18 included reused funerary material, including his second gilded coffin, which once belonged to another ruler whose name was rubbed out (Reeves 1990).

During some periods, Egyptian body containers were decorated with a dizzying array of figural scenes and texts. Ironically, this very richness is another complicating factor for coffin studies. One densely decorated coffin can justifiably demand the attention of a scholar for years. A Middle Kingdom coffin replete with tiny columns of Coffin Text spells

and colorful friezes of objects can take years of work to document, process, compare, and analyze (Willems 1996). A Third Intermediate Period coffin with colorful decoration on the interior and exterior can demand two volumes (van Walsem 1997). Not only that, but the scholar must become a jack of all trades, able to deal with materials sciences, religious studies, social history, art history, and archaeological methods. For example, materials like wood and paint can tell us a great deal about economy and the status of the coffin owner, but so can the study of the deceased's administrative titles and genealogy.

Coffins, cartonnage, and sarcophagi represent many things to the researcher. They are documents about the social status of the person contained inside. They record the economy of the time, including the availability of certain resources or trade networks, as evidenced by a red pigment from Spain on the wrappings and cartonnage of a Roman Egyptian mummy (Walton and Trentelman 2009). Body containers are a means to understand the makeup of Egyptian society, particularly as a tool by which to examine differences of status or gender (Meskell 1999; Willems 2001; Grajetzki 2003; Richards 2005; Cooney 2007, 2010). Coffins of particular elites can instruct the researcher about political and status history (Schiaparelli 1927; Dodson 1998; Taylor 1999). Coffins are a window into Egyptian beliefs in rebirth after death with complicated religious spells, maps of the underworld, and protective iconography (Assmann 2005; Manassa 2007). The decorated coffin can also be considered an object of art (Terrace 1968). Still, because body containers come from a wider section of society than most other formal Egyptian art forms like tomb painting or sculpture, many art historians have discounted the art historical value of coffins, cartonnage, and sarcophagi. The execution, type, and richness of decoration on a coffin of a lower elite may pale in comparison to its elite companions; however, it is this very comparison that tells us about the unequal makeup of Egyptian society and its connections to visual media as a form of social display (Cooney 2007).

## Coffin Development

Coffin studies demand detailed descriptions of stylistic development so that researchers can understand the changing Egyptian perspectives on death and rebirth, social structures, economic systems, and funerary fashions from the fourth millennium BCE (the time of the earliest ancient Egyptian elite coffin burials) to the fourth century CE when some of the last ancient Egyptian body containers were produced. Many coffin studies are primarily typological, meaning that the researcher focuses on detailed information about style, material, and craftsmanship in order to determine the dating of a given body container (Taylor 1985; Niwinski 1988; Willems 1988; Lapp 1993). Egyptologists have been known to argue *ad nauseum* about contested dating for a particular coffin, and for good reason. Without the establishment of typologies, Egyptologists would be unable to date an unprovenanced coffin to a particular time period and would thus be unable to apply any larger conclusions to the context in which the coffin was a part. Coffin typology is well established in Egyptology, and many excellent surveys have been written (Niwinski 1976; Taylor 1989; Lapp 1993; Ikram and Dodson 1998).

Coffin development can be tied to political and social contexts. Some coffins were produced during times of great wealth and excess, others in times of social upheaval and

economic constraints. In general, during time periods of political centralization and economic prosperity, elites owned extensive nesting coffin sets with many pieces that were part of complicated burial assemblages placed in monumental tomb complexes. Such prosperous time periods include Dynasties 4–5 of the Old Kingdom, Dynasties 11–12 of the Middle Kingdom, Dynasties 18–19 of the New Kingdom, Dynasties 25–26 of the Late Period, and the first and second centuries CE during the Roman Period. Prosperity often encouraged a faster turnover of coffin styles, because elites were able to actively compete with each other in their funerary displays. In other words, during years of plenty, coffin styles might be discarded much quicker in favor of something newer and flashier and thus more prestigious amongst fellow elites. Naturally, most of the world's collections of coffins, sarcophagi, and cartonnages on display in museums come from prosperous time periods, not only because more body containers were produced during economic booms, but also because these objects are usually of higher material value and craftsmanship and thus more sought after by modern collectors.

On the other hand, during times of political decentralization and concomitant economic upheaval, elites were not as concerned with the latest coffin fashion, returning instead to known styles that they reproduced to the best of their ability. During lean years, burial assemblages usually became simpler, more contained, and less extensive in number, and were rarely marked by sculpture or monuments on the surface of the tomb. Such burials might belong to Dynasties 9–10 of the First Intermediate Period, Dynasties 13–17 of the Second Intermediate Period, Dynasties 21–24 of the Third Intermediate Period, the Persian Period during Dynasty 27, and the late Roman Period. Coffins produced during difficult economic times are often distinguished by provincial, regional styles that are not shared throughout Egypt due to political decentralization and a lack of communication amongst elites. Because royal workshops lacked funding during hard times, craftsmen had limited access to training or comparanda pieces, which produced coffins displaying naive craftsmanship and unusual or innovative designs that deviated from the traditional canon.

The first ancient Egyptian body containers were developed at the end of the fourth millennium BCE during the Predynastic Period. These body containers were created by a new social group of emergent elites who wanted to differentiate their burials from the mass of society. Predynastic body containers were usually very simple, and most did not yet constitute coffins or sarcophagi as we understand them. It is important to remember that early elite coffins were meant to be mobile recreations of the earth as a container for the corpse, because, at this time, most people were buried in the earth or sand. The most basic body container at this time period, even for the very wealthy, was an oval or square pit in the earth, but as social inequality became more established during the Predynastic Period, wealthy people began to line burials with reed basketry, textile matting, animal skins, or, for the highest status individuals, wooden planks. Eventually, this expensive wooden veneer took on a mobile form as a rectangular wooden coffin, an object capable of being carried and displayed within funerary ritual before it was placed in a tomb. The corpse was generally flexed into a kind of fetal position inside the coffin, usually with the head oriented towards the south so that the dead could look to the west, towards the setting sun and the entrance to the *duat*, the realm of the dead. By the Early Dynastic Period (Dynasties 1–2), these rectangular wooden body containers had vaulted

lids, understood to be a kind of shrine or a small house for the dead inside. These early coffin boxes were embellished with false doorways through which the dead were believed to travel.

One of the biggest shifts in Egyptian coffin development happened at the beginning of the Old Kingdom in Dynasty 3 when some elites began to favor body containers that allowed the corpse to be stretched out. Within a few generations, Early Dynastic fetal position boxes soon became old-fashioned. This change was accompanied by another innovation in Egyptian funerary culture: mummification. Embalming a corpse was a time-consuming and awkward process that demanded full access to the body, something that was only possible when it was laid out in an extended position. Longer rectangular body containers would also have been easier to carry and maneuver. Furthermore, longer body containers were easier to build because they required only one axis of long wooden planks instead of two.

With the rectangular box came nested coffins as wealthy Egyptians devised multi-piece coffin sets that fit inside one another. In fact, many elites were now including stone sarcophagi to enclose their wooden coffins. Only the wealthiest of Old Kingdom elites could afford a three-piece set of two nested wooden coffins inside a stone sarcophagus. Once the tradition of nesting began, it became the norm throughout Egyptian history for elites, who tried to include as many body containers in their set as possible (Bettum 2013). It was believed that a high number of body containers were not only capable of providing additional protective layers around the corpse, but that they also allowed elites to compete and show off their funerary displays.

Most Old Kingdom coffins have been uncovered in the graveyards of Giza and Saqqara when officials clustered their tombs near the pyramids of the kings they served in life. Some of the coffins and sarcophagi from these necropoleis have no decoration whatsoever. Others bear vaulted lids which remade the box into a shrine, ostensibly elevating the dead to a kind of demi-god status. Other coffins and sarcophagi have recessed false doors carved onto the surface of the stone or painted onto the wood, through which the spirits of the dead were believed to move. Some of these coffins had hieroglyphic inscriptions. It was thought particularly important to include offering texts, which were believed magically to provide bread and beer, in addition to the names and titles of the deceased. A standard text might read: “An offering which the king gives to Osiris, Great God, Lord of Abydos, so that he might give an invocation offering of bread, beer, oxen, fowl, incense, clothing, and every good and pure thing to the soul of the venerated one NN.”

By Dynasty 6, a more complicated coffin type emerged, this one with a flat lid, offering texts on the coffin exterior, and a pair of *udjat*-eyes on the coffin sides where the head of the corpse rested which were believed to allow the deceased to see and participate in funerary rituals. These coffins were carefully oriented so that the painted hieroglyphic *udjat*-eyes faced east allowing the dead to awaken and view the sun’s rebirth in the horizon every morning and thus to partake in any offerings that the living might bring to the tomb during the precious daylight hours. A false door was drawn onto the coffin’s interior, and the corpse was usually laid on its side so that its face would be directly in front of this passageway. This new coffin type also included offering texts and images on the coffin interior, all meant to provide sustenance and comfort within easy reach of the deceased. As the Old Kingdom drew to a close at the end of Dynasty 6, Egypt entered

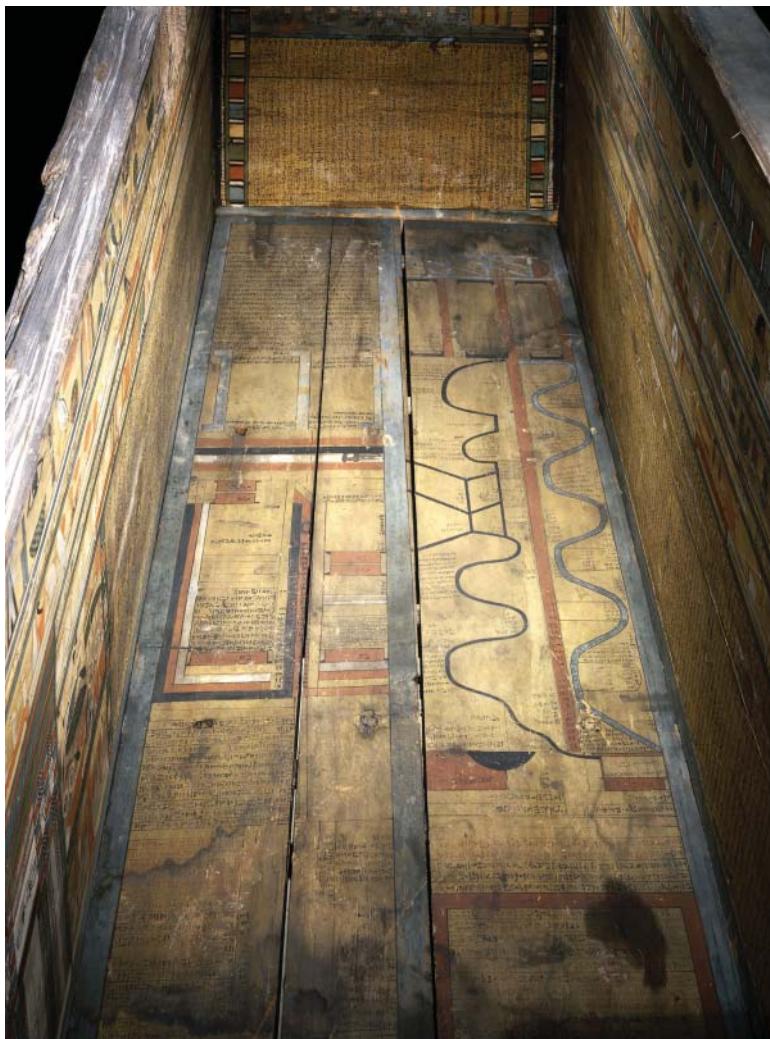
into a time of political decentralization and civil war which Egyptologists call the First Intermediate Period, and the coffins of this time retained much of the late Old Kingdom styling including *udjat*-eyes, false doors, and offering texts. During this period of unstable kingship, it became difficult for elites to acquire stone sarcophagi because no king was funding the quarries. In addition, even the rich were forced to turn to local sycamore and acacia woods for wooden coffins because trade in imported cedar was disrupted by war and political turmoil.

As soon as the political situation stabilized during Dynasties 11 and 12 of the Middle Kingdom, more elites were able to include stone sarcophagi and cedar coffins in their burials. As prosperity increased, coffin styles began to develop again in favor of new, complicated designs on both the interior and exterior surfaces. In fact, the Middle Kingdom is known as an apex of intricate polychrome coffin decoration, with changes spurred on by elites competing with one another for the most beautiful and/or eye-catching coffin. Despite these innovations, the essentials of the Egyptian coffin including the false door, *udjat*-eyes, and offering texts, were retained. In fact, this retention is a key characteristic of stylistic change in Egyptian coffins; innovations were usually added to a traditional core design.

Thus, the Middle Kingdom coffin's left side was still painted with *udjat*-eyes on the outside and the false door on the inside as it was in the Old Kingdom (Figure 14.3). However, the interior was now filled with religious texts and drawings, all within easy reach of the dead individual who lay within. On the interior bottom of the coffin, craftsmen carved small-scale hieroglyphic inscriptions that Egyptologists call Coffin Texts, spells that granted the deceased powers and protection in the next world (Faulkner 1973–1978). They painted other parts of the coffin interior with carefully labeled maps of the underworld, known as the Book of Two Ways, to guide the deceased on his ultimate journey to a lake of fire and a glimpse of the god Osiris (Figure 14.4). Another



**Figure 14.3** Middle Kingdom inner coffin of Sobekhotep, from the tomb of Sebekhetepi in Beni Hasan, Dynasty 12, British Museum EA 41572. © Trustees of the British Museum.



**Figure 14.4** Middle Kingdom outer coffin of Gua, showing depiction of the interior with Book of Two Ways decoration, from the tomb of Gua, Deir el-Bersha, Dynasty 12, British Museum EA 30839. © Trustees of the British Museum.

innovation was the addition of object friezes, now painted on the coffin's interior, showing pictures of clothing, sandals, jewelry, oils, headrests, furniture, weapons, staffs, and other essentials for a comfortable afterlife. Craftsmen included an offering list and a picture of a funerary meal next to the false door on the coffin interior, providing sustenance right next to the face of the dead as he or she lay in the box. The Coffin Texts and Book of Two Ways represent the first religious funerary spells to which non-royal individuals had access, and elites made sure to include as many of these small-scale texts as possible on their coffin interiors.

Some of the highest quality sarcophagi of the early Middle Kingdom, such as those on the coffins belonging to the wives of Mentuhotep II buried at Deir el-Bahari, show astounding new innovations, including the depiction of human figures in various poses (Spencer 1999). These finely crafted stone containers are most famous for images of royal ladies at their leisure. Non-royal coffins and sarcophagi, on the other hand, do not have such large-scale pictorial representation. Middle Kingdom elites seemed more concerned with the inclusion of as many small-scale images as possible, including spells, offering friezes, and labeled maps.

The necropoleis themselves experienced a change during the Middle Kingdom; elites felt less obligated to be buried near the pyramid of their king in the capital necropolis. Instead, it became fashionable to be buried in a grand tomb in one's hometown. For this reason, elite coffins have been found throughout Egypt, not just in the royal graveyards of Lisht, Hawara, and Dahshur. Egyptologists have even been able to differentiate different regional styles for elite coffins, in particular a northern or Memphite type for the elites who chose burial near the king, and a southern type, centered around Assiut, for elites who were interred in local necropoleis in the Nile valley. The southern style allowed for more innovation, probably because elites were able to engage in display and competition away from the strictures of the royal court and its more traditional workshops. In fact, some of the Assiut coffins show intricate and inventive astronomical depictions on the lid's underside meant to guide the deceased through the time and space of the *duat*.

Towards the end of Dynasty 12, two important coffin innovations appear, both of which are more apparent in the south. First, elite Egyptians invented cartonnage mummy masks—idealized depictions of the deceased's face which fit snugly onto the mummy's head and upper chest. Second, they developed the anthropoid coffin, a wooden case which took the form of a wrapped human body. The anthropoid coffin was placed on its side into a larger rectangular coffin, oriented so that the face of the deceased could look out the false door and the pair of *udjat*-eyes painted on the coffin side. In other words, the face of the corpse was still oriented towards the east and the rising sun, but it was now covered with a mask that provided the eternal features of eyes, nose, mouth, and ears that would never decay. The anthropoid coffin was meant to depict the deceased as a wrapped mummy, but it had the additions of a head cloth, beard, beaded collar, and, often, a text column that extended down the front of the body naming the deceased. This human-shaped container was a fundamental style change in Egyptian coffin development that signaled the use of new rituals identifying the deceased with the corpse of Osiris. Because Osiris needed his body to create himself anew, perhaps elite Egyptians thought it necessary to provide a body-shaped coffin as the ritual manifestation of that physical rebirth.

Whatever the reasons for the innovation, towards the end of the Middle Kingdom elites increasingly preferred anthropomorphic containers to hold the mummy. This innovation was accompanied by new texts and rituals, particularly a rite called the Opening of the Mouth that activated the coffin and the mummy inside so that it could see, hear, smell, and eat in the afterlife. With the advent of the anthropoid coffin, the body container essentially became a perfected human body made of materials that would last for all eternity. From this point on, the Opening of the Mouth ritual became an essential part of religious texts (Faulkner and Goelet 1994).

During the crisis of the Second Intermediate Period and into the early New Kingdom, elites continued to utilize the anthropoid coffin. Almost all of the surviving coffins from the New Kingdom into the Third Intermediate Period find their origins in the Theban region. At the end of the Second Intermediate Period and during Dynasty 17, a particular anthropoid coffin type was developed for Theban royalty and high elites known as the “*rishi*” coffin, so called by Egyptologists because of the feathered pattern depicted on the coffin surface (Miniaci 2011). These feathers may be evocative of the protective embrace of the sky goddess; or, they might represent the deceased as a *ba* (spirit of mobility) flying to and from the tomb. These *rishi*-coffins were large and were usually not contained within an outer sarcophagus.

As the New Kingdom continued into Dynasty 18, the anthropoid coffin was the favored shape. In fact, once the anthropoid coffin caught on, it was never abandoned throughout all of Egyptian history. Sometimes it was contained within an outer rectangular sarcophagus either made of wood or stone, but the anthropoid coffin remained the focus of funerary rituals like the Opening of the Mouth. The anthropoid shape of the coffin evoked a secondary body, or an Osirian body of transformation; however, the traditional features of the rectangular coffin were still retained. For example, *udjat*-eyes were still depicted on the sides of the anthropoid coffin, even though the corpse was no longer lying on its side inside looking out. The ancient Egyptians were loath to part with such an essential and trusted coffin element, and, in typical fashion, they layered the innovations of the human body shape and modeled face onto old forms. Text columns were also retained, but now they were drawn within bands that evoked mummy bandages extending down the front of the body and crossing transversely, as if binding up the corpse. The hieroglyphic inscriptions were modified to reference the corpse as Osiris; the text column on the front of the body invoked the sky goddess Nut, mother of Osiris, asking that she place the deceased within her embrace in the heavens.

In some ways, the New Kingdom coffin can be understood as a material depiction of Chapters 151 and 161 of the Book of the Dead, both of which invoke deities who were believed to protect the body of Osiris, including Anubis, Thoth, Isis, Nephthys, and the Four Sons of Horus (Lüscher 1998). The layout of the New Kingdom coffin follows the Book of the Dead Chapter 151 quite closely, taking elements from a two-dimensional illuminated papyrus and placing them onto a three-dimensional coffin, effectively wrapping the body of the deceased in protective spells and iconography. Nephthys’ image and invocation graces the back of the deceased’s head within the coffin, while Isis is placed on the bottom of the feet, as these two goddesses would have stood at the head and foot ends of Osiris’ bier, respectively. The image of Anubis is found on the coffin lid’s legs. Thoth holding a standard is located on the four corners of the case sides. Two of the Four Sons of Horus are placed in the middle of each case side, and meant to protect the internal organs and the inviolability of the body. An image of Nut, the mother of Osiris, covers the mid-body, thus containing the deceased in the *duat*-realm believed to be inside of Nut’s body. To be inside the coffin was to be inside the goddess Nut, and thus in the afterlife space from which the sun was reborn every morning. The New Kingdom anthropoid coffin usually included a wide collar of leaves and flowers on the chest, as if the deceased were dressed for a festival or a banquet.

Interestingly, because the New Kingdom coffin was human-shaped, these body containers could now display the gender of the deceased for the first time (Cooney 2008b).

Deceased women could be depicted with feminine wigs and modeled breasts, while men wore tripartite head-cloths and beards. Because each coffin likened the deceased to the corpse of Osiris, the anthropoid shape created an interesting problem for the ancient Egyptians. The coffin was meant to transform the dead into Osiris and thus into a body capable of self-regeneration by means of the god's masculinity. Coffins of female individuals therefore had to include masculinizing elements, either in the Book of the Dead texts or within the depiction of the deceased herself on the coffin surface. It was vitally important that she too identify with and become Osiris, the god of transformation from death, even though her human body was female (Cooney 2010).

As the New Kingdom progressed, coffin fashions quickly changed. Egyptologists are able to date coffins within the New Kingdom by their background color. A white color evocative of pure mummy bandages is more typical of early Dynasty 18, while a glossy black finish (associated with the fertile earth and Osiris's flesh) usually dates mid to late Dynasty 18 (Thutmose III and after). During late Dynasty 18, the coffin finish changed to yellow, the color associated with the sun god. This yellow color was achieved with gilding on the most expensive coffins, shiny pistacia resin varnish on high-level elite coffins, or yellow ochre on the cheapest lower elite coffins. It was also at this time period that arms and hands were carved on the wooden coffin surface for the first time. Yellow became the typical background color until early Dynasty 22 in the Third Intermediate Period.

Beginning with Dynasty 19, the decoration on yellow coffins becomes more complicated, including polychrome scenes of the tree goddess on the feet of the coffin lid or images of the deceased with arms upraised in worship before Osiris. By later Dynasty 20, it became common to crowd intricate Book of the Dead and Amduat imagery onto the coffin surface, particularly on the case sides. By the end of the New Kingdom, we see another novelty: the anthropoid coffin interior was now decorated with polychrome scenes for the first time. By Dynasty 21, coffins had become three-dimensional conceptions of the afterlife space, a necessary innovation when even the elite could no longer afford tomb chapels (Cooney 2011) (Figure 14.2). The Dynasty 21 coffin's exterior was covered with protective texts and imagery about rebirth, including the stages of the sun god's journey, Osiris reborn in the afterlife, the Hathor cow emerging from the western necropolis, or the Judgment Scene of the deceased in the *duat*. The interior decoration included depictions of the *duat* space, including images of protective underworld demons, solar snakes, iconography associated with Osiris like the *djed*-pillar, and the deceased in the company of the gods.

Nesting coffin sets became the norm by mid Dynasty 18, and this trend continued into the Third Intermediate Period. Elite individuals could be buried in as many as four body containers that fit one inside the next, the most ideal set included a mummy mask, one or two coffins, and an outer sarcophagus. Some elites owned two or even three coffins, nesting inside one another like Russian dolls. Sometimes elite families would include a mummy board made of wood or cartonnage instead of a second coffin, which lay on top of the corpse rather than enclosing it. During Dynasty 19, the mummy board might depict the deceased in a pure white garment, in the form of an *akh*-spirit, the manifestation of the deceased after he or she had successfully passed the afterlife judgment. Sometimes, the deceased as an *akh* was represented on the lid of an inner coffin. The mummy mask was the innermost covering in a New Kingdom coffin ensemble, and it could be fashioned out of wood or cartonnage.

Gilding and inlay were common features for the rich on all of these coffin pieces, but lower elites made do with painting of red and yellow ochres, black carbon, gypsum white, and blue and green made of frit pigments. Only the wealthiest individuals were buried with an additional rectangular sarcophagus made of stone or wood and decorated with Book of the Dead texts. A Dynasty 18 elite Theban craftsman named Kha was buried with a gilded coffin, a mummy mask, and a rectangular wooden sarcophagus, all in the glossy black style (Schiaparelli 1927). During later Dynasty 19 of the Ramesside Period, it became fashionable for very rich officials to include an anthropoid stone container in their burial ensemble, something quite innovative as all previous stone boxes had been rectangular in shape. By Dynasty 21, sarcophagi were no longer commissioned. Not only were the quarries closed, but these objects could no longer fit into the crowded, secret cache tombs favored by the Theban elites at this time.

By Dynasty 22, the yellow coffin suddenly went out of fashion, a shift that was accompanied by a clear political change: the ascension to the throne of a king named Osorkon I. The reasons behind this sudden style change are unclear, but it is important to remember that all coffins and body containers were the prerogative of the elite. It is possible that Osorkon I pushed a new group of elites into high-level Theban official and priestly posts who then wanted to differentiate themselves from the previous incumbents with new, more fashionable, funerary styles. After Osorkon I, elite individuals were buried in coffins with white or plain wooden backgrounds. Arms were no longer carved onto the surface. Lid decoration was quite variable, ranging from the simple depiction of the goddess Nut with a vertical text inscription to a series of scene panels showing winged goddesses, veneration scenes of the sun god or Osiris, and the purification of the deceased wearing the white pleated garment. The decoration of a Dynasty 22 coffin was not as crowded as it had been in Dynasty 21, and text was at a minimum. The coffin interior usually included the wings of the goddess Nut spread out, as if embracing the deceased. Another important Dynasty 22 development was the full cartonnage body container, which acted as the innermost piece that enclosed the mummy quite tightly with lacing of twine up the back. This was an essential innovation during hard economic times when wood was scarce and trade with the Lebanon had all but stopped.

Royal burials form a special category of body containers in design and shape. Old Kingdom and Middle Kingdom royal sarcophagi were rectangular pieces of hard stone, like granite, and were usually undecorated. However, during the New Kingdom and later, royal body containers were richly decorated. The late Dynasty 18 burial of Tutankhamun is our only example of a semi-intact New Kingdom burial, and it reveals that a king, even a lesser king buried in haste, could be interred in nine body containers, fitting one inside the other. Tutankhamun's corpse was surrounded by four gilded rectangular shrines, a hard stone rectangular sarcophagus, three gold anthropoid coffins, the innermost one made of 269 pounds of solid gold, and a solid gold mummy mask. Every other New Kingdom royal tomb has been looted, so it is not clear if Tutankhamun's burial is representative of the norm. Some sarcophagi belonging to other New Kingdom kings do survive, and the numbers suggest that other, more established, kings were able to include more than one stone sarcophagus in their ensemble, and thus may have included larger coffin sets in their tombs compared to Tutankhamun's.

Interestingly, an outer red granite sarcophagus of the Dynasty 19 King Merneptah was found reused in the Dynasty 21 tomb of King Psusennes I at Tanis. This leads us to

the other semi-intact royal burial from ancient Egypt: the royal tombs of Dynasty 21 and 22 kings found in the temple enclosure at Tanis. Just at the start of World War II, French archaeologists found these northern kings buried with gilded wood coffins, gilded mummy masks, silver coffins with hawk heads and ram-headed falcons on the chest (Montet 1947, 1951, 1960). These tombs provide a glimpse of the relative poverty of these monarchs during a time of political decentralization and economic collapse. Not only did the craftsmen make do with gilded wood, rather than solid gold or silver, but the kings shared a small burial space with one another and included relatively few body containers in their coffin ensemble. During hard economic times, even kings had to make do with less.

No royal tombs of the Late Period (Dynasties 25 and 26) or later survive, but we have many non-royal examples (Figure 14.5). Late Period elites no longer found cartonnage



**Figure 14.5** Late Period coffin belonging to Wennefer, a Dynasty 25 Monthu priest, Egyptian Museum Cairo, CG 41046 (after Gauthier, 1913).



**Figure 14.6** Coffin of Cleopatra (interior), from Qurna, Thebes, Roman Period, early second century CE, British Museum EA 6706. © Trustees of the British Museum.

fashionable, probably because when the political and economic situation improved they wished to avoid coffins so associated with scarcity. Instead, Late Period elites favored coffins that showcased the wood, particularly if it was imported cedar. Elites created more innovation to display their conspicuous consumption of wood, paint, and gilding: the coffin was mounted on a square wooden pedestal at the feet so that it could stand tall when displayed upright. These coffins were then enclosed in a new style of rectangular outer sarcophagus—one with a vaulted lid and four posts at the corners, emulating the vaulted coffins of the Old Kingdom. The figured decorations on the Late Period coffin included winged goddesses, divinities enclosed in shrines, the deceased worshipping Osiris, the judgment scene, and the now essential image of the corpse on a mummification bier above four canopic jars. Late Period elites included something else on their coffins to differentiate themselves from the previous Dynasties 21 and 22: lines of funerary text in neat columns and rows. The coffin interior was decorated with large-scale images of Ptah-Sokar-Osiris, a hawk-headed god of the underworld, and/or the sky goddess Nut. During the Late Period, the backside of the coffin was decorated for the first time—with figural depictions of the *djed*-pillar, representative of Osiris, or with text columns from the Book of the Dead—suggesting that an audience stood all around the upright coffin during funerary rituals.

As we move into the Dynasty 30 and Ptolemaic period, coffin decoration was simplified and streamlined. The lid depicts the deceased wearing a burial collar with text columns, although sometimes imagery with the Four Sons of Horus and the winged Nut were retained. During this period, large stone anthropoid sarcophagi were common for high elites, and it became fashionable to depict the faces of the deceased hieroglyphically, with exaggerated and enlarged visages.

During the Roman period, the ancient Egyptians used a wide variety of body containers. The most distinctive and innovative are the cartonnage masks and body covers, many of which have fussy plaster detailing, gilding, and inlay on the headdress lappets and chest (Figure 14.6). Other Roman examples include modeled portraits of the deceased as they would have appeared in life, with fashionable hairstyles, jewelry, and clothing.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

General surveys are the most important starting place for the beginning researcher of coffin development and meaning (Schmidt 1919; Taylor 1989; Ikram and Dodson 1998). However, most coffins are published in museum catalogues with a number of other object types (e.g., Van Haarlem 1990; Berman and Bohac 1999; Jørgensen 2001; Lacovara and Trope 2001). For predynastic burials and body containers, the most important publications are site analyses (Castillos 1982; Bard 1991). For the Old Kingdom, the most synthetic works are Günther Lapp's surveys (Lapp, 1983, 1993). Because of the more complicated text and pictorial decoration, Middle Kingdom coffin studies are quite extensive and move the field beyond typologies (Terrace 1968; Willem 1988; Hoffmeier 1991; Willem 1996a, 1996b; Locher 1998; Willem 2001; Grajetzki 2010). New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period coffin publications are quite extensive, covering the body container from art historical, religious, social, and historical perspectives (Niwinski 1976, 1988; Taylor 1989, 1999, 2001a; van Walsem 1997; Dodson 1998, 2000; Taylor and Strudwick 2005; Cooney 2007; Aston 2009; Miniaci 2011). For clay coffins of the eastern Delta, desert regions, and the Levant, see Sabbahy (2010) Royal sarcophagi are often treated separately in the literature (e.g., Eaton-Krauss 1993; der Manuelian and Loeben 1993; Wilkinson 1994;

Brock 1996; Verner 2000). Because of the sheer number of Third Intermediate Period coffins, the researcher is encouraged to start with catalogues and surveys (Niwinski 1988; Taylor, 2003), moving on to more specific studies (Niwinski 1981, 1984; van Walsem 1997, 2000; Taylor 2001b). Late Period and Ptolemaic coffins and sarcophagi have only recently drawn the attention of serious scholarship (Elias 1996; Manassa 2007; Bierbrier 1997). For the Roman Period, the researcher is directed first towards Riggs (Riggs and Stadler 2003; Riggs 2005).

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## CHAPTER 15

# Luxury Arts

*Arielle P. Kozloff*

### Nothing Can Compare ...

Imagine the most glorious treasures in world history. Many would start with King Tutankhamun's (1333–1324 BCE) jeweled golden mask and coffins. This chapter shows that there is no empire known that outproduced ancient Egypt during its thirty dynasties of pharaonic rule, yet Tutankhamun's treasure was merely one of the many highpoints in the continuum of Egypt's remarkable history of exquisite workmanship in gold, silver, semiprecious stone, glass, glazed wares, and fine hardwoods. Egypt's luxury art production was partially a gift of its proximity to gold mines and to quarries rich in colored semiprecious stones. What Egypt lacked within its own territories, it obtained from neighbors and trading partners with grain, gold, and military might with the exception of diamonds, the only precious substance virtually unknown to the ancient Egyptians. The richest and most powerful kingdom in the world, Egypt was also able to command the most highly skilled artisans and the most up-to-date technology to fabricate all of the marvelous materials at its disposal into luxury arts of unsurpassed quality.

Ancient Egypt's luxury goods served three different realms: divine, royal, and official. Temples required cult statues and ritual objects of the richest materials. Pharaohs, whose purviews overlapped with those of the temples, needed fine wares to furnish their palaces and to give as gifts to their courtiers. Courtiers depended to a high degree on the generosity of their kings, but in some periods grew as wealthy as princes themselves and could afford to commission their own treasures and monuments. This chapter divides the luxury arts into three arenas: cult objects made for temple use, objects made for royal use, and those apparently made for private ownership. Some of the objects in the last two categories may have been lightly used during owners' lifetimes, but the remarkable state of preservation of the majority suggests that they were kept in mint condition until placed in their owners' tombs for the journey to the afterlife.

## Gifts for the Gods

The most impressive surviving testament to temple patronage in the luxury arts is the Dynasty 19 (1292–1191 BCE) gilded and inlaid, silver cult statue of a falcon-headed god now in the Miho Museum in Japan (Plate 8). It embodies what the ancient Egyptians meant when their texts described the gods as having “bones of silver, flesh of gold, and hair of real lapis lazuli” (Lichtheim (1976), 198). This seated statue is 16½ inches tall, and would originally have been nearly two feet tall when its crown was intact. Solid-cast, it weighs more than 35 pounds. According to Metropolitan Museum curator Catharine Roehrig (Roehrig (1997), 18–21), the figure may be Horus, the son of the goddess Isis, or an amalgamated trinity god, Ptah-Sokar-Osiris, who was sometimes represented as a falcon-headed human wearing a crown framed by a pair of ostrich plumes.

On the one hand, it is surprising that only this major cult statue survives, since contemporary texts (Becker et al. (1994), 54, n. 3) from the Ramesside Period (1292–1077 BCE) record enormous amounts of silver statuary donated to temples. On the other hand, items of tremendously high material value were obvious targets for theft and reuse throughout history. This falcon-god icon was doubtless made in a workshop or a series of neighboring, specialized workshops within the precinct walls of an important temple. The materials used were so costly that they were kept carefully guarded in the temple treasury until needed. The silver head and body were cast by the lost-wax process; the arms (and perhaps the lower legs) were apparently cast separately and soldered on. The god’s skin was gold hammered into sheets and “attached by crimping the edges into grooves cut unobtrusively into the surface of the figure” (Roehrig (1997), 19, n. 4). As cited in ancient texts, the god’s hair or at least his headdress and the markings on his face were probably lapis lazuli—most likely imported from Western Asia. This semiprecious stone was cut into strips and inserted into long, linear gold cloisonné cells made of strips of gold from the mines Egypt controlled in Nubia, northern Sudan, or in the eastern desert. Silver mines *per se* are not found in Egypt, but this metal did occur as a natural alloy of gold. So-called “aurian” silver, according to British expert Jack Ogden (Ogden (2000), 170), was probably used for many of the relatively rare Egyptian silver objects known. Alternatively, silver could be found in mineral ores such as oxidized lead ore, and from the Near East where relatively pure silver was more plentiful. The blue color visible today on the statue’s headdress is an ancient synthetic crystalline material known as “Egyptian blue,” which was perhaps used as a bedding material for lapis lazuli. Often Egyptian blue (see Newman, this volume) was used as a substitute for the stone. A calcium-copper tetrasilicate, Egyptian blue is closely related to glass, but seems to predate the invention of glass by several centuries, appearing by Dynasty 4 (2543–2436 BCE), the time of the Great Pyramid (Nicholson and Henderson (2000), 205). Egyptian blue was ground up as a pigment and also cast in molds or cut into forms to create decorative elements for larger compositions.

The falcon’s eyes are inlaid with rock crystal that occurred naturally in the western desert and on the Sinai peninsula. These carefully carved and polished orbs are drilled from behind to give the impression of a pupil, creating a deeply penetrating gaze despite the fact that humans were not allowed to stare directly into the eyes of either kings or gods.

The Miho figure wears a striped kilt of metal. A cult statue usually wore additional wraps made of the finest linen, which were changed every day at the time of the god's ritual bath by chanting priests who carefully swept away their footprints as they backed out of the Holy of Holies, the temple's main sanctuary and the statue's residence. During certain festivals, the statue was removed from the sanctuary and was placed in a portable shrine on top of long poles. The shrine was carried on the shoulders of files of priests who marched in a colorful and aromatic (incense-laced) procession out of the temple precinct and into the town.

A rare, perhaps unique, solid gold statuette of a god is the 7-inch tall, striding figure of the god Amun, acquired by Howard Carter (the discoverer of Tutankhamun's tomb) in 1917, and since 1926 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Schorsch (2007), 84–87). It is in nearly perfect condition except for the missing toes of the god's right foot and the tall feathers of his platform-shaped crown. Even the *ankh* (the hieroglyph for "life") held in his pendant left hand is perfectly modeled as are his crisply modeled facial features, elegantly braided divine beard, and sharply pleated kilt. With the crown's original tall plumes intact, this cult object would have been close to 12 inches tall.

The Amun statuette dates to the Third Intermediate Period (1076–723 BCE), a time, as its name suggests, when the power of the unified pharaonic line waned. The High Priests of Amun created their own ruling class in the south at Thebes, while a new dynasty of pharaohs set up a capital in the north. This gold Amun, whose actual findspot is unknown, may have been commissioned for Karnak temple at Thebes, the "mother-church" of Amun worship. The Greek epic poem of the Trojan War, Homer's *Iliad*, tells of "hundred-gated Thebes," referring to all the temple pylons on both sides of the river there, and reports the city's indescribable amounts of treasure, which at the time may have included this golden masterpiece if we judge by the time-span to which it is attributed, which coincides with the surmised date of the Trojan War. In the Late Period (722–332 BCE) and Ptolemaic Period (305–30 BCE), deity statuettes in bronze, some of them inlaid and overlaid, became quite common. Almost every museum with an Egyptian collection has a few. While some of the larger statues may have been central cult figures, by far the greater majority was paid for by commoners who had their names inscribed on the bases as votive gifts to shrines and temples.

## Royal Treasures

Royal luxury objects have become extremely familiar to modern eyes since the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922, especially considering the waves of traveling exhibitions featuring the king's grave goods. It is almost impossible to choose a favorite from among the silver trumpets; the inlaid gold pectorals; the ebony and ivory chair carved to resemble a camp stool with a faux leopard-skin seat; the gilded throne with its scene of the young king and his queen inlaid in the back rest; the beds with frames in the form of lions and divine cows; and the alabaster vessel with a recumbent lion guarding its contents, his red-tinted ivory tongue hanging long to cool himself in Egypt's searing heat. By no means, however, is this the only royal treasure known from ancient Egypt.

A trove nearly six hundred years older and languishing in Tutankhamun's shadows includes the jewels of Princess Khnumet, daughter of Amenemhet II (1878–1843 BCE),



**Figure 15.1** Diadem of Khnumet, Middle Kingdom, Dynasty 12, reign of Amenemhet II, from Dahshur. © The Art Archive / Egyptian Museum Cairo / Araldo De Luca.

the third king of Dynasty 12 in the Middle Kingdom. Khnumet's treasure, including two diadems and some bracelets and necklaces, is one in a series of jewelry hoards belonging to Middle Kingdom princesses and queens discovered during the period from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century. Khnumet's tomb was in her father's funerary complex at Dahshur to the south of the megalithic stone pyramid complexes built centuries earlier in the Old Kingdom at Giza and Sakkara. Amenemhet II's pyramid was built of mud brick and is now in ruins.

The most fetching of Khnumet's gems is a delicately woven and inlaid golden hair-wreath (Figure 15.1). It conjures up the image of a lovely young girl as she pads barefoot through the palace or dances in the Audience Hall with the wreath jingling and rustling on her head. The wreath is made of loosely intertwined golden wires holding nearly two hundred tiny gold five-pointed elements with turquoise arms and carnelian centers, perfect renditions of the Egyptian hieroglyph for the word "star." The gold wires are held at six points by spacer beads of cruciform shape with the cross-arms formed by turquoise, gold, and carnelian papyrus umbels. In the hub of each cross is a red carnelian disk with a gold dot at its center. Like the tiny stars, these lily-and-disk space beads are astronomical symbols. The central discs with their golden dots are the hieroglyph for the word "sun" and the name of the sun-god Re, while the papyrus umbels, according to Egyptian legend, represent the reeds from which the sun was born every day. Together, the elements of the spacer beads symbolize the sunrise, the daily rebirth of the sun, and eternal resurrection.

Khnumet's delicate crown recalls a passage from the *Tale of Sinuhe*, a classic of ancient Egyptian poetry, known from texts dating to the time of Amenemhet III (1818–1773 BCE). The story line follows the life of a noble, Sinuhe, who ran away

from Egypt after the death of his king (Amenemhet I, 1939–1910 BCE). When Sinuhe returned, he was forgiven for his absence and welcomed back into the court of the next king, Senwosret I (1920–1875 BCE). At the climax of the story, Sinuhe's appearance before his new liege culminates with a musical performance by the female royal children in the Audience Hall. The girls offered to Senwosret their “necklaces, rattle, and sistra,” made of numerous small beads and/or thin wires designed to jingle, rustle, and whir, while they chanted, “Your hands upon this beauty, enduring king, these insignia of the Lady of Heaven! May the Golden One give life to your nostrils, the Lady of Stars enfold you!” (Parkinson (1997), 41).

The three epithets—Lady of Heaven, Golden One, and Lady of Stars—all belong to the goddess Hathor, the goddess of fertility and rebirth. She was imagined by the Egyptians as a cow, her belly being a pathway of stars, surely an embodiment of the Milky Way. The sun, whose earthly son was the king, passed through her body at night to be reborn on the eastern horizon each morning. Appeasing Hathor was crucial to the king's attainment of eternal life. The items carried by the princesses were, indeed, the goddess' insignia, and the sounds they made while the princesses danced and chanted were sacred to her.

All of the jewels in Khnumet's treasure have obvious royal and/or religious symbols intertwined throughout their designs. Even the bracelet clasps are in the form of hieroglyphs which can be read to form messages of good wishes for eternal protection and long life. Her misty golden wreath of stars, however, may be the most important, deeply symbolic, and ritually powerful of all of these items. While the crown's immediate charm stirs up images of Victorian and Edwardian maypole dancers with their decorative floral wreaths, this important royal jewel is far more than that. It is a talismanic funerary head-dress representing the heavens and the stars with which Princess Khnumet wished to join in her afterlife so that she could be reborn every day in a continuous cycle like the sun emerging from its lily at dawn again and again, forever.

Another important royal treasure belonging to kings who lived a millennium later comes from the eastern side of the Nile Delta at Tanis, the residence and burial place of the pharaohs of Dynasties 21 and 22 (1076–746 BCE) in the Third Intermediate Period (Leclant 1987). The earliest of these pharaohs ruled in the north at the same time as the High Priests of Thebes. Some of their royal tombs were found essentially intact (the only other being Tutankhamun's burial), and yielded silver coffins, mummy masks, as well as pectorals, cuff bracelets, and so on, much like those found in Tutankhamun's tomb. These objects, however, are coarser and lack the delicacy of design and execution of Dynasty 18 jewels. Like Tutankhamun's treasures, the Tanis finds have toured internationally.

## Courtiers' Tickets to Heaven

The *Tale of Sinuhe* mentions princely houses full of treasures, and reports that many fine furnishings and vessels were brought out at appropriate times to be used and enjoyed by the owners and their guests. The ancient Egyptians, however, apparently did not surround themselves with knickknacks because there are very few items of furniture or architectural elements suitable for the display of precious objects. In other words, ancient Egyptian homes and villas were not “decorated” with amusing and eye-catching items in

the modern, western sense. This sparseness is typical of rural village dwellings in Egypt today where heat, dust, and pests are best dealt with by keeping surroundings simple and easy to clean. Instead, fine objects appear to have been kept in storage areas lined with shelves and chests that were closed and sealed for safekeeping. Even if some were lightly used, these objects were, in general, made not to be passed down through the family, but to accompany their owners to heaven. This explains why much of what we see in museums today shows few or no signs of use from the owners' lifetimes.

The afterlife could be reached only by the purest of the pure via tombs decorated and furnished to the best of the owners' economic abilities and more often than not with the direct or indirect approval and support of the king. Many fine tomb furnishings—vessels, statuettes, jewelry, and suchlike—are inscribed with prayers to individual deities, wishes for eternal life, or include important religious symbols in their design. Such objects were, therefore, not mere baubles for the amusement of the rich, but sacred articles that aided the tomb owners in their quest for happy, peaceful, and prosperous afterlives.

In this category is a museum favorite, the faience hippopotamus figure (Figure 15.2). These small (often more or less fist-sized) figurines are made of a type of glazed ceramic that reminded early Egyptologists of the colorful tin-glazed ware originating from, and named after, the Italian city of Faenza. Faience hippo figures date roughly to the same time as Princess Khnumet's jewelry, perhaps slightly later. They are usually glazed turquoise blue with black manganese drawings of papyrus, lilies, birds, butterflies, and so forth on the hippopotamus' body, suggesting that the beast is just below the water's surface above which plants, insects, and animals float and flutter. None of figurines are inscribed with prayers or the like, so we are left to guess at their meaning. Hippopotami were an eternal menace in the Nile Valley. During the day, they remained



**Figure 15.2** Faience hippopotamus, Middle Kingdom, Dynasties 11–12, 5 in. (12.8 cm) long.  
© the Miho Museum, Japan.

mostly submerged unless accidentally disturbed by Nile traffic, when they lashed back by overturning shallow-keeled boats, killing many a sailor, even one of Egypt's earliest kings according to ancient legend (Waddell (1940), 26–29). At night, these huge creatures emerged from the river's depths and grazed in farmers' fields, decimating the crops with their huge appetites and big feet. The hippopotamus was also believed to represent threats to the dead in the afterlife where agricultural fields, as on earth, needed to be tilled, sown, and cared for until harvest. Almost all of the faience statuettes have been found with their legs and feet broken off, presumably so that the dead could have eternal power over the evil force embodied in the hippo.

Despite their popularity today, partly due to the Metropolitan Museum of Art's large faience hippo named "William" (Hayes (1990), fig. 142), these objects are not particularly common. The Metropolitan Museum has a group of hippopotamus figurines in various sizes, but most museums have none. Faience was a high-tech luxury material, and these figurines represent the first of many high points in the millennia-long history of faience production in Egypt. An object of this size and quality of decoration could have been afforded by only the wealthiest of individuals, while almost any Middle Kingdom Egyptian could afford a few tiny beads or even an amulet in the form of a favorite symbol or deity.

A common item of jewelry worn for thousands of years by ancient Egyptians who could afford it, was the broad collar or *wesekh*-collar formed of multiple rows of tiny beads, sometimes including semiprecious stone, but most often faience. The most complete and dazzling example is on display in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Scott (1973), pl. 26). A riot of brilliant colors, its five rows of beads in blue, bright green, egg-yolk yellow, yellow-green, and crimson as well as brilliant white imitate flower petals and plant elements found in nature, each of which had a special meaning for the afterlife. At each end of the necklace is a flat, spatula-shaped terminal with multicolored petal designs on its surface.

Tremendous control over the kilns and glazes was required to produce these colors in their richest hues on a single surface. Only faience vessels and other fine objects bearing the name of Amenhotep III (1390–1353 BCE) can compare, so this necklace must have been made in the workshops of his Theban residence, Malkata, on the west bank of Thebes not far from the Valley of the Kings, the famous cemetery of the New Kingdom pharaohs.

One of the most charming luxury objects from ancient Egypt is a small glass vessel in the shape of a fish, now in the British Museum (Figure 15.3). Found buried under the floor of a courtier's house at Tell el-Amarna, the short-lived capital of Tutankhamun's father, Akhenaten (1353–1336 BCE), this exquisite object may actually have been made in the reign of the previous king, Amenhotep III, at his palace.

In comparison to the faience hippos, this little fish is not merely rare, but very possibly unique in its pristine condition. It was made as a container for perfumed oil or for eye-paint, and its basic form is very similar to a particular shape of vessel known from the reign of Amenhotep III (Kozloff (1992a), 386–388). In this instance, however, the glass artisan allowed his imagination to escape convention, and he transformed the more generic vessel shape into the image of a bulti fish (*Tilapia nilotica*), which was regarded as a symbol of eternal life. The bulti gathers its fertilized eggs into its mouth, where they hatch, and then the fish spits out the little fry. Thus, after they had disappeared into



**Figure 15.3** Glass vessel in the form of a “bulti” fish, el-Amarna, Dynasty 18. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

the parent’s oral abyss as eggs, they reappeared as lively swimmers, symbolizing rebirth. Akhenaten’s devotion to one god, the sun-disk Aten, and his official proscription against religious symbols other than those related to the Aten may explain why this glass fish was hidden away by its owner under the floor of his house at Amarna. On the other hand, its presence at Amarna may have been due to the bulti’s iconographic association with the sun.

Of the three high-tech manufactured substances described here, glass was the last to appear. It may have been invented in the Near East, perhaps in the Tigris–Euphrates Valley, since the ancient Egyptian words for “glass” appears to have been borrowed from eastern languages. Glass, however, reached its apex of ancient production in the Nile Valley during later Dynasty 18. Records from the Amarna Period show that raw glass ingots were shipped from the East to Egypt for use in palace workshops at the same time as the raw glass that was being manufactured locally. Finished masterpieces not made for the king and his court were shipped abroad to foreign rulers. For the most part, the production of fine glass vessels died out in Dynasty 19, but glass continued to be used for fine inlays, particularly in temple and palace furnishings, and as a substitution for semiprecious stones such as lapis lazuli and red and yellow jasper. This is echoed by one of the ancient names of glass that refers to it as “stone of the kind that flows” (Nicholson and Henderson (2000), 195). The art of producing fine glass vessels closely resembling those of the New Kingdom in color and decoration was revived at the beginning of the sixth century BCE. Throughout the Mediterranean, especially from the fifth to the third centuries BCE, glass vessels are most easily distinguishable from their predecessors by shape.

Some of the most beautifully crafted and designed objects in the category of “luxury arts,” especially during later Dynasty 18, were complex spoons crafted of boxwood. Expense was a factor because boxwood was imported from Cyprus and the Upper Tigris

Euphrates Valley according to the Amarna letters (Moran (1992), 80, EA 25; 113, EA 40). A few of these spoons are inlaid with ivory and bear traces of pigment in the interstices of their carved scenes, but, in general, the fine-grained wood was unembellished. The spoon handles are artfully carved into small two-dimensional vignettes or three-dimensional figures. The symbolism of many of the two-dimensional vignettes incorporates lithe dancing girls playing musical instruments and singing, or gathering Hathor's sacred reeds in the marshes where the sacred cow was thought to roam. As all music was sacred to Hathor, such performances were meant to entice the goddess to emerge from her hiding place and attend to the rebirth of the king and likewise his courtiers.

The most dramatic and eye-catching of the figurine-types is in the form of a nude girl stretched out horizontally as if floating, holding a duck in front of her on her outstretched arms (Figure 15.4). The bird's body forms the spoon bowl. Its wings, pinned at the shoulder to its body, swivel outward to reveal the bowl's interior. The girl mimics the pose of the goddess Nut who is shown stretched across the sky as a nude young woman on tomb ceilings and sarcophagi. Something of an alter ego to Hathor, Nut was thought to swallow the sun at dusk on the western horizon and give birth to it the next morning on the eastern one. If the nude girl on the figurine spoons is Nut, then her duck stands for the hieroglyphic "son," as in the child she bears, the son of the sun-god, namely the king himself (Kozloff (1992b), 331–334).



**Figure 15.4** Cosmetic spoon of young girl swimming: purchased 1834; N 1704, New Kingdom, late Dynasty 18, ca. 1400–1300 BC. Partially painted carob wood, sculpture in the round, L. 34 cm; W. 7 cm. © RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Hervé Lewandowski.

These utensils have long been regarded as ointment containers, and yet, of the hundreds known, only one was found with a small lump of resin in it. In fact, none of the spoons show any traces of ointments or any wear at all. All of the spoons are quite delicately made. The two-dimensional spoons are wafer-thin, and feel in the hand as light as the wing of a balsa model airplane. Clearly they were unable to withstand daily wear, either as containers or instruments for scooping exotic gels from larger vessels. More likely these spoons were used only once during funerary rites, to gently offer water to the deceased as if from the Goddess of the Sycamore who is repeatedly shown in this act on late Dynasty 18 stele, funerary furniture and papyri. The Lady of the Sycamore was yet another manifestation of Hathor, the same deity honored as a celestial goddess by the princesses in the *Tale of Sinuhe*. In late Dynasty 18, Nut was also considered a tree goddess who was depicted inhabiting a tree.

Although the tree most commonly associated with Hathor was the sycamore, it is not surprising that sycamore wood was not used for these spoons. While able to store a significant amount of water and offering a huge canopy of shade, the sycamore tree produced a wood that was soft, fibrous, and not nearly fine enough to be carved into small, exquisitely detailed sculptures. Boxwood was perfect, being a fine-grained hardwood. Coming from the East, boxwood may have been considered appropriate for the job considering Hathor's position as a goddess of the East.

For the most part, these types of spoons fell out of fashion after Dynasty 18, and only a few examples exist from subsequent periods. In fact, what we know of the steady stream of Egypt's luxury art production over two millennia dwindles to a trickle. After the Third Intermediate Period, no great treasures of silver and gold have been found, although one always hopes for the discovery of the intact tomb of a Ptolemy or a Cleopatra or a high member of their courts.

Faience seems to have been the one great survivor. Faience artisans, having perfected their craft before Egypt's history began, continued for centuries to create beautiful ritual objects like those carried by the princesses of the *Tale of Sinuhe*, as well as jewelry, funerary markers, vessels, and, of course, shawabtis, the funerary figurines made to accompany their owner into the next world in order to carry out his agricultural work. Three-dimensional statuettes of deities as well as vessels in faience remained staples of Egyptian artistic output well into the Greco-Roman period. Some of the most complex figurines and rococo vessels were made during this last gasp of Egyptian culture. With rare exceptions, however, the later faience artisans never strayed from the easily made blue and green glazes into the more difficult yellows, reds, and whites produced with such brilliance during the reign of Amenhotep III.

## Manufacturing Secrets of Antiquity's High-Tech Materials

Faience as a material deserves special attention because it was in all of human history "the first high-tech ceramic," a phrase coined by two of its foremost analysts, Vandiver and Kingery (Nicholson (1998), 50 and 63, n.2). Up to 99 percent of the basic raw material is silica found in the plentiful sand of Egypt. Sand, however, is full of impurities. According to Nicholson (1998 50), high-grade silica was produced by crushing relatively pure

quartz pebbles, “resulting in a clean, dazzling white body material.” This made the glaze applied to the surface sparkle with an intensity that explains why the ancient Egyptian word for faience was “dazzling” (*tjehenet*) (Friedman (1998a), 15). The remaining 1.5 percent of faience is lime or calcium oxide, and the remaining 0.3 to 0.5 percent is alkali, primarily soda. Faience objects were either modeled by hand then decorated and fired, or pushed into fired-clay molds, removed, possibly worked further, and then fired. There were at least three different methods for glazing faience, two of which are considered “self-glazing.” The first, called “efflorescence,” involves mixing soluble salts (the glazing material) with the silica, lime, and soda. As the object dries, these salts migrate to the surface, and during firing, they melt and fuse to become a glaze. The second process, “cementation,” is a matter of firing the object while it is buried inside a vessel full of glazing powder which fuses to the surface. The third method is similar to the method used for glazing pottery and involves applying the glaze elements in a slurry to the surface before firing. Only one firing is necessary for faience.

Faience is known from earliest dynastic times mostly in the form of beads, small amulets and figurines, rarely more than 3 inches in height. The most famous early faience piece exists as a series of bracelet elements representing a royal falcon perched atop a palace facade from the tomb of King Djer of Dynasty 1 (2870–2823 BCE), now in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo. Faience objects of great complexity and beauty continued to be made well into the Greco-Roman Period (332 BCE–337 CE). “Egyptian blue,” mentioned above in the discussion of the falcon-headed statue (Plate 8), does not seem to have developed until around Dynasty 4 (2543–2436 BCE). It was formed into objects both by hand and in molds, but, unlike faience, Egyptian blue could also be ground up and used as a pigment with a sparkly appearance, much like lapis lazuli. Egyptian blue was also used by the ancient Greeks, who called it *kyanos*, and by the Romans, who called it *caeruleum*, and thought that it was invented in Alexandria (Nicholson and Henderson (2000), 205).

Ancient Egyptian glass shares the same ingredients as faience: silica, lime, and soda but in different amounts. Actually, the soda-lime glass of antiquity has much the same chemical composition as early and mid twentieth-century Coke bottles. However, very little (nearly) colorless, transparent glass is known from antiquity before the invention of glass blowing in 50 BCE. Most ancient Egyptian glass is thick and barely translucent, the finest examples having surfaces decorated in multiple colors like the fish illustrated in this chapter (Figure 15.3).

The ingredients for glass including various colorants were melted in pans to create a viscous material much like thick molasses. The most frequently quoted, but by no means sure, theory about how ancient vessels were formed starts with gathering a bit of this viscous mass on the end of a tool in a long, thick streamer and trailing it carefully around a prepared core consisting mainly of earth or dung (Nicholson and Henderson (2000), 203). The desired shape resulted from additional heating and working with various tools and then marvering or rolling the vessel on a smooth rock in order to flatten the coils of glass into a continuous and even surface. Decorative rings or spirals in contrasting colors were formed by gathering molten glass from their respective pans and trailing them around the outside of the vessel. The festoon shape of some decoration was achieved by drawing a thin tool in one direction against the colored trails, dragging them into swags. The vessel was then reheated and marvered completely smooth. When cool, the core was

removed from the vessel so that the interior was ready to hold some cosmetic ointment or pigment such as eye-paint.

Faience, Egyptian blue, and glass are often difficult to distinguish from each other visually, but breaks or chips in the surface often offer a clue to the identity of the material. A bright white layer beneath the color is usually one clue to faience. Glass and Egyptian blue are often very similar in appearance to each other, even at their breaks, except a chip in glass will have a wet or puddled appearance, while Egyptian blue looks dry.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Many of the most useful books on the luxury arts have been published by museums, either as collection catalogs or, more often, as exhibition catalogs, because the subject holds great attraction and intrigue for the museum-going public. Museum publications with large concentrations of luxury arts are Hayes' classic two-volume *Scepter of Egypt* (1990), various Cairo Museum catalogs and the Miho Museum catalog, both cited below. Exhibition catalogs such as Boston's *Egypt's Golden Age*, Cleveland's, Fort Worth's, and the Louvre's *Egypt's Dazzling Sun* (Kozloff and Bryan 1992), the Rhode Island School of Design's *Gifts of the Nile* (Friedman 1998b), and The Metropolitan Museum of Art's *Gifts for the Gods* (Hill and Schorsch 2007) have enriched our knowledge and made superb photographs available for the lay public, students, and scholars, as has Carol Andrews' (1991) monograph on jewelry. The Cairo Museum and Egypt's Supreme Council have made possible the publication of several superbly illustrated books on the Tutankhamun (for example, Hawass 2005) and Tanis (Leclant 1987) treasures. In-depth discussions of materials and technology are provided by world-renowned experts in the outstanding Cambridge University Press publication edited by Paul Nicholson and Ian Shaw (2000), cited below. Paul Nicholson also expanded his discussion on faience in *Gifts of the Nile* (1998). The *Tale of Sinuhe* and other Middle Kingdom classics of Egyptian literature are translated by Richard Parkinson (1997) and enhanced by extensive and thoughtful footnotes. For better understanding of the importance and ubiquity of symbolism in ancient Egyptian objects, see Richard Wilkinson's thorough and insightful monograph (1994).

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PART III

## Concepts in Art

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## CHAPTER 16

# Ideology and Propaganda

*Ronald J. Leprohon*

### Introduction

The ancient Egyptians conveyed messages to a particular audience by various means, which included written texts, statuary, or two-dimensional representations. This organized program of publicity was used to propagate specific and selected information. Messages emanating from the royal palace were intended to communicate well-defined statements about royal power and allegiance to the crown, while those from private individuals were meant to demonstrate high social status. The crown's intended audience was quite simply the country's population, while private officials aimed at impressing their own peers.

Polemical or ideological tracts produced by the palace (Blumenthal 1970; Grimal 1986) and private autobiographies written on stelae or tomb chapel walls (for Old Kingdom texts, see Kloth 2002; for the First Intermediate Period, see Coulon 1997; for the Middle Kingdom, see Doxey 1998; for the New Kingdom, see Guksch 1994; for Third Intermediate Period texts, see Jansen-Winkel 1985; and for the Late Period, see Otto 1954) contained obvious propagandistic elements. A nobleman or high official could boast of his close relationship to the king, his eloquence, and unsurpassed judgment, recount the stages of his career, or promote the ethical values of his time (Gnirs 2001). Artistic creations were also effective in delivering the same messages. This impact should, perhaps, not be surprising given the highly functional aspect of ancient Egyptian art, as has been discussed elsewhere in this book (for a different approach to this topic, see Baines 1994).

### Accessibility

Before analyzing elements of propaganda, one must determine the accessibility of the artwork examined in the present chapter. In this age of quasi-total availability of information,

it is easy to forget that a certain amount of what is illustrated in books on ancient Egyptian art—and thus readily at hand for modern-day perusal—was simply not accessible to the ancient Egyptians. Material made for the burial chamber or the representations on the walls of the same were only meant for the benefit of the deceased's *ka*-spirit. Perhaps other noblemen had admired the objects in the workshops where they were produced. But once these objects had been deposited within the sealed tomb (cf. the pile of wooden statues shown in Smith (1998), 72, fig. 134), the objects stopped being what we would consider to be "works of art" and became what they had been intended to be all along: utilitarian images meant for the use of the deceased throughout eternity. Representations of cultic acts found on inner temple walls, especially those close to the sanctuary, would have been seen only by the very few who had access to these more private areas. Therefore, such scenes will be excluded from the present discussion.

What were accessible, however, were royal statues or representations in open spaces. For the former, the most obvious and imposing are the enormous seated statues of King Ramesses II in front of the temple at Abu Simbel in Nubia. Similar statues, on a smaller scale but still larger than life, would also have stood before other temple pylons and been visible to all. They were common in the New Kingdom, but one example from the Middle Kingdom stands out. Amenemhet III erected a pair of colossal statues at the site of Biahmu in the Fayum. Only their pedestals survive today, but classical authors describe them (Habachi 1941). Other accessible royal statues were those deposited in the open courtyards and hypostyle halls of temples (Smith (1941), 518–521, discusses both royal and private statuary; Assmann (1996), 65, 73). The high officials who were permitted entrance into the temple precincts (Bell (1997), 164–170; Bryan (1996), 161 and n. 3) could have seen them. Similarly, two-dimensional representations of the king presented in the open would have been seen by one and all. Probably the best example of the latter is the ubiquitous smiting scene, usually carved on the outside walls of temple pylons (Hall 1986), which demonstrated the king's power to repulse enemies and accordingly protect his subjects. High officials deposited private statues in temple courtyards, where their peers, whom they were trying to impress, had access.

The scenes engraved or painted on the walls of the above-ground tomb chambers of non-royal officials were similarly accessible. One genre of texts, the so-called "Address to the Living," on which passersby were entreated to recite prayers on behalf of the deceased tomb owner (Shubert 2007), makes it quite clear that people did, in fact, go inside funerary chapels. An Old Kingdom official from Deir el-Gebrawi warned "any person who will enter this tomb of mine" to only do so in a state of purity (*Urk.* I, 142: 15–16), while a Middle Kingdom soldier who left a statue at Dahshur called out to "every lector priest ... who will enter this chapel and who will see this statue of mine" (Fakhry (1961), 41–42; Stefanović (2006), 63). In the New Kingdom, there are references to people "offering in the presence of my statue in my funerary chapel" (*Urk.* IV, 1185: 4), and giving an offering loaf "to the lector-priest who is in my funerary chapel in the course of every day" (*Urk.* IV, 1800: 12). This last statement also reminds us that the various priests hired to fulfill the ongoing funerary cult of the deceased had to have access to the tomb chapel to carry out their duties (Hartwig (2004), 8).

Such entreaties were sometimes rewarded not only with the expected prayers recited orally but also with written testimonials, in the form of graffiti left at the site (Robins (1997), 12; Hartwig (2004), 42, n. 44). The royal funerary complexes at Abusir

(Peden (2001), 58–63, 95–96), Sakkara (Peden (2001), 61–63, 96–101, 279–280), and Deir el-Bahri (Peden (2001), 106–107, 120–123) received visitors who left written records of their sojourns. Private tombs at Beni Hasan in Middle Egypt (Peden (2001), 46–47, 102) and El-Kab in southern Upper Egypt (Peden (2001), 75) received the same treatment, but the lion's share of graffiti left on the walls of tombs comes from the west bank at Thebes (Peden (2001), 68–74, 103–105, 119–120, and 274–275). Most of these visitors' inscriptions were fairly short, simply consisting of stock phrases extolling the virtues of the tomb scenes. One such text from the reed pen of a New Kingdom scribe who visited an early Dynasty 12 tomb reads: "The scribe Djehuty, true-of-voice, came to see this tomb from the time of Kheperkare [i.e., King Senwosret I], may he live forever. Then he praised the god greatly for it" (Parkinson (1991), 148).

An additional piece of evidence regarding subsequent visits to tomb chapels is a religious festival called The Beautiful Feast of the Valley (Schott 1952), which was held at Thebes in the New Kingdom. A statue of the god Amun was taken out of the temple of Karnak and transported across the river to Deir el-Bahri to pay tribute to the funerary cults housed there. During the festival, private individuals also took the opportunity to visit the tombs of their deceased relatives, where they held a feast. A few even left graffiti describing some of the ceremonies from the festival (Quirke 1986).

The repetition of scenes from one tomb to another also suggests access to the artistic representations found in tomb chapels. One example is the occurrence of the so-called "Painting of the Seasons" scene in the two adjacent Dynasty 6 tombs of Mereruka and Khentika at Sakkara (Bochi 2003). This duplication certainly supports the idea that the latter was not only aware of the former's depiction but wished to include the scene—albeit in a slightly modified version—in his own tomb. From the New Kingdom, two such examples exist. A temple accountant named Amenemhat from the time of Thutmose III (TT 82; PM I.1<sup>2</sup>, 163–167) so admired the Theban tomb of Senet, the mother of Intefoker, who had served as Senwosret I's vizier (Davies 1920), that he had his tomb carved near that of Senet and even modeled some of the images in his own tomb on the earlier Middle Kingdom scenes (Parkinson (1991), 147, who notes that Amenemhat mistook the tomb for the vizier's). Another example of copying is a detail from a party scene in which one guest turns to her neighbor and offers her a mandrake fruit (for the symbolism of the vignette, see Derchain 1975 and Robins (1990), 52). The best-known image is from the Theban tomb of Nakht from the reign of Thutmose IV (TT 52; Shedid and Seidel (1991), 46, 48–51), but a number of other occurrences in Theban tombs (Hartwig (2004), 99), all of which may be dated to the same reign, attest to the popularity of the vignette in local tomb paintings. The scene is also found engraved on the middle register of the funerary stela of a chief coppersmith named Ahmose, which can be dated stylistically to the reign of Thutmose IV and which is now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (Simpson 1985). Ahmose presumably saw the delightful episode in one or more of the Theban tomb chapels and requested his artist to reproduce it on a smaller scale on his stela.

The archaizing tendencies of the so-called "Saite Renaissance," in which artistic representations from earlier periods were either adapted or copied outright, are well known (Smith (1998), 232–251). One such instance is the New Kingdom painted scene from the Theban tomb of Menna (TT 69) of a woman carrying a child in a sling while picking fruit from a tree (conveniently illustrated in Mekhitarian (1978), 79; see also Hartwig

2013) transferred to an engraved version of the same in the Saite period tomb of the Fourth High Priest of Amun Mentuemhat (Fazzini et al. (1989), 71). As with the earlier New Kingdom coppersmith, one can imagine the Saite period priest visiting Theban tombs, admiring particular scenes, and wishing to add these to his own funerary chapel.

## Royal Propaganda

When, in the late fourth millennium BCE, a number of local chieftains in Upper Egypt undertook to consolidate their power over neighboring polities, their courts devised ways to communicate their emerging dominance with images that conveyed a narrative of their growing supremacy. Thus, a ruler would not only be shown conquering enemies and presenting them to local shrines (Darnell et al. (2002), 10), but he would also be shown on a much larger scale than the other figures around him, assuring he would be the focal point of attention. In addition, the composition would show him holding certain symbols of power, such as maces and scepters, and perhaps even wearing special headgear. This series of artistic conventions, seen very early on in the formation of pharaonic power, would continue to be used for over three millennia, with ever more elaboration as time went on.

Another strategy used by the court to demonstrate royal dominance employed the emerging system of writing. Although the captions may have helped complete the pictorial narrative for the few who could interpret the signs, the large majority was left guessing at the meaning of all these symbols. To counter this, the rulers' names were written within a vertical rectangular sign; its upper portion showed the royal name while the bottom represented an elaborate palace facade. The building is surmounted by a falcon figure. This detailed composition had to easily convey its meaning, and so one assumes that a story—what we would refer to as a “myth” today—about a celestial falcon-ruler living in an opulent palace was known to the general population, who could then connect this tale to the human leader whose name was engraved in the tableau. The palace facade icon, known as the *serekh*, visually located the chieftain within the social hierarchy, indicating that he lived in grander circumstances than the rest of the population. The *serekh*, a word that literally meant “to cause to know,” hence something like “to inform,” would be used for millennia to enclose the so-called Horus name, the earliest designation for a king in ancient Egypt. In that respect, it is noteworthy that two other royal names, the throne and birth names—sometimes referred to as the prenomen and nomen, respectively—were written inside oval signs, which we call cartouches. These special hieroglyphs would also have made the names obvious as indicators of royal power, even if illiterate viewers could not necessarily identify which specific ruler was named within them.

Another enduring royal symbol was the so-called smiting scene (Hall 1986), where the king holds a fallen enemy by the hair and is about to club him, presumably to death. From the Narmer Palette, its most successful early occurrence, to the Ptolemaic examples at the very end of ancient Egyptian history (by which time the original single enemy had now become a multitude of pleading prisoners) the scene conveyed a strong message of the king as all-conquering and powerful, a ruler who would brook no opposition. The original placement of the Narmer Palette is difficult to determine since it was found in a later archaeological context, but smiting scenes are usually found on the outside of

the temple pylons for all to see. Since the fallen enemies were almost always foreigners, the symbolic meaning of the scene was the king repelling what the Egyptians saw as a representation of chaos. The composition was to magically protect the temple's sacred grounds behind the entrance pylon. What is also noteworthy about such a scene is that the king is never seen actually fighting in combat. Only the outcome of the battle is shown, with the victorious Egyptian king about to dispatch a conquered foe. The victory was always preordained, with Egypt's gods guaranteeing the king total victory.

An exception to avoiding showing the king fighting occurs in the Ramesside period. On the northern outside wall of the Hypostyle Hall at Karnak, Sety I was shown first riding off to war in his chariot at the border fortress of Tharu, crossing over from Egypt into Palestine (Figure 16.1; see also LD III, 128; PM II<sup>1</sup>, 55; Epigraphic Survey (1986), pls. 6–7; and Murnane (1990), 39–42), then actively campaigning in the Levant (PM II<sup>1</sup>, 53–57). Other examples are the elaborate scenes of Ramesses II's famous battle at the city of Kadesh in modern-day Syria. To herald what the king certainly considered a victory, these were engraved on the walls of a number of temples in Egypt and Nubia. Ramesses II's battle scenes are of special interest because there is a disjunction between the reliefs and the accompanying texts. The former show only the positive side of the battle, with the heroic king riding his chariot into the heat of the battle. The texts, however, describe the event in detail, revealing the lapses in the Egyptians' military intelligence, which almost cost them the battle. The full narrative includes the extraordinary statement that the king "did not know" about his army's precarious situation (Kitchen (1996), 15), an unusual admission that ran contrary to the palace's customary statements about the king's infallible judgment. Thus, in this case the literate elite received a different message than the illiterate masses (for a full discussion, see Bryan 1996). From Dynasty 20, Ramesses III's incomparable reliefs showing his battles against the so-called Sea Peoples are found on the walls of his Mortuary Temple in western Thebes (PM II<sup>1</sup>, 518–520; Murnane (1980), 11–18). The richness of detail showing the charging pharaoh, the



**Figure 16.1** Sety I in his chariot, New Kingdom, Dynasty 19, Temple of Amun-Re, Karnak, Photograph: Ronald J. Leprohon.

soldiers' headgear and weapons, and the prostrate enemies remains unsurpassed in the catalogue of war reliefs from pharaonic Egypt. The conclusion of the battles showed the king presenting the captive enemies to the gods. Once again these were carved on temple surfaces that could be easily seen by the population (examples are found in PM II<sup>1</sup>, 54 (167), 56 (169), 59 (175), 85 (222), etc.; see Derchain 1966 and Shubert 1981). Such aggressive episodes were complemented on other exterior temple walls by scenes in which the king was shown hunting (Simpson (1982), 270; Baines (2003), 42), which also demonstrated similar prowess to his subjects.

The king had other methods with which to trumpet his victories. At the borders of his kingdom, commemorative stelae were set up to detail his victories and his intentions toward the newly conquered territory. Some of these have survived, such as the so-called Boundary Stela of Senwosret III, left at the Second Cataract in Nubia (Parkinson (1991), 43–46). Others, such as the stelae of Thutmose I and Thutmose III by the Euphrates, are only known from their mention in texts carved after the fact in Egypt (*Urk.* IV, 697: 3–5). In Senwosret III's case, the text also refers to the erection of a statue of the king (Barta 1974; Kemp (2006), 239), which would have further reminded the local population of the Egyptian king's presence.

Another type of scene designed by the palace to win the hearts and minds of the population are the so-called Divine Birth scenes. Their iconography reinforced the king's divine right to rule by using the subterfuge of displaying scenes of a god impregnating the current ruler's mother and thus engendering a divine birth. The two best known of these scenes are from Hatshepsut's temple at Deir el-Bahri (PM II<sup>1</sup>, 348–349) and Amenhotep III's Birth Room in Luxor Temple (PM II<sup>1</sup>, 326–328). In Hatshepsut's case, her legitimization program was supplemented by the scenes of her fictitious coronation under her long-dead father Thutmose I (PM II<sup>1</sup>, 347–348). All of these scenes were carved on the walls of the middle colonnade at Deir el-Bahri and were thus accessible for many to see. Amenhotep III's reliefs, however, were carved in a small room deep inside Luxor Temple, and so it is difficult to establish how available they would have been to the population at large.

Statuary was another means used by the palace to send specific images about the king to his subjects. In the Old Kingdom, the image offered was that of a dignified, majestic ruler with superhuman powers and direct connections to the divine (Assmann (1996), 64). Following their Old Kingdom counterparts, representations of the king in the early Middle Kingdom were rather idealized; the similarities to the older models may well have been deliberate on the part of kings who wished to be associated with the glories of the past (Lorand 2011). By the end of Dynasty 12, however, a remarkable experiment occurred. Gone was the expressionless king, to be replaced by a weary-looking monarch with hooded sunken eyes, a drooping bitter mouth, and surprisingly large ears that stick out from his cloth headdress (Bourriau (1988), 37–43). A number of such statues, made for Senwosret III, were found in the temple complex of King Mentuhotep II at Deir el-Bahri (PM II, 384–385), hence would certainly have been visible to visitors at the site. As has been pointed out (Tefnin (1992), 150–151), the large ears might simply have been a family trait. But explaining how such a specific iconographic feature endured for generations, well into Dynasty 13 and even into early Dynasty 17, whose kings were not even related to the original Dynasty 12 family, is a puzzle. Additionally, although the late Dynasty 12 royal faces appear old and grizzled, the kings' bodies are shown youthful and muscular.

The textual evidence helps to explain this unusual royal depiction. Ears were, of course, used for listening, and hearing and listening were considered particularly desirable and praiseworthy qualities in this period (Tefnin (1992), 153–154). As the sage Ptahhotep counseled, “If you are a man who leads, listen calmly to the words of one who is pleading... Not all that one pleads for can be granted, but a good hearing soothes the heart” (Lichtheim (1973), 68). Ptahhotep also advised that “Listening is useful to the one who listens... it creates good will” (Lichtheim (1973), 74). This quality of the figure of authority who heard his subjects reached its apotheosis in the god known by his Greek name of Mestasytmis, from the Egyptian expression *mesdjer sedjem*, “the ears that listen” (Wagner and Quagebeur 1973). Of note is that this little-known deity, who is found in the Greco-Roman period, is mostly encountered in the Fayum, an area where Dynasty 12 had been highly active during its floruit. Thus, the king’s large ears on the statuary were the sculptor’s solution for bringing this quality of good listening to the fore. It was the semiotic image of the benevolent ruler who heard and understood his subject (Tefnin (1992), 153).

The king’s weary look is also an iconographic reflection of another element of the royal program of the time. Senwosret III claimed to be a king “who doesn’t sleep with a matter (still) on his mind” (Sethe (1928), 83: 25). A hymn sung in the same king’s praise also declared that he was “A unique youthful one who fights for his frontiers and doesn’t let his subjects weary themselves. He is one who lets his nobles sleep until dawn, and his (military) recruits can slumber on because his heart protects them” (Sethe (1928), 66: 9–11). Thus the king would take the brunt of the responsibility for the country and allow his people to not tire themselves with such matters. This motif of the caring king who spent nights worrying about his subjects is echoed in a Dynasty 13 royal text where King Neferhotep I declared that he would “seek out what is beneficial for the future” (Simpson (2003), 344). This sentiment would be repeated in Dynasty 18, when Amenhotep III claimed to be “one who spends the night seeking out what is beneficial,” albeit this time for a temple (*Urk.* IV, 1701: 14–15; for other New Kingdom examples, see Brand (1998), 33–34; and Grimal (1986), 525, n. 387). The iconographic experiment would not be repeated on royal statuary, but it is noteworthy that Amenhotep III’s chief architect, Amenhotep son of Hapu, chose this particular type of portraiture when he wished to be represented as a sage in his own statues (Baines (1994), 83–84; Assmann (1996), 78). In contrast, the royal statuary in the early New Kingdom gave the kings more delicate features with a rather impassive and impersonal expression (Russmann (1989), 89–97), even though their bodies were broader and more muscular than those of their Middle Kingdom predecessors (Kozloff (2001), 225).

## Private Propaganda

A woman is asked about her husband,  
while a man is asked about his rank.

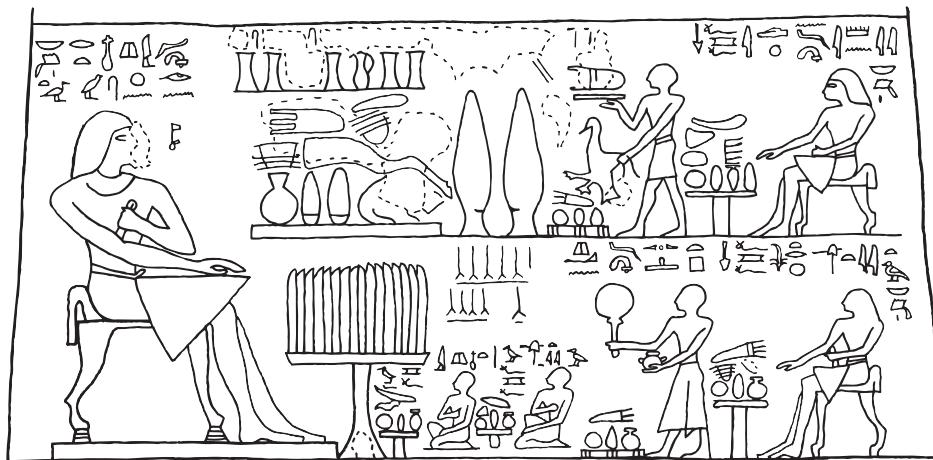
Given the sentiments conveyed in this aphorism collected by the sage Any (Lichtheim (1976), 140), one can well imagine a society in which members of the ruling elite vied with one another for supremacy on the social ladder. In their self-promoting

autobiographical statements, officials bragged about being “a fellow of the king, who is greeted by name” (Doxey (1998), 374). Having become such a “foremost confidante before his entourage and his dignitaries” (Doxey (1998), 280) meant that the official could be “promoted by the king before countless (of his peers)” (Doxey (1998), 393). This honor gave him the prestige of “entering unimpeded, without even (the need of) his announcement” (Doxey (1998), 280), indeed, of being “one whose arrival is (eagerly) awaited among the entourage” (Doxey (1998), 363).

Keeping up with such social pressure presumably also meant constantly ensuring that one wore the right clothes with the proper accoutrements, along with maintaining a large household filled with supplies and servants. That is certainly how high officials wished to be remembered for posterity by their communities, since those are the sorts of concerns that filled the walls of their tomb chapels. Notwithstanding that a good number of objects from everyday life have survived (for New Kingdom material, see Brovarski et al. 1982), the bulk of our knowledge about daily life in ancient Egypt nevertheless comes from scenes carved or painted on the surfaces of tomb walls. Although it is usually understood that the main function of such scenes was to ensure a prosperous afterlife, one can nevertheless contend that the elite were also using these depictions to make statements about their high status. If agricultural scenes showed their ability to produce and store food—which was, after all, the currency of the time—images of fishing and hunting also demonstrated the amount of leisure time their position in society afforded them. Indeed, the mere fact of being able to afford an impressive tomb displayed the owners’ ability to hire first-rate artists, which showed off their wealth and status to their peers. Although the tomb owner’s actual involvement in the final product is difficult to establish (Eaton-Krauss (2001), 137), it seems reasonable to assume that the patron had some input. This may perhaps have occurred at the beginning of the undertaking with discussions on the choice of scenes and their placement on the walls, although there is evidence of tomb owners visiting the site to oversee the decoration of the tomb (Hartwig (2004), 28).

There were a great number of ways, some more subtle than others, to indicate that status. The tomb owner must of course be the focal point of attention (Robins (1990), 54). Thus, like the king in royal scenes, the high official was shown bigger than others in the composition, even including the members of his family. He could also display additional authority by leaning on a long staff and holding a scepter (Drenkhahn (1984), 1271). Once drawn to the tomb owner’s figure, viewers would be immediately impressed by his clothes (Assmann (1996), 69–70), some of which were fringed, starched (Green 2001), 278), and at times pleated (Janssen (1995), 383, 391), all of which necessarily required significant care such as pressing and proper storage (Hartwig (2004), 42). Such elaborate clothes are even seen on statuary (Bochi (2003), 167–168). This was in marked contrast to the workers shown around him, who wore simple kilts or were actually naked (Robins (1997), 76). On his feet were sandals, surely a commodity not everyone could afford, especially if they were made of leather (Janssen (1975), 292–298). Other obvious markers of wealth were the elaborate wigs worn by the owner, whereas others around him wore either simpler wigs or were bare-headed.

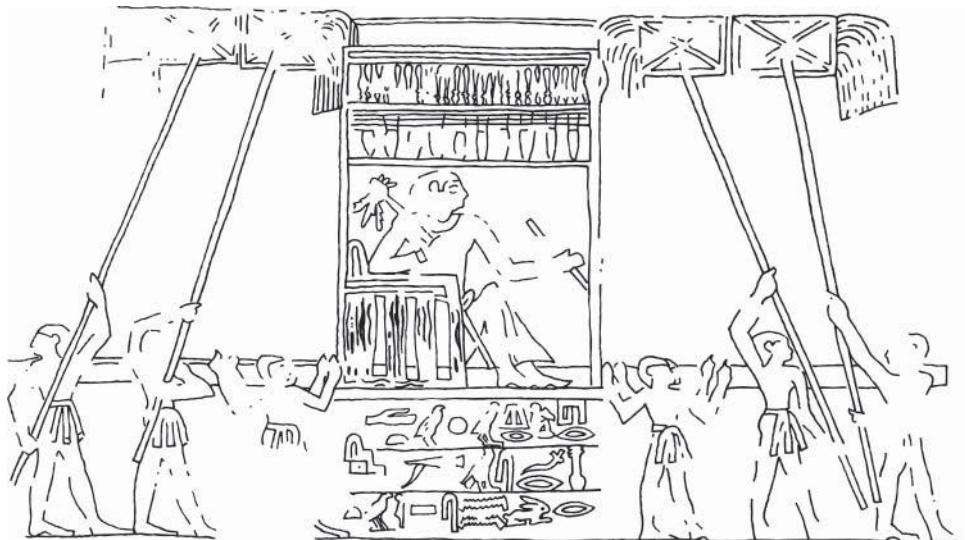
These markers of status are well illustrated in the lower register of the stela of the Chief Treasurer Iykhernofret, whose late Dynasty 12 commemorative monument at Abydos recounted his participation in the Osirian Festival there (Leprohon 2001). At the bottom



**Figure 16.2** Iykhernofret seated before an offering table with his two sons, brothers, a subordinate member of his office, and a servant, from the bottom of the stela of Iykhernofret (Berlin 1204). Redrawn from Schäfer (1904), by Barbara E. Ibronyi.

of the stela (Figure 16.2), he is shown sitting on an elaborate chair, facing right. He wears the shoulder-length bagwig popular at the time, a broad collar, and a starched kilt that juts forward. His left hand, folded on his breast, holds a handkerchief, which was itself a marker of high status (Hartwig (2004), 91), while his right extends to the offering table before him. The other figures in the composition are his two brothers, two sons, a subordinate member of his office (Leprohon 1978), and a servant, all of whom face Iykhernofret. The brothers' high status is indicated by their wearing similar kilts and wigs to Iykhernofret while sitting on elaborate chairs; but their smaller scale still renders them as subordinate to Iykhernofret. Although members of the family as well, his sons are clearly shown as having inferior status, indicated by their short kilts, their bare heads, and the fact that they are sitting on mats on the floor; they are also shown on an even smaller scale than their adult relatives (Robins (1997), 72). Iykhernofret's underling, an "Apprentice to the Chief Treasurer" named Minhotep, is shown standing while holding a mirror and a stone vase in each hand; he wears a long unstarched kilt that extends below his knees, but he is bare-headed. The last figure on the social scale is a servant who brings offerings of a bird and vegetables to Iykhernofret; he wears a simple short kilt and is bare-headed. Thus, with a few simple changes in the representation of the figures, the artist has managed to convey every individual's relative social position. Because these commemorative stelae were regularly seen by visitors at the pilgrimage site of Abydos (Leprohon 2009), the clearly defined class distinctions would have been clear to the onlookers.

A less subtle image that asserted social superiority was the depiction of the tomb owner's method of transport, much the way luxury cars are prized today. The tomb owner was shown borne aloft in an elaborately canopied palanquin (for a number of examples, see Vandier (1964), 328–363). He sits on a cushioned chair, holding symbols of authority, as attendants follow him carrying tall flabella to keep him cool. The palanquin is supported

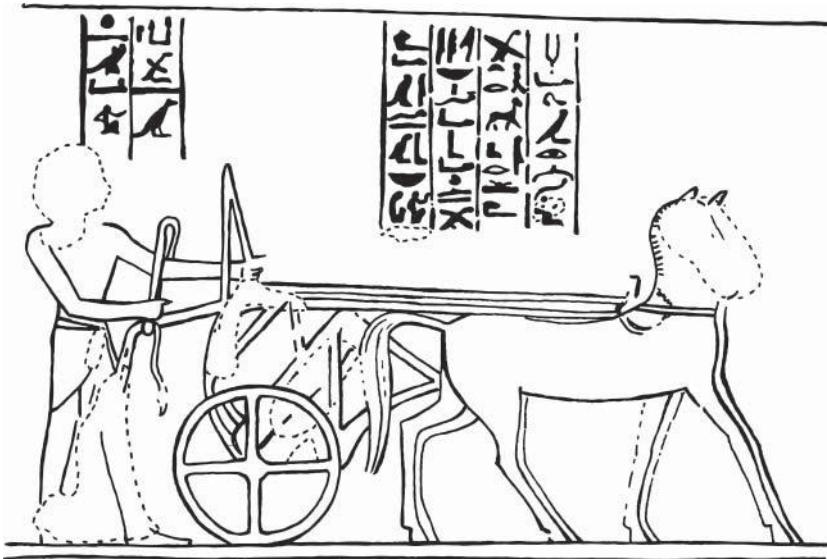


**Figure 16.3** Djau borne aloft on a canopied palanquin, Tomb of Djau, Old Kingdom, Dynasty 6, Deir el-Gebrawi. Redrawn from Davies (1902b), pl. 8, by Barbara E. Ibronyi.

by two long poles and held by up to twenty porters or more. The chair was carried high on the men's shoulders in order to raise the official up as far as possible above his surroundings. In the Dynasty 6 tomb of Djau from Deir el-Gebrawi (Figure 16.3), a self-congratulatory caption under the chair claims, "Happy are those who carry the palanquin! It is better when it is full than when it is empty."

From the New Kingdom on, the elite greatly prized another mode of transportation: the horse and chariot. The earliest example in a private tomb is that of Pahery at El-Kab, from the time of Thutmose III (Tylor and Griffith (1894), pl. 3). Pahery's maternal grandfather was the celebrated warrior Ahmose son of Ibana (Lichtheim (1976), 12–15), whose descendants profited greatly from an association with the glorious days of the wars of liberation against the Hyksos. On the southern end of the west wall of the tomb, which depicts the work of all three seasons, a vignette from the winter season shows a groom holding a team of horses. Over the horses, a caption reads, "Stand and don't resist, oh excellent team of horses of the mayor, beloved of his master, of which the mayor boasts to everyone" (Figure 16.4). In this case, only the literate would have appreciated the combination of text and picture. Because the scene was unusual for its time, however, we may also surmise that once the caption had been read out loud to a number of people, its content might have spread around the community by word of mouth.

The effectiveness of these captions as propaganda is difficult to gauge because of the low level of literacy in ancient Egypt, but the same Pahery certainly used them to his own benefit. On the same western wall, all the captions referring to him—which use larger hieroglyphic signs than the captions referring to the workers and their occupations—are written in so-called Middle Egyptian, a stage of the language dating back to the Middle Kingdom and which, by the New Kingdom, was reserved for royal or sacred inscriptions. In contrast, the speech of the workers is written in the current vernacular, referred to as

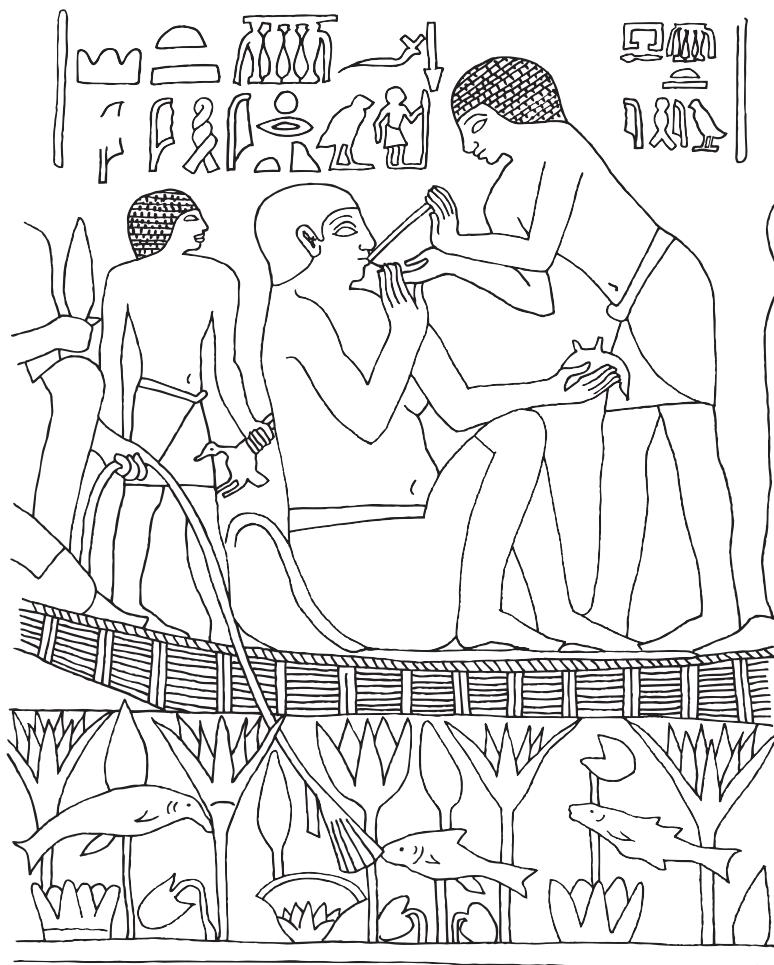


**Figure 16.4** Groom holding a team of horses, Tomb of Pahery, New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, El-Kab. Redrawn from Tylor and Griffith (1894), pl. 3, by Barbara E. Ibronyi.

Late Egyptian. Thus, for anyone who could read, Pahery was seen to be educated and well-spoken, while his workmen were shown using a common dialect, which, presumably, no self-respecting nobleman would have used in polite conversation. In fact, Pahery seemed to have been quite conscious of this distinction. His self-laudatory inscription, inscribed in the niche of the back wall of the chapel (Tylor and Griffith (1894), pl. 9), makes the claim that he never “spoke with low-class words” (Lichtheim (1976), 19). Perhaps, as the member of a family that owed its affluence to the fact that their ancestor was a decorated war veteran, Pahery was mindful of not revealing his modest roots to the long-standing local nobility. At any rate, even if only the literate elite class could grasp the juxtaposition of dialects inscribed on the walls of his chapel, they were, after all, the very people Pahery was trying to impress.

In the ubiquitous banquet scenes (for a collection of these, see Vandier (1964), 216–256), the very depiction of which was a means of promoting one’s wealth, the tomb owner was surrounded by his loving family and lavishly dressed guests—whose numbers in a given tomb may have been dictated by the wall space—and attended by a handful of servants, who busied themselves with the banqueters’ every need. The latter’s subordinate position was accentuated by a number of easily understood gestures of submission, such as bowing or raising the arms in respect (Vandier (1964), 321–325; Dominicus (1994), 5–37), by their smaller size, and simpler clothes. During such feasts, the great quantities of beef and wine consumed would certainly have signaled wealthier people who could afford such fare (Hartwig (2004), 108–110).

A corollary to this conspicuous consumption of food and drink was the depiction of the tomb owner as corpulent, which indicated his ability to eat however much and whenever he wished, always a mark of wealth. There are numerous representations of the tomb owner shown at different stages of his life, first as a trim and fit young man then as a



**Figure 16.5** Mereruka's overweight brother Ihy lounging in a small papyrus boat, drinking from a cup brought to his lips by an attendant while also holding a fowl, Mastaba of Mereruka, Old Kingdom, Dynasty 6, Saqqara. Redrawn from Duell (1938), pl. 43, by Barbara E. Ibronyi.

successful middle-aged official with a drooping chest and an expanding waistline (conveniently illustrated in Robins (1997), 76). Perhaps the epitome of this sort of image comes from the Old Kingdom mastaba of Mereruka at Sakkara, where the latter's overweight brother Ihy is shown lounging in a small papyrus boat, drinking from a cup brought to his lips by an attendant while also holding a fowl in one hand (Figure 16.5). The message to viewers was clearly that this particular family was one to be reckoned with. Both representations of the perfectly fit young noble and his later prosperous self are in marked contrast to those of the ordinary workers surrounding him, who could be shown with less than perfect bodies, balding heads, beard stubble, and indeed sometimes even with physical imperfections (Assmann (1996), 69).

This contrast is once again echoed in the textual evidence, as the so-called Satire on the Trades poked fun at various occupations, comparing them unfavorably to the scribal profession, which marked its practitioner as being part of the literate elite (Baines 1983; Baines and Eyre 1983). If a literate official could brag about being “clean of fingers” (Doxey (1998), 284), goldsmiths, on the other hand, had “fingers like the claws of a crocodile” (Lichtheim (1973), 186). Other trades maligned include potters, carpenters, stone masons, gardeners, weavers, bird-catchers, and fishermen (see Lichtheim (1973), 186–189), exactly the types of workers in the so-called Daily Life Scenes on tomb chapel walls. One can well imagine soirées in wealthy households where the elite amused themselves with a recitation of such woes, happy in the knowledge of their own superior, comfortable existence.

Scenes of everyday activities were another way to represent high status. On the surface, the figure of a nobleman standing, leaning on his staff, and observing the work done on his own estate seems like an obvious image to put on the walls of his funerary chapel. If one focuses solely on the activities themselves, it can be assumed that these were placed there to magically repeat themselves endlessly for the owner’s benefit (for semiotic studies of such scenes, see Angenot 1996 and 2000). The captions accompanying the scenes, however, can add another layer of meaning to the representations (Bryan 1996; Angenot 2002). The texts inscribed before the standing or sitting official often begin with the verb “watching,” or “observing” (*m33* in Egyptian). What follows the verb can refer to “the work done in the fields” (Davies (1901), pls. 4, 13) or “the capturing of the gazelles of the desert” (Newberry (1894), pl. 7). Closer to home, the owner is shown watching “all the works in the craftsmen’s workshops” (Davies (1902a), pl. 13), or, more dramatically, “the accounting of the estate managers,” as the latter bring in their taxes before a number of scribes ready with their papyrus rolls and reed pens carefully tucked behind their ears (LD II 64a; PM III<sup>2</sup>, 495). What is significant here is not merely that the estate owner was watching, but that he, unlike everyone else in the scene, was only looking. He was not actually working, a sure indicator of higher social standing. It is tempting to think that even some of the non-literate majority might have been able to catch the nuanced message. Since the eye-hieroglyph is one of the few signs used in the writing of the verb *m33* and that the verb is the first word in these particular captions, perhaps anyone who was observant and persistent enough may have been able to catch the gist of the caption.

A further refinement to the “watching” captions occurs in a vignette from the previously mentioned tomb of Pahery at El-Kab (Tylor and Griffith (1894), pl. 3). On the left of the full scene, the large caption before the standing figure of Pahery reads: “Watching (*m33*) the seasons of summer and winter and all the occupations done in the fields, by the mayor of El-Kab and the mayor of Esna, one who always acts and watches (*m33*) in the fields of the southern district, the Scribe of Grain Accounting, Pahery, true-of-voice.” Contrasting this is a caption over a man driving a pair of oxen plowing a field, which reads: “Hurry up, lead man, and drive the cattle! Look here, the boss is standing (there), seeing.” Here the verb is not the usual *m33*, “to watch,” but *peter*, “to see,” with the implication that the tomb owner not only watched the work being done but also “saw” everything that went on. This word play may have been intended to be humorous, a joke only the literate few would have caught, but it also exemplifies the notion of the unchallenged authority of the tomb owner over his charges.

Scenes of the owner watching passively from a distance are contrasted with another popular motif, where he was actively pursuing two different activities, those of hunting in the desert or fishing and fowling in the marches (for a collection of such scenes, see Vandier (1964), 717–829). In these, the tomb owner is shown in full force, striding forward in the act of launching a throw-stick or a spear; he is depicted as a virile young man and is, of course, always successful at the catch. The high status of the nobleman was obvious in these: he was shown emulating the king in the latter's role of maintaining *Ma'at* by pushing away the forces of chaos (Robins (1990), 48–50; Bochi (2003), 167). Additionally, such activities were an obvious status symbol, because only people who had obtained a certain standard of living had the luxury of pursuing them.

One example of these scenes, from the early Dynasty 6 mastaba of Nekhebu at Giza (Smith (1958), 59, fig. 2) (Figure 16.6), shows an interesting disparity between the large upright image of the tomb owner and the figures around him. Striding forward in his papyrus boat, Nekhebu has speared two large fish through which the harpoon's barbs can be seen. In contrast, at the bottom right hand side of the scene, underneath the speared fish, are three small figures fishing from a diminutive boat. One man holds a line in the water while his other hand is raised, gripping a mallet with which he will club the fish once it is caught. Another man bends over, reaching into the water to catch a fish with a hand-held hook, a method that must have taken a certain amount of skill and patience. The third man in the boat is leaning back with his hands on his belly, seemingly asleep, and pulling on a papyrus stalk perhaps to anchor the boat. The contrast here is between Nekhebu being able to essentially fish for leisure, and the fishermen's industry, which, for them, was presumably their livelihood. Of course, one may argue that the full



**Figure 16.6** Nekhebu spearing fish above a smaller boat of fishermen, Mastaba of Nekhebu, Old Kingdom, Dynasty 6, Giza. Redrawn from Smith (1958), 59, fig. 2, by Barbara E. Ibronyi.

composition was simply the result of the artist wishing to cram in as much information as he could in one scene, but the juxtaposition is striking.

These particular activities depicted on tomb chapel walls also find a reflection in the written record. A series of texts referred to as “The Pleasures of Fishing and Fowling” date to late Dynasty 12 and are preserved on Dynasty 18 papyri, thus attesting to their popularity. In these, noblemen yearned for days spent in the countryside, where they could hunt and fish to their hearts’ content. One man describes such an outing in the following manner: “Oh happy day when we go down to the marsh, that we may snare birds. . . . We shall trap birds by the thousands” (Caminos (1956), 7–8).

And at the end of his life, the official’s funeral performance had to be elaborate. His final journey would have been an exceptional farewell on the part of the community. Attended by his family, mourning women, an assortment of priests, and the notables of his city (Davies (1925), pl. 19), the cortège would have left his house and crossed over to the west bank. After various purification rites, the coffin would be carried to the tomb, where more rituals were performed, before the final entombment. Such pomp would be lavishly illustrated on the walls of his chapel. Notwithstanding the difficulty of assessing these particular scenes in terms of self-promotion—since they were presumably produced long before the event itself—the images were more than simply a recording of the event. Like the scenes of daily life discussed earlier, they would commemorate the tomb owner’s importance to his country and community forever and for all to see.

An artist commissioned with producing a royal portrait or decorating the walls of a nobleman’s funerary chapel had a number of methods at his disposal to elevate his patron’s status. The king had to be shown to be unique, powerful, and without equal, a ruler who would brook no opposition and protect his nation. As for private individuals, obvious representations were of the official in the presence of the king, being praised for his perfect conduct and preferably showered with the crown’s bounty (Hartwig (2004), 71). Barring such a lofty presence, the tomb owner was depicted larger than the other figures around him, including even his own family. He could be shown observing the work done on his estate or being presented with lavish offerings while seated with his wife before a table laden with food. To speak of ideology and propaganda in ancient Egypt may seem to be forcing a modern-day outlook on such an ancient culture. Today we equate propaganda with autocratic regimes, but this chapter has presented kings using texts and images to promote a specific ideology, as well as private individuals using the same to propagate certain ideals about themselves and their place within their society. The ancient Egyptians may be far removed from us in time and space but in many ways they are also very similar to us.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The article by Simpson (1982) examines the use of art as propaganda. The author first mentions colossal royal statues as obvious indicators of the king’s might. He then examines so-called rebus statues, where the combination of images in the composition can be “read” as a specific message of the king’s patronage of the gods and the latter’s reciprocal protection of the kingship; statues of Senenmut, Hatshepsut’s favorite courtier, holding Princess Nefrure in his lap, which enhanced his prestige by showing his closeness to the crown; scenes of the king triumphing over his enemies; and the harsh features on the portraits of the late Dynasty 12 kings. This last topic is

expanded in Tefnin's 1992 study, where he examines the correlation between the textual and the iconographic evidence of the period to explain the remarkable appearance of the king at the time. Betsy M. Bryan's 1996 analysis asks the readers to consider the different audiences for a certain work of art, depending on whether they were literate or not. While the latter group had to satisfy themselves with the images and their accompanying symbolism, the literate elite were sometimes given additional information, which gave them a more nuanced view of the work and the event it commemorated. In her detailed study of tomb paintings from the reigns of Thutmose IV and Amenhotep III, Melinda Hartwig (2004) touches upon a number of iconographic themes high officials used in their tomb decorations. These include scenes where the tomb owner is present before the king; the presentation of gifts by foreign delegations; and the registration of troops and workers, to name a few. These were used to show the tomb owner's position and status within society, and tell us much about the latter's wishes to be commemorated in specific fashion.

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## CHAPTER 17

# Religion and Ritual

*Emily Teeter*

## Introduction

The Egyptian world was permeated by religion. Religious beliefs formed the Egyptians' view of the world, and religious beliefs and the needs of cult practices were manifested in most of their architecture and art. One of the features of this intertwining of religion and artistic production was the result of the innate conservative nature of the Egyptian artist. Although there is tremendous variation and modification in the forms of Egyptian art, the fundamental styles are immediately recognizable, whether they were the product of the third millennium BCE or 30 CE. Astounding consistency exists with the use of frontality in sculpture, the representation of the human form in relief or painting, and the forms of architecture. Modes of representing the king with crowns, staffs, and regalia to differentiate him from his subjects, were set in the fourth millennium BCE and they stayed essentially unchanged for 3,000 years. This eternal nature of Egyptian art and architecture was the result of its relationship to religion. The Egyptians believed that their earliest cultural forms were made by the gods, and, because of this divine intervention, these forms were perfect and had to be preserved and maintained.

Another fundamental principle of Egyptian art was its potency. Images were far more than decoration—they were functional substitutes for what was represented. A statue or a relief portraying an individual ensured that person's existence as long as the image itself was preserved. If the living saw the image, it evoked the memory and spirit of the person or thing depicted, thereby bringing the subject into existence. As a result, images of food on the walls of tomb chambers functioned as eternal sources of those provisions for the deceased. Conversely, if the image of an individual was effaced, the existence of that person was effectively erased. These images did not function in isolation—the accompanying hieroglyphic texts had a similar effectiveness because they were written in a script that was composed of small images. Thus the written reference to "bread, beer, oxen, and fowl" in the standard offering prayer ensured that those goods, or whatever else was spoken of, was brought into existence.

## Art and Architecture as Reflections of Religion

The belief in life after death was a major force in the development of art and architecture during Egypt's history. The Egyptians believed that the deceased dwelled eternally in the afterlife, and had the same material needs as the living, which included food, drink, clothes, entertainment—all of which were supplied by offering rituals, by representations of desired activities, as well as by written references to food on the walls of the tomb.

In the absence of texts, the details of earliest mortuary beliefs in the formative period (ca. 4000–2600 BCE) can only be understood imperfectly through the material record. Vessels dating to Naqada IIIC (ca. 3600 BCE) are painted with early figurative decoration. Images of boats, plants with reproductive stems, rectangular animal hides, and emblems mounted on poles have all been associated with early funerary cults: the boat ferried the deceased to the burial ground; a hide was wrapped around the body; the standards were symbols of gods or sacred places; and plants alluded to rebirth. Many of these vessels were found empty in tombs as prestige goods, but also as a type of amulet—presumably to ensure the transition of the dead to the afterlife. The act of providing the deceased with grave goods is an indication that the life after death had material requirements to the ancient Egyptians.

In the mid Old Kingdom (ca. 2435 BCE), more explicit texts explain the function of architecture and funerary art. These sources relate that the soul of the deceased was composed of different aspects, each of which had specific needs that were met by architectural features of tombs. The major components of the soul were the *ka* and the *ba*. The *ka* can be likened to the physical double of the individual. As indicated by the standard offering prayer that provided bread and beer for the *ka*, the *ka* was the aspect that required real or symbolic food offerings.

The other main element of the soul was the *ba*, or life force. At night, the *ba* rested on mummy, reuniting the physical and intellectual aspects of a being. But during the day, the *ba*, in the form of a human-headed bird, left the body and the tomb to return to the sunlit life of the living where it drank from pools and sunned itself in the trees.

These conceptions of the soul, especially the physical needs of the *ka* and the mobility of the *ba*, as well as the need to preserve and protect the mortal remains of the body were responsible for the basic architectural plan of private tombs of the Old Kingdom and later. A fundamental aspect of ancient Egyptian funerary beliefs was that the body had to be preserved for the deceased to live and function eternally in the afterlife, hence the extraordinary procedures for burial and for mummification taken to preserve the physical presence of the deceased. Tombs, whether rock-cut or constructed of stone blocks, had a subterranean burial chamber where the body in its coffin and some of the grave goods were deposited. This chamber, which in some cases was dozens or more meters below ground, was sealed after the burial to safeguard its contents. The desire to preserve the memory of the dead among the living led to the production of statues and two-dimensional representations of individuals in the tomb's above-ground chapel, both of which served as doubles of the individual and ensured eternal life after death.

Private tombs developed from simple oval pits probably covered with a heap of sand that symbolized the mound of creation upon which all life began. In the Predynastic Period (ca. 4000–2950 BCE), small chapels, the antecedents of tomb superstructures,

appear in the form of small enclosures adjacent to the mound covering the burial. A private tomb at Hierakonpolis dating to about 3800 BCE was topped with a reed superstructure that imitated a house (Friedman (2011), 37–40). Even from this early period, it is clear that the tomb was a model of a house in which the deceased would dwell forever. Later texts confirm that the term for tomb was “house of eternity.” This equation between tomb and house (or, later, temple) was to be a recurring theme that continued for the rest of the dynastic period.

Over time, tomb superstructures became more complicated with the addition of rooms, staircases, and storerooms, in step with the growing complexity and requirements of mortuary beliefs. Indeed, this idea of “tomb as house” was also reflected by grouping tombs into communities or necropoleis. Here, the dead lived on in their own community, but were not remote from the living, for the dead depended upon the living to provide food offerings in a tomb chapel built at ground level. The growing elaboration of mortuary rituals was reflected in changes in the form and decoration of the chapel. In Dynasty 3, the tomb superstructure became more complex as it was enlarged to accommodate rituals that provided for the dead and also brought the living and the dead together. The rectangular superstructure or *mastaba* (Arabic for “bench”) developed corridors within it, best documented in the tomb of the official Hesire. The corridors in some elite tombs were furnished with multiple niches fitted with panels carved with an image of the deceased. A stone lintel and drum, the latter a representation of a rolled up mat that could be pulled down over a portal, indicated that these niches are to be interpreted as imitation doors which are first seen in tomb U-j of a “proto-ruler” of Nagada III/Dynasty 0 (Dreyer 1990, (2011), 129–130). These allowed the spirit of the deceased to pass between the chambers of the tomb. By Dynasty 4, the corridor was expanded to create rooms within the mastaba.

The requirements of the offering cult were responsible for other architectural features of tombs. The mortuary cult involved offering food, incense, and other goods to a statue of the deceased, which, through the principle of substitution, *was* the individual. Wood or stone statues were placed in a closed chamber (*serdab*) that communicated with the tomb chapel by narrow slit-like windows that allowed the odor of offerings to symbolically feed the *ka* of the deceased. Offerings could be in the form of real food, images of food, written offering lists, or the mere spoken reference to food. A funerary offering formula highlights this concept: “May you give bread, beer, oxen, and fowl, and every good and pure thing. But if you have nothing in your hand, may you speak with your mouth ‘a thousand of bread, beer, oxen, and fowl’” (after Dunham (1937), 102).

The false door (Figure 17.1) was another architectural feature that developed in response to ancient Egyptian mortuary beliefs. Within the superstructure, this representation of a door was usually located near the shaft that led to the burial chamber. It was a replica of a portal that allowed the *ba* to migrate from the burial chamber to the tomb chapel. Initially a simple niche, false doors grew increasingly complex with multiple jambs and inscriptions. By late Dynasty 4, these doors were usually decorated with scenes of the deceased, his or her name and title(s), and funerary offering formulas. The texts on false doors often included a reference to festivals during which the *ka* of the deceased wished to receive offerings, reflecting the desire for continued participation in the realm of the living.

This desire to fully engage with the living may also account for a modification in tomb decoration starting in mid Dynasty 4, when scenes of industry and fishing and



**Figure 17.1** False door of Ny-sw-redi with an image of the deceased emerging from the central portal. Above, he is shown seated before a table of funerary offerings. The inscriptions call upon the king to grant him a good burial (left), and upon Anubis for food offerings during certain festivals (right). Late Dynasty 4. OIM E10825. Photograph courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

fowling, began to appear on tomb chapel walls. By the following dynasty, a dazzling array of “daily life” scenes, featuring offering bearers, workshops, boat processions, and tax collectors, covered the interior walls of private mastabas. These scenes functioned on several levels. They represented an ordered and controlled world composed of a man and wife together with their children, and scenes of harvest, workshops, and banqueting. Other reliefs and paintings more vigorously stressed the conquest of chaos. Scenes of spearing fish in the marshes, hunting wild birds and hippos represented wild animals being conquered and controlled by humans, and served as a reassuring and potent guarantor of the power of order.

The changing function, placement, and forms of statuary reflect developments in mortuary theology. As noted, in the earlier Old Kingdom, statues were located in tombs inside the *serdab* where they were the recipients of offerings. Gradually, by Dynasty 5, they were relocated from the *serdab* to a visible position within the offering chapel itself. A further development can be seen in the Dynasty 5 tomb of Neferbauptah at Giza, where a statue of the tomb owner was placed in an even more public position—within a niche in an interior courtyard of his mastaba (Weeks (1994), pl. 41). In the tomb of Seshemnofer IV, also at Giza, statues were prominently placed flanking the entrance to the pillared entrance of his tomb (Arnold (1999), 44). This migration of statues from inaccessible to more accessible locations marks a step in the gradual transfer of the offering cults of individuals from tombs to the more public setting of temples. In that location, the individual as represented by the statue could eternally be in the company of the god and the king. The temple setting may also have afforded the person greater opportunity to accrue offerings because of the heavier traffic in temples rather than in private tombs.

The transfer of statues to a temple context can be further documented by Old Kingdom texts such as the Decree of Pepy II (ca. 2205 BCE) that permitted an image of his vizier to be set up in the temple of the funerary god Khentamentiu at Abydos (Strudwick (2005), 108). The decree specified that the vizier's statues were to be granted offerings during every celebration in the temple. These provisions came from a cycle of offerings that tied the individual to the king and the gods. In theory, the king made offerings to the gods in temples to secure divine protection for the land and its inhabitants. These food offerings, once presented to the deity and “consumed” by him, were laid before other statues and then finally distributed to temple workers as their wages. This same arrangement also allowed an individual to partake of divine offering as documented by a text belonging to the official Shemai (Dynasty 8, ca. 2150–2881 BCE) concerning his statue cult in the temple of Min at Coptos: “your statues, your offering tables, your *ka* chapels ... which are in any temple of the temple precinct” (Robins (2001), 40). This phrase indicates the growing presence of officials' statues within what had been the preserve of the king and god, effectively blurring the line between royal, divine, and private cults.

This concept of a statue being an effective representative of the person accounts for other innovations in funerary cults. In Dynasties 5 and 6, some corpses were encased in plaster, or in layers of modeled linen and plaster, transforming them into virtual statues. The close relationship of body to statue is confirmed by the ritual of the Opening of the Mouth that was performed on both statues and mummies. The ritual reanimated the person/statue through a series of actions and prayers during which a priest touched the eyes and mouth with woodworkers' tools.

The habit of placing statues in temples so that they could serve as eternal conduits for blessings and offerings became the norm in the New Kingdom. The response to this trend was a tremendous surge in the production of stone statues of the elite and also the development of new forms of statuary. Block (also called cube) statues that show an individual seated with his cloak around his bent legs, were introduced first in the Middle Kingdom, became popular in the New Kingdom, and were very common in the Third Intermediate and Late Periods. The abstracted cube that represented the sheathed body was probably a reference to the mummy wrappings of Osiris, hence symbolized the deceased being reborn after death. This form, which provided an ideal surface for

inscriptions and lengthy prayers, was compact and less easily damaged in the temple setting. The flat surface created by the crossed arms provided a platform for food offerings. Prayers on some of these statues implored the passerby to clean the statue and to remove offerings that might decay and pollute it (Rizzo 2004).

The New Kingdom saw the growing popularity of solar theology that equated the unending rising and setting of the sun with the eternal birth, death, and rebirth of an individual. The adoration of the sun was manifested in texts and new artistic forms such as stelophorous statues that show a man (none are known for women) humbly kneeling behind a stela, arms upraised at its upper edge in a gesture of adoration. Most of these are incised with a text introduced by the formula “praising the sun when it rises,” rather than a traditional funerary formula that called upon the king and gods for funerary offerings. Stelophorous statues have been recovered from niches over the entrance to Theban tombs and from pyramidians that topped tomb superstructures—another reflection of solar theology. A further manifestation of the solar cult are scenes of the tomb owner greeting the sun, and texts that praise the sun in its rising and setting that appear on the door jambs and entrance walls of New Kingdom tombs.

The rise of personal piety and changing conceptions of the power of the semi-divine king may be responsible for other developments in New Kingdom art. Personal piety is characterized by new closeness between man and god that diminished the king’s traditional role as the intermediary between the gods and his subjects (Radwan (1991), 221–222). The artistic expression of this can be seen in many examples of New Kingdom art that stress the relationship of the individual to a deity. Although the king is rarely shown on private monuments of that era other than on votive stelae from Qantir, a military-dominated city established by the Ramesside kings (Wells (2011), 91), generally there are fewer images of, and textual references to, the pharaoh, while there is an increase in the number of compositions that show individuals with the god(s).

Texts and representations that reflect personal piety may portray the individual as a humble being who strives for the blessings or the mercy of a god or bows before the deity. The same closeness of man and god is shown in naophorous statues that depict an individual kneeling, embracing, or holding a shrine (*naos*) containing a god. These are, with only a few earlier exceptions, an innovation of the Ramesside age, the era from which most of the texts of personal piety date.

A further development in this new, direct relationship between people and their gods is manifested in the introduction of intercessory statues. These portray individuals who were considered to have a special relationship with the divine, and who were able to more effectively transmit requests and prayers to deities than the petitioner himself, or even the king. Although some of the associated texts make a brief reference to the king, these statues document a further step in the people’s direct access to the god and the erosion of the power of the once-divine king. The best-known intercessory statues depict Amenhotep, son of Hapu, and Imhotep, who, not coincidentally considering the importance of architecture, were both deified architects. Statues of both men were set up in and around temples (Wildung 1977). Their special function was confirmed by their statue inscriptions that assured petitioners of their ability to transmit their pleas to the god(s). Their popularity and presumed effectiveness is documented by the partial effacing of these inscriptions that were worn smooth by the touch of generations of petitioners.

Ancestor busts are another manifestation of this new theology. Unlike the usual Egyptian statue that portrays an individual in his entirety, these show only the head and shoulders. These represent the *akh iker n Re* (effective spirit of Re), a recently deceased member of the household or community who had special communication with the god Re, and who, like an intercessory statue, could more effectively relay petitions to the god. More information about this cult is gleaned from stelae of the *akh iker n Re* whose texts and representations suggest that the busts were set up in houses where members of the family would leave offerings to propitiate the spirit.

The changing relationship between man, king, and the gods and its effect on artistic forms was also reflected by the composition of stelae from the Old Kingdom onward. Individuals begin to appear in funerary reliefs in late Dynasty 2 (Robins 1997, 38–39). As noted, they were located in a niche in the tomb superstructure. In that context, the deceased is shown alone, accompanied by his or her titles and a list of food and quantities of linen required in the afterlife. These are the most egocentric form of commemoration since they call upon no god or king. The individual is always shown on the left side of the stela facing right, a position that indicated prestige that, in later times, was the location for a god or the king (Robins 1994).

In Dynasty 4, the composition of funerary stelae changed to reflect a dynamic that explicitly linked the king, the gods, and the deceased. This was founded on the belief that the king made offerings to the gods to secure divine protection for the land and its inhabitants. This nexus of ritual action linked the three entities. In the Old Kingdom, neither the god nor the king appear on private funerary monuments due to their exalted status which made it inappropriate for them to be shown alongside mortals. However, the presence of the king and god(s) was manifested through the funerary offering formula (*hetep di nsw* meaning “an offering that the king gives”) indicating that the deceased was granted offerings directly from the god(s), or more commonly, from the god(s) because the king had initially offered to the deity. The increased verbiage necessitated larger blocks of text that linked the deceased into a cycle that emphasized the importance of the king to the deceased, but also the king’s own dependence on the gods. As a result, the components of most funerary stelae of the Old Kingdom consist of an image of the deceased seated on the left facing right, a list of his or her priestly or administrative titles, and the *hetep di nsw* formula.

The composition of Dynasty 18 funerary stelae also reflects changing conceptions of the relationship between man, god, and the king. Many of these stelae show the deceased directly worshipping the deity. This juxtaposition of beings of vastly different ranks was expressed through a new system of register lines. The upper register was reserved for those of highest prestige (gods), and lower registers for those of progressively less status. The king is rarely included in these compositions, although his presence is inferred by the *hetep di nsw* offering formula.

What appears to be a growing desire for individuals to have direct contact with their gods may have inspired Dynasty 19 and 20 votive stelae that were set up in temples or chapels. These stelae most commonly show the god on the left in the privileged position and the worshipper on the right. Most of these votives dispense with the *hetep di nsw* in favor of the “praising the god” (*dwa netcher*) formula of the stelophorous statues. The brief texts usually state that the stela was made by or for the individual whose name and titles or occupation are given. On many examples, the lower register is given over to



**Figure 17.2** Stela of Harsiese showing him adoring Re-Horakhty (left) and Atum (right). Such compositions document direct communication between man and god, without the intermediary of the king. Dynasty 26. OIM E12220. Photograph courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

images of family members, reflecting the higher status (in this context) of the one who commissioned the stela versus his family. On these monuments, usually the only reference to the king is in the person's administrative titles that may refer to the state. These stelae reflect a man–god relationship that morphed from a practical appeal to the god for food through the grace of the king, to a more philosophical and direct relationship of praising the god in order that the deity might honor the worshipper's *ka*.

In the Third Intermediate and Late Periods, the merging of solar and chthonic theologies was expressed by a new form of stelae. Most are round-top wood panels divided into three registers (Figure 17.2). At the top of the stelae appears the winged disk, the representation of the solar god, Behdety. In the middle register, the deceased is usually depicted twice: at the extreme left and right facing the center, with his hands raised in

adoration of the gods Atum, who represented the night sun, and Re-Horakhty, who symbolized the day sun, both shown back to back in the center. These gods represent the totality of the daily cycle of the sun with which the deceased's passage from the dark hours of the night to rebirth each dawn was equated. Below the vignette is a block of text, phrased as a speech from the deceased. It often includes a brief genealogy and a passage from the Book of the Dead praising the rising sun.

## Festivals and Their Impact upon Architectural Forms

Religious festivals affected the forms of architecture and art. Festivals were periodic, mostly annual events that required certain settings for the performance of the ritual actions that comprised the celebration. Our earliest evidence for architecture that accommodated festivals comes from the remains of buildings at Abydos and Hierakonpolis. It appears that the focus of religion and cult at that time was the king himself, and that the structures were designed as places for the periodic display of the power of the ruler. As a result, monumental architecture associated with the first kings was fenced or walled to differentiate the sacred space from the profane world. The remains of a temple at Hierakonpolis dating to about 3500 BCE, now preserved only as a series of postholes, is perhaps the earliest example of this style of architecture. It consisted of a large walled oval court (45 × 13 meters) with small booth-like structures to the north, and a large rectangular structure to the south. The faunal remains in trash pits near the enclosure show that wild animals (crocodiles, hippos, gazelle, Barbary sheep, and “various carnivores”), were slaughtered there in a show of the king’s power over the forces of chaos that were represented by the animals (Linseele, Van Neer, and Friedman (2009), 126, 133, 136; Friedman (2009), 89, 103; Friedman (2011), 35–36).

Monumental architecture of Dynasties 1 and 2 further reflects the power and status of the divine king. Each king of Dynasty 1, and a few of the following dynasty, built mud brick enclosures to the north of their tombs at Abydos. Some of these structures were enormous, such as that of Khasekhemwy, the last ruler of Dynasty 2, which measures 133.5 × 77.7 meters with walls 10 meters tall. The exterior walls are niched, indicating that the structure was supposed to represent the king’s palace. These structures have been interpreted as places where the gods, the “Followers of Horus,” came to honor the king during his lifetime (Arnold (1997), 81; O’Connor (2009), 162). Entombed near the “Western Mastaba” enclosure next to the monument of Khasekhemwy were fourteen boats, each more than 25 meters long, encased in mud brick. The boats may represent the fleet that brought the gods into the royal presence.

Nowhere in Egypt is the link between the needs of religious cult and the forms of architecture clearer than at the Stepped Pyramid Complex of King Djoser (ca. 2592–2566 BCE). The many elements of the complex are designed to accommodate rituals that accompanied elaborate theological beliefs. The Djoser complex, consisting of the stepped pyramid and other buildings, is surrounded by a limestone wall 10.5 meters tall that encloses an area 544 × 277 meters, and shows continuity with the enclosures at Hierakonpolis and Abydos. As with the mud brick enclosures at Abydos, the wall’s exterior is niched in imitation of the king’s palace, indicating that the buildings within were related to rituals that commemorated the ruler.

The better state of preservation of the Djoser complex makes its interpretation less speculative. The entire complex is like an enormous stage set for the performance of the Sed-Festival that, in theory, was enacted on the thirtieth anniversary of a king's accession, and usually at three-year intervals thereafter. Among the earliest, best documented, and most important royal commemorations, the Sed-Festival was an important expression of royal ideology and legitimacy as indicated by its continued performance into the Ptolemaic Period, some 3,000 years later.

The Djoser complex accommodated three main cult needs: a space for the performance of the Sed-Festival; a place for the gods to meet and honor the king; and a burial place for the king and his *ka*. Most of the complex was devoted to the symbolic enactment of the Sed-Festival proper. A major theme of the festival was the geographic duality of Egypt, the country originally being composed of two separate lands: Upper (southern) and Lower (northern) Egypt. A recurring theme in art and architecture was that the king was master of both. As a result, architectural elements that functioned within the Sed-Festival occur in pairs. The facade of one large building is ornamented with the papyrus emblem of Lower Egypt, another with the lily of Upper Egypt. Chapels with curved rooflines represent the ancient Per-Wer shrine of Upper Egypt, and flat-topped structures emulate the Per-Nu shrine of Lower Egypt. These buildings and shrines, with their austere and elegant facades, are no more than that—facades. They have no interiors and were never intended to be used by the living king. Thus, the complex represents an astounding investment in labor expended for an architectural setting for religious rituals.

The main cult act of the festival was a ritual race that the king enacted to demonstrate his physical ability to rule. The king alternately donned the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt and entered the large court to the south of the Stepped Pyramid to run a circuit marked between two B-shaped markers. He then proceeded to a courtyard with shrines to the east and west where he was seated on a dais with two staircases to accommodate and symbolize his double enthronement (Figure 17.3). There, he was acknowledged as king of all Egypt by the gods who were probably represented in statue form in their shrines.

The dominant feature of the Djoser complex is the stepped pyramid that covers the king's burial. The architectural development of the pyramid mirrors the elaboration of royal mortuary theology. A heap of earth, representing the mound upon which creation took place, is presumed to have covered the burials of the first kings. This mound was encased within the superstructure of the tomb. At Djoser's complex, this rectangular mound-like form was enlarged, and then extended upward to make a stepped structure that may symbolize a staircase by which the king's soul could ascend to the stars. Djoser's successors transformed this stepped structure into a flat-sided, true pyramid. The underlying theological changes manifested by this further development have been related to the concept of rebirth symbolized by the mound of creation, and also to the rise of solar religion represented by the *ben-ben* stone of Heliopolis, a symbol of the sun, that is the same form as the apex of a pyramid (Otto (1975), 694; Lehner (1997), 34–35, 74–75). In either case, the presence of stepped pyramids within the slightly later “true” pyramids reflects the innately conservative nature of Egyptian architecture and the continuity of the underlying religious concepts.

Festivals of the Middle Kingdom and later had an equally strong impact upon architecture. The main feature of these festivals was the procession of the gods. Each temple had a resident deity whose statue “dwelled” inside a naos in the temple sanctuary. The statue,



**Figure 17.3** Stepped pyramid complex of Djoser at Saqqara. Shrines of the gods of Upper and Lower Egypt stand behind the dais with a double staircase upon which the king was enthroned during the Sed-Festival. Dynasty 3. Photograph: Emily Teeter.

as the *ka* of the god, was believed to be enlivened by its *ba* (Teeter (2007), 311–312; (2011), 43–44). The god's needs for food, drink and other provisions were provided for by daily offering rituals. During festivals, the statue of the god (or gods) was processed around the temple, through the community, or it traveled from one temple to another.

The preparation for the deity's journey necessitated a series of rituals. After purification ceremonies, the chief temple priest entered the sanctuary, intoning prayers as he opened the doors of the shrine. After more purification rituals, the statue of the god was transferred to a portable shrine that was placed on the deck of a boat (also called a sacred barque). These craft varied in length, but the more modest boats appear to have been about three meters long. The boat was supported on a framework of carrying poles born on the shoulders of a double file of priests.

Chapels erected along the processional routes were an architectural response to this practice. These shrines provided places for the priests to rest and for the community to adore the god. Most of these structures are rectangular and open-ended to allow the procession to enter and exit without turning the boat (Figure 17.4). Many are elevated and have large fenestrations on the sides in order to give the community a better view of the boat. Ramps, rather than stairs, facilitated the procession of priests. A rectangular stone pedestal in the middle of the structure provided a resting place for the barque. Boat pedestals and ramps became standard architectural elements of Egyptian temples.

These processions were responsible for other features of temple architecture. At Thebes, chapels with three sanctuaries, each with their own boat pedestal, accommodated the



**Figure 17.4** Chapel for sacred boat processions at Karnak. The stepped ramp and open ends of the shrine facilitated the movement of the boat that held the statue of the god. The central pedestal provided a place for the priests to rest the craft, while the open sides allowed the boat to be seen by the god's adorers. Dynasty 12. Photograph: Emily Teeter.

processions of the Theban gods, Amun, his wife Mut, and their son Khonsu. According to inscriptions on temple walls and architraves, the large courtyards of Theban temples functioned as places where the people could gather and adore the gods as they processed along the straight axis of the temple (Teeter (1997), 4–5).

In Thebes and elsewhere, the processional routes between temples were defined by avenues of sphinxes. On the east bank, approximately two kilometers of tightly spaced sphinxes on pedestals linked the Temple of Amun-Re at Karnak and Luxor Temple providing a backdrop to the Opet festival, an annual ritual of renewal of the king's power and his association with the god Amun.

The major celebration on the Theban West Bank was the Beautiful Festival of the Western Valley, an annual event that was a joyful reunion of the living and the dead. The earliest representations of the festival date to the reign of Hatshepsut (ca. 1479–1458 BCE). In the course of the festival, statues of deceased kings and of the Theban triad, Amun, Mut, and Khonsu, were paraded through the necropolis to visit the memorial temples on the edge of the desert. The procession of the festival necessitated that each of the western temples, from the time of Hatshepsut onward, include shrines for the boats (Heany (1997), 121–122). These boat processions date from at least the reign of Mentuhotep II (ca. 2009–1959 BCE), for his temple at Deir el-Bahri also has a boat chapel (Arnold 1974; Heany (1997), 93, 95). The Valley Festival also accounts for the orientation of some groups of tombs on the Theban west bank. The barques

spent the night at the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri. On both sides of the long sphinx-lined processional way that accessed the temple, tombs were erected with their entrances oriented to the path that the procession would take, thereby enabling the souls of deceased individuals who dwelled in the tombs to forever participate in the festival (Eigner 1984).

## Religion and Art in the Amarna Period

Perhaps the clearest illustration of how religion impacted art dates to the Amarna Period (ca. 1353–1333 BCE). Late in the reign of Amenhotep III, a new henotheistic theology was promulgated that elevated the disk and light of the sun, called the Aten, to a preeminent place in the pantheon. The worship of other gods was discouraged, and the cults of the chief gods—Amun or Amun Re, and his consort Mut, and their son Khonsu—were attacked. The names of those deities were excised from temple and tomb walls, even from the apex of 25-meter-tall obelisks. In the new theology, the Aten was the source of all life, and Amenhotep III's son, Amenhotep IV (who later changed his name to Akhenaten), was presented as the son of the Aten and the sole messenger of the new theology. In that role, the king was dispenser of all life and all fate. These theological changes coincided with dramatic modifications in artistic styles and compositions.

Although many features of Amarna art are still open to interpretation, the major themes were that all life came from the Aten, the king was the sole messenger of the Aten's theology, and that one's fate was dependent upon loyalty to the king. Rebirth in the afterlife, which traditionally had been dependent upon conducting one's life in a moral way, was replaced by blind obedience to the king. Texts in a courtier's tomb state “Lifetime is in your (the king's) hand and you grant it to whomever you wish” (Murnane (1995), 112, 117). Although always a feature of Egyptian art, images reflecting the idea of regeneration were recast in innovative ways. Colossal statues of Amenhotep IV at East Karnak show him as an androgynous Creator God with heavy hips and thighs, feminine breasts, and without male genitalia (see Figure 11.7 in Hartwig “Sculpture,” this volume). This androgyny was probably a symbolic reference to Atum, the primordial god who created the world by himself without a female partner. Portraying the king as the Creator God sent a strong propagandistic message about the power of the ruler.

The style of Amarna era art changed through the seventeen-year reign of Akhenaten as the king refined his new theology, moving from the most extreme style of the East Karnak colossi to a softer, yet still non-conventional style, exemplified by the late swan-necked bust of Nefertiti which has become such an icon of ancient art. The different ways in which the king and the queen were portrayed underscore the symbolic rather than naturalistic nature of these representations. At one time scholars sought physiological justifications for these peculiar and distinctive images of the royal family, but increasingly they are considered to be manifestations of the new theology.

Entirely new compositions were devised to emphasize the status of the king and his role as the sole communicant with the Aten. Scenes show the royal family under the rays of the Aten, the sun's beams ending with tiny human hands that offer an *ankh*, the sign of life, to the king and queen. Although the princesses are included in the shower of the Aten's beams, they do not receive life directly from the god, but only secondarily

from their parents. Officials and other members of the court were never shown under the rays since they received life as a reward for their service to the king. Scenes of the processions of the gods that dominated pre-Amarna compositions were now devoted to images showing the king and queen in a daily chariot procession from the palace to the temple. Scenes that covered the walls of private tombs were also altered. No longer was the deceased the main figure. Instead, he was placed in a secondary role as the scene was dominated by large-scale images of the king and queen who offer the tomb owner, shown in much smaller scale, a reward for service. Other tomb reliefs depict scenes of life in the palace that do not even include the tomb owner.

Overall themes of art also changed in the Amarna Period. There was a new emphasis upon the fleeting and ephemeral rather than the static and eternal, perhaps a reflection of Akhenaten's professed interest in nature and "living in truth." Reliefs show more action—animals scamper, the king and queen fondle and kiss their daughters. There is more overlapping of figures, and the strict adherence of figures tied to ground lines is less consistent. Scenes of temples and palaces with courtiers and workers busily engaged in mundane tasks replace the formal images of the deceased at banquets in the afterlife.

The shared chronology of the new theology and the appearance of the new themes, compositions, and representations make it very clear that changes in religion drove these artistic innovations. So it is not surprising that art rapidly reverted to the pre-Amarna style after the death of Akhenaten—the self-professed sole prophet of Atenism. In the reign of Tutankhamun traditional compositions showing the gods in procession and the deceased among the gods in the afterlife were restored. Although a lingering legacy of the Amarna period was evident in the soft belly and rounded breasts of male figures that continued, with some modification, into Dynasty 19, the lack of interest in the theology of Akhenaten led to the reversion of religion and most aspects of art to their pre-Amarna forms.

## Conclusion

These examples of the affects of religion and ritual on art and architecture give only a tiny sampling of their interdependence. The forms of artistic expression were the direct result of the needs of ritual actions and, as such, art reflected ritual and belief. One would be challenged to isolate artistic features from their underlying theological associations. Modifications in the relationship of the king to his subjects, and mankind to the gods, led to new forms of stelae and statues. Likewise, the growing complexity of temple rituals and the ceremonial performance associated with festivals mandated architectural forms, since temples and tombs were simply the setting for cultic actions. The clearest link between religion art dates to the Amarna Period, when the most dramatic modifications in artistic representation were contemporary with, and motivated by, unprecedented changes in theology.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The mythical/cosmological basis for temple architecture is addressed by Reymond (1969), Finnestad (1985), and Baines (1997). General remarks about how temples and tombs reflect religious

concepts can be found in Wilkinson (2000, 54–99), Dodson and Ikram (2008, 12–29), and Hornung (1990, 23–31). Robins (2001, 31–43), discusses the context and function of statues in cult activities. Religious concepts reflected by pyramids can be found in Lehner (1997, 25–35). The symbolism and significance of the Djoser complex is explored by J.-P. Lauer (1972, 1976). Shafer (1997) contains a group of important essays that cover the impact of religion and festivals on architecture in the Old and Middle Kingdoms, which are also covered in Arnold (1997). The New Kingdom is dealt with by Heany (1997) and Bell (1997); the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods by Finnestad (1997).

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## CHAPTER 18

# Narrative

*Nadja S. Braun*

### Definition of Narrative and Narratology

“Narrative is everywhere,” claims the literary theorist Brian Richardson (2000, 168). Narrative is a pan-global phenomenon, and performs countless functions in human cultural interaction. As the most basic of cognitive abilities of human beings, storytelling makes up the most part of communication, allowing incidents to be organized and transformed temporally into a chronological and causal order and passed on to others (Toolan 1998). Both human experiences and the cultural consciousness of societies are based on the narratives preserved in them, which are then passed on, making it possible to understand the past, to navigate the present, and to draw visions for the future.

Though narrative is known primarily from oral or epic-literary narration, narrativity has become accepted as an interdisciplinary phenomenon and narratology is a component of many branches of science. Consequently, one even speaks of a “narrative turn” in many other disciplines such as Egyptology. Yet, despite the widespread attention focused on narrative, one must be careful, because narrative is actually everywhere “but it isn’t always so important” (Bal (1999), 19). Basically anything in culture has a narrative aspect, or could at least be perceived as narrative, but the question of narrativity does not have (the same) significance everywhere.

The problem of defining the term is complicated by the vague meaning attributed to it, so that, even today, there is no accepted definition for narrative, especially visual narrative. Therefore, it seems appropriate to focus on oral narrativity first, which can be seen as a prototype of narrative, beginning with the kind of storytelling everyone experiences in the everyday communication of events between people. The second type of narrative is composed of myths, legends, and the much more complex type of written narrative, the so-called “epic-literary narrative.” A fundamental characteristic of narrating is a central plot, whereas specific descriptions of conditions or objects are less important.

Events are usually connected with a specific situation, place, time, and circumstances, which together build the setting of the narration. Oral narratives often feature occurrences that defy expectation or deviate from the norm in a way that generates interest. The trouble with this sort of narration for scholars is that it is an inherently subjective type of communication, based in large part on the individual values of the perceivers. Conversely, the audience may or may not share the interests of the storyteller. Thus, one can view natural narrative as a culturally acquired cognitive scheme.

This cognitive approach is independent of media and thus has a broad potential application. Each medium has particular affinities for certain themes, plot types, arrangements, manifestations, or content. It is therefore impossible to use the same type of narration on stage, for example, as one would during conversation or in a lengthy novel (Ryan (2004), 356). The other problem is that narrativity is not temporally constant; rather we have to assume the presence of both historical and cultural changes that prohibit a universal transcultural narrativity. But, in spite of these restricting factors, there are certain elements that could be taken into consideration if one focuses on prototype semantics to determine the most important factors of narrative. Prototype theory is a type of cognitive categorization in which some members of a category are more central than others. For example, if people are asked to give an example of the category “fruit,” apple is more frequently offered than “plum,” “pineapple,” or “strawberry.” Thus, the prototype acts as the exemplar of the members of a given category, and it is from this prototype that the structural principles and the representation of that category are derived. This means that all substitutes have to show specific qualities that are common to all substitutes determining the degree of membership within the category (see below). The greater the number of attributes shared by members of a category with the prototype, the greater the degree of cohesion, not on an analytical but a universal scale.

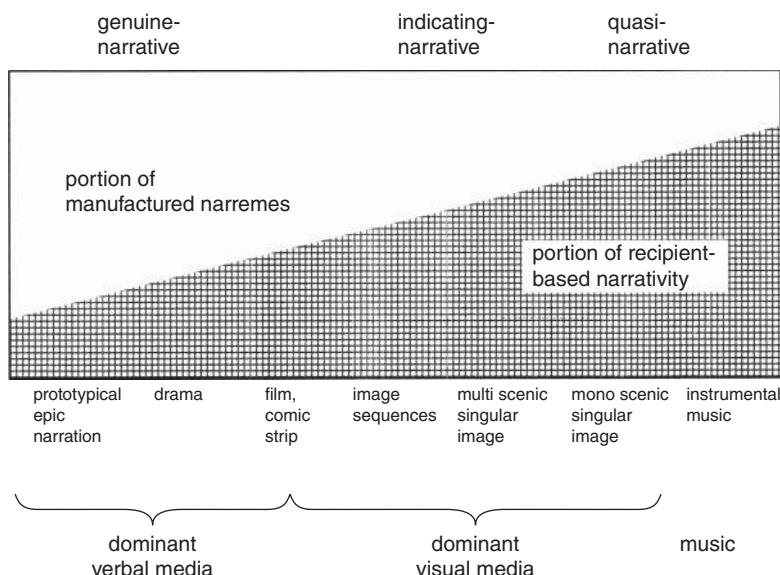
Inevitably, we have to accept that there are gradations in narrativity. At the top of the scale, there is the prototype of narrative, the so-called “oral or epic-literary narrative.” At the lower levels, there are the other forms and media of narrative. They are not less important than the prototype, because, even though they do not correspond to the prototype in some details, they have to be regarded as narrative. So there is a hierarchy, but no valency in the sense of the prototype dominating the other substitutes.

In order to apply prototype theory to narrative, a catalog of prototypical elements, known as “narremes,” must be consulted. Conceived as the basic unit of narrative, narremes are necessary to provide a sense of dimension, a quality of representation and experience, and the action that centers around anthropomorphic figures. Syntactical narremes may establish causality in chronology or temporal progression.

Another essential component of narrative is a meaningful progression of events characterized by excitement or climax. The teleological presentation of elements within a narrative contributes to the quality and comprehensibility of the story, establishing meaningful connections between its components. It is not only the chronological connection that is important, but also the causal connection, so that the succession of events appears motivated and explicable. Another important syntactical narreme is the thematic foundation of unity, or, more precisely, the formation of consistency. Finally, events must stand out from daily experiences, although it is not important if the events are real or fictional.

The basic forms of narrative are macrostructures that are regarded as the basis on which narration develops into a pattern. Experiments have shown that the macrostructure is a basic prerequisite for understanding texts. When the reader starts understanding the text, the macrostructure is gradually revealed and thereby controls the reception of further information by the reader. Further analyses have shown that the existence of a traditional system of narrative is critical for the organization and the reception of a text. Thus, it is considerably more difficult to extract the gist from a narration that comes from another culture or historical period. Macrostructures are also visible in different media, though some forms of media limit the realization of the macrostructure, which can cause misunderstandings, especially if there is no face-to-face communication between the sender and perceiver or if they live in different historical periods and/or cultures. This is exactly the problem modern Egyptologists confront when they read ancient texts or analyze ancient Egyptian imagery. It is often easier to understand written narrations because of their manufactured narrativity (see below) in contrast to imagery where inevitable gaps occur. With imagery, perceivers' ability to understand the narrativity it contains is complicated because this requires them to use their background knowledge and imaginative capability. The picture itself only supplies the request to be narrated, the so-called "Appellstruktur für narratives Sinnbildungsvermögen" [structural call-out to the capacity to create narrative sense] (Pandel (1999), 396).

Since narrative exists in different media such as pictures and even dance, it is useful to have a closer look at their narrative potential. Whereas some media rely upon the perceiver to act as the primary narrator, others are comprised of a fundamentally higher number of manufactured narremes (Figure 18.1). Distinguishing the degree of narrativity possessed by particular media serves as a good starting point for defining the structure of narrative.



**Figure 18.1** Scheme of the narrative potential of different media (after Wolf (2002), 94).

There is, however, another distinction which is possible within this category, namely between diegetic and mimetic narration, that is, between narration mediated verbally by a narrator, and narration without a mediating narrator, as, for example, in plays, ballets, or pictures. Chatman's text type classification (Chatman 1990; see also Bremond 1964) proposes the existence of macrostructures that are independent of media and serve as the foundation of narrative. Following his logic, a narration could therefore be transformed from one medium to another without losing its essential properties:

the subject of a story may serve as argument for a ballet, that of a novel can be transposed to stage or screen, one can recount in words a film to someone who has not seen it. These are words we read, images we see, gestures we decipher, but through them, it is a story that we follow; and it could be the same story. (Chatman (1980), 20)

[The original French reads: le sujet d'un conte peut servir d'argument pour un ballet, celui d'un roman peut être porté à la scène ou à l'écran, on peut raconter un film à ceux qui ne l'ont pas vu. Ce sont des mots qu'on lit, ce sont des images qu'on voit, ce sont des gestes qu'on déchiffre, mais à travers eux, c'est une histoire qu'on suit; et ce peut être la même histoire]. (Bremond (1964), 4)

The simplest means of narrative transposition is the conversion of oral narration into written form or, alternatively, into pictures. There are many examples in which a verbal or epic-literary narration can be transferred to a pictorial medium and vice versa. As narrative transcends both medium and genre, its applications are seemingly endless. In the ancient world, it would be visual narrative that offered the Egyptians the greatest potential for communication.

## Visual Narrative

This chapter is limited to the pictorial medium that was used by the ancient Egyptians to circulate their narrations and pass them on from generation to generation. However, in ancient Egyptian culture, oral narratives were seldom written down. Thus it is the task of the Egyptologist to glean narrative meaning from the existing images—the peculiarities, possibilities, applications, and limits of which will be the focus of the rest of the chapter.

In art, the great narrative capability of pictures has long been recognized, based on the idea that pictures are autonomous. Since people have communicated through representations throughout the millennia, particularly when populations were largely illiterate, pictures can be seen to possess the qualities of a text. Not only the early depictions by the Egyptians, but also the polychrome rock carving of the Aborigines from the age of Dreamtime and Stone Age cave paintings in France and Spain testify to early pictorial narrativity and demonstrate that visual narrative is a type of narrative with a long history and full of remarkable developments. Strictly speaking, pictures always tell stories, for whenever people receive written or spoken words, they automatically form pictures in their minds. The same image-making takes place while viewing a picture, because it evokes memories and triggers emotions and fantasies through which the image is not perceived as such, but its expression.

Nevertheless, not every image is narrative. According to Steiner (1988, 8), the “typical art-historical usage of the term ‘narrative painting’ is very loose by literary standards.” It follows, therefore, that narrative paintings need to be distinguished according to the pictorial types and materials used in ancient Egypt. In Sauer’s view (Sauer 2007), it is possible to distinguish mainly between categories of content, for example between images of events and images of persons, daily life, landscapes, or cities. However, it is assumed that only the images of events have visual narrativity. That is why the purpose of portraits is to commemorate, honor, or announce the depicted person, or even to criticize or make fun of him or her. This category includes the Egyptian portraits, such as images of the tomb owner and his family, or mummy-portraits of the dead. Likewise, scenes of daily life are not really narrative because their intention is not to describe particular events, but typical, recurring situations of human coexistence such as work, feasts, or family life as well as burial rituals like the Opening of the Mouth. Landscapes are of little importance to this study, as in ancient times they served primarily as background scenery. Although in representations of historical events it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between standardized pictures or depictions of specific events, for narrativity to be present it is not important whether the event is real or fictional. What really counts is that the idea of the specific historical, fictional, religious, or mythical event is brought to mind, so the illustration of a single moment or a few scenes can convey the whole narration.

Of course, visual narrative has its limits compared with narrative literature. This is why research started to recognize visual narrativity as part of narratology quite late. The major disadvantage in comparison with oral or epic-literary narratives is the atemporality of pictures, because they are not a temporal but a spatial medium with limited ability to express the temporal dimensions of experience, time sequence, and state change. Thus, images must operate in a more complicated way than literature. If there is literary foreknowledge the viewer can fall back on, it is possible to leave out episodes or vary the length of the narrative especially with image sequences. Understanding is arrived at through the viewer’s knowledge of text and image. Problems appear with new stories unaccompanied by textual explanations to control perception and assure the images are decoded correctly. Since pictures are much less precise than texts, they offer considerably more room for interpretation. Even if we accept the existence of something like a visual language, an iconic sign is not necessarily equal to its verbal equivalent, and there is no system in place that can completely avoid ambiguity. Eco (1972) speaks of “poor codes,” assuming that every viewer seizes codes while viewing an image in the same way he uses these codes in language. Unfortunately, the perception of pictures happens less consciously, so that until now, appropriate theories have been missing. Merely Barthes’ *Rhetorik des Bildes* (1969) is a convincing attempt in this direction.

However, most scientists agree that a picture can be seen as a kind of text, which means that pictures can be read and interpreted like verbal texts. Serious problems arise if the context of sender and receiver is based on individual experience. Furthermore, the interpretation of an image is never fixed and can change over the years so that there are more possible interpretations. Context is also important because the interpretation of an image is dependent on its placement. For example, an isolated image will be understood differently than one that is situated in the midst of a pictorial grouping. This means that, when viewing images, one must distinguish between understanding

the content and the reconstructed and intended meaning that is established by context, foreknowledge, or contemporary social conditions. Consequently, since the beginning of writing, subtexts have often been used to aid in an accurate interpretation, and to avoid redundancies. Nevertheless, sometimes numerous different stories are told by only one image.

There are certainly limits to visual narrative compared to the prototype with respect to the convention of contentual and syntactical narremes of representation and meaningful integration (*Sinnintegration*), as well as the illustration of meaningful connections (*Sinnzusammenhänge*). One indirect aid to comprehension is facial expression and gestures that express delight, respect, sorrow, fear, and so on. Issues of causality and teleology persist because motivation and suspense are impossible to explain or reproduce. On the other hand, visual narrative also has its advantages. Pictures can show the recipient what is meant by presenting the exact shape and colour of a person, landscape, or object vividly and in detail. Thus, the prototype should not be seen to be superior to its substitutes, as each medium has its own strengths and weaknesses as a vehicle of narrative.

According to Kibédi Varga (1990), visual narrative can be separated according to the arrangement of the story:

- Type 1, monoscenic;
- Type 2, multiscenic image sequences;
- Type 3, multiscenic; and,
- Type 4, monoscenic single images.

Within these basic types, manufactured narrativity (*werkseitige Narrativität*) is expressed, in most cases, by image sequences because the perceiver intuitively tries to combine the successive pictures into a narrative. It is, therefore, also possible to put together isolated images by means of foreknowledge and/or fantasy. Psychological experiments have shown that when one combines a sequence of images in one's mind, completely original narratives can come into being (see, e.g., Muckenhaupt (1986), 191). This type of image reading requires action on the part of the receiver because a picture story will not open up to a passive and superficial recipient who only recognizes known images.

This special kind of narrating is based on a connection between redundancy and innovation. "Redundancy" refers to determined content in which visual repetition and equality create a homogeneous narrative framework so that the pictures are seen as coherent. "Innovation" means the introduction of new signs, the modification or arrangement of which stimulates the recipient to think about the reason for this change. Ostensibly, if the first picture is compared to the second one, the recipient will fill in the gaps between them. For this reason, it is necessary for the recipient to realize the causalities that enable him or her to interpret the feelings of the persons depicted—correctly.

By stringing several pictures together, it is possible to create a sequence of events. In principle, this is also possible with just a single image portraying only an event. Because of this, states and events are perceived semantically through specific personified actors such as human beings, animals, or objects. These actors and their actions correspond to the

subject and predicate in a sentence so that they create a kind of image-sentence, energizing what could be a static picture. If a subplot is added before or after the main plot (i.e., a single image) to complete the central action, we call this a multiscenic image sequence. This kind of visual narrative requires greater intellectual investment because of its more complicated structure. A greater portion of recipient-based narrativity is necessary with monoscenic singular images because they often require a great deal of deduction on the part of the viewer if he or she is to make sense of it; they thus stand at the outermost edge of visual narrativity. Consequently, at first glance, it is not always possible to recognize whether a monoscenic single image is narrating a story because it merely depicts a tiny extract from an event.

Yet the monoscenic type of narrative is very popular, if certain rules are observed. These include the so-called “*punctum-temporalis*-doctrine,” which means that the central moment (*peripeteia* or *Umschlagpunkt*) is captured to evoke both past and progressive action. From the sixth century BCE onwards, Greek vase painters were very accomplished at focusing on only a single part of the action which, most of the time, was the narrative culmination or the moment shortly before it, when the action that was to follow was foreseeable. This is commonly known as the “pregnant moment,” and requires a knowledge of the underlying narrative because the receiver of a monoscenic picture cannot perceive the narration, just an action. However, the decisive point in monoscenic pictures can only be narrative if the recipient recognizes the single event as part of a longer action sequence. Only in this way, can the moment captured in the image be embedded in a process or development that makes it possible for the viewer to (re-)construct a before and after in his or her mind. Ultimately, narrativity arises in the individual perceiver’s mind and is not necessarily inherent in a monoscenic picture, so to speak.

An image can only be seen as narrative if it includes the basic elements of narrative. However, it is possible to stimulate the viewer’s narrative scheme. According to Kafalenos (Mahne (2007), 23), a picture with narrative implications offers the viewer an experience that is comparable to entering a narrative by prompting him or her to question what has happened before, what is about to occur, and where we are in the pictorial narrative sequence. Still, it is impossible to know with certainty whether the perceiver understands an image as narrative, so that the process of narrativation may start, even if that is what is intended by the sender. For that very reason, many senders use titles, markings (*Beischriften*), or other devices to ensure comprehension. In the end, however, it depends on individual perceivers and their cognitive capacities whether a picture is narrative or not. For this reason, Ryan (2004, 332) distinguishes between “being narrativity” and “having narrativity,” ultimately accepting that the narrative potential of an image exists only as a possibility.

Apart from monoscenic single images, multiscenic singular or concurrent images (*Simultanbilder*) exist—they are mainly known from Christian altarpieces—in which a single picture displays several temporally consecutive stages of a biblical story. In this way, individual scenes are linked by the reappearance of the main character, so that the impression of a temporal process is created. With multiscenic singular images, foreknowledge is also needed on the part of the perceiver to ensure that the narration is decoded, thereby allowing narrativity to unfold. Since the large number of visual messages prevents extensive associations, these images offer less space for imagination

than a monoscenic singular image. But, without the corresponding text or previous knowledge, it is not always easy to recognize these pictures for what they are, especially if the images show a situation that is narrated at the same time, and suggest what is narrated (see an example below). Yet, it is possible to arrange for narration to be carried out by the narrator and also by one of the characters in his narration, acting as a kind of second narrator inside the narration (a kind of embedded narrative).

## Visual Narrative in Ancient Egypt

Given the low level of literacy in ancient Egypt, visual narrative was an effective means of recording and relaying narration. With the exception of multiscene image sequences, the theories of visual narrative demonstrated above are applicable to Egyptian imagery. Among these, monoscenic singular images are most prevalent and were in existence from the early days of Egyptian civilization. Since manufactured narremes were not common in ancient Egypt, the deciphering of narrative was dependent on the ability of the individual perceiver. Coupled with this is the contemporary viewer's status as an "outsider" from ancient Egyptian society. It has to be seen as speculation whether what we see as a monoscenic singular image was perceived as such by the ancient Egyptians, especially if there are no written sources handing down the corresponding narrations. Nevertheless, the aim of this chapter is to show a few examples which suggest, despite these doubts, that there was visual narrativity in ancient Egypt.

In the temples and tombs of ancient Egypt, there are plenty of scenes that give the impression of visual narrativity. However, if we consider their function it becomes clear that they were largely dictated by the principles of sympathetic magic. Their main purpose was to enable the owner (e.g., god, king, or tomb owner) to magically reactivate the content of the scenes so that he could continue to experience and enjoy the depicted activities throughout eternity. Thus, the scenes generally had to guarantee the correct and ideal enactment of the observances depicted such as the daily ritual in the temple or burial rites in private tombs. So the picture's function was not to narrate a specific cult enactment by a particular king (which would be a necessary condition for narrative), but to overarch earthly reality with the Egyptian idea of perfection (Blumenthal (2002), 57). This same principle applies to battle scenes on the outside walls of the temples: their primary function was not to tell people about the pharaoh's victory, but to magically protect the temple and its divine inhabitants. Consequently, some of these battle scenes refer to specific events, but are more or less standardized representations of typical actions.

Scenes depicting rituals or feasts can be interpreted accordingly. They do not narrate a specific ritual act, but instead are timeless representations of a ritual or feast. Even if a specific deity or king can be identified along with the cultic actions, these images are nothing but standardized scenes and not a visual narration of a particular festival or ruler. According to the *pars-pro-toto* principle, it is enough to depict only a few scenes to represent the whole ritual or feast. In fact, these representations deliberately avoid being fixed on a specific event to guarantee perpetual validity.

It is the same with the lively and seemingly unique images known as the scenes of daily life in private tombs that do not narrate specific events in the tomb owners' lives.

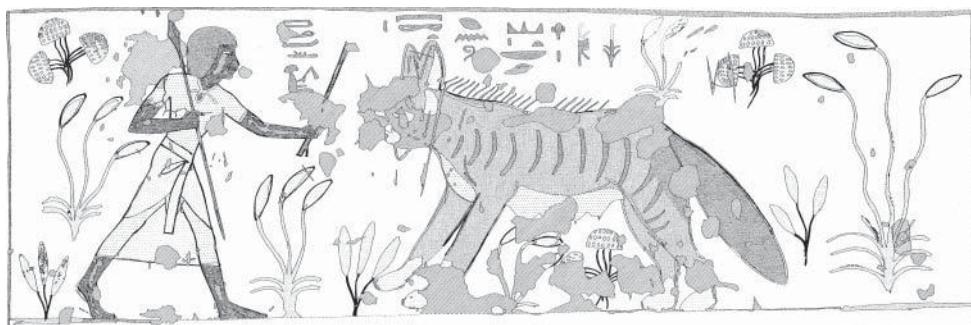
According to Groenewegen-Frankfort (1951, 33), they are “elaborate pictographical conceits rather than images of transient events,” and for this reason, they consist of various phases of one typical occurrence. The sequence of the scenes is not narrative but purely conceptual; nor is the writing which accompanies the scenes dramatic in character (Kantor (1957), 44). Like the scenes of rituals and feasts, these show the ideal—the life that the tomb owner wished to lead in his afterlife. Daily life scenes preserved the deceased’s identity, particularly his or her name, career, and correct lifestyle to document the fulfillment of the tomb owner’s religious and worldly duties. Therefore, these images did not narrate an individual’s life in a picture-book manner, but acted as magical life insurance for the continuance of the deceased’s identity in the afterlife.

## Examples of Visual Narrative in Ancient Egyptian Art

Though the rules regarding decoration seem to be very strict, there are a few exceptions that can be interpreted as visual narrative, such as the famous representations of the battle of Kadesh, which refer to a specific battle in a specific place and even name some of the participants, thus meeting the conditions for narrative. Other examples are scenes from the temple of Queen Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari, like the expedition to Punt or the production and transportation of the two obelisks for the temple of Karnak. Again, because Egyptologists assume that these occurrences are real and contain the necessary elements such as a specific event, place, and time, these can be seen as examples of narrative art.

Notable exceptions exist in private tomb decoration as well. Here are found images that represent specific events in a particular person’s life such as the visit of a ruler from Syria to an Egyptian doctor in the tomb of Nebamun (TT 17) or Amenemhab’s encounter with a hyena (TT 85) (Figure 18.2; and see below). The existence of such images gives rise to the question as to why visual narrative was not more popular in ancient Egypt, given the presence of tomb autobiographies that record specific events not represented in imagery.

In addition to these special cases, another group of representations fulfills the criteria for visual narrative. These are illustrations of Egyptian myths using single images or motifs. One example is the *Myth of the Heavenly Cow*, which is about the extermination of mankind, the retreat of the sun god Re to heaven, and the resultant division of



**Figure 18.2** Amenemhab facing a hyena (after Guksch (2003), 104, fig. 1).

heaven and earth. Illustrations of this myth appear again and again in the kings' tombs during the New Kingdom. They usually depict the heavenly cow accompanied by eight supporting gods or, alternatively, by the signs of eternity, *Neheb* and *Djet*, as divine pillars, and the king in question is often part of this group, replacing Shu. The direct reference to the *Myth of the Heavenly Cow* in these illustrations acts as a monoscopic singular image, because, if the viewer remembers the mythical narration, the narrative potential of the picture can unfold, since a myth is nothing but a narration. It is not the primary function of such images to narrate the myth, but to make the potential within them available for the individual ruler. Nevertheless, it is obvious that illustrations of this myth can be construed as narrative. Unfortunately, most ancient Egyptian myths are not preserved, so that many allusions to visual narration cannot be recognized, just as the narrative potential of these monoscopic images cannot be deciphered by today's viewers.

The most important sources of visual narrative in Egyptian art are the figured ostraca dating from Dynasties 19 and 20, mainly from the workers' village Deir el-Medina or from the Valley of the Kings in Thebes. There also exist a few illustrated papyri like the papyrus Turin 55001, the so-called "fairy-tale-papyrus London" (British Museum pBM 10016) (Lepsius (1842), pl. 23; Brunner-Traut (1984), 68), and the coloured papyrus of Cairo (Egyptian Museum Cairo JE 31199) (Robins (1997), 191–192), all from Dynasties 19 and 20. Many of these drawings or polychrome paintings differ from imagery found in the official context of temples and tombs that had to conform to canonical convention. Instead, the depictions on figured ostraca were less constrained and offered a more creative canvas for the producer. Among the canonical pictures that were used as drafts or sketches for decoration are narrative illustrations such as fables, fairytales, and myths in which humanized animals appear. Many of these motifs are drafts or sketches for large-scale wall paintings in private houses that are now lost, except for a few remains and copies that would have been used as models for other paintings. It can also be assumed that these motifs were not found in official art. Some could, of course, be spontaneous sketches and nothing more than a few moments of idle amusement or satirical pictures. But it is also possible that a considerable number of these sketches bear witness to lost fairytales, myths, and other narratives that were passed on from generation to generation without ever being written down, and consequently, are very significant for the exploration of ancient Egyptian narrative.

The most important function of visual narrative on small ostraca and papyri was as a narrative carrier since single figure or scene illustrations were passed from hand to hand. Brunner-Traut (1979, 9) assumes that sometimes storytellers were drawing such images while narrating or ordered high-quality pictures on ostracon or papyrus from skilled craftsmen for this purpose. Especially the papyri mentioned above could have been (part of) the collections of wandering storytellers. In Egypt, the existence of "book-boxes" is demonstrable, where private collectors built up a kind of private library of illustrated papyri (Parkinson (2009), 141). It is also conceivable that some craftsmen manufactured such pictures for the education and edification of their family, using them like modern picture books when the elders passed their stories to the young ones.

Narrative illustrations were also used as memory aids by a narrator or person who wanted to recall a specific story. If, for example, someone were to show us today a picture of a gingerbread house with a young girl and a young boy standing in front of it,

many would be able to remember the fairytale of *Hansel and Gretel*. The same likely happened with ancient Egyptian pictures, but unfortunately today most of the ancient narrative corresponding to the preserved images is lost. Therefore, we are no longer able to unfold the narrative potential of the story, but we get the impression that we are confronted with an example of the visual narrative of ancient Egypt because the pictures show very specific scenes and characters that are not reflected in decorative and standardized pictures from official contexts. This again demonstrates that the question of visual narrative is inevitably combined with a temporal and cultural context. Behind each picture lies a complex system with which the ancient Egyptians were familiar, the so-called “black box,” the contents and mechanism of which Egyptologists today can only speculate because it is not possible to enter this hermeneutic circle and get emic access (van Walsem 2005).

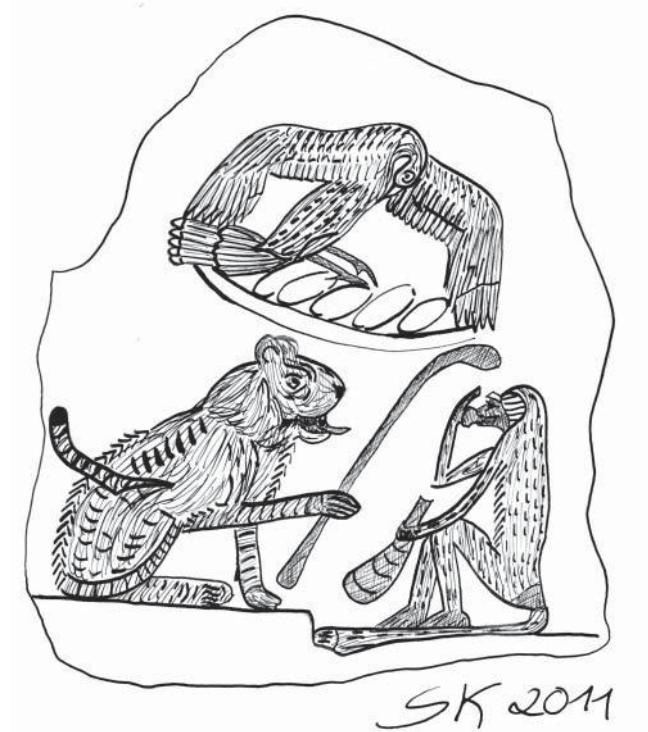
Nevertheless, it is possible, in some cases, to recognize visual narrative even if it is not possible to reconstruct the original story. A unique example of a monoscenic singular image in Egyptian art is the representation of a hunt in the tomb of Amenemhab (TT 85), a soldier from the time of Thutmose III (Guksch 2003) (Figure 18.2). Located on the wall opposite the entrance, this image depicts the tomb owner facing a hyena. Amenemhab has not yet triumphed over the animal, as the hyena stretches out before him with an open mouth and alert, upright ears. Compared to the hunter, the animal is strikingly large and we can see that it is a nursing mother, which makes it even more aggressive and dangerous. The dramatic tension of the scene is heightened because of the alternating movements of Amenemhab and the hyena. Although both of them are standing on the base line, the picture conveys an impression of depth and reality. Because of the sand-coloured undercoat and the unusual plants, it can be assumed that the event happened in Syria during one of the tomb owner’s expeditions. But we have no further information about the result of this encounter, which is also unusual. Perhaps the end is left open intentionally to keep the viewer in suspense. Although we have no proof that the scene represents a singular personal event, it does contain the necessary elements for a narrative: it illustrates a very specific event at a specific place (somewhere in Syria) with a specific individual, in a plot that offers the viewer the possibility of recreating the story.

Another remarkable monoscenic singular image can be seen on an ostracon from the papyrus Turin 55001, showing a hippopotamus picking figs from a tree (Figure 18.3). According to the picture, the huge animal has somehow managed to climb the fig tree with a ladder. There is a black bird sitting on one rung, obviously talking to the hippopotamus. This strange situation is reminiscent of the scene from the famous fables of Aesop. It is reasonable to assume that animals exhibiting human behavior are part of a lost Egyptian fable or fairytale. Sadly, we may never discover what the animals are talking about, or why a hippopotamus was chosen to pick the figs. The scene is not unique; there is another example on an ostracon from the Museum of Agriculture Fouad I at Cairo (Vandier d’Abbadie (1937), pl. XCII, fig. 2717) and on the London papyrus (British Museum pBM 10016).

An example of a multiscenic singular image occurs on an ostracon from the Museum of Berlin (Inv. 21443) from Deir el-Medina (Figure 18.4). The ostracon illustrates a scene from the myth of the solar eye preserved in written form on several papyri. The text tells how the furious deity, Hathor-Tefnut, in shape of the Nubian cat, abandons her home to



**Figure 18.3** A hippopotamus harvesting figs in a fig-tree. Line drawing by Stefanie Kaiser.



**Figure 18.4** Scene from the myth of the solar-eye on a Deir el-Medina ostracon in the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, Berlin (Inv. 21443) from Deir el-Medina. Line drawing by Stefanie Kaiser.

go to Nubia—which causes her father, the god Re, to send the god Thoth to bring her back. Thoth turns into a small monkey and manages to calm the goddess with tricky and flattering speeches, eventually persuading her to come home. These speeches are in the form of five fables embedded in a story which serve as the framework to demonstrate to the goddess that she is obliged to fulfil her destiny and come back. The Berlin ostracon represents a striking, artful drawing of the cat sitting on a low platform opposite a baboon; above them, is a nest where a bird is brooding on five eggs. The gesture of the cat holding a stick in her paw suggests that the feline is talking to Thoth in a threatening manner, but he does not seem to be disturbed and is calmly eating a date. The other image of the bird and the eggs probably refers to the fable narrated by Thoth of the vulture and the cat making a pact to secure the safety of their offspring which is, ultimately, broken by the vultures, resulting in the death of the chicks.

Multiscenic und monoscenic singular images are also found among Egyptian paintings. One very impressive example of a monoscenic image sequence is the so-called Basel Animal Story on a strip of plastered canvas from Dynasties 19–20 (Inv.Ae.Bou.13) (Wiese 2003). From right to left, the sequence begins with scenes of cats and mice playing a game with a ball, wrestling, followed by a cat driving a chariot attacked by a lion while



**Figure 18.5** Photo and line drawing of a portion of the Basel Animal Fable. Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig, Inv.-Nr. BSAe 1081. Photograph by A. Voegelin, line drawing by S. Dürr (after Loeben 2009), fig. 4).

being pulled by two dogs with a standing lion and a hyena holding implements resembling short knives in their paws. The lion and the hyena move toward a relatively small donkey that is also walking upright, carrying a mouse on his shoulder. In the following scene, a female donkey is lying on a bed giving birth while a mouse-servant is caring for her. Next the hyena steals the baby donkey, passing it to another figure (Figure 18.5). It seems that these last scenes tell the story of a newborn donkey being stolen by two villains. Although we will likely never know the ending of this tale, or its title, these images remain a very impressive example of narrative in Egyptian art.

## Conclusion

All of these examples demonstrate that visual narrative was an essential part of Egyptian art. In different contexts and forms, we can find images fulfilling the conditions necessary for them to be seen as narrative. Moreover, the theories valid for (visual) narrative in other disciplines can also be applied to Egyptian pictures, so that Egyptology is able to participate in the interdisciplinary research on narrative.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

To my knowledge, there is presently no essential reading on narrative in Egyptian art. This will be remedied by a monograph that is currently in progress (Braun in press). For a general introduction to narratology as an interdisciplinary phenomenon see Nünning and Nünning (2002). For an overview and a discussion of the steps in visual narrative in Egyptian art, see Gaballa (1976), Gronewegen-Frankfort (1951, 1970), and Kantor (1957). An extensive collection of figured ostraca are provided by Vandier d'Abbadie (1946, 1959), Brunnert-Traut (1956, 1979), and Minault-Gout (2002). The Papyrus Turin 55001 was published by Omlin (1973). The first Egyptologist working on narrative with humanized animals was Brunner-Traut (1984). For recent articles on this topic see also Houlihan (2001), Flores (2004), and Loeben (2009). For the Basel Animal Story see Wiese (2003).

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## CHAPTER 19

# The Ordering of the Figure

*William H. Peck*

One of the keys to comprehending the art of ancient Egypt is to observe the manner in which the human figure was represented. To the modern viewer, the canonical representation of the human figure in Egyptian art may appear stiff, awkward, unrealistic, or “primitive.” However, the Egyptian artist approached the form and content of his work from a perspective far removed from contemporary notions of representation. The modern learned attitudes about pictorial representation depend on a visual vocabulary that had no meaning to the ancient Egyptians. Aspects of two-dimensional art known since the Renaissance, including perspective, modeling, and chiaroscuro, had not yet been developed and are thus of little practical use in the study of Egyptian art. Egyptian art recorded the objective appearance of a person or thing and was not dependent on a momentary visual impression. To achieve a uniform representation of the human form, a system was developed that was based on the simultaneous presentation of body parts from multiple viewpoints. The pioneering work that attempted to analyze aspects of visual presentation in two dimensions was Heinrich Schäfer’s *Von ägyptischer Kunst*, first published in 1919. In it, Schäfer endeavored to make the visual code of Egyptian art understandable by numerous examples of illustrations of both animate and inanimate objects.

Numerous theorists have contributed to the vast body of scholarship concerning the rules of Egyptian pictorial representation. One of the earliest, Johann Winckelmann (1717–1768), justly called the father of Greek art history, was one of the first to examine systematically the origins of art in the ancient world. In his *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1882), he observed that ancient records (i.e., classical authors) inform us that the earliest attempts to draw the human figure represented not the outward appearance of a man, or a view of his body, but an outline of his shadow (Schäfer (1986), viii). Therefore, Egyptian two-dimensional art illustrated objective knowledge and experience rather than a specific perception. In his *Meaning and the Visual Arts*, Erwin Panofsky

summed up the difference between Egyptian and later, perspective based, representation rather succinctly. He wrote that the Egyptian method of representation was “directed not toward the variable, but toward the constant, not toward the symbolization of the vital present, but toward the realization of a timeless eternity” (Panofsky (1955), 61). And, “All the parts of the human figure are so arrayed that they present themselves as either in a completely frontal projection or else in pure profile” (Panofsky (1955), 58). This last quote from Panofsky echoes the ideas of Schäfer, and will be examined in detail below.

To arrive at a consensus about what constitutes the basis of the human figure in two-dimensional art, I offer the following statements, roughly in chronological order of composition. One of the earliest scholars to attempt to make sense of the Egyptian “method” was Adolph Erman who wrote:

In their attempt to show every part of the body from the side which reveals it most characteristically, Egyptian artists produced a body whose strange contortions completely contradict nature. In general, the body is seen in profile, as is shown by the head, arms, legs, and feet. But a face-on [*en face*] eye is placed in the profile head, and the torso in particular emerges completely confused. (Erman 1885, cited in Schäfer (1986), 283)

According to Schäfer, Erman was the first modern commentator to enumerate the essential elements in the representation of the human form. Somewhat later, Jean Capart explained the essential basis of Egyptian two-dimensional rendering as a choice between:

descriptive geometry, or the process of perspective. The latter represents solid bodies as they are seen in space. The two systems are based on principles which may be considered almost contradictory, the first aiming at showing things as they are, and the second as they appear to us. On the one hand we have an ideological process and on the other a sensory perception. (Capart (1942), 89)

In 1958, William Stevenson Smith made a subtle but very important point when he wrote:

All pre-Greek peoples give us a kind of diagram of a thing as man knew it to be, not as it appears to the eye under transitory circumstances. In spite of this attitude toward visual impressions, the Egyptian had an instinct to imitate closely what he saw about him. (Smith (1981), 1)

Here, Smith expressed his view of the dichotomy between what is known and what is seen, but he added that the Egyptian artist was a keen observer of the world around him and was capable of incorporating his observations into the details of his work. Smith also echoed Schäfer in the use of the distinction “pre-Greek” as a kind of dividing line between cultures that based artistic expression on the known, and those that moved on to the observation-based act of reproducing experience. Smith was a dedicated archaeologist, but also an art historian who devoted considerable attention to analyzing and explaining many aspects of Egyptian art in the tradition of Schäfer.

One of the most incisive comments on the basis of the form and the intention of Egyptian art was made by J.R. Harris in 1966. He wrote:

in order to fulfill its magical purpose, any representation, whether in three dimensions or two, was required to be immediate and absolutely explicit and comprehensible, and in general therefore both sculptor and draughtsman sought to communicate a rational objective truth independent of time and space, and to show things in what were deemed to be their real and immutable forms, free from such purely visual effects and distortions as might constitute an obstacle to identification. (Harris (1966), 9)

Similarly, Cyril Aldred wrote of the Egyptian artist's vision of the world as:

concerned not with presenting an evanescent personal impression, caught at an instant, but with what he regarded as eternal verities. He represented not what could be seen transiently, but what he expected to exist for perpetuity. (Aldred (1980), 15)

Whereas Gay Robins emphasized the two-dimensionality of Egyptian art on a plane surface in that:

they did not aim to incorporate the appearance of depth. Rather they arranged two-dimensional images of the objects they wished to represent over the flat drawing surface. These objects were rendered from their most characteristic and easily recognizable aspect, usually in profile, full view, plan or elevation . . . the rendering of the human figure forms a composite built up from its individual parts. (Robins (2008), 21)

The largest single obstacle to understanding Egyptian two-dimensional art is the historically ingrained assumption that an illusion of space or depth is necessary for a visual composition in order for it not be considered "primitive," "childlike," or simply unrealistic. Since the Egyptian artist was producing a timeless document and not a momentary image, there was no necessity to create the illusion of three-dimensional space. In western art since the Renaissance (and, to a certain extent since the time of the Greeks), the standard visual clues used to suggest depth and mass have been based on converging lines, relative size, the overlap of forms, and a change of color in hue or intensity. Of these only overlapping, where one figure is partly concealed by another next to it, was commonly used by the Egyptians:

Egyptian sculptors were masters of overlapping . . . The distance between the figures was not expressed by artistic perspective but by an intricate interweaving of various objects, limbs and bodies, spread over a considerable width. (Harpur and Schremin (2006), 353)

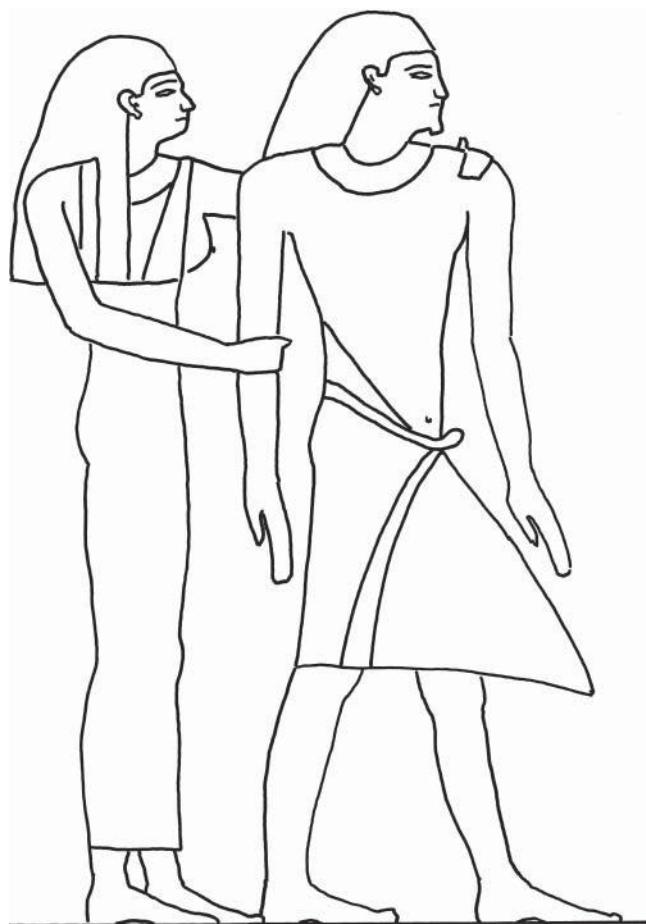
However, what is usually meant to be conveyed by overlapping in the Egyptian composition is a side-by-side positioning rather than one in front of the other. Typical images of man and wife, where the wife is behind and partly covered by the husband, are certainly intended to be read this way.

Once the illusions of recession in space and solid mass are dispensed with, if they were ever considered, the only solution to a complete and reasonable representation

of an object or figure was the *composite* diagram. A composite diagram takes the most characteristic views of the subject and combines them in a manner that was never intended to be naturalistic. The simplest example from ancient Egypt is the biliteral hieroglyph *mn* which is a gaming board. The gaming board is shown in plan, as a rectangle subdivided into three rows of squares; and the gaming pieces are shown in elevation (profile) as if they were standing on the side of the upturned board. The combination of the two views results in a comprehensible representation of board and pieces, each shown in its most characteristic view and combined in such a way to indicate their function together.

The presentation of the human figure in Egyptian two-dimensional art is a prime example of the use of the composite diagram, easily read, completely understandable, and without reference to time or place. The composite diagram makes no provision for time of day or season; location is only alluded to as a convention that explains action and has little influence on the presentation of the figure. Other conventions of Egyptian two-dimensional representation include the decorum with which the participants are represented, the hierarchy of size, the uses of color, and the employment of the register system. For example, the tomb owner, as the most important participant, stands or sits in a formal pose, whereas the activities that provide for his benefit—the work of offering bearers and field workers—are often carried out by figures depicted in active and unrestricted poses. This formal pose is also seen in representations of the king and the gods. The size of figures is dictated by importance, so that deities are usually shown larger than mortals, males larger than females, parents larger than children, and humans larger than animals, although there are many variations and exceptions to this scheme. Color is generally dictated by sex; males are red-brown and females are pale yellow. A significant exception to this rule was illustrated by Henry G. Fischer (1963, 17–22) who noted that there was some variation for standard coloration in the Old Kingdom and one use of yellow on male figures might indicate the effects of sheltered existence on an elderly official. Deities, who are obviously exempt from human rules, often have symbolic coloration: green or black for Osiris and blue for Amun, as the two most obvious examples. The compositional framework for two-dimensional presentation is usually based on a register (band, zone) system where the surface or wall is divided into regularly delineated horizontal areas that organize visual information and the activities represented, a device that goes back to the time of the Narmer Palette.

The dominant figure is the one looking right, emulating the ordinary orientation of hieroglyphic writing. In the image of the standing male figure, the head is in profile with a single eye depicted frontally (Figure 19.1). The shoulders and upper chest are shown from the front with a slight suggestion of breast on the edge of the chest and a curve for the small of the back. The arms, hands, legs, and feet are generally represented in profile, but the hands vary according to the depiction. At the waist there is a suggestion of a twist that displays the navel close to the leading edge of the abdomen. If the figure is facing right, the left foot is advanced. The feet, for much of Egyptian history, show the arched side with only the large toe evident (Russmann (1980), 57–81; Schäfer (1986), 294). The female figure is delineated in essentially the same manner with one breast, or at least a nipple, on the front edge of her chest. Additionally, the two legs of the female are usually shown together rather than one leg advanced. Seated figures are depicted according to the same rules, even the advanced left foot for males.

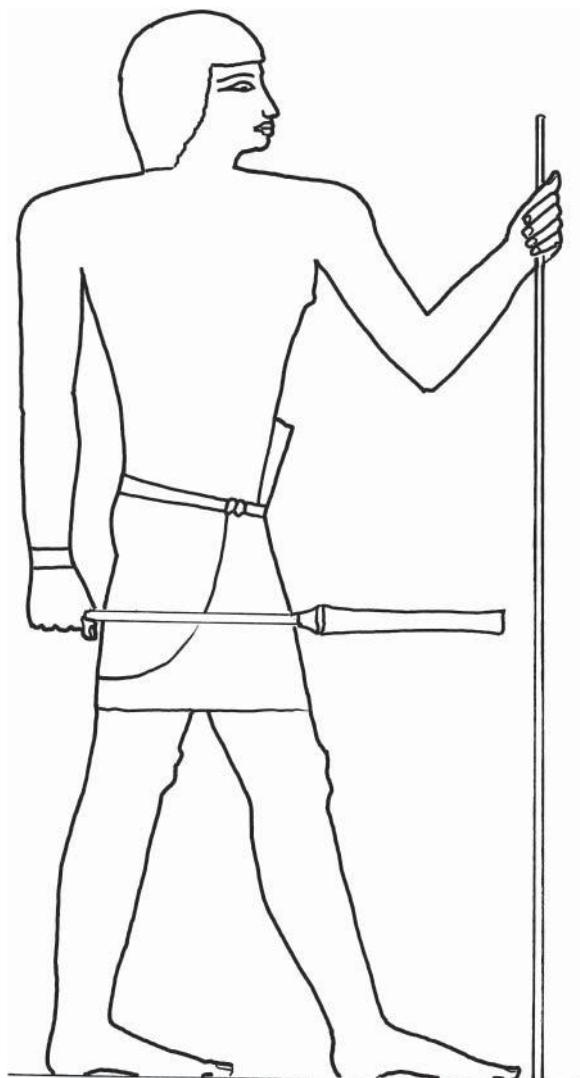


**Figure 19.1** Standing male and female (after LD II, 45). Drawing by W. Peck.

The explanation for the selection of views is relatively simple. Although the most recognizable rendering of a person's face may indeed be from the front, the most characteristic view that an artist can create by line on a two-dimensional surface is the profile. All Egyptian two- and three-dimensional art is based on a linear conception (Peck (1978), 14). Seen in profile, the eye appears as a wedge-shape that does not describe the whole, so the choice of the frontal view of the eye is natural when the aim is to exhibit what is known rather than what is seen. The broad shoulders of male figures and the more narrow shoulders of females not only serve to identify and differentiate sexual differences but they also provide a wide surface where jewelry and identifying regalia can be displayed. How could the ubiquitous broad collar be shown otherwise? A side view of the shoulders and upper torso, like that of the eye, would be virtually meaningless (although it is used in some particular situations). The navel, if positioned in the middle of the abdomen, would have made the rendering of the junction between the lower abdomen and legs more difficult so the navel was drawn near the forward outline of the torso to help smooth that transition.

The side views of limbs and other appendages are simply the most characteristic way to render them. However, fingernails and toenails are usually shown in profile, a curious exception to the general rule of depicting the most descriptive aspect. Some exceptions, such as thumbs that appear to be on the wrong side of the hand, will be treated below, as will figures with leftward, as opposed to rightward, orientation.

In the standard depiction of the right-facing standing male, the left foot is forward, and the left hand holds a staff with the fingers of the left hand shown in a natural grasping position, while the right hand holds a *shm*-wand with only the back of the fist showing (Figure 19.2). In other examples the beaded collar is displayed as it would be seen when



**Figure 19.2** Standing male facing right (after LD II, 4). Drawing by W. Peck.

looking at a figure head on. When the figure is reversed to face left—still holding the staff and the wand—certain difficulties arise. William Stevenson Smith admitted that there could be confusion in the artist's attempt to portray paraphernalia in its proper place, held in the correct hand: "We know from statues that the man carried his staff in his left hand and his wand in his right. This could be satisfactorily imitated in relief when the figure faced to the right, but the artist met difficulties *which he seldom solved satisfactorily* when the figure faced to the left" (Smith (1946), 274, author's italics).

Smith offers numerous examples of the artist's attempt to solve these difficulties. He points out that the most often employed solution resulted in a figure that looks to the modern observer as if reversed to show the back of the torso. Whereas muscle and bone structure (knees, collar bones) are commonly rendered, the spine is not detailed. The solution to the leftward-facing principal figure is often accomplished by putting the hands on the "wrong" arms (Figure 19.3). In some instances, the wand is shown behind the

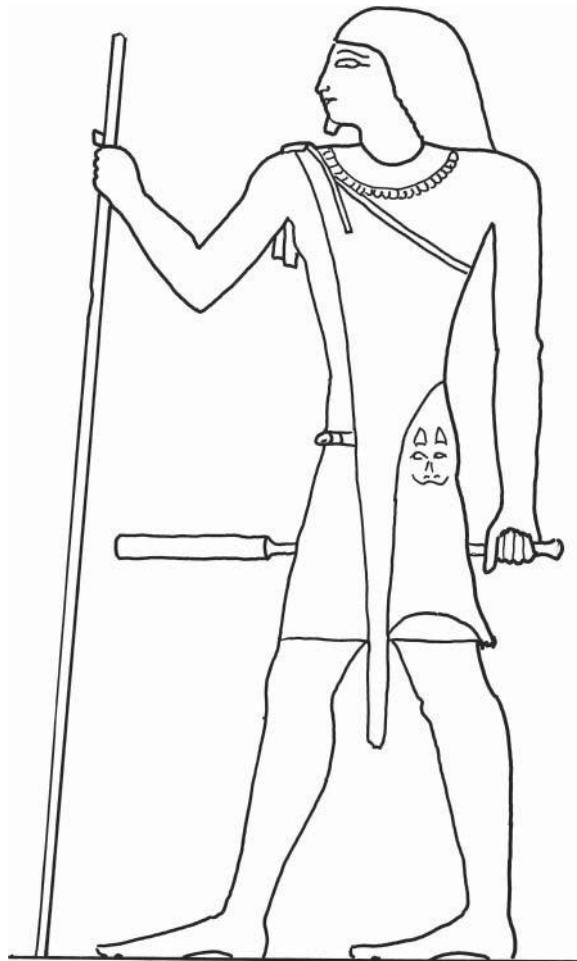


Figure 19.3 Standing male facing left (after LD II, 8). Drawing by W. Peck.



**Figure 19.4** Seated male and female (after LD II, 10). Drawing by W. Peck.

figure indicating that it is still carried in the right hand. As Smith (1946) observed, the difficulties encountered with the leftward facing figure were seldom solved satisfactorily, but there were many variant attempts to achieve the desired symmetry where a right and left facing figure each carry the same attributes.

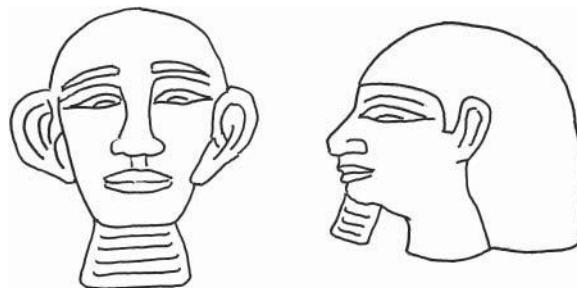
The scene of the deceased seated before his or her offering table depicts a figure with two left hands, both with the thumbs turned down (Figure 19.4). This convention, more than any other, has elicited a reaction from viewers not familiar with the intentions of Egyptian art that the artist did not know his right from left. The right hand is extended in a gesture of receiving the offerings, yet indicating the details of the palm apparently was not favored (although the palm of the hand was sometimes carefully delineated on predynastic slate palettes so that the thumb is on the lower side of the hand (Schäfer (1986), pl. 4). This arrangement, with the thumb seemingly in an unnatural position, is common when open hands are shown. The closed fist does not seem to present a problem since the thumb is usually situated on the upper side of the hand. It is probable that the visual concept of the “open hand” required that the thumb to be down whereas the “closed hand” did not.

As with every set of rules there were significant exceptions to the standards of representation in Egyptian art. Perhaps the most important was the deviation from the profile face to one that was frontal. The most obvious example is the *hr*-hieroglyph where the head is shown as full face. The nose is carefully detailed with prominent lobes of the nostrils, and naturally, both eyes are shown as are the ears. Schäfer in *Von ägyptischer Kunst* in paragraph 4.4.3, explained the subject of frontal faces as “Looking and moving out of and into the picture” and included illustrations of “A Vessel with a Spout,” a “Sky Goddess in the Lid of a Coffin,” and a “*Ba* Bird at the Head of a Sarcophagus,” all typical

examples of figural heads facing the spectator. On the problem of the frontal face which seems to violate the rule of the profile head, Smith wrote that the Egyptian artist:

was averse to representing a face in front view or a figure in frontal position, and conversely a back view. Occasionally an individual broke the rule of practice, and did attempt such a representation, although the examples are very rare. Oddly enough, the same principal by which the characteristic aspect of an object from above forced the frontal representation of certain heads used as hieroglyphs or in designs. (Smith (1946), 342)

The *hr*-sign (Gardiner (1957), sign list D2) is the ideograph in the word “face,” whereas the sign *tp* (Gardiner sign list D1), shown in profile, is the ideograph in the word for “head” (Figure 19.5). It is interesting to note that the exceptions to the general rule, the *hr* face and the *m* owl, are two hieroglyphs most often encountered on practice pieces for both drawing and relief. On the frontal view, Smith uses two of Schäfer’s examples, the “Board Game Player” and the “Rope Maker.” Unfortunately, neither of these examples illustrates frontal faces; they rather show bodies from the front. The key to the use of the face and/or body shown from the front is dictated by the nature of the “characteristic aspect.” The hieroglyphs of the scarab beetle, fly, lizard, and turtle are all shown in plan from above, because that is their most characteristic aspect and describes the creature depicted the best. The face or body shown from the front was chosen for essentially the same reason, because the frontal view describes an action or an activity at its fullest or best. A prime example is the depiction of two musicians in the fragment of painting from the tomb of Nebamun (British Museum, EA 37984; in Parkinson (2008), fig. 88). The musicians differ from the other musical group to the left with their faces rendered in the traditional profile because the artist has chosen to explain the action of flute playing with faces shown from the front to give a more complete idea of the action. In the same way, the god Bes is shown full face probably because the most characteristic view of the god’s “lion” head that identifies him is best described frontally. Another significant and regular use of the face as seen from the front appears in New Kingdom groups of captives where the central figure is depicted in this manner, perhaps for reasons of balance in the composition. In fact, foreigners are more apt to be excused from the strict rules of ancient Egyptian representation, particularly in battle scenes where the complexity and confusion of violent action allowed more liberty with modes of depiction. It seems to have been



**Figure 19.5** Hieroglyphs (after inscription in the tomb of Ptahhotep, Saqqara). Drawing by W. Peck.

generally accepted that if the profile head did not explain fully what was intended, a full face may have been substituted.

Another significant deviation from the norm appears when figures reach out, lean forward, or grasp an object with both hands. The so-called “turned back” arms or “folded over” shoulders result in images that are often awkward but governed by the same rules as the composite figure (Smith (1948), 302; Schäfer (1986), 309; Fischer (1996), 13–41). Somewhat akin to this is the representation of statues in a simple profile view. One explanation for statues being shown this way is that they are inanimate objects in origin and not composite views of a living image. The depiction of statues proves that an Egyptian artist could visualize and represent a true profile of a figure where it was called for, just as he could handle a frontal face in situations where it better explained an idea.

Egyptian art was not limited to the formal depiction of the human figure but also included representations of a wide range of activities. This contrast can be seen between the large images of the tomb owner, king, or god that served as the eternal embodiment of their essence, and the smaller figures of offering bearers, workmen, hunters, fishermen, and children at play, which were less bound by the restrictions of formalism. A few examples will suffice to illustrate the difference. As early as the work of Erman (1885), a distinction was made between the formal depictions of the tomb owner, king, or deity and the other activities included in a scene. Images of workmen in the fields and soldiers in battle could not be constructed with the same rules of decorum and reserve used for the representation of the deceased. As a typical example to illustrate the variety and complexity of poses possible in a scene, Erman chose the hauling-in of a large fishing dragnet by a crew of boatmen (Figure 19.6). This includes many types of postures such as arms extended outwards from the back, folded over shoulders, wide stances with flexed knees, a figure bending from the waist, and in the center, an overseer who leans on his staff with one leg bent in a relaxed position. While this scene includes some variety in the depiction of figures that the Egyptian artist could achieve, other examples illustrate the difference between “formal” and “informal” even more clearly.

One wall in the mastaba of Ptahhotep at Saqqara includes cattle drovers, papyrus being gathered, bundled, and carried, children’s games, fruit watered and harvested, grapes stomped and juice extracted, rope making, bird catching, boat building, wrestling, transport of caged animals, and other large groups of domestic and wild animals (Davies 1900; see also Figure 6.5 in Angenot, this volume). A great number of methods of illustrating

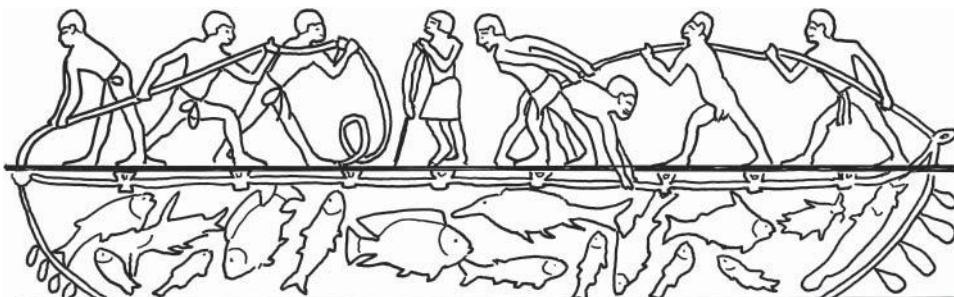


Figure 19.6 Fish netting scene (after LD II, 9). Drawing by W. Peck.

the human figure in two dimensions are demonstrated, testifying to the ability of the artist to observe detailed actions and then to codify them in his designs. While the depiction of many details in the types of activities mentioned appear to be based on original observations, almost every one of them can be found on the walls of other tombs. In contrast to contemporary conceptions of artistic creation, which privilege individual expression, the specific way to render an active figure or activity was already standardized for artists in order to be duplicated. This suggests the existence of the ancient equivalent of “pattern books” or models from which the artist-draftsman drew the correct manner of presentation of a subject. The large number of New Kingdom ostraca used for practice sketches attest to the learning process of the artist as well as the practice of using established prototypes.

Two examples of established iconic compositions will help to exemplify this idea. In Old Kingdom tombs, a standard motif depicts a herdsman carrying a calf across a body of water. The calf may be held in different ways but the idea that the animal needs to be supported and protected remains the same. This may be an allusion to a passage in the Pyramid Texts where a goddess is asked to transport the spirit of the king in a similar manner, or it may simply be, as Henry Fischer once suggested (personal communication, ca. 1965), that carrying a calf is a practical way to induce the mother cow and the herd to follow. In any case, this composition is repeated in a number of tombs without significant variation, and is probably not the immediate product of direct observation, although its prototype may have been based in reality. A New Kingdom example of a similar iconic composition is found in the image of a lady at the funerary banquet who turns to offer a piece of fruit (or a lotus) to her companion behind her. The companion holds the wrist of her friend to steady it, a gesture that might be considered another incisive observation on the part of the artist—if the motif was not repeated in other tombs indicating its standardization. These two examples attest to the fact that even the “non-formal” scenes allow for variations in the presentation of the figure, and are part of a body of standardized and codified rules governing artistic representation.

From the beginning of the dynastic era, compositions on a flat surface were laid out with the aid of a system of horizontal and vertical lines (Robins 1994). Although this system eventually developed into a grid of equal squares, only a limited number of lines marked out the major points of the human figure during the Old Kingdom. It was not until the Middle Kingdom that the squared-off grid was fully utilized. Virtually every scholar who has studied Egyptian tomb painting and relief has grappled with an attempt to understand the logic and the utility of the grid system and its change or adjustment in the Late Period. Foremost among these is Eric Iversen (1955, 1975) who sought to correlate the grid system with Egyptian metrology as well as establish that artistic proportional relationships were based on the observation of exact relationships in human anatomy. Iversen’s work was considered the explanation and solution of how the grid square system worked until Gay Robins (1994) reexamined his premises using examples of grid squares *in situ* (rather than using photographs or other researchers’ drawings, a working method for which she faulted Iversen). Her study of proportion and style and the relative changes in both through history has since become an accepted understanding of the grid system (Peck (1999), 203; Baines (2007), 219).

The most common misunderstanding about the use of the grid is that it established the correct proportions of figures once and for all, and did not simply act as a guide

for the overall layout of the composition. It is clear that proportions changed over the span of Pharaonic history, even though the classic proportions established in the Old Kingdom were revisited from time to time. As the guide lines of the Old Kingdom gave way to the squared grid in the Middle Kingdom, a relationship was established that made the height of the standing figure eighteen squares from ground line to hairline, and the seated figure fourteen squares. This relationship was more or less fixed until the so-called “reform” grid was introduced in Dynasty 25, which changed the height of the standing figure to twenty-one squares from the ground line to the upper eyelid (not the hairline), and seventeen squares for the seated figure. What is crucial to understand is that the layout of the formal human figure was not fixed and inflexible but that variations in the relation of anatomical parts created variation in artistic style. The grid provided a general aid for the layout of the figure as well as the composition of which it was a part. However, the grid did not dictate the unvarying proportion of anatomical parts throughout Egyptian history. One only has to compare the proportions of the king on the Narmer Palette or the wood carved reliefs of Hesire to the “classic” Old Kingdom depictions of figures in later tombs such as that of Ptahhotep at Saqqara to see that differences developed early on. Ironically, in some general art history texts these two early examples, the Narmer Palette and the Hesire reliefs, are used to explain the proportions of the human figure throughout Egyptian history.

This chapter has sought to explain the nature of ancient Egyptian representations without belaboring the terminology used to describe it. It is significant that William Stevenson Smith (Smith 1946, 326) commented in a footnote on the difficulty of selecting an acceptable terminology to describe what the Egyptian artists were trying to accomplish in two-dimensional representations. As the pioneer who contributed much of the initial groundwork to understanding and deciphering many of the formal aspects of Egyptian art, Schäfer (1986) struggled for a considerable time to find the appropriate definition. He finally settled on *geradvorstellig*, which Baines translated as “based on frontal images” (Baines (1986), xvi–xvii):

The term means that the (mental) image on which a representation is based is one that excludes all accidental factors in the perception of the original object, and is therefore unshortened and not distorted in any other way; the processing of the mind implies that a selection of elements in the object according to their significance normally occurs.

The choice of the definition “based on frontal images” is subject to confusion. In some examples of the literature on Egyptian art, the standing figure is described as having a “frontal” view of the shoulders and upper torso as well as the eyes, contrasting with the “profile” view of the head, lower torso, legs, and feet. What the terms *geradvorstellig* and “based on frontal images” convey is a mental process based on prior knowledge that is free of foreshortening and other momentary impressions, and not a perception that demands a specific viewpoint. This naming of the process is at the crux of much of the discussion concerning the interpretation of Egyptian two-dimensional art in its various manifestations. Schäfer maintained that what was used to describe the Egyptian process was also true for all “pre-Greek” art (where the term “pre-Greek” serves not as a designation of a historic period, but of art anywhere and at any time before the development of a perspectival attitude toward representation).

*Perspective* can be defined as a method of representing the illusion of space and volume on a two-dimensional plane, observed at a particular time and from a fixed position. This is achieved, in part, by imagined visual extension of lines in objects so that they converge as they suggest recession in space based on a distortion of the original object to achieve the illusion of volume. Other aids to create space (by recession) and volume (by distortion) on a two-dimensional surface by overlapping in which one object partly conceals the another, or is smaller so as to seem deeper in space. Change of color (hue, intensity) is also used to produce an effect of atmosphere and distance. Actually in practice, warm colors (reds, yellows, oranges, and browns) tend to suggest advancement of shapes in a composition, whereas cool colors (blues, greens) suggest recession. Dark and light colors can affect the composition in either way, depending on the field context. Shadows can also play a part in the modeling of objects to suggest volume, contour, and shape.

Since Egyptian art in two dimensions can be considered conceptual and not perceptual during most of its history, none of the clues to space and volume itemized above were considered (with the rare exception of modeling) by the ancient artist, although there are instances of the comparative size of participants in scenes that has led to speculation about the possibility of intended depth or distance; a phenomenon easily explained by the rule that size indicates importance or by the ability to utilize the available space in the composition.

In her epilogue to Schäfer's *Principals of Egyptian Art*, Emma Brunner-Traut advanced the alternative designation *aspective* (a-spective meaning perspective-free) to replace Schäfer's *geradvorstellig* ("based on frontal images"). She maintains that he was never completely satisfied with *geradvorstellig*, which she describes as a clumsy compromise. She also explained that *aspective* better defined the "mentality" he attempted to describe as well as other aspects of Egyptian culture that arose from the same attitude. In trying to find the correct vocabulary to explain Egyptian art, Brunner-Traut sought a wider understanding of Egyptian mental processes:

Egyptians do not strive to achieve a "personal viewpoint", they conceive that their task is to integrate themselves into the abstract and universal order laid down once and for all by God; they do not arrive at knowledge through critical perception but through believing acceptance. (Schäfer (1986), 427)

If this statement were entirely true, all Egyptian painting and relief sculpture would look exactly the same. There would be no period changes in style and no modifications in delineating measured proportion. There would also certainly be no difference in the use of realistic detail resulting from direct observation, however subservient the Egyptian artist may have been to the established rules of presentation. Brunner-Traut also proposed that the final product was achieved by constructing the image "part for part" as true and ideal for everyone, everywhere (Schäfer (1986), 424). If the image had this universal quality of being right, there would have been little need for lengthy explanations of the principals of Egyptian art such as the valued work of Schäfer.

"Perspective," the art of appearances, is considered in contrast to "aspective." However, perspective implies much more than only the attempt to reproduce appearance. Reproducing appearance demands skill that must be learned. The expertise demanded of artists since the historic development of three-dimensional illusion requires complex

modes of education and training that parallel the “knowledge-based” art of the Egyptians (and all of what Schäfer grouped together as “pre-Greek”). Anyone who has undergone the rigorous studio training that includes one-, two-, and three-point perspective, color theory, anatomy, and the rendering of objects with light, shade, and color, would be aware that reproducing the illusion of reality is not simply a matter of looking and perceiving. Looking and perceiving is a level of competence that may only be achieved after a rigorous education in translating perception. It was only with artists such as the nineteenth-century Impressionists that academic training and technical preconceptions of how a picture should look were partly abandoned for the supposedly simply act of realizing “appearance.” The academic approach to two-dimensional art, whether it was in the time of the Greeks, the Renaissance, or the nineteenth century, was also conceptual to the extent that it was based on training, albeit to a different degree and a different end than Egyptian art.

The Egyptian artist created a timeless image intended to last for eternity, composed of ideal views of elements combined to form the whole. Any attempt to understand Egyptian two-dimensional art must begin with the acknowledgement that intention dictated visual vocabulary. As J.J. Winckelmann cautioned in his *History of Ancient Art*:

Do not attempt to find faults and imperfections in a work of art until you have learned to recognize and identify its beauties. This advice is the fruit of long experience, namely, that most men miss the beautiful altogether because they criticize before they have even begun to learn. (Leppmann (1970), 279)

Although Winckelmann’s subject was the art of Greece, this wise advice applies especially to the presentation of the human figure in Egyptian art. Ordered with a different visual vocabulary, Egyptian art must be approached with a mode of perception grounded in an understanding of the intention that underlies it.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The most important and basic reference to representation in Egyptian art is certainly Schäfer (1986). Smith (1946) is also valuable. Baines (2007) contains new research and insights.

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## CHAPTER 20

# Portraiture

*Betsy M. Bryan*

Because portraiture has been such a frequently discussed topic, the following chapter provides an overview of portraiture as it has been treated in Egyptological literature since the second half of the nineteenth century. The primary dictionary definition of “portrait” refers to an artistic likeness: “A drawing or painting of a person, often mounted and framed for display, esp. one of the face or head and shoulders. Also, an engraving, photograph, etc., in a similar style. A statue (full size or as a bust), an effigy.” A now rare secondary meaning from the Oxford English Dictionary is more commonly what is meant by “representation”: “Something which represents, typifies, or resembles the object described or implied; a type; a likeness” (Backlund 2010; Oxford University Press 2013). Both of these definitions are apparent in the portraiture scholarship of ancient Egypt. In the following discussion, a variety of ways in which the term “portrait” has been defined or discussed are presented from a historicized perspective with the aim of contextualizing portraiture scholarship within the fields of Egyptology and Egyptian art history. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the contemporary positioning of portraiture as a topic within Egyptian art.

### **Approaches to and Definitions of the “Portrait” in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: Appreciation and Growth of Collections**

The most literate and engaging discrete English-language discussion of portraiture in the late nineteenth century is that of Amelia Edwards from her volume, *Pharaohs Fellahs and Explorers*, in which she provided three impetuses for the popularity of the topic:

[W]e are always eagerly curious to know what our forefathers were like, how they lived, and wherewithal they were clothed. This is why the art of portraiture touches us more nearly

than any other. It brings us literally face to face with those who lived and loved and died “in the old time before us”... But the interest of portraiture is not merely historical; it is also ethnographical. The sculptures of Assyria and Babylon, of Susa and Persepolis, record racial characteristics, and enable us to trace the origin, and sometimes to track the migrations, of peoples and tribes. Lastly, there is the human interest ... his very name may be unknown to us; but if the ancient artist was a master of his craft, and if he has handed down to us a face instinct with power or furrowed by thought, that face arrests us and holds us like the face of a living man. (Edwards (1891), 113–115)

In these brief observations Edwards captured the three primary emphases of most discussions of portraits up to the contemporary period: descriptive analysis; physiognomy and race; and individual likeness and its interpretation.

## Descriptive Analysis

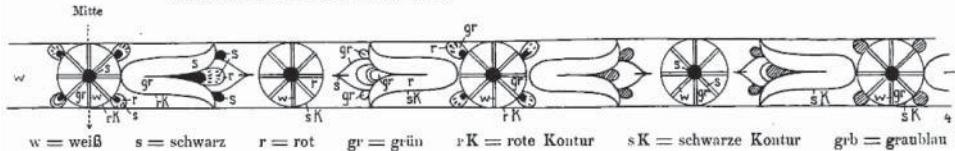
In the 1890s Schäfer summarized the lives and historical activities of Taharqa and Psamtik I as he described the poses, clothing, hairstyles, and attributes of both kings’ portraits, comparing them with other known examples in the manner of the great formalist art historian, Heinrich Wölfflin (Schäfer 1895a, 1895b; Bachmann 1996) (see Figure 23.2 in Lacovara, this volume). The sculptural details not only expanded the documentation of Egyptian and Nubian culture, but they satisfied Edwards’ and her fellow museum visitors’ desire to make the historical past more accessible (Edwards (1891), 113–114; Anonymous 1898). Scholarly interest in portraiture was strongly increased in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth, as the cemeteries of Giza were excavated and published by such great Egyptologists as Borchardt, Reisner, and Schiaparelli. The sample for comparison according to formalist technique, however, was small before this time. Even the date of the Khafre statues, found by Mariette as early as 1860, was an issue for debate. Until further statue finds at Giza demonstrated their Dynasty 4 placement, Borchardt argued against Daressy, based on eye shapes, for a later date than Khafre’s reign (Mariette (1860), 19–20; Daressy 1900; Reisner 1911; Hölscher 1912).

Debate such as that surrounding the date of the Khafre statues was the result both of insufficient comparative material and of a dearth of published and researched Egyptian art collections. Few illustrated catalogs of major museum holdings were available before 1920; Leiden was one exception (Boeser 1915). But the British Museum’s first efforts in the direction of systematic publishing addressed the hieroglyphic texts on the monuments rather than the objects themselves (Scott-Moncrieff 1911–1922). Yet Borchardt, like Schäfer and others, did recognize the need to categorize statuary—including servant figures which he sorted by their métiers (Borchardt 1897)—and began his statuary volumes for the newly inaugurated *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire*, the first volume of which appeared in 1911 (Borchardt 1911a; Borchardt 1937). Borchardt’s catalog descriptions were accompanied by numerous photographic plates and line drawings of attribute details (Figure 20.1). The need for such documentation is seen in more than one portrait discussion where the lack of classified styles and iconographic elements led to difficulties even for some of the best Egyptologists of the day. Petrie, for example, identified an alabaster figure of a ruler with bird plumage as Menkaure, suggesting it developed from the Khafre statue but without identifying any

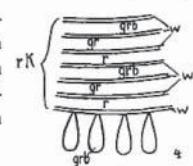
**4. Bemalte Statue der  sitzend.** — Weißer Kalkstein. — Höhe: Abb. 1,18 m. — Mit Nr. 3 zusammengefunden. **Dyn. 4.**

**HALTUNG.** Geradeausblickend. Die Arme sind von dem Obergewand verhüllt. Die Unterarme liegen unter der Brust dicht am Körper an, der r. über dem l. Nur die r. Hand sieht aus dem Gewand heraus und liegt mit der Handfläche unter der l. Brust. Die aneinander geschlossenen Beine sind gleichfalls völlig vom Obergewand umhüllt, nur die Füße sind frei. — Sitz und Rückenpfeiler wie bei Nr. 3, nur endet das Fußbrett vorn gerade. Von der l. Seite des Sitzes ist ein nach vorn breiter werdendes Stück abgearbeitet.

**TRACHT.** Dichte, gescheitelte, bis auf die Schultern herabfallende Strähnenperücke, welche die Ohren völlig bedeckt. Die Haarsträhnen sind wie nebenstehend skizziert detailliert. Auf der Stirn tritt das eigne, fast bis an die Augenbrauen gehende, gleichfalls gescheitelte Haar unter der Perücke hervor. Um den Kopf ein weißes Band mit aufgemaltem, farbigem Rosetten- und Kelchornament:



Um den Hals ein breites farbiges Halsband wie nebenstehend. Unter dem, den ganzen Körper einhüllenden Obergewand, das von den Schultern aus vorn mit spitzem Ausschnitt zusammengekommen ist, sehen die weißen Tragbänder (r. K.) des üblichen, von der Taille bis fast zu den Knöcheln reichenden, engen Frauengewandes hervor.



**FARBEN.** Haare und Augen wie bei Nr. 3. Hautfarbe gelb, Lippen desgleichen. Nägel weiß. Gewänder, Sitz und Rückenpfeiler<sup>1)</sup> weiß. Oberseite, Vordersseite und die Streifen rechts am Fußbrett schwarz.

**Figure 20.1** Partial entry in (Borchardt (1911a) CG 4) for statue of Nofret from Meidum, reign of Snefru. He includes line-drawn details from the statue that accompanied the photographs.

specific parallels and making no precise facial analysis (Petrie 1923). Now it is known that the body of the statue is in Manchester and identifies Thutmose III, and the head had been reworked before Petrie purchased it (Hardwick and Riggs 2010).

Even the museum specialist was affected by the difficulty of comparing details: Capart relayed a narrative concerning the famous relief depiction of Queen Tiye from Theban tomb 47 of Userhet that he purchased for the Brussels royal museum (Capart 1908). It had been placed on sale as a Ptolemaic relief of a king, and, although Daressy had suggested a Dynasty 18 date without providing art historical reasoning, Capart reached the correct identification and date only by a chance viewing of a photograph of the intact wall of Userhet's tomb in the *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 4 (Carter 1903). Whether the dealer's given date and description were deliberately intended to mask the actual provenance is unknown, but such inaccuracies in sale catalogs continued to be common into the second half of the twentieth century. (The tomb robbers had also elaborately inked signs across the surface in order to obscure its provenance.)

The descriptive analyses of royal statues—and portraits—were fortified in the first decade of the twentieth century by the numerous finds at Giza, including those of Harvard's Reisner expedition. Reisner's eventual publication of the statuary from the Menkaure complex, which he compared to the Khafre statuary, produced a detailed

study of the output of what he identified as two sculptors—A and B (see further below) (Reisner 1911, 1915, 1931). Building upon earlier descriptive works, Reisner identified statue types, poses, gestures, and attributes and linked them to dates and portrait development. His *Mycerinus* volume, devoted as it was to contextualizing architecture, archaeology, and sculpture, might better be seen in relation to works of the mid twentieth century (Reisner 1931).

## Physiognomy and Race

An aspect of the scholarly topic of portraiture that is far less prominent currently than in the last two centuries is its linkage to the race and origins of the ancient Egyptians and their neighbors. Here the meaning of “portrait” is often that of a characterization, as in the second definition cited at the beginning of the chapter. In the late nineteenth century ethnic identification was a major motivation for studying human depictions, as we hear from Edwards (Edwards (1891), 113–115). The question of the origins of the Egyptians, including whether a group of conquerors from outside the Nile Valley formed the early ruling elite class was an active one, and debate about it was associated with other disciplines such as physical anthropology and Biblical studies. Petrie’s strong interest in skull types and ethnicity is well known and is best seen in his article “The Races of Early Egypt” (Petrie 1901) in which he specifically links portraits to the identification of race. Petrie applied what he considered to be purely scientific methods to his classification of the races, using skull measurements and sequence dates to propose where and when specific racial types entered Egypt. He classified the portrait groups largely according to nose shapes, such as “acquiline” or “straight-bridged,” the latter defining his Dynastic Race type whom he believed entered Egypt through the Wadi Hammamat. His well-known terracotta collection of racial types, held in the Petrie Museum, was displayed briefly in 2011 and represents what Petrie believed were Greek artists’ renderings of the racial types of the late period world (Anonymous 2011).

Like Petrie, Hamy considered the measurement of skull shapes to be a means of identifying ethnic groups, and his discussions largely debated only minor points already proposed by the former (Hamy 1907). On the other hand, the scholar Sayce was more interested in identifying the portrait types of the ethnic groups found in the Old Testament, of which the Egyptians were one (Sayce 1891). For Sayce, for example, the sphinxes and other statues of Amenemhet III, reused, reinscribed, and left at Tanis, were the original works of the Hyksos rulers whose links to the story of Joseph were important to him. Sayce’s description is as follows:

The face is thickly bearded, the hair being curly, with a pigtail hanging behind the head. The nose is broad and sub-aquiline, the cheek-bones high, the forehead square and knitted, the lips prominent and expressive of intense determination [He is describing CG 392–394 (Borchardt 1925)]. The kindly urbanity so characteristic of the Egyptian face in statuary is replaced by an expression of sternness and vigor. Among the ethnological types presented by the Egyptian sculptures there is only one which can be compared with that of the Hyksos monuments. This is the type peculiar to the inhabitants of North-eastern Syria, in the district called Nahrina by the Egyptians and Aram-Naharaim in the Old Testament. (Sayce (1891), 95–96)

For Sayce, as for Petrie, the earliest dynastic portraits depict rulers of different ethnic background than the general populace. He tracked their origin to the Arabian peninsula and recognized them as the Puntites, whom he noted were shown to be most similar to Egyptians on the Deir el-Bahri reliefs (Sayce (1891), 91–94).

The interest in ethnic types may also be found in the earlier work of scholars such as Rowe and Schäfer. Rowe published Ramesses III-era faience tiles in Boston depicting foreigners as portraits of Dynasty 20, although he recognized that they were not individualized likenesses (Rowe 1908; Museum of Fine Arts Boston, MFA 03.1566-03.1577; 03.1578a-i). “[W]e have racial portraits, seen through Egyptian convention to be sure, but none the less true in detail of character or dress. The Philistine, with his feather cap of the type worn by Lykians and Mykenaeans, his reddish skin and small pointed beard, the smooth upper lip, noted as a feature of the northern and eastern Mediterranean peoples,... is well worthy of study” (Rowe (1908), 48). Schäfer, too, sought ethnic origins in portraits he discussed: he identified the Kushite rulers as negroid largely based on their appearance on Assyrian relief sculpture and suggested that their features on Egyptian and Nubian monuments were type-models to varying degrees (Schäfer 1895a). The impact of ethnographic scholarly currents is even more apparent in his discussion of the kneeling portrait of Psamtik I on the British Museum sarcophagus. After rejecting a Libyan origin for the king and noting that the name Psamtik was borne by a variety of people in the era, he concluded that the facial features on the portrait were Nubian and proposed that Psamtik was a cousin to Tanuatamun (Schäfer (1895b), 119–120). Later works by Schäfer abandon ethnographic discussion and rather expand an emphasis on the typical and idealized (Schäfer (1986), 18).

## Individual Likeness and Its Interpretation

In the late nineteenth century, Amelia Edwards and Schäfer strongly differed on the degree to which Egyptian sculptural depictions were true likenesses. Edwards' aim of conveying the religious and funerary meaning of portraiture led her to argue, somewhat impressionistically, that it was an entirely faithful reproduction of reality: “In order that the ka should feel at home in his new body of stone or wood, the statue was bound to be as exactly like the man as the sculptor's art could make it. If the man was ugly, the statue must also be ugly” (Edwards (1891), 132). Although he agreed with Edwards that the funerary cult was a primary mover in the creation and sustenance of portrait sculpture, in contrast, Schäfer, the lifelong student of Egyptian art, could rely upon his remarkable knowledge of both monuments and the western copies of them. He recognized that the *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien's* (Lepsius 1849–1859) published drawings of Sudanese monuments were idealized to a European standard, and he also recognized that the sculptured faces of Taharqa were variable types, shown sometimes as Egyptian, in his view, and other times as Kushite (Schäfer 1895b, 1936, (1986), 17) (see Figure 23.2 in Lacovara, this volume). In his *Principles of Ancient Art*, Schäfer's aim of defining Egyptian art's pre-Greek character overshadowed discussion of individual portraiture, although he stressed that the artists were entirely capable of producing it: “[E]xcellent portraits were made over and over again from the Old Kingdom on. Their

quality and number show that the Egyptians possessed the ability to observe and reproduce personal human traits, an ability which reached its high point in the royal portraits of the twelfth dynasty" (Schäfer (1986), 17). His overall approach is historical, suggesting that "each period developed and then cultivated its own ideal of beauty" (Schäfer 1895a, (1986), 17)

Borchardt's earlier statuary discussions emphasized categorization and types, but his interest in portrait likeness is increasingly apparent in his discussion, most memorably, of the wooden head of Queen Tiye (Figure 20.2) and the limestone bust of Nefertiti and in his presentations of the Khafre statues in Hölscher's publication of the pyramid complex (Borchardt 1911b, 1923; Hölscher 1912). In his summation of the face of



**Figure 20.2** Portrait of Queen Tiye with a Crown of Two Feathers, New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, ca. 1355 BC, yew wood, silver, gold, and faience inlays, Medinet el-Gurob, total height 22.5 cm. © bpk / Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, SMB / Sandra Steiß.

Tiye, Borchardt's judgment of portraiture appears to acknowledge royal portrait types in a manner not greatly different from Schäfer's:

Soweit ist das Gesicht zwar sicher auch als Porträt beabsichtigt, aber doch nicht so individuell, daß man nicht dieselben Eigenheiten bei anderen guten Köpfen derselben Zeit nachweisen könnte. Die untere Hälfte des Gesichtes aber ist durchaus individuell, sie gibt ein nur wenig stilisiertes Porträt. [The face is clearly intended as a portrait, but yet not so individualized that one could not point to the same features in other fine heads of the same time period. The lower half of the face, however, is so thoroughly individualized that there is only a minimum of a stylized portrait.] (Borchardt (1911), 4)

Borchardt's expansion of his topic, however, explored the hairstyle and iconography of the head and then compared its artistry to works of the Amarna era. He concluded that the sculptor's proficiency in executing the major facial features resulted in its masterwork status, regardless of its being a true portrait or diminutive in size.

Man sieht, wie jeder Schnitt mehr Leben in das Holz gebracht hat, man erwartet, daß die lebendigen Züge sich bewegen. Und dennoch ist nichts Kleinliches in dem Kopfe, keine Zufälligkeit, die den Gesamteindruck hätte stören können, ist slavisch wiedergegeben. Der Kopf ist trotz seiner lebendigen Porträtwahrheit nur in den großen Zügen gegeben, er ist trotz seiner Kleinheit "groß gesehen. [One can see how every cut has put more life into the wood; one expects features so lifelike to move. And yet there are no fussy details in this head, nothing incidental that might have upset the overall impression that has been slavishly rendered. Despite its truth to life as a portrait, the head has been presented in its main features; despite its smallness, it has been "seen in the large".] (Borchardt (1911b), 12)

Borchardt's methodology is art historical and largely free of personality judgment. His observed details were, however, later questioned by Schäfer who, assisted by an early use of X-rays in a museum, pointed out the distinctions between the (now better understood) earlier bag-wig headdress with dual uraei and earrings and the overlying round wig covered by blue glass beads and topped by a taller headdress. Most recently, Wildung submitted the head to CAT-scan technology and published photos showing how the head originally looked and confirmed Borchardt's suggestion that the later wig was topped by a modius, horn, disk, and plumes (Schäfer 1932; Wildung 1995, 2001)

Reisner's approach to the royal portraiture of Khafre and Menkaure resulted from his careful study of the hundreds of royal statue heads (and bodies) found at Giza through the first two decades of the twentieth century. Because he had found the famous greywacke triads of Menkaure with Hathor and several nome deities, he was able to compare the facial details and concluded that two primary sculptors were responsible for the statuary of both Menkaure and his predecessor Khafre (Reisner (1931), 108–129). For Reisner, Sculptor A was the heir of the earlier more severe style derived from the archaic era and was characterized by strongly carved facial modeling tending toward ideal types. The famous anorthosite gneiss Khafre statue represents this category (Egyptian Museum Cairo, CG 14), as do Figures 20.3 and 20.4. Sculptor B produced more gentle and realistically modeled features. The large Egyptian alabaster seated figure of Menkaure in



**Figure 20.3** Face of King Khafre, Old Kingdom, Dynasty 4, reign of Khafre, Giza, Egypt. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 21.351.

the Museum of Fine Arts Boston is an example of this artist's work (see Figure 27.4 in Gänssicke, this volume). It is interesting to note that Reisner's general categories persist in scholarly description up to today, despite having been refined by Smith and others (Smith (1949), 33–44; Anonymous (1999), 252–276, cat. nos. 56–70).

Turning to the interpretive side of portrait sculpture between 1890 and 1920, it has already been noted that Schäfer recognized facial expressions that carried individual personality traits in a few instances, such as depictions of the Dynasty 12 kings and the Amarna royal family (Schäfer 1936). This was based on his recognition that these portrait statues were highly individualized and, as he did even in his earlier work, Schäfer culturally contextualized their meaning:

The tremendous collapse at the end of this period, and the reconstruction under the great rulers of the Middle Kingdom, enriched Egyptian literature with a series of works which meditate deeply upon the contradictions in human life and were long looked to as models of language and presentation. There can be no doubt that a series of portrait heads of kings that are serious, even melancholy, and yet show an intensely active spirit, faces that are “at once full of pride and sorrow, pain and strength” were the products of the same experience. (Schäfer (1986), 28, quoting Wolters 1924)



**Figure 20.4** Face of Menkaure, Old Kingdom, Dynasty 4, reign of Menkaure, Giza, Egypt. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 11.1738. Photograph courtesy of Betsy Bryan.

It may not be surprising to note that these same Middle Kingdom royal sculptures continue to evoke such description and linkages to history, literature, and political events (Evers 1929; Hayes 1946–1947; Aldred 1970; Assmann 1996).

A very different type of characterization appears in Sayce's descriptions of Egyptian portraits in which he sought to explain who these ancient peoples were, both externally and internally:

One of the most striking relics of the past in the museum of Cairo is a wooden figure known as the Sheikh el-Beled, or Headman of the Village. It represents a well-to-do Egyptian of the lower middle class walking over his fields. An expression of quiet contentment and satisfaction rests upon his face, and his corpulent limbs show that he was accustomed to good living. The figure is exceedingly life-like, and is evidently a very accurate portrait of the individual in whose tomb it was found. It is as old as the Fifth or Sixth Dynasty, when Egyptian art had not as yet stiffened into that conventional form with which the museums of Europe have made us familiar. (Sayce (1891), 89) (Figure 20.5)

For Sayce, this was a rare portrait of a brachycephalic (i.e., short-headed) Egyptian representing a lower race in need of domination by foreigners with a mesocephalic or dolichocephalic (moderate or long) skull type:

The lower classes belonged to a different and a lower race. The civilisation which they possessed had been given to them by an alien race which held them in subjection, and compelled them to execute the monumental works which have made the name of Egypt famous throughout the world. In the course of time, however, the two races became completely amalgamated, and the dolichocephalic type more and more superseded the brachycephalic. (Sayce (1891), 90)



**Figure 20.5** Statue of Sheikh el-Beled Representing Ka-aper, Old Kingdom, Dynasty 5, Saqqara, Egyptian Museum Cairo, CG 34. © 2014. Photograph: Scala, Florence.

He saw in the Hyksos rulers (whom he took to be represented by the statuary of Amenemhet III from Tanis) (see quotation above) and the Ramesside kings these mixed ethnic types:

Ramses II, the Pharaoh of the Oppression, has features which declare his mixed origin ... It was the subjects of the Pharaohs, the scribes and the peasantry, and not the Pharaohs themselves, to whom the Israelite had to look for the essential characteristics of the Egyptian race .... The Egyptian could not govern himself; the head of the state needed to be possessed of other qualities than those which distinguished the denizen of the Nile. (Sayce (1891), 99)

A counter current to the interest in portraits as types that conveyed personality so common to the German language scholars appears in the publications of contemporary English speakers. Although Reisner and his successor William Stevenson Smith were keenly aware of the architectural and religious context of royal portraiture, their interpretive skills were applied to the behavior of the artisans and not that of their subjects. They largely reduced their discussions of Old Kingdom royal portraits to style and iconography and sought to identify the specific rulers' likenesses and then to associate them with the work of specific artists. Even when recognizing that highly realistic portraits were among the Dynasty 4 material, for example, Hemiunu's statue



**Figure 20.6** Bust of Ankhaf, Old Kingdom, Dynasty 4, reign of Khafre, Giza. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA, USA / Harvard University—Museum of Fine Arts Expedition / The Bridgeman Art Library.

(see Figure 11.2, Hartwig this volume) and relief and Ankhkaf's bust (Figure 20.6) it was the sculptor's approach that characterized Smith's description of Hemiunu:

The modeling of the head and torso are of unprecedented realism . . . Pains have been taken to give the face a lifelike aspect. The full throat and sharp jutting chin, as well as the beak-like nose, seem to indicate sharply personal characteristics. (Smith (1949), 22)

Smith's interpretation of Reisner's overall summary of Sculptors A and B encapsulates the approach of both men:

These he has designated as the works of Sculptor A and Sculptor B. In the first he would see 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," and in the second a sculptor who applies a softer modeling to his surfaces, and who is essentially a realist, striving for exact portraiture . . . The arrangement of the single figures and the composition of the groups show a culmination of experiment resulting in the ideal type for the representation of kingly majesty. (Smith (1949), 35–36)

H.R. Hall wrote brief descriptions of British Museum statues that sought to identify and describe the figures without additional interpretation (Hall 1929, 1930). The museums

of Europe and America grew in holdings exponentially during the first decades of the twentieth century, and, as a result, the bodies of material to be described, studied, and dated expanded greatly and enabled the large volumes, such as Reisner's (1931), Evers' (1929), Smith's (1949), and others to appear. By 1929, Hall did not feel the need, in the years after Evers' great opus on Middle Kingdom sculpture appeared even to describe the facial characteristic of Senwosret III: "No. 36298 (Pl. xxx) of the British Museum is a small statuette of grey slate representing king Senwosret III. It is not inscribed, but the portrait is evident, though battered about the nose and mouth. The eyes, a characteristic feature of the king's face, are well preserved. (Cf. the series in Evers, *Staat aus dem Stein*, Pls. 78 ff.)" (Hall 1929). The formal descriptive approach used in these works continued to influence publication of portraiture until the last quarter of the twentieth century.

## Twentieth-Century Portraiture Scholarship and the Formalist Methodologies

During the twentieth century, Egyptian formalist portrait analysis exhibited several trends under the influence of the predominantly Germanic art historical movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from Winckelmann and Wolfflin to Riegl to Sedlmayr to Panofsky. A large number of scholars continued, like Schäfer, to identify both the external and internal forms of a portrait and recognized types that portrayed the idealized ruler, the "good god," for each ancient time period, with the faces of nobles and gods fashioned after them (Evers (1929), II, 124; Scharff 1937; Schäfer 1936; Arnold 1996; Bachmann 1996). For these writers, truly natural representations were limited to a few brief examples with their own special historical or religious motivations, as in mid to late Dynasty 12, the Amarna period, and the Late Period (Scharff (1937), 180) (Figure 20.7, here called Senuseret). Alexander Scharff summarized his view of portraiture invoking his predecessors:

As Schäfer once showed, in a paper on portraiture, the Egyptian sculptors in general never advanced beyond a portrait which might be that of anyone of the period. The heads of the Old Kingdom have a certain uniformity of appearance; it is possible to make subdivisions for the principal dynasties (3rd–6th), and thus to work out a style of portraiture conditioned by period, but no more; and the same is true of the other main periods, the Middle Kingdom, the New Empire, and the late epoch. This fact is in agreement with my previous remark on how plastic art began. For an Egyptian, the way led from the outside inwards, and the anonymity of the artist was associated with a corresponding anonymity in the personage depicted. (Scharff (1937), 178–179)

Even current views of portraiture frequently express notions similar to this view, the primary notion being that the portrait was more than a realistic physical reproduction, and its function as the perfect vessel of the spiritual individual was primary (Assmann (1991), 138–168, 1996; Junge 1995; Laboury 2010b).

Other scholars in the structural tradition took the facial characteristics of royal statues more seriously as depictions of physical appearance. For example, William Hayes,



**Figure 20.7** Granodiorite statue of Senusret [Senwosret] III wearing nemes, Middle Kingdom, Dynasty 12, ca. 1850 BC, Temple of Mentuhotep, Lower South Court, height 122 cm. British Museum EA 686. © The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved.

describing portraits of several Dynasty 12 rulers from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, asserted that the family relationship of the kings was apparent in the sculptures:

[W]e should expect and do, in fact, find considerable resemblance in the faces of the series.... The most striking feature that they have in common is the strong bony structure of the faces, especially the high, prominent cheekbones and heavy brows. The ears are consistently huge—a marked family characteristic. The eyes tend to be heavy-lidded and pouchy, the mouths full, protruding, and sullen.” (Hayes (1946–1947), 119; and see, for example, Figure 20.7)

This characterization of the family’s facial appearance was less applicable to Senwosret I than to Senwosret III, but Hayes, like other structuralists, preferred to see the dictate of the statue’s subject rather than acknowledge the existence of specific artists’ portrait types.

Se’n-Wosret’s [I’s] strong, square-cut jaw and fine, well-shaped nose are shown to advantage in two heads, carved in relief, from the walls of his mortuary temple. There is a quality of youthful vigor in all the known portraits of this king which it would be unfair to attribute entirely to his choice of artists. (Hayes (1946–1947), 123)

These scholars bore the mark of the developing structural movements, and numerous later authors continued to represent refinements of such methodologies. Aldred, for example, accepted discrete portrait types for each Dynasty 12 ruler, but he argued that the variation in likenesses reflected the product of a number of artists working from an official model created by a chief sculptor using plaster casts (Aldred (1970), 39–40; see also Vandier 1958).

Vandersleyen has alternatively rejected the notion of ideal portraits and defended the view that actual physical characteristics are embodied in royal portraits and deliberately repeated in depictions of the same ruler:

Les sculpteurs égyptiens respectaient pourtant les traits caractérisques de leur modèles avec fidélité, dans une constante volonté d'objectivité ... [N]ous disposons ici des mêmes indices que dans les portraits romains: la récurrence des traits caractéristiques quand nous avons la chance de disposer d'une série d'images d'un pharaon; les détails "qui font vrai" et dont les plus déterminants sont peut-être la bouche et le menton. La région buccale constitue un des indices les plus sûrs d'identification des têtes royales, surtout aux époques généralement "sans barbe", comme la 12e dynastie et l'époque amarnienne, où le profil de la bouche et du menton apparaît le mieux. (Vandersleyen (1975), 7)

To demonstrate his point, Vandersleyen also argued in a number of articles against the existence of ideal types and rather notes that the variety of Amarna sculptures of royal family shows specific variations in just the features he mentioned, that is, the mouths and chins, such that it is possible to identify with certainty each person (Vandersleyen (1975), 14–27; 1997). An interest in clarifying specific facial features also characterized discussions in the 1970s and 1980s by Romano (1976) and Lindblad (1984).

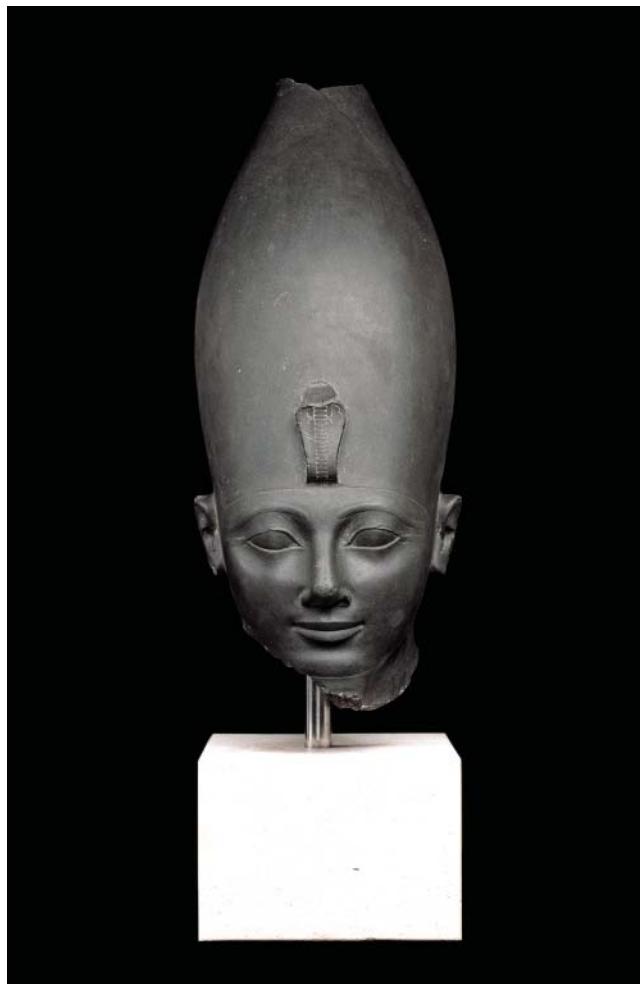
Other art historians have sought to limit their analysis to visual aspects, identifying the techniques and contributions of the artists as much as their subjects. Within this group are also those whose methodologies derived from positivist and formalist applications to archaeology (Reisner 1931; Roeder 1947; Smith 1949; Bothmer 1954, 1990). Relative dating through the seriation of features, as in Petrie's sequence dating system (Petrie 1901, 1921), was Reisner's and Smith's method for assigning the portraits of the Old Kingdom by means of statue poses, attributes, and physical features. These approaches were in earlier periods designed to describe and define, but to limit interpretation as to intent, in practice however, description was by nature subjective and often resulted in various identifications of the same uninscribed portrait heads (Anonymous (1999), 274–275, 316, cat. nos. 70 and 101).

## Current Trends in Portrait Analysis

In the most recent decades an emphasis has been placed on fully describing and contextualizing portrait statuary as part of the analysis. Scholars who represent this type of approach, make use of style and iconography in order to isolate and date significant

groups of portraits (Russmann 1974, 1995; Tefnin 1979; Davies 1981; Arnold 1996; Fay 1996; Eaton-Krauss 1998; Sourouzian 2005, 2007). Sourouzian has particularly focused attention on fragmentary statue remains lying in storerooms and on sites and has succeeded, quite remarkably, in joining and recreating monuments that can now be more properly interpreted. Some of these same scholars have also accompanied the description and context of portrait statues with architectural setting, iconological interpretation, and inscriptional data to provide a definition of specific statues' functional meaning (Tefnin 1991, 1992; Bryan 1992; Johnson 1994; Russmann 1995; Laboury 1998). These approaches may owe something to the profound contributions of Henry Fischer who particularly pointed to the interrelationship of art and hieroglyphic writing and the fact that statue iconography functioned to communicate, together with inscriptions, meaning beyond the separate elements (Fischer 1986, 1997). Yet the representations themselves remain the focus of these scholars' works, the notion of portraiture operating as part of the means of identifying and contextualizing the statues. All of these authors recognize royal portraits as types in some manner, perhaps with physical attributes inspired by the subject or by a revered predecessor (Davies 1981; Fay 1988; Laboury 2010b). Individualization of royal faces is observed to have waxed and waned over pharaonic eras, being generally more pronounced at the onset of dynamic and developing kingship, for example, Dynasties 11–12, 18, 25, and 26. This underscores its existence as "one" of the attributes that identify the ruler, along with the iconographic attributes—an aspect that can be said to have characterized royal portraiture as early as the late Predynastic (Hendrickx and Eyckerman 2012). Frequently in the last twenty years, scholars have also identified portrait features, known to identify a specific ruler, recarved on the face of an earlier statue (Sourouzian 1989). Although this phenomenon may be termed "usurpation" it is just as often considered to combine the divine powers of both rulers in a new image without necessarily demanding a malicious intent (Lorand 2011). In a similar manner, Laboury, as part of a painstaking visual analysis, interpreted the changing physiognomy of Thutmose III's portraits over thirty-five years as a reflection of political and historical ideology—particularly concluding that the latest faces of the king were deliberately styled upon his grandfather Thutmose I in order to set him as the premier heir of the Thutmoside line (Laboury 1998) (Figure 20.8).

Another approach to portraiture is represented by scholars who identify art historical study more emphatically as a cultural expression conveying messages that are paralleled in literature and history (Davis 1989; Assmann (1991), 138–168; 1996). The pursuit of portraiture in Assmann's recent studies emphasizes the individualizing sculptures of early Dynasty 4 nobles as if their artistic fidelities represented real people who desired a recognizable vessel to contain his or her spirit in the afterlife—in other words, as a surrogate for the mummy. Yet he generally rejected contemporary royal portraits, save one of Menkaure, as parallel individualized likenesses; rather they are identified as self-presentations of the power and divinity of the kingship (Assmann (1996), 63–64). Later individualizations, such as those in Dynasty 12, are seen as deliberate attempts to portray an "inner personality" (Assmann (1996), 72–76). He summarized a comparison



**Figure 20.8** Head of Thutmose III, New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, ca. 1490 BC, green siltstone, possibly from Karnak, height 60.5 cm × width 19 cm × depth 31 cm. British Museum EA 986. © The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved.

between the bust of Ankhkaf (Figure 20.6) and the Louvre quartzite face of Senwosret III as follows:

It is the specific expressiveness of the one, and the unexpressive “neutrality,” the zero expression of the other, that makes all the difference. Both display realism. The early realism we had called a “magic realism,” born from concern for the preservation of the bodily surface-structure. The later realism might be termed “expressive realism,” born from concern for the visualization of inward personality or depth structure. Expressiveness, with regard to the facial features of Sesosstris [Senwosret] III as they are displayed in the Louvre fragment, can only refer to inward qualities and attitudes, to an inner personality. It is customary to

compare these heads to a well-known piece of literature, in fact one of the great classics in ancient Egypt, the “Instructions of King Amenemhet I,” where bitterness, disillusionment and solitude are communicated verbally. (Assmann (1996), 76)

Junge brought a different cultural notion to the discussion of portraiture when he proposed that “perfection” or “beauty,” *nfrw*, was a primary esthetic of Egyptian portraiture and “dass die Kunstwerke erst durch ihre ‘Schönheit’ erkennen lassen, dass ihr Dargestelltes wahrhaft jener Welt des idealen Seins angehört, der Begriffe und göttliche Wesen angehören” [that it is only through their “beauty” that works of art make known that what they present truly belongs to that world of ideal being where concepts and divine beings belong] (Junge (1990), 23).

There are difficulties with both of these approaches when viewed from the literature published by the scholars referred to immediately before them: Eaton-Krauss and Sourouzian, for example, have properly brought to light the types, styles, and iconographies of Archaic era private and royal statuary and have demonstrated that there are both royal portrait styles and types as early as Dynasty 2 and that private statuary emulated the royal portrait—just as was generally the case later (Eaton-Krauss 1998; Sourouzian 1999). They also demonstrated that the use of attributes and specific regalia typified the private sculpture of the first three dynasties and was thus prominently self-thematizing. The description that Assmann provides of the Dynasty 12 sculpture is a restatement of observations made about Senwosret III by Schäfer seventy-five years earlier. The fact that it has been repeated through decades of Egyptological scholarship attests to modern western judgment of art but does not bring the evidence to us from ancient Egypt of what either the subject or the maker of Senwosret III’s portraits intended. Nor can Junge’s assertion that *nfrw* “beauty” was the aim of a portrait be verified from the ancient testimony. Although texts frequently referred to the beauty of the god, apparently referring to a perfection, the term was not used in descriptions of sculpture as an indication of the aesthetic. In Dynasty 18 it was most frequently used to evoke a solar quality—brightness, whiteness: in describing a colossal statue of Amenhotep III, Amenhotep son of Hapu’s inscription says that “its beauty brightened the pylon” (*hd.n nfrw f bhn.t*) (Helck (1955–1958), 1823; Posener 1975). On another statue Amenhotep son of Hapu rather described the quartzite sculptures that he brought to Karnak for Amenhotep III as *twt.wt n hm.f m hmw.t rh.t* “statues of his majesty in expert workmanship,” literally “knowledgeable workmanship” (Helck (1955–1958), 1833). Applied to kings, the word *twt*, meaning “likeness,” may have carried with it an implied notion of the earthly representative of the god embodied in the royal portrait, which was enhanced by the carving of the most experienced sculptors (Ockinga 1984). It should be noted that Amenhotep son of Hapu’s allusion to the knowledgeable expertise is equally found in the famous early Middle Kingdom stela of Irtisen, who particularly boasts of his ritual and technical knowledge (Barta 1970).

At this point in time the topic of facial portraiture is less central to art historical discussions than in the past, and this is probably the result of broadening research areas. For those whose primary discipline is art and material culture, the royal portrait face is now understood to have been but one possible element used in ancient Egypt to convey a likeness. Yet, for some others, the sculpture appears to communicate the cultural traits

that we identify in texts. No doubt the field of portrait study will be enriched by the continuing dialectic.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The Guide to Further Reading for the chapter on “Sculpture” by Hartwig covers this topic quite well. However, for those interested in overviews of “portraiture” a few works not discussed in the chapter can be suggested. Claude Vandersleyen (1982) wrote the entry in the *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, “Porträt” that attempts to list the known works identifying rulers’ portraits with accompanying bibliography. Two exhibition catalogs are representative of the roles of structuralism and connoisseurship in maintaining interest in portraits. William Kelly Simpson’s small catalog (1977) examined a number of heads in private collections using the techniques of descriptive analysis to consider their proper contexts. Donald Spanel (1988) mounted an exhibition in the late 1980s that summarized views of portraiture at the time. For those interested in relief portraiture, the volumes by Karol Myśliwiec (1976, 1988) are highly useful. The value of iconographic analysis is particularly illustrated in both volumes, with Myśliwiec identifying his methods of dating using details of royal regalia, such as shapes of uraei, ear tabs, and so forth. Other important discussions on portraiture are Bryan 1987 and Polz 1995. Essential bibliographies are Laboury 2006 and 2010a.

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## PART IV

# Interconnections with the Larger World

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## CHAPTER 21

# Egyptian Connections with the Larger World

*Greece and Rome*

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*Barbara Mendoza*

## Overview

The ancient Greeks and Romans had a very long history of contact with the ancient Egyptians, and borrowed from and, at times, simultaneously influenced their artistic motifs, styles, and material culture. This intercultural exchange spans approximately 3,300 years in the Aegean/Greek cultures (ca. 3000 BCE to 300 CE) and approximately 600 years for the Roman culture (first century BCE to fifth century CE). The boundaries of cultural influence were not clearly defined during the latter half of the first millennium BCE, as the admixture of various cultures came into play, resulting in a distinctly multicultural artistic and material culture that is known as “Greco-Roman.” Whether by waging war, exchanging gifts, sponsoring trade, or making dynastic marriages, these mechanisms clearly show the establishment of international connections at this time. This chapter outlines the visual and material evidence, mechanisms, and extent of exchange between these three powerful ancient cultures from the time of Egypt’s inception to its absorption into the Islamic world.

The ancient Egyptian civilization was once believed to have developed in isolation. The language, art, and material remains were unlike any in the neighboring regions of the Near East or the Mediterranean. Egypt’s relative geographic isolation aided the development of its civilization and art. However, there is much evidence of indirect and direct exchange with its neighbors to the north. Indirect trade or exchange between Egyptians and the Aegean cultures is made through trade with merchants and travelers along the eastern Mediterranean coast; direct exchange follows Egypt’s direct contact with the Aegean and Greece. The early civilizations of the Aegean—from the Cyclades, Crete, and mainland Greece—were contemporary with Egypt during the third and second millennium BCE. Archaic and Classical Greece existed alongside Egypt in the first millennium BCE, and, of course, Hellenistic Greece, Republican and Imperial Rome were coeval with the Greco-Roman period of Egypt. Each culture contributed to Egyptian art

in different ways, and, likewise, contact with ancient Egypt contributed to the development of Aegean, Greek, and Roman art in varying degrees.

## Egypt and the Aegean Islands

Contact between the ancient Aegean region (Crete, Thera, and the Cycladic Islands) and Egypt took place primarily in the form of indirect trade. The large Mediterranean island of Crete was inhabited by a major seafaring culture that traveled and traded throughout the eastern Mediterranean region in such areas as Anatolia, the Levant, and Egypt. The earliest evidence of trade with Egypt dates to at least 2600 BCE, coinciding with the Old Kingdom period/Early Minoan IIA period (ca. 2600 BCE). Trade may have even occurred earlier, in the Predynastic and Early Dynastic Periods, if the Egyptian finds that excavated on Crete arrived around the time of their manufacture in Egypt, ca. 3000 BCE (Lambrou-Phillipson (1990), 33). These prehistoric Greek societies were periodically in contact with Egypt, trading commodities and artistic motifs.

The earliest evidence of trade appears in the form of raw and finished Egyptian materials found on Crete. Raw materials, such as hippopotamus ivory and semiprecious stones, as well as finished products indicate some contact with ancient Egypt, probably through indirect trade. Some of these finished objects include: (1) faience amulets and small objects; (2) fine, Predynastic/Early Dynastic stone vessels found at Knossos; and (3) a diorite *pyxis* found in an Early Minoan II/Middle Minoan II context at Agia Triada (Lambrou-Phillipson (1990), 51). As the Minoans were known travelers, it is likely that these ancient mariners brought these objects back with them from their trading expeditions.

The pattern of indirect trade continued into the First Intermediate Period to early Middle Kingdom corresponding to the Late Prepalatial period in Crete. Egypt continued to supply raw materials to Crete, and they imported Egyptian stone and faience scarabs. This exposure to Egyptian scarabs prompted the manufacture of Minoan scarabs, and also influenced the development of an early form of Cretan writing. Furthermore, the Minoans began to produce their own form of small stone vessels, imitating their Egyptian counterparts.

### *Vessels/pottery*

The Middle Kingdom of Egypt, corresponding with the Middle Minoan Period, was a time when contact with Crete had been well established, though it still most likely took place through indirect mechanisms. Fine polychrome pottery and sherds from Crete have been excavated in Middle Kingdom contexts from such sites as Qubbet el-Hawa, Kahun, el-Harageh, Abydos, el-Lisht, and Tell el-Dab'a, as well as other sites in the Near East. These pieces are very distinctive and date from Middle Minoan IA to Middle Minoan IIB. The Middle Minoan IA vase with attached flowers from Qubbet el-Hawa may have arrived earlier in the Early Minoan III phase (Figure 21.1) (Kemp and Merrillees (1980), 215–219). Petrie excavated sherds at Kahun within a Dynasty 12 rubbish heap, dating to the reign of Senwosret II. These were Middle Minoan IB-II



**Figure 21.1** Qubbet el-Hawa vase. Adapted from Kemp and Merrillees (1980), 215–219.

fragments (Kemp and Merrillees (1980), 57–102. Egyptian-made imitation crinkly-rim bowls dating to Middle Minoan IB-II were excavated from tomb 326 at el-Harageh in a Dynasty 12 context (Kemp and Merrillees (1980), 6–23), indicating an Egyptian taste for Minoan wares. Two well-preserved Minoan jugs complete the MMII corpus and were found in tombs dating to Dynasty 13: the Abydos jug from Tomb 416 (Kemp and Merrillees (1980), pl. 13) and the el-Lisht vase from Tomb 879 (Kemp and Merrillees (1980), pl. 29).

Another important Middle Minoan discovery is the 153 silver cups and bowls that were found beneath the Middle Kingdom Temple of Montu at Tod in Upper Egypt. The cache, which is known as the Tod Treasure, exhibits design characteristics that are decidedly Minoan in appearance. While their cultural origin is debated, these were probably Minoan vessels of Middle Minoan IB or II date (Higgins (1997), fig. 31; Hood (1978), 153–154). Although they were found in a New Kingdom context, the silver chests in which they were buried date to the reign of Amenemhet II in early Dynasty 12, and may have been heirlooms or a cache of objects collected for their raw material (Kemp and Merrillees (1980), 290–296).

Middle Minoan III pieces have been found in Second Intermediate Period/New Kingdom contexts at Tell el-Dab'a (Bietak 1995). A post-Kamares Ware sherd (MM IIIA/B) was found in a Dynasty 13 unstratified deposit in Area H/I at Dab'a, within a Ramesside Period tree-pit. More Middle Minoan III sherds from an *amphoriskos* (small jug) were found within the Dynasty 18 citadel in Area H/II, in a secondary context. Painted on these pieces were portions of a flying gallop scene with a leopard chasing an ungulate (Bietak (1996), 70). This motif has parallels in Middle Cycladic ware. Middle Minoan

sherds do not appear outside of the palace area at Tell el-Dab'a. Prior to the finds at Tell el-Dab'a, not a single Cretan import had been found in Egypt in a stratified context or a closed deposit; thus, the finds at Dab'a are important to the study of Aegean contact with ancient Egypt at this time.

Late Minoan vases and fragments have been found at Tell el-Dab'a as well as other areas of Egypt, such as Abydos, Aniba, Sedment, and Medinet el-Ghurob. Tell el-Dab'a has significant finds that date to Late Minoan IA. Two *rhyta* were found within the Dynasty 18 citadel in Area H/II, but not in their original context. Two funnel-shaped, red-polished wares, one full-scale and one small-scale, were locally made, which indicates a Minoan presence within the citadel (Bietak (1996), 70). Examples with a Late Minoan IB date appear in Tomb 328 at Abydos with finds of Thutmose III date (Kemp and Merrillees (1980), 232–233). An LM IB alabastron from Aniba was found in tomb SA 17 of early Dynasty 18 date, although the painting style has parallels from the Middle Minoan IIIB/Late Minoan IA transition phase (Kemp and Merrillees (1980), 242–244). An LM IB baggy alabastron from Tomb 137 from Sedment (early Dynasty 18) has its closest parallels coming from Mochlos (Kemp and Merrillees (1980) 228–230). And an LM IB (or Late Helladic IIA) alabastron, excavated from Tomb 245 at Medinet el-Ghurob, dates to early Dynasty 18, although Kemp and Merrillees (1980, 242) noted it had an “ambiguous Aegean provenance.” Late Minoan II examples have not been found in any Egyptian context, and only one Late Minoan III imitation stirrup jar has been found, in Tomb 59 at Sedment (Kemp and Merrillees (1980), 245–249). At this time, Mycenaean stirrup jars were prevalent at sites with Aegean contact, primarily in Upper Egypt (Kelder 2010).

The study of Minoan ceramics in Egypt is significant, not only for understanding how these pieces were used and valued, but also for determining the clear presence of intercultural exchange between the Minoans or Aegeans (Mycenaeans) and Egypt in the second millennium BCE. The Early and Middle Minoan pieces appear to have been indirect imports, acquired by trade, probably for their innovative vase shapes or possibly the commodities that they contained. Based on the stratified evidence at Tell el-Dab'a, it appears that the peoples of the Aegean Sea may have traversed Egyptian soil as early as Dynasty 18 in the New Kingdom. The distinctively Minoan funnel-shaped *rhyta* were locally made at Tell el-Dab'a as well as the Minoan painted murals, also located at this site.

## *Painting*

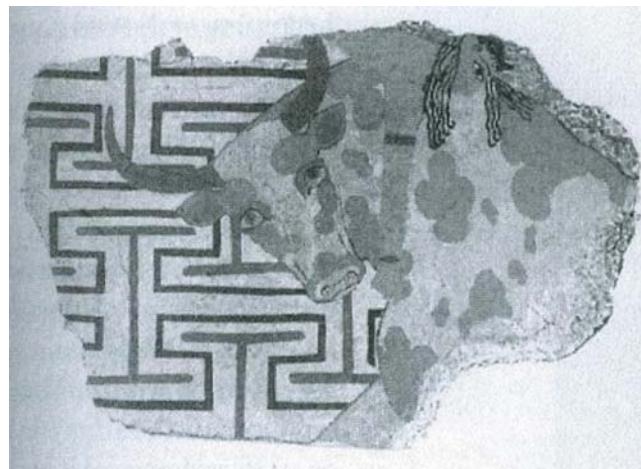
Compelling evidence for a Minoan presence in ancient Egypt is found in the murals from three areas at Tell el-Dab'a excavated by Bietak in 1992 and later (Bietak (1992), 26–28; (1995), 19–28). Bietak originally assigned some of these murals to the late Hyksos period (Dynasty 13), since there was a strong Hyksos presence there at that time (Bietak (1992), 28). After much study, however, he believes that they all come from an early Dynasty 18 level, which corresponds to Late Minoan IA (Bietak (1995), 19). These examples are part of a larger corpus of Minoan-style frescos painted by itinerant Minoan artists who worked in other areas of the Near East, such as Alalakh, Mari, and El Kabri in the Levant, as well as some sites in Mesopotamia (Niemeier (1991), 188–201).

It may be that the Egyptian royal house of the Ramessides at Avaris (Tell el-Dab'a) wanted to emulate the grandeur of the wall paintings seen at the Palace of Knossos by Egyptian emissaries.

The first fragments of Minoan frescos were found at an area called 'Ezbet Helmi from a palatial building in Area H/I at Dab'a (Bietak (1992), 26–28). It was a typical Egyptian palace building with parallels at Deir el-Ballas. The fragments were found in dumps of debris above a Hyksos layer and show Minoan motifs resembling frescos found at Knossos. The fragments on the north side contain scenes of bulls and bull leapers, a maze pattern, and a half-rosette triglyph frieze. The fragments on the east wall exhibited scenes including bearded male figures, a possible priest figure, acrobats, landscapes, hunting scenes, and leopards and lions in flying gallop chasing deer or other ungulates. Stucco reliefs were also found here. Additional fresco and stucco reliefs were found at 'Ezbet Helmi in Area H/II-III in the 1994 excavation season (Bietak 1995). The frescos were not specific to one particular Minoan scene and could not be identified, but the stucco reliefs have parallels with the "Prince of Lilies" painting from Knossos (Hood (1978), fig. 57). In Area H/III, fresco fragments were located in the early Dynasty 18 level containing images of a partial winged griffin, a mistress-of-animals motif, and figures that parallel the blue-scalped youths from wall paintings at Thera (Hood (1978), fig. 50B; Higgins (1997), fig. 109). These fragments date to the Late Minoan IA period.

It is important to note that the only place in the Aegean that produced frescos with bull leaping scenes during the period in which the Dab'a frescos were painted is the Palace of Knossos (Hood (1978), fig. 44; Shaw 1995). Thus, it is reasonable to suspect that this Minoan site is the source of inspiration for the Dab'a frescos. However, there are distinct differences that raise questions about the cultural origin of the Dab'a frescos. Upon analysis, Shaw determined that the artists at Dab'a were familiar with Minoan artistic conventions. For example, the wall paintings were produced using the fresco technique, rather than tempera. In fact, this is the first time that the use of the fresco technique is attested in Egypt. Additionally, there is a Minoan character to the theme of the Dab'a murals, and the style of the armlets, bracelets, and short kilts is commonly found in Minoan depictions. What is un-Minoan about the Dab'a murals is the choice of yellow, rather than white, for the skin of the bull leaper, the selection of scale (Minoan artists tended to paint in miniature scale) and the style of the figures which is stiff and awkward in comparison to the fluidity of Minoan pictorial representations (Shaw (1995), 120). Another un-Minoan feature is the frontal face of the Dab'a bull (Figure 21.2), which does not often appear on Minoan frescos until after the date of the Dab'a frescos. The earliest Minoan period examples are from a sealing from Sklavokampos (Crete) of Late Minoan IB date, and from one of the Vaphaio cups (from mainland Greece) of the same date (Higgins (1997), fig. 179). The face depicted in frontal view first appears as early as the Old Kingdom, and is used primarily for deities, such as Hathor or Bes (Dasen 1993). Thus, the representation of figures in frontal view may be said to be an Egyptian convention.

Another corpus in which to investigate a Minoan presence in Egypt are the representations of Aegeans in ancient Egyptian tomb paintings. According to Wachsmann (1987, 30), there are only six Egyptian tombs that portray Aegeans making tribute to a tomb owner. These tombs date to the pre-Amarna period and are located in Thebes.



**Figure 21.2** Fresco fragment of a bull and bull leaper from Tell el-Dab'a. Adapted from Bietak (1995), 19–28.

Later Theban tombs depict representations of “Aegean-like” emissaries, but Wachsmann shows in his work that they illustrate either non-Aegean (Syrian, Palestinian, Anatolian) or hybrid figures (e.g., Minoans with another of these ethnic groups). The six tombs were decorated prior to the reign of Amenhotep III. The tombs are: Senmut (TT 71), Puyemre (TT 39), Intef (TT 155), Useramun (TT 131), Menkheperreseneb (TT 86), and Rekhmire (TT 100), and most date to the reign of Thutmose III. The earliest of these tombs was the tomb of Senmut, and after the tomb of Rekhmire an actual representation of an Aegean figure would not be recorded again pictorially. However, although Aegean objects continue to be depicted in Theban tombs, they are carried by Syrian emissaries or hybrid figures.

According to Wachsmann (1987, 105), Egyptian artists ceased to represent Aegeans in their tomb paintings soon after ca. 1450 BCE. The fall of autonomous Minoan culture appears to date to just before 1450 BCE (the end of Late Minoan IB). The Late Minoan IB–Late Minoan II transition took place late in Thutmose III’s reign. Therefore, the last recorded Aegean visit is synchronic with the end of the Minoan culture on Crete. The Egyptians most likely stopped representing Aegeans in foreign tribute scenes because the direct contact with them ceased when the Minoan civilization fell. Contact was not revived by the Mycenaeans after they consolidated their hold on Crete and the other Aegean islands. Thus, according to Wachsmann (1987, 105, 128), the Aegeans painted in Theban tombs after 1450 BCE should be identified as Minoans.

Frescos of actual Minoans carrying wares ceased after the reign of Amenhotep II (1425–1400 BCE) (Hornung et al. (2006), 492) because of the destruction of the Minoan culture. But though the Minoans disappear in the pictorial record, their vessels continue to be represented in Theban tombs. As contact with the Minoans waned, indirect contact was established with the Mycenaeans, which began during the reign of Amenhotep III (1390–1353 BCE), as evidenced by the archaeological record in both the Aegean and Egypt.

## Motifs

A transference of motifs occurred between Crete and Egypt, which appears as early as the Middle Kingdom in Egypt. For example, a heart-shaped spiral-form design that Shaw argues originated in Minoan embroidered or woven patterned textiles is painted on the ceiling of the tomb of Hepdjefa at Assiut, dating to the reign of Senwosret I (Shaw (1970), 25–30). The Middle Minoan IA vase with attached flowers from Qubbet el-Hawa also has the same spiral pattern with interlocking designs (Kemp and Merrillees (1980), Abb. 60). The interlocking spiral motif from the Aegean could have provided the impetus for the torsional spirals found on scarabs and painted ceilings that occur in the Middle Kingdom in a heart-shaped spiral form design (Crowley (1989), 109).

The “flying gallop” scene is another Aegean motif that has been found on Minoan exports and paintings in Egypt. Found on the niello-decorated, bronze dagger of Queen Ahhotep (late Second Intermediate Period/early New Kingdom), the flying gallop was a way to depict animals moving quickly. Crowley (1989, 183) believes that the motif probably arrived in Egypt via the Aegean. Prior to the Middle Kingdom, Egyptian painters chose to depict animals in static animal poses and continued with this artistic convention well into the second millennium BCE.

Crete also received figural motifs from the artistic conventions of ancient Egypt. The Sphinx Plaque from the eastern Cretan site of Mallia contains a depiction of an Egyptian sphinx with a tail and an Osiride beard, but the head is purely Minoan (Warren (1995), 2–3). The artisan had to have some knowledge of Egyptian iconography (Immerwahr 1985), and possibly adopted this motif as a symbol of authority. The figure of Taweret, the household goddess of protection who took the form of a hippopotamus, was found on a *rhyton*, also from Mallia (Middle Minoan III–Late Minoan I date) (Baurain and Darcque (1983), 3–73). The Minoans appear to have reconfigured this Egyptian goddess into a Minoan fertility genius who brings water to vegetation and sacred stones (Warren (1995), 3). Other Egyptian motifs, including depictions of squatting apes and crocodiles as well as images of lion hunts, are also found on works from Crete. Lastly, the papyrus plant (the Egyptian symbol of fertility and regeneration) is found on wall paintings in the “House of the Ladies” on the Cretan island of Thera (Marinatos (1951), 109–10, fig. 3–4).

According to Crowley (1989), the reasons for motif transference between Egypt and Crete were compatible symbolism, artistic usefulness, or simply an interest in the subject. In Egypt, the artists seemed to have adopted Minoan motifs for their novelty or for artistic usefulness; whereas in Crete the acceptance of the Egyptian motif depended on whether its symbolism was compatible with their own. The means was through imports, such as statues and statuettes, gold work, jewelry, scarabs, amulets, and textiles that were most likely purveyed by merchants, soldiers, and officials who traveled to these lands.

Contact with the Aegean ceased when the Mycenaean civilization fell into the Greek Dark Age (ca. 1200–900 BCE), a period of cultural decline and migration that is poorly documented. The migratory peoples of the Mediterranean produced little art during the late Bronze Age, while the artistic tradition of ancient Egypt continued unbroken.

## Egypt and Greece: The Late Period

The peoples of mainland Greece emerged as a civilization around 900 BCE and flourished as a society for more than 800 years. While Egyptian art thrived in the New Kingdom and on into the Third Intermediate Period, Greek art was still in its infancy. The Greeks had cultural ties through religion, mythology, language, and art to the Minoans and Mycenaeans, but these earlier cultures lacked any type of monumental art that could build a stronger national identity than in its pre-Greek times. Thus, the Greeks, on having contact with Egyptian art at its maturity, borrowed and reinterpreted Egyptian art. Increased contact with Egypt through trade and later colonization would expose Greek travelers and artists to new forms of representation in sculpture, architecture, painting, and ceramics.

By the eighth century BCE, Greek artists began producing small images of the human figure in stone. However, it was contact with the Egyptians in the late seventh century BCE that seems to have been the impetus for Greek sculptors to develop new types of monumental works. The late seventh century BCE corresponds roughly to the Late Period of ancient Egypt, that is, Dynasties 25 (Kushite) and 26 (Saitic). The Egyptian artistic practice at this time was “archaism,” or the harkening back to traditional Old, Middle, and New Kingdom artistic conventions to legitimize the rule of these Kushite and Saite kings.

The Greeks began living in the Egyptian Delta after Psamtik I in Dynasty 26 hired eastern Greeks (from Caria and Ionia) as mercenaries to fight the Assyrians in the Delta. Greek mercenaries continued to play an important role in Psamtik II's campaign against Nubia in 593 BCE. Greek soldiers carved inscriptions on the colossi of the Ramesses II temple at Abu Simbel but may have gone as far south as Napata in ancient Nubia. In appreciation for their service, Psamtik I granted the Greeks land in the Delta to colonize: Naukratis in the western Delta and Daphnae (Defeneh) in the eastern Delta (see Boardman (1999), 111–141). Memphis also became a haven for Greek immigrants. From Dynasties 26–30, trading was the Greeks' main occupation.

Naukratis, originally an Egyptian settlement, was occupied and settled by eastern Greeks from Miletos, Samos, and the Ionian Islands. They erected temples to Aphrodite, Hera, Apollo, and the Dioscuri, and there is also a scarab factory here dating to the early sixth century BCE. All Greek trade with Egypt passed through Naukratis. The Greeks traded silver, wine, and olive oil, and Egypt exported grain, linen, and papyrus. W.M.F. Petrie found this ancient site at the end of the nineteenth century CE, where he uncovered Greek pottery sherds, Greek statuettes, scarab seals, weights, coins, stamped amphora handles, and jewelry (Leonard 1997). Excavations at Daphnae also yielded contemporary Greek finds.

### *Sculpture*

Some scholars believe that Egypt's role in the development of Greek art was minimal. However, two main arguments exist that point to Egyptian artistic influence on Archaic Period three-dimensional sculpture of the sixth century BCE: (1) the sudden appearance

of large-size Archaic Greek *kouroi* (beardless youth figures) of marked technical skill with no native precursors suggests non-indigenous prototypes; and (2) the visible similarities between monumental Egyptian and Greek sculpture which probably are not accidental. Outlined below are several points of convergence.

- The striding male figure is the oldest type of Egyptian standing figure. Coming from a strong artistic tradition, this Egyptian statue type most likely influenced the Archaic *kouros* figure (Richter 1970). The striding male figure is frontal, symmetrically arranged around a central axis, and positioned in a striding stance, with both arms down at the sides, often holding objects in its fists known as emblematic staves, for example, the *ka* statues of Ranofer (Aldred (1980), figs. 56–57).
- The calf-bearer figure type, or its variant the antelope bearer, is a common type found in Egyptian tomb painting (Mekhitarian (1954), 87) and in sculpture (e.g. the Naukratis “hunter,” Levin (1964), pl. 8, fig. 13). This figure type may have been a prototype for the Thasos Ram Bearer (Richter (1970), figs. 84–86) and the Acropolis Calf Bearer (the *Moschophoros*) (Richter (1970), 75), though it was also a common motif in the Near East and Minoan Crete.
- The group statue type, such as the figures of “Dermys and Kittylos” of Boeotia (ca. 615–590 BCE) has several features indicating Egyptian influence (Richter (1970), 48–49, figs. 76–77). The male figures’ stance with inner legs advanced, the outside arms extended downward, the hairstyle reminiscent of the nemes headdress, and the niche-like back pillar are similar to Old Kingdom Egyptian pair statues (for example, the pair statue of Mem-sabu and his wife (Aldred (1980), fig. 64)). The arm of the figure on the left with his arm around the shoulder of the other may be, and niche-like back pillar are a similar features found in the Old Kingdom statues on the pair statue of Hetepheres and Meresankh, if it is not an arm of a deity.
- The use of stone for monumental sculpture. Hard stone Egyptian statuary probably influenced the Greeks because of its size and durability. Previously, Greek art was limited to small clay and bronze sculptures because of the unstable state of internal affairs. No life-sized or monumental statuary existed in Greece before the sixth century BCE.
- The use of colossal statuary. Colossal statuary was a sculpture type that occurred most notably during the New Kingdom. Greeks undoubtedly saw the colossal statues of Ramesses II at Kom el-Hisn (near Naukratis), Tanis, and Memphis. Greek soldiers saw the colossal figures of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel in Upper Egypt. The Egyptian colossi clearly influenced Greek sculptors as they carved the colossal Kouros of Samos and Colossus of Rhodes.

Other points of interest when looking at possible Egyptian influence in the rendering of Greek statuary are: (1) the use of the inlaid eye, unusual in Greece prior to contact with Egypt; (2) the inclusion of the emblematic stave held by *kouroi* figures; and (3) the placement of sculpture to line processional ways between and in cult temples such as on the island of Delos where marble lions line the processional way.

Diodorus Siculus wrote that two sculptors, Theodorus and Telekles, constructed the Pythian Apollo in two parts, one sculpting at Ephesus and the other at Samos (Diodoros I. 98). This account illustrates the method that Theodorus and Telekles learned while

traveling in Egypt in the sixth century BCE, that is, they may have been preparing a hollow cast bronze statue, much like the bronze Egyptian priest figure from Samos (below) and the “Brother of Pashas” bronze figure in the Louvre Museum (Mendoza (2008), pl. 44).

### *Kushite sculpture (Dynasty 25)*

In body type and pose, Kushite sculpture (ca. 750–657 BCE) emulated Old Kingdom sculptural forms. In sculpture, the Dynasty 25 (Kushite) body type was muscular with broad shoulders, narrow waist, slender hips, and thick muscular legs with large hands and feet. This body type exhibits a technique known as “bipartition,” which is a sculptural technique that emphasizes the vertical median line of the torso (Bothmer (1960), xxxv). This is a simple technique to indicate the chest, which consists of a shallow depression from pectoral muscles to the naval. The usual pose is a striding male figure with the left leg advanced, the left arm bent with the left fist up, and the right arm held straight at the side with the fist parallel to the ground. Specific physiognomic features reflect the Kushite way of art. The head is very large and rounded, sitting atop a thick, columnar neck. The face also has full, rounded cheeks. The facial features are sharply incised and include large eyes, wide, rounded nostrils, full lips, and a pronounced line that extends from the outer edge of the nostrils to the corners of the mouth (naso-labial fold). Examples of this type of sculpture are the statues of Mentuemhat from Thebes (Russmann and Finn (1989), fig. 78; and see Figure 4.4, Josephson, this volume) and the Egyptian priest figure from Samos Island (Figure 21.3). An example of a kouros that exhibits the bipartite physique is the Leukios kouros colossal figure from Samos (Richter (1970), 86–87, figs. 258–260).

Another feature of Kushite sculpture is the adoption of the twenty-one and a quarter square grid for the rendering of two- and three-dimensional figures. The  $21\frac{1}{4}$  grid is found in the Dynasty 25 tombs of Mentuemhat and Amenirdis I. This late modification of the Egyptian canon may have influenced the method of rendering Archaic Greek kouroi, as the proportions are similar.

### *Saite sculpture (Dynasty 26)*

The Saite Dynasty (664–525 BCE) saw innovations in the rendering of the male figure. By the time of Psamtik II, the Egyptian torso began to be divided into three sections. This technique known as “tripartition,” emphasizes the three horizontal areas of the torso: the chest, the rib cage, and the upper abdomen, divided by the lower chest and arch of the rib cage (Bothmer (1960), xxxv). The Saite sculptors were interested in surface modeling, a technique which may have influenced the sculptors of the Greek kouroi. Egyptian examples of this feature appear on Nakht-hor-heb (Levin (1964), pl. 7, fig. 9) and Psamtik-seneb (Levin (1964), pl. 7, fig. 10) of Dynasty 26. There is a Middle Kingdom precedent for the tripartite form (Evers (1929), I, pl. 44). It appears that the tripartite technique was used by the Greeks to a lesser extent than the bipartite, though there are some examples, such as the Munich kouros (Richter (1970), fig. 391). In addition, the Saite torso appears to be thinner and more delicately rendered than the Kushite torso, for example, the Egyptian priest figure from Ephesus (Mendoza (2008), pl. 54).



**Figure 21.3** Bronze Egyptian priest from Samos—Samos B 1312. © DAI-Athen-Samos 6047 / Gösta Hellner.

Another feature that is characteristic of Saite sculpture is the addition of a smile on the countenance. According to Levin (1964), Egyptian sculptors began rendering this smile around 660 BCE. Often referred to as the “Saite smile,” it is characterized by a deep, sickle-shaped curve along the bottom of the lower lip that turns upward (Bothmer (1960), pl. 50). The smile figures prominently in Dynasty 26; however, there are precedents as early as the Middle Kingdom (Russmann and Finn (1989), fig. 18). The smile is more definite on Dynasty 18 statuary. The mouth tends to be upturned on the statues of Thutmose III, the late sculpture of Amenhotep II, and the early sculpture of Amenhotep III. The convention of the up-curved mouth continued into Dynasty 19. Much of this statuary was in the Delta, and may offer a precedent for the perceived smile on Dynasty 26 statuary. Much discussion has focused on whether the Saite smile influenced the Archaic kouros figure, as many of these figures exhibit a similar smile, known as the “Archaic smile.” An argument may be made for this notion by considering what appears to be a transitional example, that is, the small, alabaster kouros figure from Sais

(Edgar (1903), Egyptian Museum, Cairo CG 27425), which is rendered with a smile and clenched fists. Other small alabaster kouroi figures exist at Naukratis. If not a contemporary influence, the Archaic smile may also be traced to early seventh-century BCE examples of Daedalic sculpture, which come from Crete. Therefore, if the Archaic smile was not a direct influence on the Saite smile, or a simultaneous development belonging to an international style, then it may be said that it was indirectly influenced by Egyptian sculpture via Crete sometime in the late second millennium BCE.

## *Architecture*

At the end of the Late Period the Greek influence in ancient Egyptian society was obvious. Wealthy Greek settlements with Greek names dotted the landscape of the Delta, though many did not survive. The small town of Hermopolis Magna (Ashmunein) yielded a few examples of bicultural architecture from this time period. The cemetery associated with this town is the site of Tuna el-Gebel in Upper Egypt with some wealthier Pre-Macedonian Period burials. A well-known funerary temple-tomb located here is the Tomb of Petosiris who was a High Priest of Thoth (Lefebvre 1924). This tomb dates to ca. 340 BCE, just before the time of Alexander's conquest of Egypt, and contained the burials of three generations of Petosiris' family. It is an excellent example of how both Egyptian and Greek architectural traditions were used to create a new cultural identity. The superstructure is built like a small rectangular Egyptian temple, made of sandstone and limestone, equipped with a half-pillared pronaos, screen walls, elaborate capitals and a naos (Corbelli (2006), fig. 19). One walks through the gateway and porch to an interior single room, where the burial of Petosiris lies in a deep shaft in the center. The burial and chapel walls were decorated in the Egyptian style, while the exterior chapel and screen walls were decorated in the Greek style. It seems that Petosiris wanted to cover all possible bases to insure his proper burial.

## *Painting*

There are few examples of tomb or wall paintings from the Late Period that combine Egyptian and Greek styles. A noteworthy example is provided by the Tomb of Petosiris that is decorated with so-called daily-life scenes in the pronaos, as is Egyptian tradition (Lefebvre 1924). However, the style of these painted reliefs shows Greek influence. Greek influence can be seen in the background color is light blue, which is unusual for Egyptian tombs; the frontal depiction of Petosiris and his field workers; and the Greek garments and hairstyles worn by the figures. The Egyptian influence appears in scenes on the walls of the pronaos such as berry sorting, carpentry, agriculture (including the famous winnowing scene in Figure 21.4), cattle breeding, and metal working. On both sides of the entrance, Petosiris and family are depicted larger than the workers, in profile, and display hieratic scale. An interior pilaster exhibits a scene of Petosiris playing the ancient Egyptian game of Senet. The naos was decorated with traditional Egyptian funerary scenes depicted in the Egyptian style. One such scene has Petosiris appearing with various divinities; another depicts the funeral of his father, Sishu.



Figure 21.4 Winnowing Scene, Tomb of Petosiris. Lefebvre (1924), pl. XV.

## Egypt and Greece: The Hellenistic Period

When Alexander the Great, a Macedonian Greek (r. 336–323 BCE), took control of Egypt in 332 BCE, his reign cast what some scholars have called a “veneer of Greek (or Hellenistic) culture” over Egypt. Alexander’s empire was far-reaching and extended from the Adriatic Sea to the Punjab, and from Tadzhikistan to Libya. For Egypt, its long-standing cultural and artistic practices withstood a visual makeover from the increasingly powerful society that was built by the Ptolemies, Alexander’s successors in Egypt. The Greeks brought their material culture as well as their political, social, and artistic traditions with them. For Greeks living in Egypt, a cultural change took place that reflected new methods of cultural expression within the existing artistic repertoire. While many objects were imported from the Greek world for Greek consumption, craftsmen and artists from the new Greek capital of Alexandria were producing innovative “Alexandrian” objects, such as Ptolemaic *oinochoai* (a type of Greek vase), small scale grotesque sculptures, Hadra vases, silver vessels, and sardonyx cameos, to name only a few.

Pharaonic Egypt had dealt with foreign rulers in the past, but not to the extent of a seemingly complete subjugation of the country under Greek rule. Previously, foreign rulers had embraced Egyptian culture, leaving Egypt’s cultural identity relatively intact.

However, when the Greeks took control, rather than just living among the Egyptians, the ancient society soon reflected “a split personality” that lasted until the end of Roman rule. Two very strong cultural and artistic traditions existed side by side in the same country: traditional Egyptian culture and Hellenistic Greek culture. Egyptian art continued to be produced by the Egyptians for the Egyptians, while the Greeks continued to represent their gods and themselves in a purely Greek manner using the local medium (diorite or granite) to express their own cultural identity. In some areas, the lines of cultural identity in the royal and private sector of Ptolemaic Egypt became obscured.

## Sculpture

Greek-style ruler portraits and statues were present in all levels of Ptolemaic Egyptian society. We find them in large-scale stone statuary as well as on Ptolemaic oinochoai (Thompson (1973), 78–101, for example pl. XXVI, fig. 75), metalwork, and terracottas. This attests to the power of the Ptolemaic ruler cult, especially at the beginning of the era. The Egyptians also had a tradition of displaying their royal images, particularly in temples. As a result, two main types of royal statuary were manufactured in Egypt at the beginning of the Ptolemaic era: the traditional Egyptian and the traditional Hellenistic.

Traditional Egyptian statues were made of hard stone, employed a back pillar, appeared frontally, and were presented in a variety of Egyptian poses: striding, seated, seated in a Heb-Sed robe, in Osiride form, kneeling, or as a sphinx. The male torso was modeled in either the bipartite or tripartite technique that had developed in the Late Period. The king wore the traditional *nemes* headdress, uraeus, and a *shendit*-kilt. One characteristic of Ptolemaic Egyptian royal statuary is the rendering of an idealized face with a slight smile which can be traced to the royal inscribed sculpture of Dynasties 30 and 31 (Figure 21.5). In most cases, these pieces can only be dated by inscription because they are idealized images. For the most part, Egyptian-style Ptolemaic royal sculpture adhered to the native artistic conventions, specifically to legitimize their rule of Egypt.

Unlike idealized Egyptian-style Ptolemaic royal statuary, the image of the Hellenistic king was based on personal, charismatic leadership. The Greek ruler represented not only his own kingdom but the State as well, and so needed to be easily recognizable to the population. Greek statue forms were very different from their Egyptian counterparts. They include: the bust, the herm, the “ruler as founder,” the “ruler as an equestrian.” In some cases, portraits depict the ruler holding a spear, referring to the military aspect of kingship, or more specifically, the land won by conquest. These primarily marble pieces are free-standing, naturalistic, and not frontal, unlike their Egyptian counterparts. Most notably, they have naturalistic physiognomic characteristics that make them easier to identify and date, especially by using images of rulers on Greek coins as a basis of comparison.

A third type of royal Ptolemaic statuary, which some scholars refer to as “hybrid” or “bicultural,” blends Egyptian and Greek characteristics. Stanwick (2002), who identified sixteen bicultural statues, calls it the “Hellenized” type. This third type is unprecedented in the Egyptian royal image, but in and of itself, is not homogeneous. This corpus displays Egyptian and Greek elements, to varying degrees, including: a Hellenistic hairstyle for the king or queen, figures wearing a diadem, the queen holding a cornucopia (Stanwick



**Figure 21.5** Ptolemaic King, Brooklyn Museum of Fine Art, 37.37E. Source: © Brooklyn Museum photograph.

(2002), fig. 173), the king wearing a crown with a dual looped uraeus, or the queen wearing a crown with a uraeus but without loops. Another feature is the depiction of curly hair under the nemes headdress (Stanwick (2002), fig. 143). There are about sixteen bicultural sculptures that have Greek elements. Presumably these elements were borrowed and utilized to create an image of an Egyptian ruler who was ethnically Greek. Some have a close visual connection to sculptures of both cultures so that some Greek pieces can be positively identified, especially by the arrangement of their locks, in comparison to their fully classical counterparts or coins. Most current scholarship centers on identifying Ptolemaic Greek portraits by the twenty or so inscribed Egyptian-style sculptures known to exist.

The three types of Ptolemaic sculpture were manufactured for different locations and audiences: (1) Greek-style figures from Alexandria, Canopus, and the Fayum regions were located in temples, tombs, and public places; (2) traditional Egyptian-style representations found all over Egypt, particularly in Lower Egypt, were manufactured for Egyptian temples, and indicate that the native Egyptian practice was continued by Ptolemaic rulers; and (3) bicultural figures found in the Hellenistic centers of Alexandria,

Canopus, Medinet Madi, and Thebes (like many of the Greek-style figures) continued to be manufactured throughout the Roman period.

The blending of Egyptian and Greek occurred in the representation of deities as well. The god Osiris received a makeover during the Ptolemaic period with the introduction of Serapis (Hassan (2002), 104–105). Serapis was an underworld Egyptian deity who emerged out of a fusion between Osiris and the Apis Bull of Memphis. He originates in Pharaonic Egypt, but is best known to history in his Hellenized form which evolved in the early Ptolemaic Period. The Ptolemies developed his cult to the point where he became one of the most important deities in the ancient world. The cult of Serapis was introduced by Ptolemy I to unify the heterogeneous society in Alexandria and in other areas of Egypt. In his fully Greco-Roman form, he was a synthesis of various Hellenic and Egyptian deities such as Zeus (sovereignty), Dionysus (fertility), Asklepius (healing), Hades-Pluto (afterlife), Helios (sun god), the Apis Bull (fertility), and Osiris (life after death). By ca. 250 BCE, these multiple aspects underlying Serapis were incorporated into the program at the Serapeum in Memphis. Numerous images of Serapis exist from Hellenistic and Roman times resembling the god Asklepius, with a bushy beard, flowing hair, and three locks that fall vertically over his forehead. He is depicted enthroned, wearing a *chiton* under a *himation*, a fruit basket (*kalathos*) on his head, and holding a libation bowl in his lower right hand (Hassan (2002), 104–105; Pollitt (1986), 279–280).

## Ceramics

The blending of both Egyptian and Greek elements may also be seen in the example of Ptolemaic *oinochoai* (Ashton (2003), fig. 5). These tall, faience vases with narrow necks were manufactured specifically during the time of the early Ptolemies. The ruler cult in Alexandria, set up in the third century BCE, followed in the tradition of the early successors of Alexander's empire. One of the first Ptolemaic festivals was the Arsinoeia, the festival dedicated to Queen Arsinoe II. Epigraphic evidence suggests that *oinochoai* were either gifts by or desirable purchases for citizens or visitors who wanted to express loyalty to the rulers (Thompson (1973), 118). They were standardized objects, mass-manufactured for public use. Egyptian characteristics of these vases include: the medium (Egyptian faience), the inclusion of a personal name, the type of altar (depicted in relief), and the Ptolemaic queen dressed as Isis. Greek elements include: the shape and cult association of the vase, the mention of Agathe Tyche (a Greek deity), the type and attributes of the female figure, the language of the inscription, and the ritual itself. The purpose of this bicultural vase design was to prompt expressions of loyalty from the Greek population, and to draw Egyptian locals to sympathize with the cult. Since the religious beliefs of the Egyptians were disparate and uncongenial to the Greeks and thus a danger to political stability, the answer was fusion. Therefore, the wide distribution of these vessels was an exercise in public relations.

## Painting

A number of ancient sources mention noteworthy Alexandrian painters, though none of their works have survived in Egypt. Alexandrian muralists were credited with inventing

an impressionistic style of painting as well as developing the genre of landscape painting. The impressionistic style of painting can be seen in the royal tomb paintings at Vergina in Macedonia (ca. 336 BCE), such as The Abduction of Persephone by Pluto (Tomb IA) (Pollitt (1986), 193, fig. 204). In contrast, painted murals in Alexandrian cemeteries, such as at Mustafa Pascha and Mustafa Kamal, reflect a blend of Egyptian motifs and Hellenic styles (Venit 2002). These paintings are similar to those found at Tuna el-Gebel (Corbelli (2006), fig. 26) in that they depict Egyptian burial rituals blended with Classical stylistic elements in new motifs.

The mosaic became a popular medium in Ptolemaic Egypt and spread throughout the eastern Mediterranean region. In Alexandria, a pebble mosaic depicting a battle scene surrounded by a border of griffins was executed in the traditional Greek style, and another scene depicted Erotes (Cupid-like figures) engaged in a stag hunt (Pollitt (1986), 130, fig. 136). At Thmuis, the famous stone mosaic of Berenike II is a political allegory and depicts the Ptolemaic queen with large, dark eyes wearing a crown that may represent a *trireme* ship (Ruler of the Seas) (Hassan (2002), 35, 88). Almond-shaped eyes with black cosmetic lines is an Egyptian artistic convention. In their burials and paintings, the Greeks adopted the ancient Egyptian convention of almond-shaped eyes with black cosmetic lines but added eyelashes which gave the faces a bright-eyed appearance. Enlarged eyes became a popular motif in the Greco-Roman era, as well as the use of the mosaic medium. Mosaics continued to be created in the Eastern Mediterranean and Near East through the Byzantine era.

### *Ptolemaic reliefs*

During the Ptolemaic period in Egypt, the exteriors and interiors of the temples that were constructed continued to be decorated in relief, but they took on a very different appearance. In these reliefs, the king makes offerings to his divine ancestors. Royal ancestors were revered as demi-gods, ranking beneath the gods, and the living ruler also represented himself on the divine side of these offering scenes. Since Greek rulers were not considered divine, the Greek dynastic image could only superficially adapt to Egyptian temple representations. The changes in the execution of temple reliefs developed in a very specific way as well. The reliefs during Alexander's time followed the Saite tradition. The early Ptolemaic reliefs were superior to the later Ptolemaic reliefs in that the bodies are better modeled, and less exaggerated and distorted. It is the reliefs of Ptolemy VI that show the beginnings of the lumpiness and doughiness of bodies, and even hieroglyphs, that become the norm for later reliefs. From the time of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II on, the reliefs are visibly distorted and vapid.

### *Architecture*

Along with relief sculpture, the temple form changed in Ptolemaic Egypt and reflected the dual nature of contemporary society. Approximately fifty medium to large temples were constructed in this period (Arnold (1999), 143), and are preserved in varying degrees. These Greco-Roman temples exist throughout Egypt, with some of the most complete

temples located at Aswan, Philae, Elephantine, and Edfu. Their form underwent three phases of development (Arnold (1999), 150). In the earliest phase, from 323 to 180 BCE (Ptolemy I to V), temple building followed the style of the Egyptian Dynasty 30, which is similar in plan to the Tomb of Petosiris. The second phase, from ca. 180 to 80 BCE (Ptolemy VI to IX), reflected a classical style, with Greek elements (discussed below). The architects of the last phase from ca. 90 BCE to 14 CE (Ptolemy X through Augustus), created complex structures with extraordinarily high ceilings and widely placed slender columns that opened up the interior space. Architectural sculpture was highly elaborate and there were a multitude of capital designs. These three phases paralleled contemporary Hellenistic buildings in Alexandria (McKenzie 2008).

The transformation from a Pharaonic Egyptian temple to a Ptolemaic Egyptian temple was simultaneously simple and complex. Most cult temples such as the Temple of Amun-Re at Karnak contained many phases of construction that reflected the building program of a specific pharaoh. However, the Temple of Khonsu at Thebes offers an example of a self-contained cult temple with canonical elements. This temple is fronted by a pylon gateway followed by a colonnaded courtyard, a hypostyle hall, and a barque sanctuary known as the holy-of-holies (Arnold (1999), 25–28, fig. 1). With Ptolemaic temples, the sanctuary was now configured as a *naos*, an open box shrine that housed the divine image. In front of the naos is the pronaos, a wide, colonnaded porch area that replaced the hypostyle hall of earlier Pharaonic temples. The facade of the pronaos is lined with a screen wall similar to that of the funerary temple of Petosiris. Additional features added to the Ptolemaic temple were the *wabet* and the *mammisi* (Snape (1996), 57). The *wabet* is a small chamber near the sanctuary that had its own open court for priests where officials celebrated the New Year. The *mammisi* is a separate building, located within the temple walls, that represented the birth house where the cult deity was born.

It is important to note the increased use of classical elements in typically Egyptian buildings and constructions in Alexandria. The Doric column or Doric engaged column was used in Egyptian chapels, kiosks, and rock-cut tombs of the period, like those at the cemeteries at Mustafa Pasha and Mustafa Kamal (Venit 2002). Canonical Egyptian elements such as the cavetto cornice, the cobra frieze, striding sphinxes, and the winged sun disk embellished Greek buildings in Egypt and abroad. Unprecedented in Egypt was the use of heart-shaped angle pillars for the exterior corners of buildings (Arnold (1999), fig. 103). New column capitals appeared such as a cavetto capital used at Anfushy and a triglyph and metope frieze pattern (with the metopes filled with cartouches) used in a relief at Kom Ombo.

## Egypt and Rome

The transformation of the artistic and cultural landscape in Egypt continued after the death of the last Ptolemaic ruler, Cleopatra VII, in 31 BCE. Greeks and Egyptians continued to live side by side, but now Egypt, as the province “Aegyptus,” was part of the growing Roman Empire. The Roman emperor Augustus took control of Egypt and appointed a Roman prefect to govern the “Hellenized” country. The Greek centers were in Alexandria, Memphis, the Fayum region, and Thebes. Romans, however, only replaced Greeks in high offices and did not settle in Egypt en masse as the Greeks had for the past

three centuries. The population in Alexandria and the Fayum continued to be largely ethnically Greek, but their tastes were for the contemporary Hellenistic style and, soon, the Roman style. The classicizing of the native traditions and the creation of a Greco-Roman artistic tradition did not eradicate traditional Egyptian art and practices but transformed them yet again. Rome promoted new, hybrid deities that all could worship. Burial practices reflected Egyptian, Greek, and Roman customs and new, wholly Roman, stylistic traditions were introduced into the artistic repertoire, always with an eye to the east. Roman art influenced Egyptian art to a degree, and the older Egyptian art continued to influence the Classical world.

## *Sculpture*

Small, locally made terracotta figurines, such as those found at the Roman period Fayum sites of Karanis (Gazda 1983) and Tebtunis, were found in domestic, cemetery, and temple contexts. Their distribution throughout the ancient Mediterranean world suggests that these figurines were widely used, and may have had a protective, religious, or fertility function. Popular subjects include gods such as the child deity Harpocrates in his Hellenistic form and female figures carrying baskets of fruit, worshipping, or playing musical instruments. Terracotta figurines of camels, dogs, and horses were also popular. Trappings on the necks of horses and amulets around the necks of dogs may reflect their votive function in connection with Roman religious festivals (Ellis (1992), fig. 28). These terracotta objects were mold-made in multiple parts, covered in a lime wash, and painted with details in pink, black, and red. Unlike the bronze animal statuettes common in this period, they were probably not used in connection with Egyptian animal cults.

Bronze statuettes of deities were manufactured as early as the late Old Kingdom in Egypt, and reached the height of their popularity with the growth of animal cults in the Late Period. Animals were not worshipped as gods but were considered sacred, earthly manifestations of a particular deity. Bronze statuettes of animals were used as votive offerings, and could be in the form of coffins, or parts of coffins attached to lids. Thousands of bronze votive statuettes of various Egyptian deities were manufactured in the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods and deposited in Egyptian temples and religious sanctuaries by devotees. They were made at temple workshops using the lost-wax technique; the names and prayers of the offerers were inscribed on separate wooden or bronze support bases. In an effort to “keep house,” temple priests placed these statuettes in caches. Some Roman figures show a disturbing juxtaposition of influences, such as the limestone statuette of the Goddess Bastet in Classical dress (Bianchi et al. (1988), cat. 132) or the bronze statue of Horus as Emperor, wearing contemporary garb (Bianchi et al. (1988), cat. 134). Next to the animal-headed figures, anthropomorphic deities, such as Osiris and Isis, also became very popular.

Egyptian deities were “classicized” as well. The Egyptian Nile god, Hapy, was transformed into the popular god Nilus, the Roman personification of the Nile River, which became an important figure to the Romans (Hassan (2002), 122). A tiny marble head fragment from the Roman town of Tebtunis now in the Hearst Museum of Anthropology (PAHMA 6-20349) most likely represents Nilus, depicted with a thin fillet around his head, or possibly the Roman god Jupiter. The goddess Isis, transformed into a new

version of Isis-Aphrodite (Hassan (2002), 75) or Hathor-Aphrodite (Riggs (2005), fig. 30), displays several classical qualities, such as flowing drapery and natural movement. This hybridization is also seen in the figure of Isis Cleopatra who fused a goddess with an historical figure. Cheshire (2007) notes that there is a corpus of syncretized figurines that depict an Aphrodite figure with an Egyptian queen, the latter wearing a vulture cap. Some figures wear a composite vulture cap, sun disk with horns, and plumed feathers that denote divinity.

The fusion of styles can also be seen in Roman Period plaster mummy masks (Hassan (2002), 186–187), which are largely distinct from the idealized cartonnage and gilded masks made for the Ptolemaic elite (Corbelli (2006), figs. 58, 62). The plaster masks may be seen as the final stage of the Egyptian mummy mask tradition and date from the late first century BCE to the third century CE. As a group, they provide evidence for the changing funerary practices of Roman Egypt and exemplify a new Egypto-Roman tradition at its fullest. This includes the Egyptian burial custom of covering the deceased's head to protect it, the conventional coloring of male and female flesh (reddish-brown and yellow, respectively), and the black outlining of the eyes. From Rome come the contemporary hairstyle, dress, and jewelry, and the naturalistic rendering of the facial features. These funerary masks had the same function as traditional mummy masks but they were manufactured differently. The masks were produced from a mold onto which facial features and details were then modeled. These could include wavy locks and a short beard or mustache. Black paint was used to color the hair and outline the eyes; red or yellow paint represented the flesh; and pink, blue, or purple was used for clothing or jewelry. Grimm's typology (1974) provides a valuable resource of provenanced Roman mummy masks categorized by site, which makes it possible to determine regional differences for future studies.

## *Painting*

Perhaps the most recognizable art form from Roman Egypt is the corpus of individualistic mummy portraits that have come from various sites in Egypt, extending from Saqqara to Aswan (Doxiadis 1995). These portraits are known as "Fayum mummy portraits" because the majority of examples come from the Fayum region, but they are part of the Roman painting tradition. Their style is paralleled by examples from Pompeii, 79 CE, and other Roman sites that display a distinct attention to an individual's physical characteristics (known as Roman *verism*). However, the religious tradition in which they were created is largely Egyptian. The earliest portraits, painted on wooden panels layered with gesso, date to the first half of the first century CE (Shore (1972), 9). Most date to the second and third centuries, followed by a decline of production in the fourth century when the practice of mummification was abandoned. The portraits depict the deceased in a youthful state, dressed in the fashion of the times (Doxiadis (1995), 234–235), and gazing to the left or right. With enlarged eyes, elongated oval-shaped faces and symmetrically proportioned features, mummy portraits follow the Egyptian artistic conventions for men and women. They are executed using a variety of styles, ranging from simplified to highly realistic to highly stylized in the Late Antique period. Since the Roman taste for

realistic portraiture is evident, there may be a connection with the Roman cult practice of the imagines, or wax images of familial ancestors placed in the courtyard of a Roman house. Although there is no direct connection with this practice found in Egypt, some scholars suggest a connection with the introduction of encaustic painting, or painting with wax as a medium (Pliny *Natural History*, XXXV). Encaustic painting was introduced to Egypt by Roman artists, and most panel portraits of the region were painted with natural pigments and wax as the binder.

Also noteworthy is the corpus of painted linens and relief stelae that portray the deceased in a traditional Egyptian funerary scene, clad in contemporary Roman clothing (Riggs (2005), figs. 79–82). The individual typically stands between the deities Anubis and Osiris or Isis, all elaborately dressed in intricate patterns. Anubis gazes at the deceased, who gazes frontally with the other deity. Another example shows a young man standing between Isis and Nephthys, who both look in his direction (Riggs (2005), fig. 74), which is a funerary scene commonly found in Pharaonic times. In one scene, a curly-haired man, dressed in a toga is led by Anubis to an awaiting Osiris, with Isis gently touching his back. Striking is the classical rendering of the man, while the deities are depicted in a precise and formal Egyptian style.

The Roman world was influenced by Egyptian culture, as well. The Greek and Roman world had a taste for *paradoxographoi*, or the exotic, and showed this interest in their arts in Italy. Nilotica scenes with exotic qualities were a popular theme in early Hellenistic and Roman art. Egypt was a prime source of strange creatures for the Greeks. Decorative Egyptian artistic motifs included cobras, tigers, leopards, crocodiles, and hippopotami, animals that were not found in Greece. In fact, Pliny (*Natural History* XXXV, 142) reported that Neakles of the third century BCE incorporated crocodiles in his paintings. Furthermore, the large Nilotica mosaic (ca. 80 BCE) from Praeneste, Italy is a whimsical blend of exotic vignettes that shows various locations in Egypt as the Romans may have envisioned them. In these ways, Egyptian motifs highly influenced Roman wall painting.

Lastly, classicized Egyptian motifs continued to fill the tomb walls of Roman period burials in Alexandria and other Roman sites in Egypt. Winged sun disks decorate doorway lintels, and composite deities, such as the Chimaera, were painted in an impressionistic, Hellenistic manner. At Karanis, a mural painting depicts a lion striding in profile; the head is frontal and wears a *nemes* headdress, clearly a reference to the Sphinx figure but it is possibly the deity Tutu (Bothmer (1960), pl. 131) (Plate 9). The animal has uraei emanating from each ankle; a snake-tail and panther-like head emerging from the back of the neck; and a dolphin head emerging from its right shoulder. New motifs continued to be created through the end of the Roman period and used throughout the Roman Empire.

## *Architecture*

With Roman rule, new types of administrative buildings were constructed in the main centers of Egypt, such as Roman baths, triumphal arches, basilicas, and forums (Arnold (1999), 225), and new types of tombs like the rock-cut *triclinium* tomb and the

brick-built tomb (Corbelli (2006), 17–20). The *triclinium* tomb was an offshoot of the Ptolemaic-era multi-chambered *hypogea* tombs at Mustafa Kamal and Mustafa Pascha that displayed the mixed Egyptian and Greek style murals discussed above. Typically, though, the murals of the Roman-era tombs depicted static Egyptian mummification scenes in a heavy, painterly style, such as those found in the Tigrane Tomb (Corbelli (2006), fig. 16). In this tomb, a mummy lies on a Roman bed with garlands; thus, traditional Roman funerary motifs are integrated with a traditional Egyptian funerary compositional scene.

About forty temples were constructed in Egypt under Roman rule (Arnold (1999), 226). Rather than continue the Late Ptolemaic architectural style of heavily embellished exteriors, Roman temples return to the austerity of Pharaonic times. Except for the screen walls, the exterior brick walls are left blank, and thick columns are topped by simple lotus capitals. The familiar inclined pylon was embellished with a torus molding framing the façade, for example, in the Temple of Hathor at Dendera (Arnold (1999), fig. 211). This simple temple type signified the traditional Egyptian-style temple to the Romans, who repeated it over and over in their constructions. Rather than altering the temple, they chose to do what many cultures had done before which was to hearken back to what they perceived as the traditional Egyptian style. In fact, the Romans could be considered the first Egyptophiles, as they were so fascinated with Egyptian culture that they built constructions in a slightly altered Egyptian style. Examples include the first century CE Temple of Isis at Pompeii (Ellis (1992), fig. 38) and the artificial Nile, the Canopus, at Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli in the second century CE (Ellis (1992), fig. 37).

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

For an understanding of the extent of intercultural connections between the Aegean (Minoans/Mycenaeans) and Egypt, see Kemp and Merrillees 1980, Bietak 1995, Crowley 1989, Lambrou-Phillipson 1990. For a discussion on Minoan painters in Egypt, see Bietak 1995 and Shaw 1995. For Late Period art and Egyptian influence on Greek art, see Bothmer 1960, Levin 1964, and Russmann and Finn 1989. For general works on the art of Greco-Roman Egypt, see Bianchi 1988 and Hassan 2002. For funerary arts, see Riggs 2005, Corbelli 2006, and Doxiades 1995. For royal Ptolemaic portraiture see, Stanwick 2002, Ashton 2003, and Thompson 1973. For architecture of the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, see Arnold 2003, McKenzie 2008, and Venit 2002.

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## CHAPTER 22

# Egyptian Connections with the Larger World

*Ancient Near East*

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## Introduction

Ancient Egypt's interaction with contemporary Western Asian cultures was wide-ranging and continuous throughout its history. Even though a multiplicity of states characterized the ancient Near East, Egypt and Mesopotamia witnessed the initial rise of pristine states and the invention of writing with its utilization in the economic and artistic record. Aspects of the art and culture of both permeated the rest of the contemporary Near East in a variety of different ways.

The nature and range of the earliest contact between Egypt and Mesopotamia have been of great interest in the study of the archaeology of the ancient Near East since at least Henri Frankfort (Moorey (1987), 36). Because of the vastness of the topic of ancient Egyptian–Near Eastern interconnections in material culture, the scope of this chapter is limited to those elements of contact that relate more directly to Mesopotamia than to Syria and the Levant, and to matters that pertain more to figural representation and architecture than to other material manifestations of contact.

Egypt's relations with coastal Syria and the Levant are observable in the archaeological record and understood in a historical framework in a much more straightforward manner than those with ancient Mesopotamia. The scholarly literature on Egypt's commercial and political interest in Syria and the Levant and its archaeological manifestations is vast, with an increased interest over the recent years in the impact of the Egyptian Empire on, and its interaction with, the Eastern Mediterranean during the New Kingdom (1550–1069 BCE) (Van De Mieroop 2007). Less frequently and rigorously probed, however, are the fundamental but often elusive interconnections and parallels between Egypt and Mesopotamia, not always explicable by scenarios of traceable diffusion and historical contact, especially in the domain of the visual arts and architecture.

## Predynastic Egypt and Western Asia

Even though there was never a period in which Egypt was culturally cut off from the Near East, the most intense exchanges took place during the state formation phase of Egypt, Nagada II (ca. 3600–3350 BCE) and III (ca. 3350–2950 BCE), roughly contemporary with the Late Uruk (ca. 3500–3100 BCE) and Jemdet Nasr (ca. 3100–2900 BCE) cultures of Mesopotamia (Frankfort (1941), 356; Moorey (1987), 37; Kantor (1992), 15–16); and later again during the Egyptian New Kingdom, coinciding with the period of the great international era of the Late Bronze Age (Feldman (2001), 384, 2005). Egypt and the Levant were already trading partners throughout the late Predynastic (ca. 3500–2950 BCE) and Early Dynastic (ca. 2950–2593 BCE) phases of the Egyptian state as attested by mutually exchanged vessels containing commodities (Frankfort (1924), 104; Kantor (1992), 4, 17–18, 21). Egypt appears to have also relied on the Near East for obtaining lapis lazuli as early as Nagada II (Moorey (1987), 37). Nagada II also marks the beginnings of contacts with Mesopotamia, as certain spouted jugs reminiscent of Mesopotamian types are among the earliest features that provide comparative chronology between the Nagada II and Late Uruk cultures of Egypt and Mesopotamia (Kantor (1952), 249–50).

It is also in the Nagada II–III funerary contexts in Upper Egypt that we encounter examples of the cylinder seal, both direct imports from Elam and Mesopotamia (Boehmer (1974a), 514) and of local Egyptian manufacture, displaying abstract or stylized depictions typical of the Jemdet Nasr style characterizing the glyptic of both the Late Uruk and Jemdet Nasr cultures of Mesopotamia (Frankfort (1941), 355; Boehmer (1974a), 503; Kantor (1992), 15). Other visual elements typical of the same cultures in ancient Mesopotamia on the one hand, and the Susa I–II (ca. 4000–3100 BCE) as well as the Proto-Elamite (Susa III, ca. 3100–2700 BCE) culture in Southwestern Iran on the other, appear on artifacts of prestige and commemoration (Teissier 1987; Smith 1992). Knives made of flint and ivory, such as the Gebel el-Arak knife of Nagada II and the ceremonial palettes of Nagada III, are thought of as the products of a full-time artisanal class in the service of “a clientele interested in possessing such luxury goods” (Trigger et al. (1985), 34).

A “hero” figure dominating two heraldic beasts, a motif attested in Western Asia as early as on Susa I (ca. 4000–3500 BCE) stamp seals, appears on the wall paintings in Tomb 100 at Hierakonpolis from Nagada II (Smith (1992), 235–38). Scholars have often noted how the “priest-king,” a quintessentially Mesopotamian figural type, is shown on the Gebel el-Arak knife (Figure 22.1) in a way in which he is dominated by, rather than dominating, two lions rendered in the Proto-Elamite manner (Petrie (1917), 30; Boehmer (1974b), 31–32; Moorey (1987), 43; Kantor (1992), 15). Other Mesopotamian, Susa II (ca. 3500–3100 BCE), and Proto-Elamite motifs seen in the visual arts of this state formation period of ancient Egypt include the serpo-feline, the rosette framed by intertwined serpents, and the high-prowed boats (Figure 22.2).

Nagada III is also the period in which the initial examples of writing appear on pottery and small tags attached to goods in Tomb U-j at Abydos (Dreyer et al. 1998) and on commemorative monuments consisting of identifying labels. The appearance of proto-cuneiform writing on the Late Uruk (ca. 3500–3100 BCE) tablets and the earliest



**Figure 22.1** The Gebel el-Arak Knife, the knob side showing the “priest-king,” Nagada II. Louvre, Paris, E 11517. Photograph courtesy of Mehmet-Ali Ataç.

attestation of a writing system in Egypt in Nagada III (ca. 3300 BCE) may be thought of as roughly contemporaneous (Wengrow (2011), 99). So any potential seniority on the part of ancient Mesopotamia in the development of writing and its constituting the catalyst in its emergence in ancient Egypt (Trigger et al. (1985), 5) is not so clear any more (Baines (2004), 154, 175).

One of the perennial questions in the study of the architectural interconnections between Mesopotamia and Egypt is whether or not the recessed paneling seen on the exterior, and sometimes in the interior, of the public structures of the Uruk and Jemdet Nasr periods in Mesopotamia inspired the so-called palace facade design on the monumental funerary structures of the Dynasty 1–2 (2950–2593 BCE) kings and the mastabas of the high-ranking bureaucrats in Abydos and Saqqara, respectively (Frankfort (1941), 334). The “palace facade” feature has its two-dimensional counterpart in the *serekh* that contains the Horus name of the king, and is ultimately what underlies the



**Figure 22.2** The Gebel el-Arak Knife, side showing the boats with high prows, Nagada II. Louvre, Paris, E 11517. Photograph courtesy of Mehmet-Ali Ataç.

“false door” of the typical Egyptian tomb, initially seen on the exterior of the Early Dynastic (2950–2545 BCE) mastaba tombs, but ultimately an aspect of the interiors of the funerary offering chapels.

Frankfort (1941: 346–47) questioned the connection between the “palace facade” as an architectural treatment and the idea of a palace, although the occurrence of this feature in what has been identified as a monumental palatial entrance in mud brick excavated in Hierakonpolis dating to the Early Dynastic Period (Kemp (2007), 81–83) may show that the association is not far-fetched. Frankfort, however, did acknowledge the necessity to consider the appearance of the “palace facade” in Egyptian architecture with reference to the Mesopotamian recessed paneling, noting that, in contrast to Mesopotamia, the development of this feature cannot be observed in gradual stages in the archaeological record of Egypt, and that its appearance is sudden. The *serekh*, however, appears on the labels from Tomb U-j, which takes the motif back to Nagada III.

The major questions that have occupied scholars since Frankfort are about the rationale behind the possible Egyptian borrowings of certain Mesopotamian artistic and architectural ideas and motifs as well as about the mechanics of the exchange and its geographic

routes. Some scholars think that this early range of borrowings enabled Egypt to fill some kind of conceptual gap in its cultural development, be it in the domain of religious and philosophical ideas (Moorey 1987), or purely in the adoption of modes of expression without recourse to what those modes conveyed within a specific ancient Mesopotamian idiom (Pittman 1996a). Frankfort (1941: 358) saw this “influence from the east ... as a catalyst. It is curious that there is no evidence of contact on the Mesopotamian side.” It is highly likely, however, that familiarity with one another existed between the intellectuals of both cultures, who would have been responsible for the invention of writing and the codification of royal and other imagery.

As far as the mechanisms of contact are concerned, given the difficult geographic barriers between Egypt and Mesopotamia, many scholars think that, rather than communication directly from center to center, it was through the overlap of their hinterlands in Syria-Levant that Mesopotamia and Egypt could be in touch with each other (Frankfort (1924), 103; Moorey (1987), 40; Pittman (1996a), 12–13; Wengrow (2011), 99). Another more controversial path was seen in the maritime route from the Gulf around the Arabian Peninsula into the Red Sea, with a landing on the shore of the eastern desert of Egypt near the Wadi Hammamat (Kantor (1992), 16–17). Easily portable objects, especially the cylinder seal and clay sealings on trade goods, have been identified as the primary media by which visual motifs may have traveled (Teissier (1987), 49), although designs on perishable material such as cloth and small pieces of furniture may also have played a role.

The deep-seated parallels between some of the cultural elements of the formative periods of Egypt and Mesopotamia, however, preclude confining the connections to trade or intermediaries, and point to direct contact (Frankfort (1924), 136; Kantor (1992), 17). Throughout his studies of the cultures of ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, Frankfort (e.g., (1924), 124–127) tried to come to grips with how the two were so different while sharing so many commonalities. Even though the Egyptian hieroglyphs and the Mesopotamian cuneiform look very different, they share internal characteristics (Moorey (1987), 40), both being, in origin, pictographic sign systems combining syllabic signs in the case of the cuneiform, consonantal signs in that of the Egyptian hieroglyphs, and logograms and determinatives in both. In some of the earliest works of art from the state formation periods of both cultures, such as the Warka Vase (Late Uruk) and the Narmer Palette (Nagada III), there exists further the shared desire to explore an intermediate domain between figural representation and writing, which results in a blurring of the boundaries between the two (Pittman 1994; Baines (2007), 285–288). Thus, such parallels may reveal contact or mutual awareness on a much more fundamental level than an overlap in hinterlands or trade (Smith (1992), 235, 245), and would entail “a sustained and elaborate acquaintance, on the part of the Egyptians, with Mesopotamian culture” (Frankfort (1941), 354).

What distinguishes the earliest Mesopotamian and contemporary Susian and Proto-Elamite influences on predynastic Egypt from the many parallels of a systemic type found in the later phases of both cultures, however, is the “direct quotation” quality observed in a number of the visual motifs that appear on the knife handles and the slate palettes of Nagada II–III. It is often noted by scholars how the practice of direct borrowing or “quoting” is brief in duration. Egypt quickly casts off this intrusion once the basics of Egyptian art in its distinctive aspects are fully codified in the

Early Dynastic Period with the Narmer Palette in a way constituting the turning point (Trigger et al. (1985), 39; Moorey (1987), 43). Even the cylinder seal, which initially reflected elements of Mesopotamian carving but ultimately featured fully Egyptian motifs, eventually disappeared, replaced by the scarab (Frankfort (1941), 357).

## Predynastic Egypt and Early Dynastic Mesopotamia

Despite its initial borrowing from ancient Mesopotamian and Susian visual themes and motifs in its predynastic art, Egypt may have supplied a delayed feedback to Mesopotamia in the latter's Early Dynastic era (ca. 2900–2334 BCE) in terms of the visual topoi of kingship that can be found in the Nile Valley as early as its Predynastic Period. Among these topoi, for instance, are the king attacking the enemy with a mace and the dead enemy being devoured by birds of prey. Both of these topoi can be seen for the first time in ancient Mesopotamia on the Stela of Eannatum from the Early Dynastic Period, several centuries later than their Egyptian counterparts on the Narmer Palette and the so-called Battlefield Palette. One might think that there is nothing special about the dead enemy devoured by birds of prey for it to be such a *topos*, and yet its occurrence in both Egypt and Mesopotamia on commemorative monuments from periods in which ideologies of hegemonic kingship were in the making does point to its meaningful utilization within a semiotic system.

In fact, it is precisely the codification of such a semiotic system in figural representation in the Late Uruk Period (ca. 3500–3100 BCE) of ancient Mesopotamia and the late Predynastic Period (ca. 3500–2950 BCE) in Egypt that goes hand in hand with developments in writing in both cultures. While the implications of the earliest writing may not have been confined to recording economic and administrative information either in Mesopotamia or Egypt (Charvát (2002), 153; Baines (2004), 151; Wengrow 2008), it was the semiotic system in the visual arts that functioned as the primary medium by which concepts of historical and religious complexity were likely conveyed (Pittman (1996a), 10, 16). It took longer for writing systems to start reproducing continuous language and contain information in the form of texts. Even after a more extensive role for the use of writing was reached, however, the visual arts never lost their semiotic potential and autonomy as bearers of information not always included in texts.

The shared artifactual and figural approaches to the earliest stages of kingship in both Egypt and Mesopotamia can also be seen in commemorative mace-heads decorated with relief sculpture (Frankfort (1924), 126), especially the Nagada III mace-heads of Narmer and King Scorpion from Hierakonpolis and that of Mesilim from Girsu in Sumer depicting lions and the lion-headed eagle from the Early Dynastic Period. Mesilim, who had the title King of Kish, is associated in the earliest historical records of ancient Mesopotamia with the Umma-Lagash border conflict (Cooper (1983), 22; (1986), 19). An object first attested in Western Asia in the earliest levels of Susa (Petrie (1917), 34; Trigger et al. (1985), 33), the mace-head as “commemorative monument” decorated with relief carving must be closely related to the appearance in figural representation of the mace as the weapon *par excellence* deployed by the king in the defeat of the enemies. Among these depictions are the Egyptian smiting scenes, whose earliest example is in the Hierakonpolis Tomb 100 paintings, and the figure of

the god Ningirsu on the obverse of the Stela of Eannatum from Early Dynastic Lagash in Mesopotamia.

Another semiotic element in this earliest visual rhetoric of kingship pertaining to conquest is the position of the defeated enemy on the lowermost register of a composition or on the pedestal of a statue of a royal figure. The Narmer Palette, for instance, shows defeated enemies in the bottom register of its reverse, while the two extant commemorative statuettes of the Dynasty 2 (ca. 2730–2593 BCE) King Kha-sekhemwy from Hierakonpolis have figures of the defeated enemy carved on their bases (Smith (1998), 23–24; Robins (2008), 34). During Dynasty 3, Djoser (2592–2566 BCE) also depicted the enemy forces, this time in their formulaic representation as the nine bows and the lapwings (*rekhyt*), carved on the upper surface of a statue base on which he steps (El-Shahawy (2005), 38–39). In ancient Mesopotamia, the first extant example along these lines is a limestone statue from Susa, attributed to the Akkadian king Manishtushu, that has defeated enemies carved around its base (Moortgat (1969), pl. 142; Spycket (1981), 152). As has been suggested with regard to the defeated enemy attacked by birds of prey, these topoi, too, should be taken seriously in the establishment of a visual language surrounding kingship, perhaps with cosmological messages that go beyond the straightforward assertion of the power of the king.

All of the aforementioned semiotic elements found in the earliest visual vocabulary of kingship represent intellectual channels of communication between ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt not easily explicable merely by contact through overlapping hinterlands within contexts of trade or conquest. Rather, they reveal modes of thinking shared directly by the centers of both cultures. The time lag of a few centuries in this regard between Nagada III (ca. 3350–2950 BCE) and the Mesopotamian Early Dynastic (ca. 2900–2334 BCE) may be accounted for by the delayed development of an ideology of a militaristic and hegemonic kingship in southern Mesopotamia, culminating in the attestation of divine kingship in both text and image during the Akkadian Period (ca. 2334–2154 BCE). The Egyptian counterparts of these developments had taken effect within a much more expedited time frame in the century or two before the Dynastic Period.

## The Old Kingdom

In the earliest phases of state formation and kingship in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, the interconnections between the artistic and architectural traditions are intense and clear. Throughout the Old (2543–2120 BCE) and Middle (1980–1760 BCE) Kingdoms, as well as the First Intermediate Period (2118–1980 BCE) that separates them, interactions were instead through trade, and often between Egypt and Syria-Levant. The cities of Byblos on the coast of Lebanon and Ebla in Syria were especially active entrepôts during the Old and Middle Kingdoms as attested by artifacts inscribed with Old Kingdom royal names and those of local production in the Egyptian artistic styles from the first half of the second millennium BCE (Smith (1965), 11; Kantor (1992), 19–21; Teissier 1996; Scandone-Matthiae 1997; Feldman (2001), 386–387). Syrians and Syrian-style pottery appear on the reliefs of the monuments of the Dynasty 5 kings Sahure (2428–2416 BCE) and Unas (2321–2306 BCE) (Smith (1965), 8; Bietak (1997), 104). Timber was a material of great interest for the Egyptians in the Levant, and imported in large amounts as

evidenced in the archaeological record as early as the royal tombs of the Early Dynastic Period in Abydos (Smith (1965), 5; Spencer (1993), 79–80), with the ship of the Dynasty 4 King Khufu (2509–2483 BCE) as the salient example in the Old Kingdom.

One also wonders if there may be any Egyptian influence on the sculptural traditions of the Akkadian Dynasty and the Dynasty of Gudea (ca. 2100 BCE) in Lagash during the Neo-Sumerian Period; a matter hardly encountered in scholarly discussions on Mesopotamian sculpture. The naturalistic rendering of the heroic male body to express conceptions of divine embodiment is seen on the Stela of Naramsin (Winter 1996). The practice of carving the royal image in the round in quadrangular format, again with pronounced arm and chest musculature, and out of hard dark-colored stones such as diorite is seen in the corpus of Gudea statues (Winter 1989). These developments in Mesopotamia came after the golden age of Egyptian sculpture in the Old Kingdom, whose best-known examples are the life-size statue of Khafre (2472–2448 BCE) and the under-life-size images of Menkaure (2447–2442 BCE), both from the valley temples of these Dynasty 4 kings at Giza (Arnold 1999 and Grzymski 1999). They reflect parallel approaches to the anthropomorphic sculptural image.

Even though the textual evidence for the “induction” of statues in Mesopotamia is found only in the first millennium BCE (Walker and Dick (2001), 27–28), the inscriptions carved on the Gudea statues prescribing the food offerings to be presented to the statues (Edzard (1997), 31) and specifying the messages to be transmitted by the statue to the god Ningirsu (Edzard (1997), 35–36) point to the plausible existence of “mouth opening” or “mouth washing” rituals during Gudea’s time as well. If the hypothesis that the statues would have continued functioning in ritual contexts for some time even after the death of Gudea has validity (Winter (1992), 26–29), such a funerary practice would be harmonious with the ancient Egyptian notion of “activating” the statue through the Opening of the Mouth ritual in order for it to serve as a receptacle for the *ka*. Even if these parallels are more conceptual than the unmistakable direct quotations that characterize the art and architecture of the state formation periods in both cultures, an awareness pertaining to the morphology and function of statuary seems to have been shared by Egypt and Mesopotamia within the second half of the third millennium BCE. Although the possible channels of communication between the two cultures in this regard are no doubt difficult to pin down, this should not amount to their absence.

## The Middle Kingdom

An example of the sculpture of the Old Babylonian Period (ca. 1894–1595 BCE), perhaps more specifically the reign of Hammurapi (ca. 1792–1750 BCE), the curious royal head found in Susa was part of the Babylonian booty carried off by the Elamites in the twelfth century BCE. A resemblance between this head and the contemporary Dynasty 12–13 (1939–1630 BCE) type of royal portrait showing the subject with wrinkles and a pensive expression is sometimes pointed out by scholars (Feldman (2001), 387). As the only vaguely comparable example from Mesopotamia, this bust does not provide us with the more extensive context attached to the relevant Egyptian pieces, which would have been placed not in funerary spaces but temples (Seidlmayer 2000), where they are thought to have helped consolidate the Egyptian central authority among local administrations

(Aldred (1970), 27–28; Robins (2008), 112–113). No textual tradition sheds clear light on the semantics of the grim royal portrait, but the type is sometimes linked with contemporary wisdom literature that depicts a world of anxiety and distrust (Smith (1998), 102). This type of portrait may also reflect the burden of being divine or semi-divine among humanity, or the difficulty of bridging this gap on the part of the king.

During the Egyptian Middle Kingdom, spanning what is termed the Middle Bronze Age in the archaeology of the ancient Near East, we also observe a growing network of artistic exchanges among the cultures of Egypt, Western Asia, and the Aegean. This is the period when an influx of Aegean figural and ornamental ideas began to infiltrate the artistic traditions of both Egypt and Syria. Especially noteworthy in this regard is the establishment of a *koiné* of wall painting at centers such as Alalah, Qatna, and Mari in Syria that reflect an amalgamation of elements belonging to Babylonia, Egypt, and the Aegean (Pierre (1987), 54). The largest corpus of wall paintings comes from the palace at Mari. Located in Court 106, the only painting found in situ, the so-called Investiture, dating to the first half of the eighteenth century BCE, features running spirals, a motif often associated with Egyptian and Western Asian contacts with Crete. Running spirals can be found in Egyptian seals, scarabs, and wall painting from the Middle Kingdom through the New Kingdom as well (Kantor (1997), 22–27, 31).

Other distinctively Egyptian elements in the Mari corpus of paintings include the fragment that depicts a captive held by the hair (Parrot (1958), fig. 36), in the typical Egyptian fashion of the king's holding the defeated enemies in a bundle in smiting scenes, and the hierarchy in the sizes of the figures that make up the sacrificial procession scene (Parrot (1958), pl. 6), thought to be contemporary with the so-called Assyrian interregnum on the basis of its stylistic traits parallel to those of the art of Shamshi-Adad (1808–1776 BCE) (Moortgat (1964), 71). Arranged in a register system, this composition shows what seems to be the royal figure at a significantly larger scale than the rest of the figures, a feature alien to the art of ancient Mesopotamia but more usual especially in Egyptian tomb decoration in which the deceased is shown as the largest figure. Even though much more spatially confined and static than its Egyptian and later Aegean counterparts, the landscape of the “Investiture” painting speaks to a shared interest in capturing the natural and the spontaneous, exemplified by the blue bird overlapping one of the palm trees, within the aforementioned *koiné* of wall painting in the Eastern Mediterranean. The flowers of the trees immediately flanking the centerpiece of the “Investiture” evoke the Egyptian papyrus, suggesting a subtle but more specific visual link with Egypt (Smith (1965), 99).

During the Second Intermediate Period (ca. 1759–1539 BCE), a strong Canaanite cultural presence emerged side by side with the native Egyptian in Lower Egypt. It is often inferred that the influx of an Asiatic population from the Levant was an ongoing process throughout the Middle Kingdom (Bietak (1997), 99). The Middle Kingdom administration may not have had full-fledged imperial ambitions, but by opening up the northern part of the country to Asian immigration and by controlling the gateway to Nubia through a number of forts, it paved the way for the internationalism that characterized Egypt's empire during the New Kingdom. Traces of Egyptian presence can be seen, for instance, in the statues of Dynasty 12 (1939–1760 BCE) kings “as far afield as Knossos in Crete, on the central plateau of Anatolia, and at Adana in the Cilician plain” (Smith (1965), 14). The Asiatics' seizing full-fledged political power for themselves in

Lower Egypt and forming an alliance with the Kingdom of Kush in Nubia against the interests of the Egyptian central authority characterize the Hyksos Period, constituting Dynasty 15 (1639–1540 BCE), “coeval with Dynasties 16 and 17 ruling from Thebes” (O’Connor (1997), 52). The term Hyksos is the Hellenized form of the Egyptian phrase “Ruler of Foreign Lands,” which the Hyksos used a title for their rulers, as did the Egyptians themselves.

The Hyksos capital Avaris in the Delta, modern Tell el-Dab'a, is one of the richest archaeological sites in Egypt, representing an uninterrupted chronology of one thousand years from the beginning of Dynasty 12 in the Middle Kingdom to the Rameside era (1292–1077 BCE) in the New Kingdom and the Third Intermediate Period (1076–723 BCE) (Bietak (1996), 5). The earliest traces of a Syro-Palestinian culture at the site go back to Dynasty 12, and include “architecture types foreign to Egypt” (Bietak (1997), 97). The Hyksos Period levels of the site reflect elements belonging to the Middle Bronze Age Canaanite material culture, both architectural and artifactual, known from Syria-Palestine, side by side with Egyptian. One archaeological hallmark of the period is the diffusion throughout the Eastern Mediterranean of the so-called Tell el-Yahudiya ware, a type of pottery first recognized at a site in the Delta, characterized by a polished black surface articulated with “fields of comb-pricked impressions that were filled with white paste” (Bietak (1997), 91). This is also the period that witnessed the introduction of the lightweight two-wheeled bronze chariot into Egypt, likely from northern Mesopotamia, which would become one of the hallmarks of the royal image thenceforward (Harvey (1994), 4–5; Van De Mieroop (2007), 216; Feldman and Sauvage 2010).

The defeat and expulsion of the Hyksos by the last kings of Dynasty 17, who ruled from Thebes, altered Egypt’s relationship with the outside world. Determined to keep its political and territorial autonomy intact against external threats, Egypt initiated systematic pre-emptive strikes in Syria-Palestine, resulting in the development of a wide-ranging political and military force often referred to as the Egyptian Empire. This empire reached its peak during the reign of Thutmose III (1479–1425 BCE) in Dynasty 18, and was later renewed during the reigns of Sety I (1290–1279 BCE) and Ramesses II (1279–1213 BCE) in 19 (Smith (1965), 4).

## The New Kingdom

The New Kingdom (1539–1077 BCE), coinciding with the Late Bronze Age, is the period of the most intense interaction between Egypt and the Near East (Smith (1965), 3). This interaction was expressed primarily in two modes. The first is the documentary evidence for Egypt’s commercial and diplomatic exchanges. Wall paintings that decorated the tombs of the non-royal elite in Thebes often show foreign dignitaries, (Asiatic, Cretan, or Nubian), bearing gifts. Of clearer diplomatic content are the Amarna letters documenting the correspondence among the royal houses of the leading states of the Near East during this international era, especially through the lens of a scribal culture using Akkadian, the *lingua franca* of the Near East at this time. The permanent Egyptian presence in the Levant is also attested in the archaeological record, especially in the form of fortified military architecture (Morris 2005). The material evidence for the trade



**Figure 22.3** The Egyptian winged disk on a lintel at Medinet Habu, reign of Ramesses III, Dynasty 19. Photograph courtesy of Mehmet-Ali Ataç.

relations between Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean is perhaps best seen in the cargo of the Uluburun shipwreck (ca. 1300 BCE), off the coast of southwestern Anatolia, from the same era (Pulak 2008).

The second mode of interaction is seen in the mutual borrowing of artistic themes and motifs between Egypt and Western Asia. Especially noteworthy in the realm of imagery is the dissemination of the Egyptian winged disk (Figure 22.3) as the symbol either of a supreme deity or that of the sun god in the host culture (Ornan 2005), such as the Hittites and later the Assyrians. Also of note is the gradual formulation of an elaborate floral composition incorporating volutes and palmettes, aspects of which evoke the Egyptian lily often thought of as the ancestor of what is to become the Assyrian “sacred tree” (Figure 22.4). Earlier, however, both the winged disk and a stylized tree appear in the Old Syrian glyptic of the Middle Bronze Age (Collon (2001), 80).

While the Egyptian origins of the winged disk are indisputable, the elaborate tree is much more difficult to trace to specific sources, even though a combination of Western Asian and Egyptian elements in its formation is not improbable (Danthine (1937), 165–166, 180; Feldman (2006), 83). The stylized tree appears on objects of prestige from the tomb of Tutankhamun (1333–1324 BCE) as well as in the decoration of luxury arts from Ugarit and the rest of the Levant (Feldman (2006), fig. 35). Among the first examples of its distinctively Assyrian manifestation are the thirteenth-century BCE glazed ceramic sherd from Assur (Andrae (1974), pl. 84; Feldman (2006), 83), the carvings on the stone vessel excavated in Assur Tomb 45 (Smith (1965), 32), and the wall paintings of the palace of Tukulti-Ninurta I (1243–1207 BCE) at Kar Tukulti-Ninurta (Frankfort (1996), figs. 152–153).



**Figure 22.4** The Neo-Assyrian “Sacred Tree” panel from the throne room of the Northwest Palace of Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE) at Nimrud (Kalhu). London, British Museum. Photograph courtesy of Mehmet-Ali Ataç.

In the study of New Kingdom connections with Western Asia, scholars often highlight Syria as the juncture for traveling motifs (Smith (1965), 96–97). The winged disk and the sphinx, for instance, are thought of as having reached the Hittites in Anatolia through the mediation of Syria (Feldman (2001), 387). The sphinx has a much longer pedigree in Anatolia; it is first observed on the seals of the earlier phase of the Assyrian trade colony (1950–1836 BCE), the *karum*, at Kanesh (Kültepe) during the Middle Bronze Age (Canby (1975), 234–235). The Syro-Anatolian sphinx, however, is female, incorporating elements of the imagery of the Egyptian goddess Hathor; its finest monumental examples come from the so-called Sphinx Gate at the Hittite capital Hattusha (Canby (1975), 244).

In addition to featuring the winged disk, Hittite royal relief and glyptic art of the Empire Period (ca. 1400–1200 BCE) also show the king in the embrace of his tutelary deity (Figure 22.5). There may be an Egyptian connection here, although the Egyptian embrace shows the king in fully equal terms with the god, whereas the Hittite king is much smaller in scale than his protective god. Given the use of the winged disk in expressing the divinity of the deceased Hittite king and the close connections between the Hittite and Egyptian courts around this time, such a Hittite borrowing of an Egyptian visual theme associating the pharaoh with divinity is not unlikely.

Shared also between Egypt and Anatolia around this time is the solarization of the royal figure in both text and image, a feature that can be traced back to the third



**Figure 22.5** Hittite king Tudhaliya IV (1237–1209 BCE) in the embrace of his tutelary deity Sharruma. Shrine B, Yazılıkaya. Photograph courtesy of Mehmet-Ali Ataç.

millennium BCE in Mesopotamia (Beckman 2002). In addition to the close resemblance between the priestly depiction of the Hittite royal figure and the figure of the Hittite sun-god (Van Den Hout 1995), we encounter in Hittite Anatolia the designation “My Sun-God” in reference to the king, which parallels solar epithets such as “Sun-God of the Land” (*Utu kalamma*) of ancient Mesopotamian kings of the third millennium BCE (Beckman 2002). The solar destiny of the king is a perennial theme throughout ancient Egyptian history, particularly in the Amarna Period and its aftermath when a greater transcendentalization is also attached to the sun god (Assmann (1995), 102–155). This religious development in Egypt may well have been a catalyst for the parallel enhancement of solar conceptions of kingship and divinity in Anatolia and Assyria. An elevation in divine status is also the case with the Assyrian national god Ashur, whose name is written as AN.ŠÁR, a senior cosmogonic deity, as early as the Middle Assyrian Period (ca. 1350–1000 BCE) (Beaulieu (1997), 64). The anthropomorphic figure in the Assyrian winged disk, typical of Late Middle Assyrian and Early Neo-Assyrian art, is likely a solarized Ashur.

Of great interest in the study of the visual arts of the ancient Near East is the way in which the winged disk and the stylized tree, two of the emblematic elements of the visual repertoire of the Late Bronze Age internationalism in the Near East, are brought together in a most potent way in the art of the first Neo-Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE) in his Northwest Palace at Kalhu (Nimrud). Another visual motif of clear Egyptian derivation, the lotus, makes an appearance in the ornamental repertoire of the Middle Assyrian Empire as seen also on the wall paintings of the Palace of Tukulti-Ninurta I at Kar Tukulti-Ninurta, with its widest attestation in the Neo-Assyrian visual record (Danthine (1937), 181, 183–184; Albenda 1978).

The affinities in artistic tradition between New Kingdom Egypt (1539–1077 BCE) and the Neo-Assyrian Period (883–612 BCE) are hence remarkable, especially given the time lag, perhaps again comparable to those we have observed in the development of a visual language pertaining to hegemonic kingship between the Egyptian Predynastic and the Mesopotamian Early Dynastic. This is not to overlook the presence of the parallels between the contemporary periods of Egypt and Assyria, especially in the rise of historical narrative and matters of ornament and the stylized tree during the Late Bronze Age. However, the best crystallization of many of these elements, including historical visual narrative, in the Neo-Assyrian Period, when the heyday of the Egyptian state was long past, speaks to the complexity of the relations among Egypt and Western Asian cultures, which transcend contacts through contemporary trade and diplomacy. This complexity implies a continuum of well-rooted and shared visual traditions in the Near East regulated and advanced by shifting intellectual centers within a broad geography and chronology.

Of the most characteristic artistic aspect of the Late Bronze Age in the Eastern Mediterranean, the so-called international style in luxury arts, little need be said here in view of the presence of the recent thorough study by Marian Feldman (2006) and the restricted format of the present chapter. Briefly, this eclectic style drew primarily on the two fundamental iconographic traditions of the Near East, Mesopotamia and Egypt, but reached out further to the Aegean for its sources. In many respects, the winged disk, the stylized tree, and the sphinx, visual motifs already discussed in relation to the traditions shared among Egypt, Syria, Anatolia, and Assyria, are part of the repertoire of the Late Bronze Age art of the *koiné*. This eclectic style characterizes primarily the luxury objects of the Eastern Mediterranean littoral and the Nile Valley, with the largest corpus of examples coming from the tomb of Tutankhamun (1336–1327 BCE) (Feldman (2006), 31).

The limited artistic remains of the kingdom of the Mitanni (ca. 1500–1350 BCE), a major player in Late Bronze Age diplomatic exchanges, also partake of the international repertoire of images. One can observe in the wall paintings from the administrative structure at Nuzi guilloches, stylized volutes and palmettes, and bucraenia (Moortgat (1969), fig. 77), comparable to those found on ceiling decoration from the palace of Amenhotep III (1390–1353 BCE) at Malkata (Smith (1998), fig. 285). The Mitannian glyptic tradition is rich in the imagery of winged disks and stylized trees (Stein 2009).

The coastal character of the art of the international *koiné* is further apparent in ivory carving especially in Syria-Levant, an artistic tradition that reaches from the Late Bronze Age into the Iron Age (Smith (1965), 51–52; Feldman 2009). Small-scale ivory panels, originally part of furniture and attributed to Phoenician workshops especially during

the Iron Age, were perhaps one of the most effective media of transmission of ancient Egyptian visual ideas to Western Asia. The so-called Nimrud ivories, found mostly in Fort Shalmaneser at Kalhu (Nimrud), present a whole repertoire of fundamental Egyptian imagery, such as the union of the crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt (*sema tawy*), the stylized tree with the lotus and the lily, the winged disk, and the sphinx (Mallowan (1966), 471–599; Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw 2004). Thanks to this style of ivory production spanning the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age, there can be little doubt that the cultures of the Near East, especially Assyria, were deeply familiar with the artistic traditions of ancient Egypt.

## New Kingdom Egypt and the Iron Age in Ancient Mesopotamia

As discussed above, among the shared cultural traditions between Egypt and Assyria is what we may refer to as historical narrative in both text, in annalistic writings, and in image, in depictions of panoramic military campaigns (Smith (1965), 37). With the extensive temple relief carvings depicting the campaigns of Sety I (1290–1279 BCE), Ramesses II (1279–1213 BCE), and Ramesses III (1187–1157 BCE), New Kingdom Egypt is likely the model for the relevant developments in Assyria, which start in the Middle Assyrian Period and come to full fruition in the Neo-Assyrian (Pittman (1996b), 348–349; Feldman (2005), 144–147). In Egypt, battle scenes appear in transportable media as well, such as Tutankhamun's painted box and a painted papyrus from Amarna (Parkinson and Schofield 1997). The textual manifestation of this new historical tradition in the form of royal annals is much more developed and extensive in Assyria during the Middle Assyrian Period than its visual counterpart. Among the few extant examples of the latter are the highly worn relief decorating the base of one of the altars of Tukulti-Ninurta I found at the Ishtar Temple at Assur (Smith (1965), 45; Moortgat-Correns 1988) and the so-called White Obelisk dating to the reign of Ashurnasirpal I (1049–1031 BCE) (Pittman 1996b). The religious contexts of both Egyptian and Assyrian historical narrative in the Late Bronze Age show the sacral overtones of a sense of history that transcends terrestrial ideas of kingship.

In Egypt, the principal examples of historical narrative in the visual arts are the reliefs depicting the Palestinian campaigns of Sety I at Karnak; the nearly standardized representations of the Battle of Kadesh depicted repeatedly at different temples such as Luxor, western Thebes, Abydos, and Abu Simbel; and the battle of Ramesses III against the “Sea Peoples.” The latter two, with their elaborate panoramic compositions and idealized reinterpretations of historical events, almost signal an awareness of the impending end of a great era, which imbue them with an epic quality.

It is perhaps an analogous epic perspective that characterizes the art of the beginning of a new era in Assyrian prospects with the establishment of the first Neo-Assyrian capital city at Kalhu (Nimrud) in the Iron Age and its decorative program. James Henry Breasted (1932, 268–269) plausibly argued that it was Egypt that lent Assyria the impetus to depict in relief sculpture scenes of military campaigns and royal lion and bull hunts, the latter being especially prominent on the pylons and north wall of the temple complex of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu. The Assyrian version of the royal hunt for lions and wild

bulls again appears for the first time in the art of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud. Another visual trope pertaining to imperialism developed by the Egyptians in the New Kingdom, which later became one of the hallmarks of the Assyrian and the Achaemenid Persian (550–331 BCE) empires and their artistic traditions, is the procession of tributaries bearing gifts to the imperial center. Examples of this formulaic scene in Assyria can be encountered in the art of Ashurnasirpal II, Shalmaneser III (858–824 BCE), and Sargon II (721–705 BCE) in the Neo-Assyrian Period.

The clear indebtedness of Assyria to Egypt in these matters during the reign of Ashurnasirpal II is again not explicable solely with synchronized political and military contact between Egypt and Assyria. The reign of Ashurnasirpal II lies between the Late Bronze Age, the truly international period of the ancient Near East, and the seventh century when both Esarhaddon (680–669 BCE) and Ashurbanipal (668–627 BCE) campaigned against Egypt. Even though the art of Ashurnasirpal II is by no means derivative of Egypt in its style and subject matter, its deeper compositional and semantic structure reflects a learned familiarity on the part of its creators with the Egyptian tradition.

The Egyptian technique of sunken relief is alien to Assyria; however, there is a strong morphological affinity between the relief sculpture of Ashurnasirpal II and the low-relief style, especially of Sety I as evidenced by the interior of his temple at Abydos. It may not be a stretch of imagination to think of the spatial and sculptural quality of the inner halls of this Egyptian temple as the closest approximation to what an Assyrian palace interior would have looked like, given that none of the latter survived intact. Gay Robins (1990) showed that the proportions of the figures of the reliefs of Ashurnasirpal II are much more varying and diverse than the proportional “canonization” seen in Egyptian figures, but the fact alone that Ashurnasirpal II’s art calls for such a study in comparison to Egypt speaks to an affinity.

## Western Asia and the “Eastern High Gate” at Medinet Habu

With the exception of the Predynastic Period, the material in this chapter has inevitably gravitated toward the impact of Egyptian art on the artistic traditions of Western Asia. One unique element in the reverse direction is within the domain of architecture, the so-called Eastern High Gate at Medinet Habu from the New Kingdom (Figure 22.6). This monumental fortified gate is often mentioned in scholarship as incorporating elements belonging to the military architecture of Syria-Levant (Hölscher (1951), 10, (1984), 63–64; Badawy (1968), 457, 462). However, the relation is not as easily demonstrable as one might think. The architecture of the gate is in full conformity with what is known of Egyptian military architecture elsewhere (O’Connor (2005), 445), and, even though the two wings constituting the tower are reminiscent of the gates flanked by two towers seen in the archaeological record of Syria (Badawy (1968), 45), the deep U-shaped courtyard between the two wings facing outward is unknown in Western Asia (Haeny (1967), 73).

Scholars seem to be divided about whether Syro-Levantine elements are to be seen in the architecture of the High Gate. The gate was also erroneously dubbed the *migdol*



**Figure 22.6** The Eastern High Gate at the Temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu seen from the West. Photograph courtesy of Mehmet-Ali Ataç.

in early scholarship on the basis of the assumption that an Egyptian phrase of probable Near Eastern derivation, *mkrt*, thought to be related to the northwestern Semitic word *migdol*, might mean a fortified tower (Seguin 2007). More recent investigation showed that a common meaning of the word in both linguistic domains is far from certain and that, even though the Hebrew meaning of the word *migdol* is tower, there is no evidence that this was the meaning of the related words in the Semitic languages of the Levant during the second millennium BCE. It is further totally unknown what kind of a building or settlement the Egyptian phrase *mkrt* would have designated.

The Near Eastern influence in the Eastern High Gate, however, cannot be so easily discounted; even the scholar who is the most skeptical about seeing Western Asian elements in the architecture proper, Gerhard Haeny, is willing to admit the connection in the upper chambers of the tower on the second and third stories. Haeny (1967, 75) adduces evidence from Egyptian texts in pointing out the use of certain architectural terms of probable Near Eastern derivation in association with the fortification walls of Medinet Habu, especially *r̥t*, meaning upper hall and found twice in Egyptian texts in connection with the word *ssd*, window. He further cites passages from the Old Testament depicting rulers retreating to upper-story spaces and those that associate women with upper-story windows. In the upper levels of the Eastern High Gate, the rooms with windows were decorated with unique reliefs showing the pharaoh at banquet in the company of nude women and young girls, whose erotic connotations are explicit (O'Connor 2005). Haeny even conjures up the well-known Syro-Phoenician figural type in ivory called the “woman

at the window," in drawing attention to the Western Asian associations of such spatial suites (Haeny (1967), 72–77).

A parallel connection among a Syrian building type known from the Assyrian textual record as the *bīt-hilāni*, a second-story royal suite, and a banquet scene in relief sculpture that involves the king in the company of women in Assyria can again be found in the Iron Age, in the Palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh (Albenda 1976, 1977). Here as well, the upper story of a gateway or entrance structure featuring a portico, the so-called "Room S," one of the plausible manifestations of the *bīt-hilāni* in Assyria, was decorated with a relief scene showing the king banqueting outdoors in a garden that may be part of the private quarters of the queen. The ritual connotations of the scene are clear, especially in the vegetal symbolism in the relief, which features alternating fruit-bearing date palms and conifers and a grape-vine canopy (Collins 2004, 2006). In fact, after the international era of the Late Bronze Age, the reigns of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal mark Assyria's most direct contact with Egypt during the first millennium BCE (Feldman 2005). Both kings conducted military campaigns against Egypt, which had then begun to reassert its control over the small states of the Levant (Myśliwiec (2000), 106). Large statues belonging to the Dynasty 25 pharaoh Taharqa (690–664 BCE) were found at Nineveh, and it is perhaps again Taharqa who is shown among the two captives held by a nose rope by Esarhaddon on his monumental stela from Zincirli commemorating his conquest of Egypt (Börker-Klähn (1982), 213, no. 219).

## Ancient Egypt and the Achaemenid Persian Empire

The death blow to an over-expanded and weakened Neo-Assyrian Empire was dealt by a Median–Babylonian coalition; Nineveh fell around 612 BCE. After a century of native Babylonian rule in Mesopotamia under the Neo-Babylonian (625–539 BCE), the Near East was reunited under one single imperial administration. The Achaemenid Persian Empire was perhaps the first truly multicultural empire in world history, with each region in the imperial fabric maintaining its unique cultural characteristics, and the center, in turn, drawing on a multiplicity of traditions. The eclectic artistic and architectural style developed by the Persians in Susa, Pasargadae, and Persepolis relied primarily on Egyptian and Assyrian imperial models in the forging of a novel visual rhetoric for the Empire. Hence, in the well-known relief figure from Pasargadae accompanied by an inscription citing Cyrus (559–530 BCE), we see the Egyptian *atef*-crown on the one hand and the four wings of an Assyrian genius on the other (Root (1979), 300–301).

In Susa and Persepolis, we often see an explicitly Egyptian winged disk, in addition to a more Assyrian-looking version on the Behistun and Naqsh-i Rustam reliefs, even though the overall plasticity and morphological characteristics of the Achaemenid Persian relief scenes that bring together figures of the king and the winged disk are closer to Assyrian art than they are to Egyptian. Egyptian moldings such as the cavetto cornice appear in the architecture of the Empire, while tribute scenes, ultimately going back to Egyptian sources but cast here in the ancient Mesopotamian visual formula of the "presentation scene" (Root (1979), 282–284), decorate extended surfaces along what may have been

processional routes. The statue of Darius I (521–486 BCE), found in Susa, revives the age-old trope of reserving the bottom register, or pedestal, of a victory monument or a royal statue for formulaic representations of captives. In this case, the imagery transforms the Egyptian formula of merging the royal cartouche surrounded by crenellations with the tied captive. The new formula shows the subject peoples of the Empire surmounting the royal cartouche and upholding the ground on which stands the king (Roaf (1974), 76, 148; Root (1979), 146–147, 160).

Without a tradition of historical narrative, it is ironic that Achaemenid Persian court art looked for inspiration mainly from the two imperial artistic traditions, Egyptian and Assyrian, that did develop and perfect the historical narrative mode in the visual arts. The assimilation of elements belonging to the art and architecture of Egypt and Assyria by the Persian artists, architects, and iconographers may certainly have had a lot to do with the visibility of Egyptian and Assyrian monuments during the Achaemenid Period (Root (1979), 39, 283), just as the visibility of New Kingdom monuments and relief in Egypt may have been a source of instruction for the Neo-Assyrian artists in the creation of the large panoramic narratives of Ashurbanipal (Feldman (2005), 148). Nevertheless, the uninterrupted continuum of artistic traditions, kept alive by the transmission of expert knowledge belonging to intellectual schools of art and scribes patronized by courts of Egypt and Western Asia, spanned chronological and geographic distances. There were many moments in ancient Near Eastern history when the channel of communication was dormant, but it never disappeared completely. It is very likely that such high-profile communication between cultural centers initiated the dialogue between Egypt and Western Asia as early as Egypt's Predynastic Period, and sustained its impact uninterruptedly throughout pharaonic and ancient Near Eastern history.

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## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

For contact between ancient Egypt and Western Asia during Egypt's state formation period (Nagada II–III), with an emphasis on the visual arts and the transmission of designs and motifs, see Boehmer (1974b), Teissier (1987), Smith (1992), Pittman (1996a). A discussion of the nature of the earliest cultural contacts between Mesopotamia and Egypt can be found in Moorey (1987). The works of Frankfort (1941) and Kantor (1942, 1952) are foundational in presenting the questions and their ramifications. With a focus especially on the comparative chronology of Egypt and Western Asia, Kantor 1992 covers significant ground both in period and geographic area. As far as artistic interconnections between Egypt, Western Asia, and the Aegean throughout the Bronze Age are concerned, Smith 1965 is still the classic. More particularly on Egypt's relations with the Near East during the Middle Bronze Age, see articles by Bietak, O'Connor, and Scandone-Matthiae in Oren (1997). A comprehensive and copiously illustrated exhibition catalog, Aruz, Benzel, and Evans (2008), spans both the Middle Bronze Age and the Late Bronze Age

in laying out the cultural and artistic interconnections among Egypt, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Near East. Specifically on the Late Bronze Age contacts among the leading powers of the Near East and their artistic traditions, see Feldman (2006). A historical analysis of the political and cultural relations of the Egyptian Empire with the Western Asian world is found in Van De Mieroop (2007). The artistic bridge from the Late Bronze Age on to the Iron Age between Egypt and Assyria is treated in Feldman (2003), with an emphasis on the panoramic narrative reliefs of the palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh. Robins (1990) offers a comparative analysis of the proportional relations in human figures in ancient Egyptian and Assyrian art. The question of Western Asian or Syrian architectural models for the Eastern High Gate at Medinet Habu is addressed in Hölscher (1984), Heany (1967), Badawy (1968), and O'Connor (2005). On the incorporation of ancient Egyptian artistic and architectural traditions into the eclectic artistic style of the Achaemenid Persian Empire, see Roaf (1974), Stronach (1974), and Root (1979).

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## CHAPTER 23

# The Art and Architecture of Kushite Nubia

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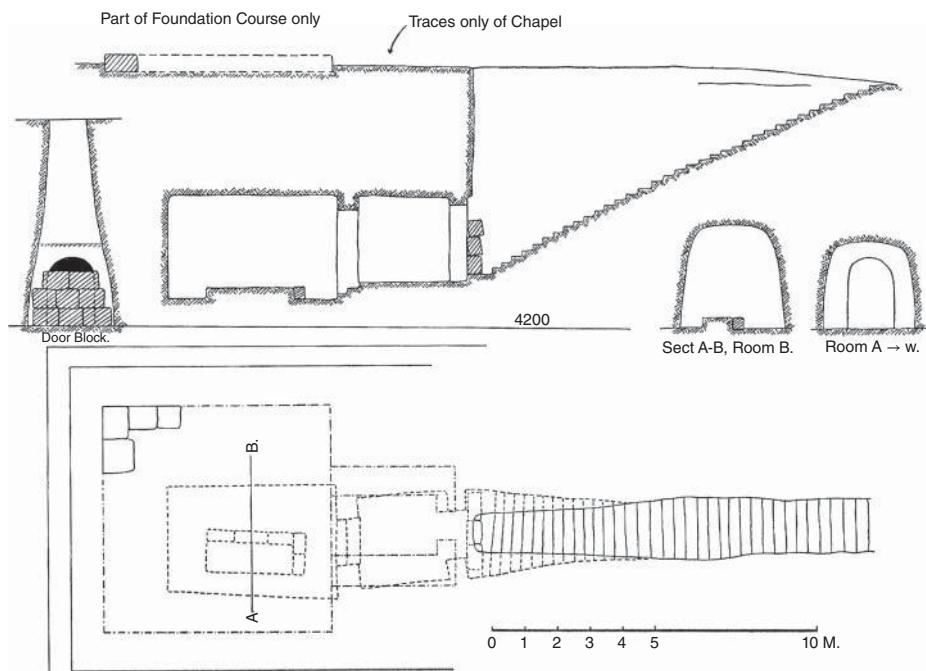
*Peter Lacovara*

## The Origins of the Kushite Empire

The Kushite kings of Dynasty 25 and their Napatan successors not only brought about a renaissance in art and architecture in Egypt, but also created a new artistic idiom for Nubia that would survive for nearly a millennium. Although much of the revivalism of the period was dismissed by earlier Egyptocentric scholars as mere copying, we now see that it is, in fact, a complex and studied reinvention of past styles, and a reinterpretation of pharaonic motifs and themes.

We know little about the forebears of Dynasty 25. Their ancestral tombs, located at el-Kurru, are tumulus graves of ancient Nubian tradition. The ceramics associated with them are a combination of local handmade wares hearkening back to the pottery of the Kerma Culture along with some Egyptian imports. Suggestions that these burials may go into the Ramesside Period have been refuted by a careful study of the ceramic evidence by Lisa Heidorn (Heidorn 1994). Likewise, suggestions that the origin of the dynasty may be somehow connected with Egyptian colonists or “missionaries” reflect an arcane view of Nubia that has no basis in reality (Kendall 1999).

With the expansionist designs of Kashta (ca. 760–747 BCE) and his successors, a rapid transformation in funerary architecture occurred in the cemeteries at el-Kurru associated with the Nubian capital at Napata. Still undiscovered, Napata is somewhere in the vicinity of the great temple complex of Gebel Barkal. At el-Kurru, the tombs change from the traditional tumulus burial to a pyramid, although distinct from both the royal pyramids of the Old and Middle Kingdom and private New Kingdom Egyptian examples. Reisner (Dunham 1953), influenced by his study of the development of Egyptian pyramids, has postulated an intermediate phase where the tumuli evolved into *mastaba* tombs and then pyramids, but the evidence for this is slim and questionable. Although the cemetery was badly plundered and denuded, one can clearly see that the tombs thought by Reisner to belong to the



**Figure 23.1** Plan and section of Kurru Pyramid 5, Queen Qalhata, el-Kurru, Nubia (after Dunham, 1950).

intermediary mastaba phase, are square in plan and largely indistinguishable from the early pyramids.

One of the best preserved of the early Kushite pyramids is Kurru Pyramid 5 (Figure 23.1), the tomb of Queen Qalhata, the sister-wife of Shebtiku (702–690 BCE) and mother of Tanwetamani (664–656 BCE). The fact that queens could have funerary monuments on the scale and in the style of kings underscores the status of women in Nubian society. Although the superstructure of Qalhata's pyramid is largely destroyed, the sandstone sepulcher measured seven meters square at its base and had a burial chamber built entirely beneath it. Although it has been postulated that these pyramids were designed after New Kingdom Egyptian pyramid tombs either in Egypt or in Nubia (Hakem (1988), 243), they are not slavish copies but something quite original that evolved in Nubia on its own.

At Kurru, the development of the pyramid structure starts as a simple pit grave beneath a tumulus and then progresses into a chamber beneath the pyramid reached by a long stairway trench (Dunham 1950, 1955). By the time of the construction of Qalhata's pyramid, the standard plan of the substructure was already established with a stair entrance leading into a vestibule that fronted the burial chamber. This tradition would last well into the Meroitic period. Like most of these, the burial chamber and vestibule had vaulted ceilings and, in Queen Qalhata's tomb and that of her son Tanwetamani (Tantamani), much of the painted decoration was still preserved. Many motifs were taken

from the pharaonic repertoire such as the stars on the ceiling, images of Osiris on a bier, and the procession of gods and the solar barque. However, the image of Tanwetamani depicts him as a distinctly Nubian ruler with the traditional cap-crown favored by the Dynasty 25 kings as well as the double uraeus and ram head with solar disk pendants (Plate 10).

A central feature in the burial chambers of many of the Nubian pyramids is a stone coffin bench hearkening back to the bed burials of Nubian tradition, but also serving as a support for a coffin. A pair of exquisite bronze bed legs in the form of the goose of Amun were found in the tomb of another queen of Shebitku and again show a seamless integration of Egyptian motifs into Nubian tradition. Given the damp environment of these burial chambers and the repeated plundering that occurred, no coffins were discovered. Nevertheless, fragments of inlay and gold foil indicate that the coffins were as lavishly decorated as those of Tutankhamun and other New Kingdom pharaohs, although following the broader style of the sarcophagi of Dynasty 25 and early Dynasty 26.

Although looted, many of these tombs still contained great wealth. Alongside the imports from Egypt were locally manufactured products inspired by pharaonic traditions including shawabtis, amulets, offering tables, stelae, ritual vessels, and furniture. While similar to Egyptian types, shawabtis and amulets were distinct not only in style but in material. This suggests that the “faience” (a vitreous quartz paste) from which they were manufactured was a local development. This was the case when the technique of “faience” manufacture was re-engineered by the Kerma Nubians centuries before to replicate the material that had been imported from Egypt (Lacovara 1998). Fragments of intricately carved ivory panels from furniture decoration were also discovered at Kurru. While ivory was a well-known type of luxury good and status gift throughout the Eastern Mediterranean during the first millennium, these panels are of indigenous production, as seen in the unique depictions of dom palms along with ostriches as well as more familiar Egyptian motifs. A number of gilded silver amulets were discovered in the royal tombs at Kurru, although most are probably Egyptian imports similar to ones found in the royal tombs at Tanis and given to the Nubian kings after the conquest of the Delta. The tribute of the Delta rulers to the Nubians is recorded in the Pianky stela and included: “gold [bars] or precious stones … bracelets of gold, necklaces, collars wrought with precious stones or amulets every limb, headbands, earrings, all royal adornments” (Lichtheim 1980).

## Dynasty 25

The Dynasty 25 Egyptian kings were anxious to show themselves in traditional forms and pious poses. This was expressed by mirroring the texts that recorded the takeover of the country and extolled the piety of the Nubian kings and their devotion to the established norms of society. Large-scale statues of Shabaka (ca. 722–707 BCE) and Taharqa (690–664 BCE) were set up at Karnak Temple depicting the kings in standard pharaonic dress, but with the tightly fitting cap-crown favored by the Nubian kings.



**Figure 23.2** Head of King Taharqa, probably from Karnak, Dynasty 25, Late Period, 690–664 BCE. Gray granodiorite, 36.5 cm × 24 cm. Thebes. Egyptian Museum Cairo, CG 560. © DeAgostini / SuperStock.

A colossal head of Taharqa, presumably from Karnak and now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (Figure 23.2), is one of the great masterpieces in the history of Egyptian art. It can be seen as the ultimate development of Dynasty 25 royal portraiture, a synthesis of the rather classically bland sculpture of Third Intermediate Period Egypt and the “almost brutal verism” noted by Edna Russmann (1974) in the depictions of Shabaka and in early Dynasty 25 work. The finely polished black granite head depicts the king with a broad nose, large almond-shaped eyes, full mouth, and the distinctive “Kushite fold”—a furrow running from either side of the nose towards the corners of the mouth. The top of his cap-crown is surmounted by a modius and the entire headdress is left rough to receive a covering of sheet gold. Taharqa is also depicted in numerous votive bronze figures and as a sphinx. One extraordinary example, now in the Louvre (E 25276), depicts the king kneeling before an image of the god Horus, rendered in silver and gold foil over the bronze that illustrates again the lavish use of precious metals in the sculpture of the age.

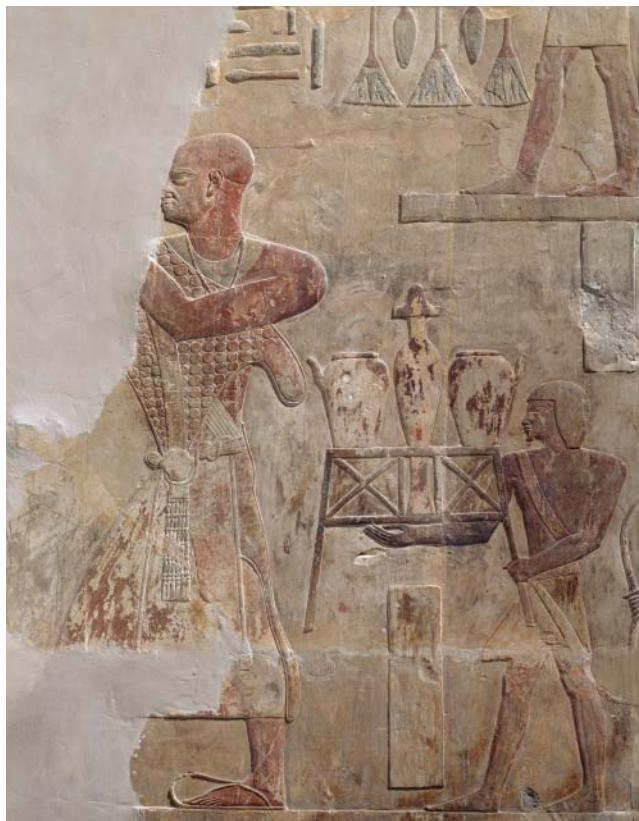
To aid in ruling over the vast amalgamated kingdom of Nubia and Egypt, the Dynasty 25 kings, who continued to rule from Napata, installed their sisters in the office of the Divine Votaress, or God's Wife of Amun, which was a sort of "vestal virgin," or unmarried priestess, who could act as their representatives in Thebes. They built their funerary chapels within the temple precinct of the Mortuary Temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, following the Third Intermediate Period predilection for locating important burials within temple grounds for safeguarding. Here again we see remarkable innovation in design in incorporating ancient traditions to new uses (Hölscher 1954).

Piankhi (753–723 BCE) had installed his sister Amenirdis in the office of God's Wife of Amun. Her tomb-chapel constructed within the first court of Medinet Habu is a small rectangular sandstone temple fronted by a small pylon gate. Inside was a forecourt with four columns fronting a sanctuary containing a holy of holies with battered sides, torus molding, and cavetto cornice. As Myriam Ayad (2009) has noted, the Nubians reached all the way back to the architecture of the Step Pyramid complex's shrine of the north for this construction. The walls are decorated in sunk relief with spells drawn from the ancient Pyramid Texts and depictions of Amenirdis and her adopted successor, Shepenwepet II. The burial chamber below the shrine corresponds to the vaulted chambers below the Nubian pyramids right down to the coffin bench and bronze bed legs. Adjoining this chapel to the west was a similar one that was later subdivided for the burials of the Divine Votaresses Shepenwepet II and her Dynasty 26 successor, Nitocris, along with her mother, Mehtenweshket. At Medinet Habu, Taharqa also built a new gateway entrance to the earlier temple to Amun that had been begun at the site by Hatshepsut and Thutmose III in Dynasty 18.

The Dynasty 25 pharaohs undertook their most ambitious building projects, not surprisingly, at Karnak. The great First Pylon, begun by Taharqa but never finished, greets visitors at the first glimpse of the temple complex. He also erected an enormous kiosk in the First Court behind the pylon, and one of its monumental papyrus columns still majestically rises there today. Additional colonnades were also constructed during this period within the temple complex and a number of small shrines placed around the periphery of the great temple, including one small chapel dedicated to Osiris Hekadjet (Osiris Ruler of Eternity) that survived substantially intact.

Under Nubian rule, a number of imposing non-royal monuments were created in Thebes. The largest and most celebrated of these is the tomb of the Mayor of Thebes, Mentyemhat (Smith and Simpson (1981), 409–416). The tomb is situated in front of the temples at Deir el-Bahri, in part to make use of the Hatshepsut causeway that had become a processional route for the ceremony of the Valley Festival. The entrance to the tomb runs south off the causeway, parallel to a massive, arched mud brick pylon. Below this is a warren of open courts, vestibules, and subterranean chambers numbering over fifty rooms, many decorated with exquisite reliefs. Sadly, the tomb was badly plundered after antiquity, but many examples of the refined, delicate carving can be found in museums throughout Europe and the Americas. The relief carving is inspired by earlier pharaonic styles, particularly from the Old and New Kingdom, with stock scenes being carefully adapted to fit the decorative program of the hypogaeum.

The subterranean chambers are positioned around a sunken court decorated with massive pairs of entwined papyrus stalks, a motif harkening back to the Archaic Period (Russmann 1994). Engaged sculptures of Mentyemhat and his wife also decorate the



**Figure 23.3** Detail of Mentuemhat, relief of Mentu-em-hat and Anubis, Egyptian, from Thebes, Late Period, late Dynasty 25 to early Dynasty 26, 665–650 BCE. Limestone with paint,  $20\frac{5}{16} \times 15\frac{13}{16}$  inches (51.6 × 40.2 cm). The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 48–28/2.

court. Above is a massive mud brick pylon with a central arch and a mud brick pyramid. The entrance was even studded with inscribed funeral cones after the New Kingdom pattern.

Perhaps the finest relief from the tomb is now in the Nelson Atkins Museum in Kansas City. It shows Mentuemhet dressed in the traditional leopard skin of a priest worn over a pleated kilt. His physiognomy is rendered as a commanding portrait from his shaven head to his rather gaunt furrowed face (Figure 23.3). Another relief from the tomb, now in Chicago at the Oriental Institute Museum (Teeter (2003), 80–81) shows two girls in a tussle over spilled grain in a genre scene of gleaners copied from a painting from the Dynasty 18 tomb of Menna (TT 69).

What was remarkable about the Dynasty 25 copyists was their understanding of the stylistic phases of Egyptian art, distinguishing scenes derived from Old, Middle, and New Kingdom sources. The most amazing of these is the Stela of Djedatumifankh, now in Cleveland, that was carved in an Archaic style evoking a slab stela of the first dynasties. Except for its material, quartzite, and its lengthy text, it is an exact replica of



**Figure 23.4** Stele of Djedatumifankh, 664–525 BC, Egypt, Late Period, Dynasty 26. Brown quartzite, 27.5 x 25.0 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of John Huntington Art and Polytechnic Trust 1920.1977. © The Cleveland Museum of Art.

the earliest extant relief carvings from Egypt (Figure 23.4). For this astute discernment of form and proportion, the artists of Dynasty 25 can be considered the world's first art historians. Another aspect of sculpture from this period is an interest in more exotic stones, such as petrified wood, peridotite, and serpentine, aside from the more standard materials (black, grey, and red granite, "Egyptian alabaster" (calcite or travertine), limestone, greywacke, and quartzite).

Archaism can also be seen in monumental relief carving as well as in private tombs. The most oft-remarked example is at the temple of Kawa depicting the king as a sphinx trampling Libyan enemies that is an exact copy (right down to the names of the crushed victims) of Old Kingdom originals at Saqqara and Abusir (O'Connor (1983), 241–245, fig. 3.17). However, such an exact replica of an existing relief is unusual. One can see a more original approach to using Egyptian models on the barque altar of Atlanersa (653–640 BCE) from Gebel Barkal. As noted by Janice Yellin (1995), here the traditional

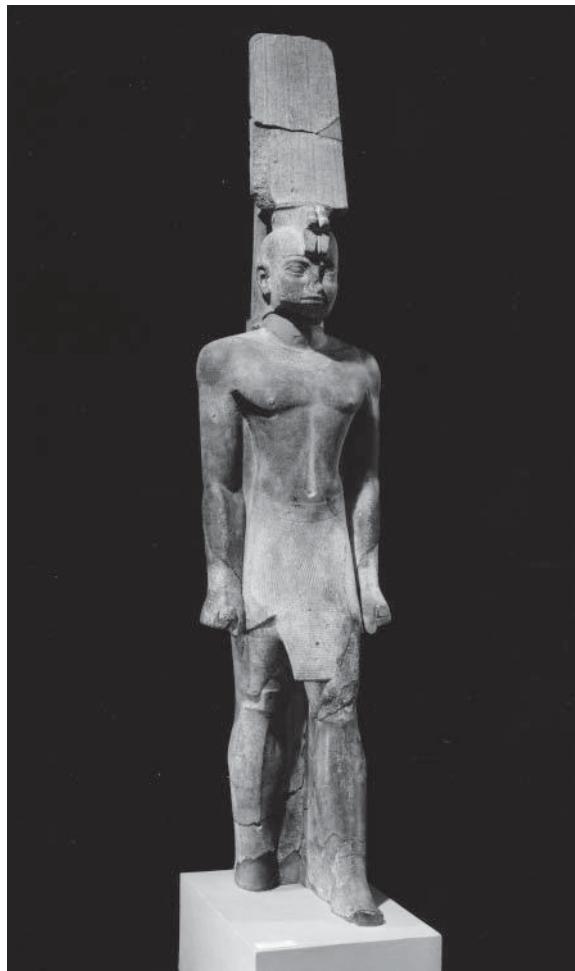


**Figure 23.5** Barque stand of King Atlanersa from Gebel Barkal, Nubian, Napatan Period, reign of Atlanersa, second half of the seventh century BCE. Findspot: Gebel Barkal, Temple B 703. Overall dimensions: 115 × 152.5 × 152.5 cm, 8164.75 kg. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Harvard University–Boston Museum of Fine Arts Expedition, 23.728. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Egyptian motif of the “baptism of pharaoh” has been reworked into a propagandistic summary of royal power (Figure 23.5). Again, the defined physique is more reminiscent of Assyrian rather than Egyptian art. Indeed, James Henry Breasted (1932) pointed out many years ago the parallelism of Assyrian carving and that of Dynasty 25. The two cultures were certainly in contact, though usually through conflict, but the exact mechanism of the artistic cross pollination and its extent is not yet understood.

## Napatan Sculpture

The forceful musculature of both Assyrian and Nubian sculpture distinguishes it from Egyptian canons, and can clearly be seen in the art of Nubia itself, both during Dynasty 25 and after. The royal sculptures from Gebel Barkal are different from those at Karnak, being more stylized both in their facial features and their exaggerated physiques (Dunham 1970). Carved out of local, grey granite, these fragmentary sculptures were found ritually buried in a number of pits in the temple precinct, presumably smashed by the invading armies of Psamtik II (595–589 BCE). The two largest statues found represent Aspelta (600–580 BCE) and Anlamani (620–600 BCE) (Figure 23.6). They depict the kings wearing the four ostrich plumes of Nubian royalty on their heads as well as the double uraeus. They also have roughened areas on the crown, kilt, and where



**Figure 23.6** Statue of King Anlamani, Nubian, Napatan Period, reign of Anlamani, late seventh century BCE. Findspot: Northern Province, Nubia (Sudan). Granite gneiss, 381 cm (150 in.). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Harvard University–Boston Museum of Fine Arts Expedition, 23.732. Photograph: © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

sandals, armbands, and three ram-pendant necklaces would have been covered with gold leaf. A group of statues remarkably similar to these was recently found at the site of Dokki Gel by Charles Bonnet (Bonnet and Valbelle 2005). They too must have been destroyed by the invading Egyptians and interred in sacred ground. Even more recently, statues of Taharqa and Senkamanisken were uncovered at Dangeil, much further south than large-scale Napatan remains had been found before (Anderson and Ahmed 2010). These too had been smashed, but whether this was due to an Egyptian incursion this far south or for some other reason remains unclear. If this was the result of Psamtik's forces, then that would give added weight to the speculation that the political and cultural shift southward toward Meroe at the end of the Napatan Period was a response to the threat

of another Egyptian attack. In any regard, the Napatan phase of the Second Kingdom of Kush gave way to the Meroitic, a far more eclectic and inventive era in Nubian art and culture.

## The Meroitic Period

Originally founded by the Egyptians in the New Kingdom but greatly expanded upon by their Nubian successors, the complex of temples at Gebel Barkal still functioned as the religious center of the kingdom, although the interests of the Meroitic successor state were focused elsewhere. The Meroitic Period was very long, some 600 years (250 BCE–CE 350), and ruled by a dynasty with fifty-seven kings along with a few reigning queens. Their annals were recorded in Meroitic, which first appears as a written language by 100 CE. In the preceding Napatan Period, Egyptian hieroglyphs were used for monumental inscriptions, and continued to be used along with Meroitic for royal names.

The Meroitic Kingdom of Kush was perhaps even larger in scale than that of the Napatan Period. It included Lower and Upper Nubia and may have also have extended south to the Blue and White Niles and the territory between them. Meroitic sites extended along the Blue Nile as far south as Sennar and perhaps beyond, though this area has yet to be fully explored. To the east, wells or *hafirs*, and caravanserai (a roadside inn with a large courtyard) indicate trade with the Red Sea coast. In the north, Lower Nubia also became increasingly important in the latest phases of Meroitic civilization. The capital city at Meroe itself may have already been founded by Dynasty 25, and its growing importance as an industrial and agricultural center as well as a trading center may have prompted the re-orientation of the kingdom.

This distancing from Egypt is reflected in the arts of the Meroitic period, and indicated not only the abandonment of many Egyptian conventions but also the adoption of alternate cultural influences. Unfortunately, there was little good stone to be had in the south, so the sculptors were largely restricted to the soft Nubian sandstone that would neither allow a finished surface or a sharp edge. One can better appreciate the work of the Meroitic artisans, on the rare occasions when they had good stone to carve, on the tablet of Prince Arikankharer (ca. first century CE) now in the Worcester Art Museum (Figure 23.7). Worked in a fine-grained grey sandstone, this relief portrays the young man in a traditional pharaonic pose of smiting a group of bound captives. His costume, however, is purely Nubian with the traditional cap-crown and diadem of a lion god wearing an *atef*-crown, a traditional Egyptian headdress worn by gods and sometimes kings. Behind him hovers the winged goddess Talakh, perhaps associated with Nike, who fans him, and at his foot a bound prisoner is shown being attacked by a hunting dog. The relief was part of a larger composition but still small in size. Its purpose is still unclear since it is too small to have been a wall relief and too finished to have been a trial piece.

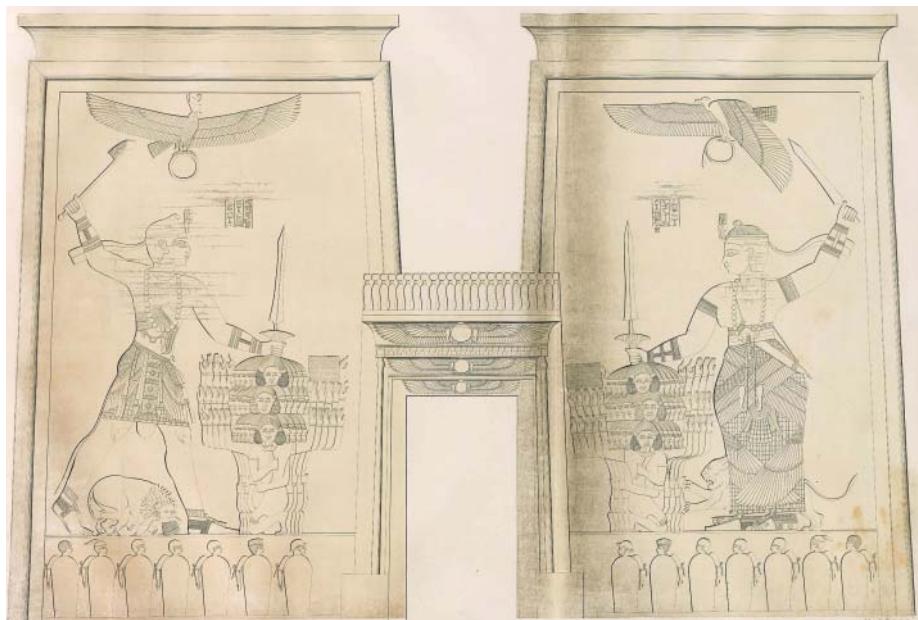
Similarly, a small stela of Amanakhabale, now in Khartoum, depicts the king offering to a ram-headed Amun and the goddess Mut rendered in steatite, again showing minute



**Figure 23.7** Relief of Prince Arikankharer. Image: © Worcester Art Museum, all rights reserved.

attention to detail, particularly in the rendering of the elaborate costumes. Representations of the kings and queens show them wearing distinctive clothing and regalia based on Egyptian and Napatan dress, and added a more original and complex ensemble as time went on. A close-fitting white robe topped with a fringed shawl and decorated with tassels was worn over most of the body. Sometimes males are shown with a kilt and elaborate greaves. There was an array of crowns, some modeled after those of an Egyptian pharaoh, but most were compilations of the cap-crown with two uraeii. Meroitic rulers also displayed a rich array of sumptuous jewelry, often bearing rams' heads—the emblem of the state god, Amun. The king was often depicted with weapons: a bow and arrows, a sword slung in a scabbard across his back with a spear and sometimes wearing the thumb ring worn by archers.

Queens' costumes were even more resplendent, bedecked with sequins and appliqués. Carefully pleated dresses covered their ample figures and they are shown with copious jewelry on their necks and arms, with rings on every finger and extremely long fingernails. Sometimes, the royal women duplicate male actions and are shown dominating captive prisoners, an attitude almost unheard of in Egypt. The pylon of the temple of Apedemak at Naga shows just such a pairing of King Natakanmani and Queen Amanitore smiting



**Figure 23.8** The pylon of the temple of Apedemak at Naga with King Natakanmani and Queen Amanitore smiting prisoners (after LD, pl. 56).

prisoners on either side of the entrance (Figure 23.8). The architecture at Naga also shows the cosmopolitan nature of Meroitic culture. While the temple more or less follows Egyptian traditions, it is fronted by a kiosk with arches and Corinthian capitals betraying Hellenistic influence. Friedrich Hinkel (1991) noted that the Egyptian-inspired buildings followed pharaonic traditions even down to the scale of proportions, while the Hellenistic ones adhered to Vitruvian principles.

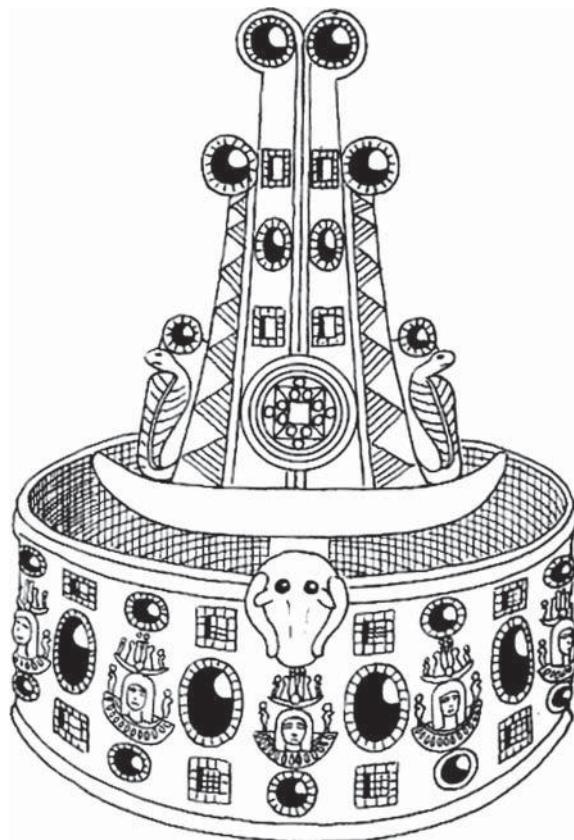
More innovation is seen in Meroitic funerary architecture. The royal tombs were always pyramidal, with a flat rather than a pointed top, and were built either of rough sandstone masonry or, after CE 50, of red brick or rubble covered with plaster. They were smaller than their Napatan predecessors, but many of their chapels were far better preserved, showing the same richly detailed depiction of the rulers and gods as in the temple reliefs. The steepness of the pyramids is probably due to a unique method of construction: a large pole was set up in the center of the structure to which a crossbeam was fixed to allow the stones to be levered into place. Friedrich Hinkel (1982) found a graffito at Meroe depicting just such a process underway along with one inscribed with measurements forming one of the world's earliest "blueprints."

The burial chambers were situated below ground and accessed by an external rock-cut stairway, and, as in the Napatan pyramids, they had a vestibule and coffin bench. The tombs, although often plundered, still yielded significant discoveries (Dunham 1957, 1963). The artifacts uncovered in them were mix of local crafts and Egyptian and

Hellenistic imports. Perhaps the greatest discovery made at Meroe was that of Giuseppe Ferlini in 1834 who found a trove of jewelry and objects belonging to the burial of Queen Amanishakheto. The skill of the enamelters who made this jewelry was without equal in the ancient world (Markowitz and Lacovara 1996). The facility of the Nubians in glass and gold is also evident in the gold glass beads produced at Meroe, as seen, for example, in a pair of gilded glass goblets found at Sedengia, one now in Khartoum and one in Pisa (O'Connor 2012).

Covering about one square mile, the capital city of Meroe has not been fully excavated. However, it is clear that there were not only large temples but also clusters of palaces and other public and domestic buildings in the capital city. The most incredible of these was a Roman style bath replete with classicizing sculptures like the famous “Venus of Meroe” (O'Connor 2012).

Amun remained the state god of Nubia and was worshipped in many temples throughout the land including the one at the capital of Meroe, which was as large as the great



**Figure 23.9** Inlaid silver crown from Ballana (after Emery (1967), 79, fig 7a).

temple at Gebel Barkal. However, Amun was joined by a pantheon of new gods and goddesses including the lion-god Apedimak and the hunter gods of the desert Arsenuphis and Sebeiumeker. Many traditional Egyptian gods continued to be worshipped as well, including Isis, Osiris, Anubis, Horus, and Mut, but often in new associations, such as the pairing of Isis with Anubis. Some deities belonged to purely local cults, as for example, the god Mash of Karanog.

## The Post-Meroitic Period

Regional differences can also be seen in the art of the later Meroitic Period, particularly in the ceramics produced at the time. In Lower Nubia, finely painted pottery appears, with motifs from Nubia, Egypt, and the Greco-Roman world including giraffes, *ankh*-signs, and ivy leaves. Some vessels even have amusing combinations of grapevines and crocodiles. Burials were often placed in small pyramid tombs and marked with both stele and sculptures of *ba*-birds (Woolley and MacIver 1910).

With the fall of Meroe to Axumite invaders from Ethiopia in 350 CE, Lower Nubia continued to flourish in the Post-Meroitic or X-Group phase. Pharaonic beliefs and styles, now extinct in their homeland, survived in this area well into the Byzantine Period. A spectacular example of this longevity is seen on one of the crowns from the royal tumuli at Ballana constructed of silver and inlaid with carnelian and garnets. While the tombs had reverted to the traditional Nubian tumulus, these crowns still retained traditional Egyptian insignia such as ureii, the *atef*-crown, the ram head of Amun and the *ba*-bird (Figure 23.9). It was not until Nubia was Christianized in the sixth century CE that the last holdouts of the fusion of Egypto-Nubian art that characterized the Kushite Period came to an end (Emery 1948).

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The most important summary of the archaeology and history of Nubia remains William Y. Adams (1977), although it lacks information from more recent research. Other important pioneering studies include those of Bernard Bothmer (1960) and Edna R. Russmann (1974). The first major museum exhibition catalog and consideration of the art of ancient Nubia was by Steffen Wenig (1978). More recent catalogs include those by Dietrich Wildung (1997), Derek A. Welsby and Julie R. Anderson (2004), and Michel Baud, et al., eds. (2010).

An important recent study of Napatan sculpture is Charles Bonnet and Dominique Valbelle (2005). More general overviews include those of David O'Connor (1993) and Marjorie Fisher, Peter Lacovara, Salima Ikram, and Sue D'Auria (2012).

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PART V

## Reception of Ancient Egyptian Art in the Modern World

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## CHAPTER 24

# Egyptomania

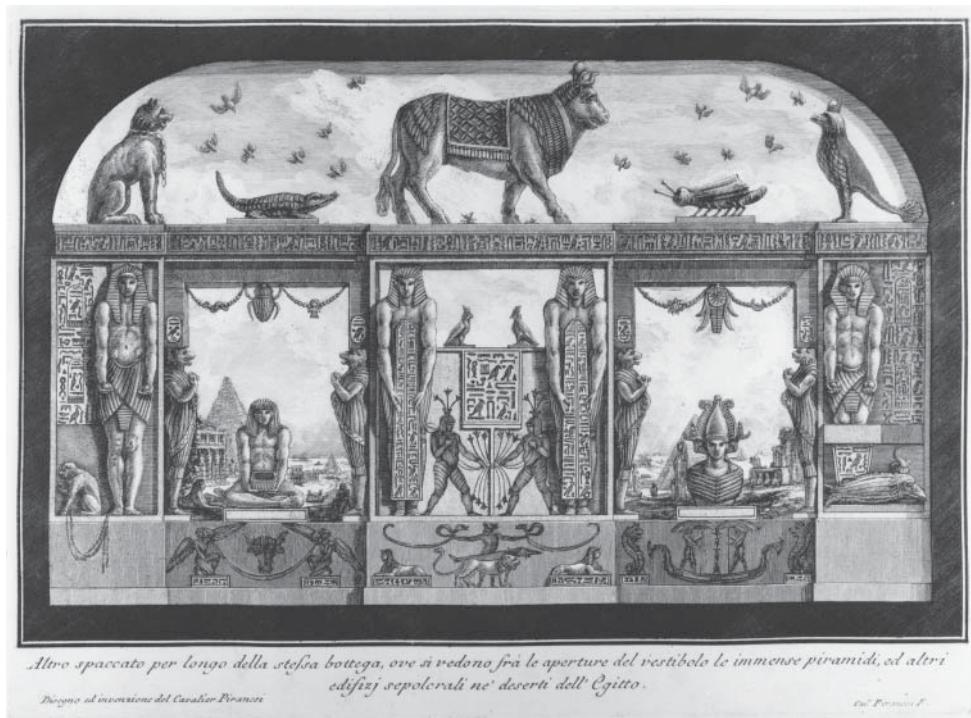
*Fascination for Egypt and Its Expression  
in the Modern World*

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*Jean-Marcel Humbert*

The western world's fascination for Egypt and its ancient civilization exists not only today but also well into the past. Already in antiquity, many authors underlined the "marvelous and extraordinary things" that one could see in this distant country. And the Romans, who adopted Isis worship and adapted it in the furthest regions of their vast Empire, were interested just as much in obelisks as in the "Egyptian" sphinxes and lions that they brought back to Rome. Emperor Hadrian himself, when his companion Antinous died, made him into a deified Osiris whose statues with the *nemes* (the Pharaonic striped headcloth) were sent to several provinces. This taste for Egypt, forgotten for centuries, developed again in the Middle Ages, aided by random journeys by explorers, adventurers, and missionaries to this region that, for a long time, remained remote and dangerous. The fascination for Egypt was also nourished by the interest of the Catholic popes who, by re-erecting Roman obelisks, hoped to appropriate the pagan beliefs that were dependent on them. The archaeological excavations that multiplied in the Roman Forum and Villa of Hadrian during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for example, contributed to this interest. Artists travelling on "The Grand Tour," who would meet inside the "English Coffee Shop" in Rome, could see the Egyptian decor created there by Piranesi in the 1760s (Figure 24.1). Nourished by archaeological artifacts and their adaptations during the Egyptian Revival, all of these factors contributed to spread a new taste for ancient Egypt all over Europe. At the same time, travelers, such as Norden and Pococke, started to publish better-illustrated books.

The interest in ancient Egypt hardly varied during the centuries, and was composed of the appeal for simple and imposing architecture made of recognizable components (cavetto cornice, battered wall, torus molding, characteristic capitals), striking decorative elements (winged disc, uraeus, vulture), zoomorphic gods, and hieroglyphs. Therefore, the mystery that surrounds this civilization is not confined to its beautiful writing, but also to its tombs, pyramids, and mastabas. Funerary beliefs in the afterlife, and the practice of



**Figure 24.1** One of the wall decorations of the English Café in Roma (Piazza di Spagna), by Giovanni Battista Piranesi (about 1760). Engraving from his book, *Diverse manière di adornare i Cammini* (Roma, 1769). © Collection and photograph: Jean-Marcel Humbert, Paris.

mummification also added something extraordinary to this already exceptional civilization. It should come as no surprise that the admiration that resulted from this, far from remaining silent and passive, would endeavor to recreate this world, or at least to reuse the decorative components from it. This is what is called *Egyptomania* or the “Egyptian Revival.” Egyptomania is characterized by its amazing spread, both geographically and chronologically. Only in some remote geographical areas such as India and central Africa was Egyptomania not found. All fields of art and daily life were affected—during Roman antiquity, and then from the sixteenth century to contemporary times. This was due primarily to the evocative force of ancient Egyptian art, and the creative power that emanated from it, as well as its capacity to be integrated in the art of all times. Egyptian art never ceased to mix with many other stylistic creations and, as well as nourishing them, was nourished by them.

Of all the instances of variations on, copying from, and arrangement of art, Egyptomania constitutes the strangest and most complex. First of all, it is involved simultaneously with the history of art and popular ethnographical studies; second, it perpetually evolves, closely integrating with the artistic characteristics of each period in which it develops; and, third, it is not constituted by pastiches of ancient Egyptian art, but instead conveys a large number of symbols—a phenomenon that does not occur within the framework of the other revivals. So any Egyptianizing artifact is always founded on influences other than

Egyptian ones, whether religious, esoteric, political, or commercial. By reusing ancient topics and symbols, Egyptomania gives a new significance to Egyptianizing recreations, which are always perceived by the public as contemporary creations.

Of course, any artistic or functional creation using decorative features from ancient Egypt refers back to this ancient civilization and to the country in which it appeared and developed. Through the phenomenon of Egyptomania, Egypt appears as the symbol of antiquity, justice, knowledge, and wisdom, and also represents death and eternal life, as well as exoticism and esotericism. Thus, what is Egyptian in Egyptomania is much more complex than may appear at first glance, because Egypt provides at the same time the models, the topics, and many of the symbols. And, if the archaeological discoveries and progress of Egyptology made it possible to understand ancient Egypt, these discoveries and advances never succeeded in erasing the mystery and dreams inherited from past centuries. However, even more than the beauty and originality of Egyptian art, it is this irrationality that Egyptomania was built on and developed.

In parallel, Egyptianizing topics point to specific, unrelated historical events in antiquity. The best example is the military campaign of Napoleon Bonaparte (1798). By placing Egypt under the lens of current events and in modern documentation, this military campaign bound Egyptian themes up with its own political symbols. Consequently, any Egyptianizing creation in the first half of nineteenth century in France or elsewhere in the world was charged with the memory of Bonaparte's campaign, became one of its symbols, and also carried on the myth of Napoleon. Based on different concepts, affected by reverie, fear, or laughter, Egyptomania has succeeded in remaining *à la mode* until today where it remains more alive than ever, thanks to the whole arsenal of possibilities, topics, symbols, and connotations that are attached to it. Thus, it is necessary to know how to read, behind its often appealing aspect, the hidden meaning Egyptomania carries.

First of all, however, it is advisable to define, with some degree of precision, what Egyptomania actually means, because this word, though well known and often employed, is rarely used precisely. Egyptomania consists in the reuse, in various forms and objects, of decorative elements borrowed from ancient Egypt. The determining factor that makes it possible to define an element as Egyptianizing is the presence of decorative elements borrowed from ancient Egypt. For example, a crouching sphinx—or *sphinge*—is not Egyptianizing if it does not wear the *nemes* headdress. On the other hand, a sitting winged sphinx or sphinge that is more Greek than Egyptian, is Egyptianizing if it wears the *nemes* headdress. In the same way, the Battle of the Pyramids represented as taking place before a scene of temple ruins and obelisks is not Egyptianizing, while the same theme animated by characters dressed as ancient Egyptians would be. Finally, any Egyptian creation like the pyramids, a temple, the interior of a tomb, can participate in Egyptomania if it is recreated and reused with a new meaning, as is the case in the movies or in advertising. However, one should not apply the Egyptomania label to everything that has a relationship with Egypt: a painting representing a view of Egypt with palm trees and a desert caravan belongs to the domain of Orientalism and Exoticism, not Egyptomania. In the same way, to travel to Egypt, to have a taste for antiquities, to bring them back and present them in a cabinet of curiosities is a mark of Egyptophilia, not Egyptomania.

The main sources of Egyptomania are: ancient monuments, such as obelisks, sphinxes, and lions, from Roman times onward; Egyptianizing sources from Roman antiquity such as the Cestius Pyramid in Rome, sphinxes, or Antinous statues from Hadrian's villa;

illustrated books written by travelers; scientific and systematic archaeological studies; special events that revive trends, for instance, the military campaign in Egypt (1798), the opening of the Suez Canal (1869), the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun (1922), or the Tutankhamun exhibitions during the 1960s and 1970s; and last but not least, topographical assimilations like the extraordinary one connecting the Mississippi River and its delta to the Nile. The nickname "Little Egypt" was given to the southern area of Illinois at the beginning of the nineteenth century and can be explained by US cities having names such as Cairo or Karnak. Further south, Memphis contributed to this concept and linked in the image of granaries supposed to provide wheat to less favored areas, while the anti-slavery fight of the middle of the nineteenth century also referred to old Egypt. There is no better example to illustrate the extent to which Egypt was able to put its mark on the most unexpected places and circumstances. But in any case, from the curse of Tutankhamun to the pyramids of the Louvre or Las Vegas, the perception of Egyptomania by the general public and the motivations of its creators did not really evolve. The temporary decor of the fêtes of the seventeenth century, the garden (or park) pavilions of the eighteenth century, Mozart's *Magic Flute*, *Aida*, and *The Ten Commandments* were all involved in a movement that attracted an ever-growing interest, proof of its perpetual modernity.

Egyptomania influenced all fields of art for centuries, but it is architecture that offers the most spectacular achievements. The first manifestation of architectural Egyptomania appeared in the pavilions ("follies"), temporary decorations for parties, and lightweight constructions planted in eighteenth-century English gardens. Beside the Chinese pagoda and Gothic ruins, there was always a pyramid, an obelisk, or a small Egyptian temple used as a summer living room or exotic greenhouse. The best examples were carried out in Montbeliard (France) by architect Jean-Baptiste Kléber, on Mr. Davelouis' property in Soisy-sous-Etiolles (near Paris, France) by P.F.L. Dubois, and in Valençay by Jean-Augustin Renard. Jean-François Chalgrin and Dominique Vivant Denon also designed an astonishing temple project in honor of generals Kléber and Desaix, inspired by the Hathor Temple at Dendera. The nineteenth century remained fond of such delicate pavilions, and one still finds them in many places such as Rome, where Luigi Canina built an Egyptian door that can still be seen today in the Borghese gardens; in Russia, where Adam Menelaws decorated one of the entrances to Tsarskoye Selo Park with an immense gateway; and in Antwerp, where the elephants in the zoo live in a recently restored Egyptian temple. From the middle of the nineteenth century, World Fairs were almost always embellished with Egyptianizing temples or houses, which have disappeared today.

Private and public architecture was also touched by this fashion at the end of the eighteenth century. Apart from the projects of Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, Jean-Jacques Lequeu, and Etienne-Louis Boullée, *inter alia*, there are well-known buildings of very high quality: in Paris, the portico of the Beauharnais Mansion and the building of the Place du Caire; in London, the Egyptian Hall that was copied on a reduced scale in Devonport and Penzance (Figure 24.2). This Egyptian Hall, famous throughout the whole world, resulted in England, and especially in the United States, in the construction of a number of Egyptianizing buildings. All kinds of buildings were influenced, including law courts, office blocks, prisons, railway stations, schools, libraries, museums, factories, churches, synagogues, masonic temples, and even pharmacies and movie theaters. Even



**Figure 24.2** The Egyptian Hall in London (Piccadilly), by Peter Frederick Robinson (1812). It was demolished in 1904. Engraving by A. McClatchy 1828, after a drawing by Thomas H. Shepherd. © Collection and photograph: Jean-Marcel Humbert, Paris.

today, non-funerary pyramids are built, such as the one near Chicago occupied by an eccentric and very rich American.

Another domain greatly influenced by Egyptomania is that of cemeteries, tombs, and memorials. As early as 1557, Guillaume Du Bellay's tomb inside Le Mans Cathedral in France was decorated with two sphinxes. Caius Cestius' pyramid in Rome, with its characteristic slim form, was copied in cemeteries that frequently used pagan decoration from Egypt, like the winged disc or the cavetto cornice. The use of pagan imagery did not fail to worry some American Christian communities in the middle of the nineteenth century, who rose up against monumental cemetery entrances like the one built by Jacob Bigelow at Mount Auburn (Cambridge, MA) or by Henry Austin in the Grove Street Cemetery in New Haven, CT. This fashion for pagan decoration was not specifically American, since one finds a few examples in London, Italy, and France from the same



**Figure 24.3** Hathoric heads on a house in Paris (place du Caire), by J.-G. Garraud (1828). © Photograph: Guillemette Andreu, Paris.

period. The obelisk and the pyramid, which offer large surfaces suitable for receiving inscriptions, were also very often used, and are still used today as memorials.

Thus, Egyptianizing architecture is extremely varied and influenced public edifices and private dwellings indiscriminately. But one can also distinguish between buildings designed completely in an Egyptian style, like the Place du Caire building in Paris, and others where Egyptomania intervened only nominally—by providing elements added to classical facades, or by mingling with other styles such as Neo-Gothic or Exotic (Figure 24.3). In all cases, the greatest imagination appears in external decoration, which mixes sculpture and polychromy. Antinous, Isis, heads with the *nemes*-headdress, Hathoric heads, hieroglyphs, and medallions bring a note of ornamental whim to very traditional buildings such as the castle of Fontainebleau in 1530, the Louvre in 1806, the Grand Palais in 1900, the Institut d'art et d'archéologie in 1927, the library of the town of Stockholm in 1928, l'École pratique de médecine de Paris in 1937; all present characteristic examples of ornamentalism. Fountains, also, inspired many of the artists of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: Isis offering water through her breast, Antinous carrying jugs, lions and sphinxes spitting water—the variations on these themes are much loved by the general public and are innumerable and visible to the entire world (Figure 24.4).

Sculpture is certainly, of all the arts, the one that was influenced most by the style of the period in which it was created. Among objects of inspiration, the “Egyptian” sphinx is, at the same time, the most representative and the most widespread of the Egyptianizing



**Figure 24.4** The “Fellah” fountain in Paris made by Bralle and Beauvallet (1806–1809) after a Roman statue of Antinous, now in the Vatican Museum. © Photograph: Guillemette Andreu, Paris.

themes. The sphinx appears during the Renaissance often mixed with the Greek sphinx; most of the time, if it is feminized, it preserves the characteristic *nemes*-headdress. The sphinxes are generally paired and occupy various sites: they crouch and appear to watch at the top of a flight of steps and/or at the entry to houses where they serve as reception and protection. One also encounters them in parks and gardens or together along avenues, as in Egypt, and in front of the temple of the World Fair in 1867, transported later to Victorien Sardou’s private mansion in Marly-le-Roi (Figure 24.5). But in all the cases, their attitude and *nemes*-headdress followed the fashion of the moment: in the seventeenth



**Figure 24.5** Paris 1867 World Fair, front entrance to the Egyptian Temple conceived by the French Egyptologist Auguste Mariette. © Collection and photograph: Jean-Marcel Humbert, Paris.

century wearing hairstyles like graceful volutes, at the end of the eighteenth century they adopt a more hieratic position and the *nemes*-headdress appears closer to archaeological reality, before undergoing the excesses of the successive fashions of Art Nouveau and Art Déco. The Egyptian lion with the head straight or turned to the side was also used in the same manner as the sphinx, particularly in Russia. And the statues of Antinous discovered in the ruins of Hadrian's villa were often copied, especially after Piranesi and Hubert Robert made them fashionable, especially to enliven interior decorations.

The other topics, apart from these great classics, are extremely varied. However, Cleopatra remains one of most permanent themes. Dying or vain, she inspired a great number of sculptors until the year 1925. In addition, one meets "Egyptian women" such as Isis and Osiris, Nubians, harpists, in bronzes of great quality by Charles Cordier, Gaston Leroux, Georges-Charles Coudray, and Emile-Louis Picault. All of these representations are immediately datable, because, besides being Egyptian women, they were also "à la mode" of their time. According to the same principles, contemporary sculpture adapted the obelisk and the pyramid, and subjected them to surprising treatments such as the cutout pyramid of Pierre Baey and the floating pyramid (or Hapitrône) of Gérard Chamaillou.

Interior decoration was invaded very early by Egyptomania. As early as 1514, Antinous appeared on the walls of one of the rooms painted by Raphael in the Vatican. But this

was an isolated case, and the true turning point in this field arrived only in the year 1760 with the opening of the Caffè degli Inglesi in the Piazza di Spagna in Rome, decorated by Piranesi. It was the fashionable place at the time where foreigners met. Its role was to be of central importance, furthermore, supported by the publication of *Cammini*, also by Piranesi. Consequently, palaces throughout all Europe had at least one room decorated in the Egyptian style, or with Egyptian decoration: Versailles, Fontainebleau, the Villa Borghese, the Vatican (which had several)—and in Spain, Sweden, then Russia, and finally England where Thomas Hope drew up inimitable pastiches. Egyptianizing fireplaces (thanks to Piranesi) became fashionable, and were covered by *nemes*-heads, hieroglyphs, and winged discs, joined by friezes of Egyptians, medallions, and painted woodwork. Wallpaper, tapestries, and hangings also made use of Egyptian themes.

About the middle of the nineteenth century, museums started, with a didactic aim, to be decorated in the Egyptian manner, in particular the Vatican and thereafter, the museums of Berlin, Florence, Moscow, and, later on, San Francisco. The Charles X Museum in the Louvre received, in years 1827 to 1835, some Egyptianizing decorations. In 1827 François-Edouard Picot painted a ceiling depicting “Study and Genius Revealing Ancient Egypt to Athens.” The broad cornice is decorated with four winged discs, seated lionesses and goddesses, and various items or gods (harpsichord, sistrums, mirrors, Anubis) to which are joined modern figurative representations of birds and snakes on the edges of the Nile. In the trompe-l’oeil frieze, a grisaille painting by Vinchon and Gosse shows a Greek sculptor copying an Egyptian Isis. In another room, the ceiling painted by Abel de Pujol represents “Egypt saved by Joseph.” This composition is surrounded by two winged discs, and in each corner can be seen Anubis, Horus, a beetle, and an ibis. The cornice is decorated with naked men hanging garlands between “Nilometers,” and in the center of the wall facing the windows a grisaille painting represents a pharaoh surrounded by his court. A frieze of grisaille paintings surrounds the room, showing scenes from the life of the Egyptians: the aim was to create an educative background for the original artifacts on display. A third room, known as the Figurines of Tanagra Room, was finished only in 1835: the ceiling, by Léon Cogniet, shows “Bonaparte surrounded by scientists and artists, directing their work and assisting the discovery of a mummy.” The painting is surrounded by two allegorical compositions: on the left-hand side, ancient Egypt with a Hathoric head, a winged Horus, pseudo-cartouches, and hieroglyphs; and on the right-hand side, an Arabian composition. The decorators in charge of the interiors of the World’s Fair pavilions were animated by similar notions. And, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the same type of decoration was used inside movie theatres, masonic temples, shops, and even ocean liners that sailed to the Orient such as the *Champollion*, the *Mariette-Pasha*, and the *Théophile Gautier*. Today, several interior designers still maintain this fashion, agreeing with the wishes of their customers. Sphinxes, in particular, have found a new career in luxurious decorations *à l’antique*.

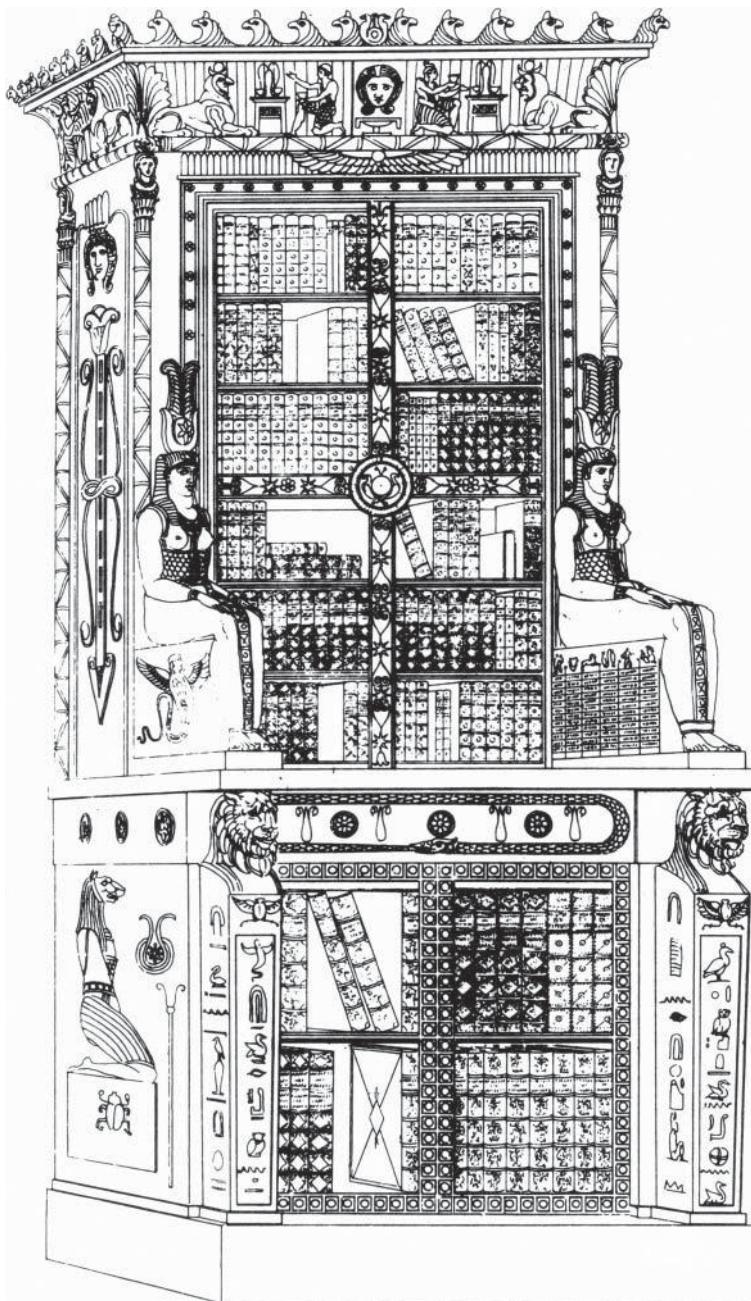
Furniture and *objets d’art* constitute the most significant part of Egyptomania. Everyone knows the Egyptianizing armchairs created at the time of Marie-Antoinette, on whose armrests rest various sphinxes *ad infinitum*, from the complete animal to a simple head with a *nemes*-headdress. But the Napoleonic Period marks the high point of the Egyptianizing style, which explains why Egyptomania is too often reduced to the name *retour d’Égypte* (“back from Egypt”) at the beginning of the nineteenth century; a name that is still used wrongly to indicate any Egyptianizing decoration,

since Egyptomania continued to spread throughout nineteenth and twentieth centuries while adapting with ease to many forms of art. Egyptianizing decoration is found on many pieces of furniture, chests of drawers, secretaires, and consoles of all kinds from the time of Napoleon the First. But there were also pieces of furniture that were much more original, designed entirely in an Egyptianizing style: Charles Percier and Pierre François Léonard Fontaine were the first to create a secretaire bookcase decorated with all the usual Egyptianizing elements (Figure 24.6). Thomas Hope in England and Dominique Vivant Denon in France had models even more daring and original made for their own use. In the year 1820, Charles Morel created a bookshelf decorated with Hathor heads, snakes, cavetto-cornices, and a winged disk, especially designed to carry, and refer to, the imposing volumes of the *Description of Egypt*. Then seats appeared, copied from the ancient originals, and Egyptianizing living room furniture that is still manufactured today.

This desire to keep small objects in the home representing the wonders of Egypt is even more obvious with *objets d'art*. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Duke d'Aumont, Marie-Antoinette, and Dominique Vivant Denon made it fashionable to have andirons and candelabras in the Egyptian style. Under the First Empire, lamps especially made use of Egyptian female statues in every imaginable position, bearing the sconce. The lamp bases were often covered with hieroglyphs, and could be entirely Egyptianizing like the pair of candelabras made by Pierre-Philippe Thomire for the Beauharnais Mansion. Under the Second Empire, the fashion was for cast-iron candlestick holders, from one to two meters in height, representing children and Nubians, who join Egyptian female statues as well as Antinous, who remained popular. Vases were also easily adapted to Egyptomania, either by adding female Egyptian heads to the handles, as Pierre Gouthière did at the end of the eighteenth century, or by composing an entirely Egyptian ensemble like the gilded bronze vase made in 1806 for the Tuileries after Denon's drawings. The Sèvres factory created in 1832 a vase named "Champollion" with a frieze of lotus and papyrus painted by Jean-Charles Develly in accordance with the famous Egyptologist's drawings. In 1838, Antoine Gabriel Willermet designed another Egyptianizing vase for the factory. Consequently, each private factory proposed new models of Egyptian vases that continue until today. Emile Gallé, for example, then Art Deco artists, were very much inspired by ancient Egyptian art.

But it is certainly in the domain of horology that the most unbridled imagination appeared: Egyptianizing pendulums with obelisks and sphinxes multiply under the First Empire. Percier and Fontaine created a model in the shape of an Egyptian pylon and another clock perfectly replicated the temple of Dendera according to Denon's drawings. But many clocks used all the usual themes such as sphinxes, lions, caryatids and busts wearing the *nemes*-headdress, hieroglyphs, and so forth. At the end of the nineteenth century, mantelpiece ornaments with massive forms and dark colors became fashionable, some of which were completely Egyptianizing, often complete with two obelisks. Besides, the small obelisk *objet d'art* is one of the most popular small-scale models. One finds it uninterruptedly from the sixteenth century until today, produced in many different materials in various sizes, sometimes covered with hieroglyphs.

Lastly, tableware items are the most sought after and original objects. The English manufacturer Wedgwood was the first to produce, at the end of the eighteenth century, canopic vases and candelabras in the shape of a seated winged sphinx. This production,



**Figure 24.6** Secrétaire bookcase with Egyptianizing decoration by Charles Percier and Pierre François Leonard Fontaine (about 1800). Engraving from their book *Recueil des décosrations intérieures* (Paris, 1801). © Collection and photograph: Jean-Marcel Humbert, Paris.

mainly made of “black-basalt” porcelain, was followed at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the most original creations yet: teapots, coffee pots, lamps, and boat-shaped writing cases with a crocodile head and a canopic vase, were brought up to date in the manner of either *black basalt* or *rosso antico*. By the middle of the century, the same objects were still manufactured, but the famous canopic vases were then made in “blue jasper-dip.”

France had to compete with Wedgwood, so the manufacturer of Sèvres created Egyptianizing patterns. At the end of the eighteenth century, Sèvres produced only one statuette—the Egyptian woman by Boizot in 1788. Then, in 1802, Sevres made a writing case with a pylon decorated with pseudo-Egyptian hieroglyphs with two seated Egyptian women on each side. This model, which was a great success, could be delivered in white or tinted blue or black. Finally, in 1805, under the influence of Denon, the manufacturer executed the first of a series of Egyptian dinner services, composed of a huge centerpiece, twenty-two feet in length, with the kiosk of Philae, the temples of Dendera and Edfu, four obelisks, two colonnades, two pylons, four seated figures of Memnon, and two rows of ram-headed sphinxes. The centerpiece was accompanied by a magnificent porcelain dessert service comprising seventy-two plates, twelve fruit dishes (“compotiers”), four sugar bowls, two jam pots, four ice buckets, four baskets, and four figures carrying dishes. Each plate was hand-painted in grisaille with different Egyptian scenes (scrupulously copied from Denon’s book) and decorated with gilt hieroglyphs on the blue marl. A smaller service for coffee and tea, composed of thirty-three pieces also with Egyptian subjects, supplemented the former.

At first Napoleon wanted to keep this Egyptian service for himself, but the interest with which Tsar Alexander I spoke about the Egyptian military campaign inspired Napoleon to offer it to him. It is preserved today in the Ceramics Museum of Kuskovo, close to Moscow. The success of this first Egyptian service was such that the Emperor demanded the plates of his personal service be produced from the same model. Then, several other smaller services (or “cabarets”) for coffee were manufactured in the years that followed, before the second centerpiece and Egyptian service was started in 1811 based on the same model that was offered to the Tsar. Finished the following year, it was offered by the Emperor to Josephine, who refused it. Kept in the manufacturer’s storehouse, the ensemble left there in 1818, when the French king Louis XVIII decided to offer it to Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington. Since then, the service was preserved in the collection of the Duke of Wellington, in Stratfield Say, until its recent purchase by the Victoria and Albert Museum, and is currently displayed in Apsley House, London. France retained some plates, and parts of the centerpiece, and, of course, the plaster casts and the molds. It is still possible to order some parts today like the obelisks; in fact, some were reused by Sèvres in 1978 by Anne and Patrick Poirier for their monumental “Ruins of Egypt” centerpiece.

Wedgwood and Sèvres products were copied or imitated throughout the nineteenth century by central European manufacturers and private workshops. The silversmith trade also used, to a lesser degree, the same Egyptian sources of inspiration. And there are also some exceptional objects, although not easy to classify, like the “Obeliscus Augustalis” and the “Apis-Altar” by Johann Melchior Dinglinger, made according to the Turin Isiacal table. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the field of everyday life and usual objects was invaded more and more by Egyptomania in militaria, fashion, and

jewelry, until the recent development called Tutankhamun-mania. Exceptional *objets d'art* reserved for the elite, became, in the course of the centuries, cheap junk items and universally available, following the example of the amulets of the Late Period.

Iconography also constitutes one of Egyptomania's privileged fields. Intended to bring the past alive again through personal interpretation fixed on canvas or paper, one's own vision of antiquity is transmitted to others—such was the objective pursued by artists who illustrated ancient Egypt. Also, in this domain, Rome provided the first decorative elements. A great number of representations of the Roman countryside show Egyptian components: a stone covered with hieroglyphs, a ruined obelisk, remains of sphinxes or lions, Antinous—Hubert Robert, *inter alia*, became a master of this kind of imaginary composition. Afterwards, Cleopatra, finally presented in a more Egyptian manner, became one of the star subjects of painting, especially in the representation of her always very theatrical death. Louis-Jean Desprez, a French artist settled in Sweden, created spectacular stage sets, while Moreau le Jeune went even further, and tried to animate the scenes that he painted. The “Procession in Honor of the Goddess Isis” (Salon of 1791, Paris) and the “Funeral of a Queen of Egypt” (Salon of 1793) show a landscape and vegetation that are more Roman than Egyptian, and characters more representative of classical antiquity than of ancient Egypt. Moreau le Jeune tried to recreate Egyptianizing backgrounds, with pyramids, temples, and colossal statues, which helped to make the scene more plausible. He especially represented, in these rather confused compositions, typical actors and accessories such as priests with shaved craniums, men with animal heads carrying *ankh*-signs and dressed in clothing decorated with pseudo-hieroglyphs, emblems decorated with animal gods and various idols. Another of his works, “Scene of Initiation with Egyptians” (1792), is totally Egyptianizing. In this work, one sees the representation of the so-called first-rank tests in Freemasonry initiations, corresponding to those practiced during the reception of the initiates in Memphis: the tests of fire, water, and air (also evoked in Mozart's *Magic Flute* that was performed at the same time) take place in front of a pharaoh and various dignitaries dressed in the Egyptian manner. The idea of “staging” such tests of initiation was inspired by the description of the procession in the honor of the goddess Isis given by Apuleius in his *Golden Ass*, which had by then been often republished (in particular in 1769, 1787, and 1797). Guillaume Boichot often represented this theme, in particular in his “Isiacal Pump” (1801), where he reproduced exactly the idol imagined by Moreau le Jeune.

These historical pseudo-reconstitutions continued throughout the nineteenth century, with an honorable career, but faced stiff competition from biblical scenes that became one of the most illustrated subjects during the nineteenth century by the great Egyptianizing painters. Among these, Adrien Guignet was very representative, and had the appearance almost of a precursor: “Cambyses and Psamménite,” exhibited in the 1841 Salon, already showed the archaeological concerns of the painter, who copied the statue of Smenkhabre in the Louvre Museum. While preparing “Joseph Explaining the Dreams of Pharaoh” exhibited in the 1845 Salon, he met the Egyptologist Prisse d'Avennes and asked him for advice. Guignet also copied the Dendera zodiac, the veracity of which was far from being perfect, but it assumes a particular decorative atmosphere with Campaniform and Hathoric columns and mural scenes, in front of which is the pharaoh with his head covered by the *nemes*-headdress, and advisors, one of whom wears the *khepresh*-crown, as well as many other characters dressed in full Roman togas. Guignet also represented

pyramids and the ruins of an Egyptian temple in his “Flight from Egypt” exhibited in the 1848 Salon.

But it is the reconstructions “in the antique manner” that really got to the heart of pictorial Egyptomania, bringing our distant ancestors to life in the fashion of the nineteenth century. True theatrical “staging” became fashionable in the 1840s, in which the painter was, at the same time, portraitist, director, decorator, property person, and costumer. The artists, obsessed by exactitude, went overboard on the archaeological excellence of their models: Lawrence Alma-Tadema is, with Jean Jules Antoine Lecomte du Nouÿ, Percy Williams Bridgman, Edwin Long, and Georges Rochegrosse, the specialist of the genre. The themes they chose were varied, but they illustrated especially scenes of daily and religious life in the court of the pharaoh, life in the harem, women at their toilette, the work of artisans, funerals, and the Judgment of the Dead. Subsequently, other artists were more inspired by the style of Egyptian drawing; this was the case with Paul Gauguin in *Te Matete* (The Market); it was also the case with Henri Matisse, André Derain, Pablo Picasso, and Paul Sérusier, who never hid their admiration for Egyptian art, nor their borrowing from it. Today, more than ever, a great number of painters are inspired by Egypt. One quotes from memory the painters David Hockney and Jean-Paul Chambas, who knew how to free themselves from the archaeological yoke, while preserving the relationship with the supernatural, light, and color; three of the essential components in Egyptianizing painting.

Close to painting, stage sets helped to revive Egypt in theaters without a break from the seventeenth century on. Of course, sets and costumes were then only approximate, but were enough to make the crowds dream. It was not until Louis Jean Desprez and then Karl Friedrich Schinkel that the proscenium offered opportunities to open up the imagination. The 1815 Berlin Opera production of *The Magic Flute* showcased starry skies, a solitary sphinx in the moonlight, and Egyptian palaces with infinite colonnades: a style was born, and the imitators were legion. From then on, stage sets resembled paintings by the masters whose themes were connected. Likewise, in the theater, Moses, Joseph, and Cleopatra were very successful.

Just like historical painting, theatrical performances were based on new archaeological knowledge, until the Egyptologist Auguste Mariette created in 1871 the “total Egyptianizing show,” *Aida* (music by Giuseppe Verdi). Many composers were inspired by Egyptianizing themes, without necessarily wanting to recreate truly ancient music, a difficult and impossible exercise as, like Verdi, they quickly understood. Gioachino Rossini wrote in 1818 *Moses in Egypt*, Pietro Raimondi in 1852 *Putifar, Joseph and Jacob*, and Victor Massé in 1884, *A Night of Cleopatra*. The creation of *Thais* by Massenet in 1894 offered the audience the curious spectacle of dancers moving in ballet tutus in the middle of Egyptian colossi. Before *Cleopatra* by Massenet (1914), an American operetta, *The Wizard of the Nile* by Victor Herbert (1895), had great success, and, in Spain, the zarzuela of Lleo, Perrin, and Palacios, *La Corte de Faraon* (1910), tells once more of the disappointments of Potiphar. The ballet was also fond of Egyptomania: most famous was certainly *The Pharaohs’ Daughter* by Marius Petipa (1862), *Le Figlie di Cheope* by Costantino Dall’Argine and Montplaisir (1871), and the *Egyptian Ballet* of Luigini (1880), which was regularly played in concert. But it was especially *Cleopatra*, created by Serge de Diaghilev for the Russian Ballet, that remained one of the greatest moments in scenic Egyptomania: with very colorful sets by Leon Bakst, the 1909 cast joined together Anna Pavlova, Karsavina, Nijinsky, and Ida Rubinstein as an astonishing Cleopatra with

blue hair). During the revival in London in 1919, Tchernichova returned to the role in costumes designed by Sonia Delaunay. The period 1870–1914 was also a time of great costumed balls, sumptuous festivities, and spectacular variety shows. Pierre Loti was photographed dressed as a pharaoh, and the famous French writer Colette played *Rêve d'Egypte* (Dream of Egypt) at the Moulin-Rouge. Closer to us, the ceaseless revivals of *Aida* and of *The Magic Flute* show the endless possibilities for reviving Egyptianizing settings and the staging.

As regards the cinema, Georges Méliès was one of the first directors who shot Egyptian subjects: *A Theft in Cleopatra's Tomb* (1899) and *The Prophetess of Thebes* (1907) reveled in cardboard and painted canvas. The Bible, Cleopatra, the last days of Pompeii, and mummies provided new themes that, in the absence of novelty or originality, offered a change of scenery and the exoticism and romance that the viewer came to seek. A genuine policy of escalation with the spectacular was soon established between studios, which competed in luxury and grandiosity, if not in credibility. Ernst Lubitsch, when shooting *The Loves of Pharaoh* (1921) in Germany, was one of the first to understand the importance of what Auguste Mariette defended more than 50 years earlier: attention to sets, costumes, and accessories gives the film the flavor of authenticity.

At the same time another type of Egyptianizing film was born: the modern adventure film in a recreated ancient Egyptian environment. Three Danish films of Robert Dinesen, dating from the years 1915–1916, *The Mystery of the Sphinx*, *The Collar of the Mummy*, and *The Son of the Sphinx* (*Sfinxens Hemmelighed*, *Mumiens Halsbaand* and *Sfinxens Son*), were prototypes of a genre with a long career. All three used astonishing sets built in the sand dunes of a beach on the North Sea, consisting of a “sphinx-pyramid” with a secret door hiding between its legs, whose eyes released luminous plumes of smoke at moments, not far from the ruins of a temple. In the United States also, cardboard “B-movies” were mixed with more serious blockbusters, among which Cecil B. DeMille’s first version of *The Ten Commandments* (1923) remains the best example. A particular theme dating to almost the beginning of cinema was that of the mummy. It was not yet the horror movie, but simply made use of a strange and disturbing character, which swung into the fantastic. Thus was opened the way to a genre of films starring Boris Karloff (1932) who remained unsurpassed despite an impressive lineage of remakes. But, in fact, it is the epic Egyptianizing films that remain the most important, in number and in quality. *Cleopatra* and *Ten Commandments* return regularly to the screen, whereas more ambitious films—like Michael Curtiz’s *The Egyptian* (1954), which retold the story of Sinuhe, Howard Hawks’ *The Land of the Pharaohs* (1955), or Jerzy Kawalerowicz’s *Pharaoh* (1966)—reflect on religion, power, love, and death. Comedy films were not to be outdone, and these hilarious pastiches exploited all the gimmicks of Egyptomania.

A great number of Egyptianizing films were launched with very effective slogans like “the largest pyramid in cinemascope” or “better than the Tutankhamun exhibition,” or “a show the size of the pyramids.” The success of this kind of advertising showed that these topics resonated deeply with the general public, and explains why current films adopt the same formula: today, on television, Cleopatra champions a floor cleaner, and, with a nod to ancient Egypt through the magic of the cinema, yoghurt and paper towels. Cartoons, in turn, respond primarily to the demands and tastes of the young public towards the marvelous and fantastic; they don’t stage original subjects, and have not given rise to immortal works.

On the other hand, comics, which are the heir to all the illustrated books of the nineteenth century, extensively use Egypt: *The Mystery of the Great Pyramid* by Edgar-P. Jacobs (1954), *The Golden Sphinx* (1949) and *The Prince of the Nile* (1973) by Jacques Martin, among many others, are already classics of the genre. In fact, children and adults find in comic strips the representations of their dreams, because comics about Egypt create strong and indelible images, available at one's fingertips. At the same time, comics convey clichés inherited from varied sources, in particular from film. And the child steeped in comic strips became the adult who now successfully exploits Egyptomania.

The last area where Egyptomania is firmly established is advertising. Again, media and themes are highly varied, from the beginning of the nineteenth century. But it is especially at the end of the nineteenth and during the twentieth century that Egyptianizing figures began to be used to sell varied products: Cleopatra and Nefertiti, symbols of beauty, praise the merits of cosmetics. The durability and strength of Egypt helped to promote tools symbolizing medicine: Egypt could make or sell drugs; and tools symbolizing death and the afterlife, which could promote the funeral business. But it is especially the fields of computing and data processing that, today, are the biggest consumers of Egyptomania. Egypt appears as the country of science, a land of vast culture, the creator of an astonishing thousands-of-years-old civilization. Thus, it constitutes a privileged reference point in the past, to which the public can easily cling to soften the cold and impersonal aspects of modern technology. Since the beginning of the 1980s, the astonishing growth of these Egyptianizing themes in all fields confirms the extent to which they are deeply anchored in the western collective unconscious.

Egyptomania well deserves to leave the ghetto of exoticism and anticomana where it has remained confined for too long. Because it is more than the expression of fashion and also more than the simple expression of exoticism, Egyptomania offers strong and indelible images for the popular imagination in which mystery and the fantastic exist always alongside the joy of living and death. Egyptomania is a truly original creation, which has earned a name through the centuries. Neither isolated incidents nor continuations of isolated incidents, all its manifestations are connected within a closed circuit. Because, in fact, in spite of its multiple aspects, we can say that there is only one Egyptomania, that responds, through all the fashions, the periods, and the countries, to one major preoccupation: to cling to the past in so far as it contained that which was most beautiful and most wonderful. This, together with decorative themes that are used as signs of recognition, form the background of this phenomenon and created the basis of its continuity. Thus, if Egyptomania has been so successful, it is because it can express itself both in architectural excesses and in the smallest of objects, in glitz as in the cheapest kind of junk, without losing anything of its exceptional evocative power. But it is especially Egyptomania's fantastic adaptability that allows it to resist the vagaries of fashion, that best explains its permanence, and that constitutes its best chance of survival.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The first book about Egyptomania (or the Egyptian Revival) was published in 1978 by Richard Carrot. It is a very good book but deals only with the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century. Another book by James Stevens Curl first appeared in 1982 and has been reprinted several

times with additions; it is a fundamental book, but devoted essentially to architecture. In 1983, the first exhibition of Egyptomania went on display in Brighton, England (catalog), which was to be followed by several other shows in the United States. The first book written by the author of this chapter, appeared in 1989 (*L'Egyptomanie dans l'art occidental*) with a text that is not as detailed as Curl's book, but presents a broader vision of Egyptomania. Next, the exhibition at the Louvre in Paris which traveled to Ottawa and Vienna in 1994–1995 was published in a catalog that contains the most important information on the subject (Humbert, Pantazzi, and Ziegler 1994), which was followed by the publication of the colloquium papers (Humbert (ed.) 1996). Then, in 1998, the author wrote a book about Paris Egyptomania (*L'Égypte à Paris*), followed in 2003 by two volumes in the “Encounters with Ancient Egypt” series edited by Peter Ucko, that treat Egyptomania (Humbert and Price (eds.), *Imhotep Today: Egyptianizing Architecture*; MacDonald and Rice (eds.), *Consuming Ancient Egypt*). The most recent book on the subject is Humbert and Pumain (2013), *Le Louxor, palais du cinéma*. For twenty years, Egyptomania has become a truly scientific subject. Hundreds of papers have been published, as well as books with narrower approaches, such as Hana Navrátilová's 2003, *Egyptian Revival in Bohemia, 1850–1920*; and in 2004, Margaret Bakos' (ed.), *Egyptomania O Egito no Brasil*. It is obvious that there is plenty to discover and study about this fascinating subject.

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PART VI

## **Technology and Interpretation**

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## CHAPTER 25

# Interpretation

*Nigel Strudwick*

All research, of whatever flavor in whatever subject, is worth naught if it is unpublished. In 2011, publication can take a variety of forms with electronic media, which are, according to some, perhaps poised to take primacy over traditional paper. While archive research will forever play a part in most disciplines, it is fundamentally wrong that one has to access archives as the only source for some projects. In a discipline so (rightly or wrongly) object- and text-based as Egyptology, publications are the first line of primary material, with consultation of the originals a secondary option. Often the latter is not possible, as monuments decay or are destroyed at the hands of man and nature; the publication (failing that, the archive) is then the only record, and it is thus incumbent on us to make the best record possible lest the subject not survive.

This chapter is intended to cover the documentation of ancient Egyptian works of art. “Art” is hard to define—is a pot “art”? This subject will be considered elsewhere in this volume (see Baines, this volume), so the range of material covered here consists of standing monuments, including statues and stelae, but excluding grave goods and cult implements. Both two- and three-dimensional subjects are considered.

While not the first to copy scenes and inscriptions, the first scientific modern recordings were made by the Napoleonic Expedition, which worked widely in Egypt and produced the magnificent *Description de l’Égypte* from 1809. The French, who were recording before the decipherment of hieroglyphs, were followed by a number of English artists and scholars in the 1820s. These included Sir John Gardner Wilkinson and Robert Hay, both of whom produced superb copies but whose work still remains largely unpublished, although accessible in London and Oxford. In the late 1820s, Champollion, the decipherer of hieroglyphs, led a Franco-Tuscan expedition to record monuments, and they produced excellent records. Of even greater importance was the trip to Egypt by the first German Egyptologist, Richard Lepsius, whose expedition recorded an unprecedented

range of material in the early 1840s, published in 1849 as *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien*; this brought the art of recording to a new height.

However, the promise of the earlier nineteenth century was somewhat lost after the 1850s, and the next boost to recording standards had to wait until the foundation of the Archaeological Survey of the Egypt Exploration Fund in 1889–1890. Several years after that, the Fund engaged Norman de Garis Davies (who first worked in Egypt at Dendera in 1897–1898 with Petrie) to copy monuments for the Survey up and down the Nile Valley. In 1907, Davies, who worked to a standard never before achieved, moved to the Metropolitan Museum of Art as the chief recorder for their new Theban project, and he, along with his wife Nina, copied and published tombs there in unprecedented detail until 1939. In 1924 James Breasted created the Epigraphic Survey of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, which has worked almost continuously since then on the recording and publication of the temples of Thebes, and is still in the forefront of recording projects.

In the postwar era, it has been harder to distinguish individual steps forward. Advances in technology have played a greater part in developments than before, largely because most of the ground-rules were formulated in the early part of the twentieth century; these rules and advances will be considered below. The first part of this chapter covers the main techniques that were used up to the 1990s, with discussion of their problems and advantages; the second part looks to techniques which have developed since the 1990s and which may genuinely have much to offer in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

## Traditional Methods, and Their Advantages and Disadvantages

How has Egyptian art been published until now? In the days before the camera, hand-copying or facsimiles were the only options available. Thus, artists formed an important section of the *savants* of Napoleon; later, Champollion and Lepsius also took artists along with them. These people drew a range of subjects: they copied inscriptions and scenes, and they did freehand drawing of three-dimensional objects (mostly statues). Scenes and reliefs were copied, some freehand, some by tracings and squeezes (see below). A particular difficulty of the reproduction processes of the age was that, when the original drawings were brought home and passed to the publisher, the originals had to be redrawn in reverse onto printing plates by specialist plate-makers, not the original artist. Given, particularly in the earliest examples, how unfamiliar Europeans were with the unusual conventions of the Egyptian art put before them, it is hardly surprising that the plate images were not always as faithful to the originals as one would wish.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, early trials of photography were being made in Egypt, although their scientific use was rather limited at first, both by the medium itself and by printing. Certainly, photography was another tool in the hands of the recorder. In an age in which sketching and painting is not as common as it once was—the technique has suffered a good deal from the technological advances of photography—the historic use of paintings of monuments as a form of documentation should never be forgotten.

Since these techniques and their descendants cover the majority of publications of the past 150 years, they will be examined one by one. This is not a “how to” guide, but rather it concentrates on particular methods and problematic issues which can help or hinder the production of fully usable records.

## *Line drawings*

Line drawings, and variants thereof, have been in existence longer than any of the other methods of documentation. Early line drawings seem mostly to have been made by eye, but since then a tracing-based system has been adopted. It can take many forms.

The technique of the squeeze may be the oldest (Caminos (1976), 15–16; Dorman (2008), 86), having its origins in classical epigraphy. Traditionally wetted paper or similar was shaped to the contours of the relief, whether raised or sunk, and allowed to dry; a drawing was subsequently made from the squeeze. There are various collections of early nineteenth-century squeezes from Egypt, such as those of Sir John Gardner Wilkinson in the British Museum and a variety in the Griffith Institute, Oxford. The major drawback to the squeeze is that any color on the surface was likely to be removed in this process. Likewise, softer stones that are not tolerant of water and friable surfaces may simply be damaged by the pressure applied by the epigrapher. In the classical world, inscriptions are more often cut into hard stone than in Egypt (i.e., marble as opposed to Egyptian limestone and sandstone), and are less susceptible to water. The technique is generally frowned upon today, although dry squeezes using aluminium foil have been used in more recent times, where no other technique could be employed. Another technique that relies on pressure being applied is that of the rubbing, whereby an image is made from the original by gently rubbing a material like carbon paper over a relief, and then producing a tracing from the resulting image. This too is only rarely used today.

The tracing of a wall scene takes two basic forms: tracing directly from the original or tracing from a photograph (Caminos (1976), 17–19; Dorman (2008), 83–85). Important examples of each technique are considered below. Prior to the 1890s, the standard of recording standing monuments was very variable. The best work, that of John Gardner Wilkinson and of Robert Hay, remains unpublished. Hay, in particular, was one of those who worked with the *camera lucida* as a non-interventionist method for making more accurate drawings than could be achieved freehand (Tillett (1984), 65). The original copies of the Lepsius expedition are excellent examples of epigraphy. When some of these were published in the 1980s, they showed how much more accurate the field originals were than the copies published in the *Denkmaeler* (Freier, Grunert, and Freitag 1984).

The British Egyptologist Francis Ll. Griffith was acutely aware that undocumented monuments were being lost in the later nineteenth century and set up the Egypt Exploration Fund’s Archaeological Survey to begin to remedy the situation (James 1982). The early work of the Survey, at Beni Hasan and el-Bersha, was respectable for the time, but by no means ideal (James (1992), 49–50). The need to find a new surveyor (as the leader of the project was termed) ultimately brought in Davies. Beginning with his work in the tomb of Akhethotep at Saqqara, Davies moved to copying tombs along the Nile Valley, and the pinnacle of this phase of his career is agreed by Egyptologists

to be his work at Amarna (Davies 1903–1908), for which he was awarded the Leibniz Medal of the Prussian Academy of Sciences. In 1907, he joined the new Egyptian Expedition of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and moved to working primarily in Thebes (Strudwick 2004).

Before continuing to evaluate the work of the Davies, however, there is a contemporary example of line drawings still produced largely by eye and not tracing. The drawings of Howard Carter in the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari from 1893 to 1899, recognized for their excellence, were basically drawn freehand, largely due to Carter's wish not to lose the artistic merit of the subject; the plates were reproduced directly from Carter's pencil drawings (James (1992), 51–53). This avenue of epigraphy was never continued, primarily, one presumes, due to the lack of sufficiently skilful artists who wished to work this way. Nina de Garis Davies was a superb artist, but she preferred to subordinate her creative talents to the initial need for the first tracing to be made directly from the original.

The Davies left no account of how their method operated, but study of their tracings and drawings leads to a reconstruction (Strudwick (2004), 199–200). It would appear that tracing paper was attached to the wall in question, and the outlines drawn on it. Such paper earlier in the twentieth century was far more opaque than today, and it is not difficult to imagine that not all details were visible to the copyist. At that point, the paper was probably transferred to a drawing board and the details added in by hand in front of the wall. The final tracing was then inked by one of the couple.

The basic technique of copying, as used by the Davies, has changed relatively little since the 1940s, although the materials have. Probably the biggest change is the use of more transparent tracing media, usually of a film of plastic, often generically referred to as "acetate," and with proprietary names such as Perspex (United Kingdom) or Mylar (United States). These materials seem to have been first employed at the beginning of the 1960s: in the tomb of Hetepka during 1964–1965, use was made of "a small square of transparent plastic (Perspex), which had done sterling service in the Sudān," presumably at Buhen (Martin (1979), 1). With these media, it is necessary to use marker pens, either permanent or water-soluble. The former is now the more commonly used; eraser pens permit the correction of errors, and different thicknesses can better copy original lines. A complete tracing may now be done on the wall without the need for details to be added by hand.

A collated and inked drawing is usually submitted to the printer. Either the field tracing is transferred onto paper with pencil and then inked, or the inked tracing is made directly from the field tracing. Those using the intermediate pencil tracing tend to employ artists to do the inking away from the monument, arguing that their technical ability at inking is higher than that of the copyist. That may be true, but as an artist is not as familiar with the scene as the epigrapher, they might introduce some errors. This author's opinion is that the epigrapher's knowledge and experience outweigh the artist's higher skills.

In the last thirty years or so, there has been a tendency for epigraphers to do their own inking, rather as the Davies did; this not only saves time and money, but it means that the copyist can spot and interpret any problems while inking, and then check and correct them in the presence of the original. Otherwise the drawings have to make long trips to and from the epigrapher's home with the consequent increase in risk of loss or damage to the facsimiles.

But should drawings *be* inked? It could be argued that the hard work has already been done at the wall, so why in effect retrace/redraw the scene, sometimes twice, quite possibly introducing errors? Obviously much would depend on the condition of the facsimile tracing. Personal experience suggests that the originals are often so dirty from their environment that it is questionable whether they can be reproduced properly. In addition, there are often comments and queries written on the tracings, which may include instructions to straighten lines, for example, since the circumstances were such that the line could not be correctly represented so that a note had to be written on the plastic. The author is not presently aware of any major publication using direct reproductions from field copies.

One of the greatest potential issues with the full-size facsimile tracing just described is whether it damages the walls being copied. The copying medium inevitably has to come into contact with the decorated surface, and then further pressure is applied as the tracing is carried out (less pressure comes from a marker pen than a pencil). The material also needs to be affixed to the wall so that it does not move, which is the most risky aspect. Ironically, this is easiest on damaged walls, where there is usually a place for attachment with a minimally adhesive tape, and hardest on walls on which the decorated surface is intact. Attempts have been made to put the copying medium in something like a frame, which is supported from beneath, thus minimizing the stress on the surface, but the success of this is presently unknown.

Another issue with such facsimiles is that such full-size copying is only feasible for monuments of relatively restricted size. This neatly leads to facsimiles from photographs, whereby a massive building or wall can be reduced to manageable proportions. Since photography became readily available, this method has also been a convenient way for scholars to publish an individual block, stela, or scene. One the masters of this was the late Henry G. Fischer, whose many important works are liberally illustrated with drawings made in most cases from tracing over photographs. This method has the advantage of enabling the making of an acceptable drawing of an otherwise inaccessible object. But what of the more systematic recording of monuments? Publication through photos alone is considered briefly further below; here two particular projects epitomize line-drawing creation on this scale.

The Epigraphic Survey of the University of Chicago (“Chicago House”) is the larger and more extensive of the two. It was founded in 1924 by Breasted as part of his wider establishment of the Oriental Institute at Chicago and of Egyptology in particular. In the past 85 years, the “Chicago House method” has become a “gold standard” by which other projects on comparable monuments are often judged, and has been frequently described (for example Bell 1987), although its use for studying artistic style has been questioned (Baines (1990), 71). Breasted brought the technique of working from photographs to its peak, but was not the first to draw on such images. Bell (1996) mentions some earlier precursors and other early users; another who can be added is Norman de Garis Davies himself, who experimented with the technique in the 1920s in Thebes and Abydos (Anonymous (1928), 182–183; Winlock (1937), 6). In summary:

First the wall surface is carefully photographed with a large-format camera whose lens is positioned exactly parallel to the wall to eliminate distortion. From these negatives photographic enlargements up to 20x24 inches are produced, printed on a special matt-surface paper with an emulsion coating that can take pencil and ink lines.

An artist takes this enlarged photographic print mounted on a drawing board to the wall itself, and pencils directly onto the photograph all of the carved detail that is visible on the wall surface, adding those details that are not visible or clear on the photograph. Back at the house the penciled lines are carefully inked with a series of weighted line conventions.

When the inking is complete, the entire photograph is immersed in an iodine bath that dissolves away the photographic image, leaving just the ink drawing. The drawing is then blueprinted, the blueprint is cut into sections and each section is mounted on a sheet of stiff white paper. These “collation sheets” are taken back to the wall where the inked details on the blueprint are thoroughly examined by two Egyptologist epigraphers, one after the other. These epigraphers pencil corrections and refinements on the blueprint itself with explanations and instructions to the artist written in the margins. The collation sheets are then returned to the artist, who in turn takes them back to the wall and carefully checks the epigraphers’ corrections, one by one. When everyone is in agreement, the corrections are added to the inked drawing back in the studio, the transferred corrections are checked for accuracy by the epigraphers, and the drawing receives a final review by the field director back at the original wall. In the case of digital drawings, collation is done utilizing printouts of the drawings. (University of Chicago-Oriental Institute 2011)

This method produces drawings of very high quality, but it does need a very specific environment in which to work—in this case, the permanent base that the Epigraphic Survey has had in Luxor since 1924, with associated office, darkroom, and research facilities.

As a large print of a photo taken with a very high-quality camera is used for the basis of the drawing, there are none of the particular dangers identified above of the epigrapher’s contact with the walls. It cannot be denied that the process is a slow one, and consumes the efforts of a large group of people; it requires a long season and the permanent base just described. The finished drawings are also the right size for the large-format publication, which has been traditional for the Epigraphic Survey, thus avoiding expensive and time-consuming reduction.

As a second example, in the interwar period, the Egypt Exploration Society’s work at Abydos took them into the documentation of the magnificent temple of Sety I (James 1982, 152–155). For this work they were fortunate in engaging Amice Calverley (Lesko 2004), who started work on making drawings from high-quality photographs; she was ably assisted by Myrtle Broome (Ruffle 2004). Breasted was again connected with this project, and he took John D. Rockefeller, his principal benefactor, to see the work in 1928–1929, as a result of which Rockefeller agreed to fund a very elaborate publication of this very important and beautiful temple. This funding allowed Calverley and Broome to work in the field until 1937.

Calverley and Broome used two techniques: in the earlier volumes of the project, they mostly produced conventional line drawings away from Egypt using a mixture of tracing over the photographs via a light box, and also projecting images of the photographs onto a drawing table and tracing them in the field, subsequently checking the originals on the wall. This method was not unlike (but nonetheless different from) that of the Epigraphic Survey. They also increasingly used a method that has been little, if ever, used by others, drawing selectively on very low-contrast prints of the negatives in pencil, enhancing details. The resulting image was effectively a mixture of both line drawing and photograph and termed “retouched photographs” (the term “reinforced photographs”

has also been used by Calverley, Broome, and Gardiner (1933), vii–viii; a summary of the method may be found in Baines (1990), 70–72).

The resultant four volumes, produced between 1933 and 1958, are some of the most magnificent in the Egyptological library, but at a level of opulence which modern research funding could not hope to achieve. However, large parts of the front hall and side rooms of the temple still remain unpublished. The Egypt Exploration Society has undertaken some further fieldwork with the aim of completing the Calverley record, but this has never been given the priority it deserves, and seems not to be of great interest to those charged with it.

One cautionary note that should be sounded regarding drawing on photographs: the quality of the photograph must be excellent, not only in terms of clarity, focus, and exposure, but also in its orientation. Most photographs are not taken with this ultimate aim in mind, and it is important to ensure that the images are made without distortion, exactly in the orientation of the wall. There are still the occasional examples where drawings exist that are made from photographs which do not meet these criteria (El Saady (1996), particularly the front cover and plates 36 and 37).

There are other variants of these methods; two worthy of mention are the use in more recent times of direct tracing onto paper at Giza (Brovarksi (1996), 36–37), and the creation of drawings by tracing images of projected 35mm slides (Roth 1991). The former technique has been used in the publication of many tombs at Giza in the *Giza Mastabas* series, but the latter work has yet to see the light of day. Together, the examples mentioned above cover the principal approaches used by Egyptologists of all nationalities for recording two-dimensional scenes. In the early years of Egyptology, drawings were used to publish statues and three-dimensional objects, but that has rapidly given way to the use of photography, as will be discussed below. Inscriptional and relief details on three-dimensional objects, however, are still frequently copied in line by using one of the methods just described.

Both approaches just described could, in theory, be applied to both the copying of relief and of painting, although, in practice, drawing from photographs has been almost entirely used for relief; the facsimile approach applies to both.

### *Potential problems of line drawings*

Though I am an advocate of line drawing for the publication of two-dimensional decoration on Egyptian monuments, it is nonetheless important to stress that the method is not perfect, and it does have potential and actual drawbacks. The extent to which these apply varies according to the method and the practitioner. Generally, the overall quality is dependent on the eye and the hand of those producing the work. Although the goal of the work is to be objective, it is impossible not to produce an interpretation of what is in front of one. The epigrapher who has spent hours in front of the scene he or she is copying should know every square millimeter of it, and thus should be able to find a way to represent all these nuances in the finished product. But if one is careless, or is unable to follow the line of the original, what is the result? A drawing should show more detail than a photograph, if for no other reason than to justify the amount of time spent at

the wall. While it is invidious to quote examples where this is not true, it is nonetheless exemplified by Hari (1985) and El Saady (1996).

For drawings of two-dimensional relief, the copyist is faced with the dual problems of the location of the line, and the representation of any modeling in the carving (discussed in Bell 1987). Unlike a painting, one is not copying a brush line, but a chisel incision. Thus, what is a line? Each epigrapher will come up with his or her own solution to this issue in the form of a series of conventions. For some, sunk relief will be copied by following the line of the bottom of the sunk area, while others will follow the line on the flat surface of the wall. To represent what is raised and what is sunk, the epigraphic world is divided into those who use an artistic convention (usually the system of weighted lines known as “sun and shadow”) and those who indicate the relief type in the accompanying text. “Sun and shadow” does, to some extent, require a higher level of artistic ability and a good comprehension of the convention, while the single unvariable line is quicker and easier for the non-artist Egyptologist to produce. Users of the “sun and shadow” technique have been associated with the Chicago Epigraphic Survey; postwar British Egyptologists have tended to adhere to the unvariable line method, as do the epigraphers of Macquarie University, for the most part. As one who grew up with the single thickness of line method and who has subsequently specialized more in painting, the rendering of “sun and shadow” is complex and difficult to express in drawing. It cannot be denied that, at times, this rendering gives a more pleasing effect, and does have the ability to represent raised and sunk carving in the same scene without the need for cumbersome explanations. It is, nonetheless, an artificial convention, and is thus subjective. The externally more polished and “professional” or “artistic” look of “sun and shadow” can, in the wrong hands, fool the viewer into thinking that the drawing is more accurate than it is, and while the seeming roughness of some single thickness lines may not beautify the subject, they might in fact be following the original more closely.

Modeling is equally an issue, and is closely linked to the hypothetical light source, since it is depth of carving, not a chisel line, which gives the original its power and beauty. The most ambitious attempts to represent it are probably those of the Epigraphic Survey, who use stippling or shading. Simpler examples represent the muscle of a leg in raised relief with a line that does not exist on the original, but is a convention to indicate that there is something there. Calverley’s solution of retouching photographs was quite elegant in this respect, as it allowed the relief to be represented by the image. The reader may find it instructive to contrast the graphic styles of two twentieth-century publications, neither of which use the “sun and shadow” technique, of the tomb of Kaiemankh (G4561) at Giza by Junker (1940) and by Kanawati (2001).

The situation with painting is different, as one is normally following a line. Nonetheless, there are issues: does one use a constant line thickness, or should one follow the thickness of the actual line? With the exception of the work of the Davies, most postwar work seems to exhibit a tendency towards employment of the single thickness of line, yet it cannot be denied that the vitality and creativity of the painting seem to be lacking in many such drawings. This author has tried to follow the Davies technique as far as possible, but, of course, it has its limits, such as when one is attempting to represent a blob or patch of color, such as a dab with a brush, which has no formal outline. There one must have a convention—in this case, it is to use the thinnest line thickness that will be capable of reproduction at the intended scale.

## Photography

Drawings were the only way for the early expeditions to record everything, including statues. However, while we may delude ourselves on the need for artistry and interpretation in a drawing of a scene, none would deny the artistry of drawing a three-dimensional object, and indeed the great risk of subjectivity. The full depth and “feel” of a statue can only be really seen in photography. This will be considered further in the second part of this chapter.

The Egyptological community is undecided as to the merits of photography alone as a method of recording wall scenes (Caminos (1976), 17–19; Bell (1996), 104; Dorman (2008), 86–87 sound very cautionary notes, shared by this author). However, many scholars have published monuments, both tombs and temples, just in photographs; this is particularly true of many of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) *Archäologische Veröffentlichungen* publications, which employ (admittedly superb) photographs as their only or principal medium (compare Dorman (2008), 88). However, while a photo can bring a wall to life, it can also miss details; Bell’s view is highly apposite:

Because a single photograph necessarily gives an incomplete impression of a wall, the success of any attempt to publish a monument solely in photographs is limited. (Bell (1996), 104)

Bell has further succinctly expressed the true role played by photos in the same text:

In epigraphy, photography is vital as a complement or control to line drawings for its unique capacity to convey an accurate impression of the style of carved surfaces as well as their three-dimensionality in the play of light and shadow across them. (Bell (1996), 103)

It is important to realize that, while the camera may not be able to lie, it can misrepresent things. It may slightly distort the subject, and, more importantly, the eye of the viewer could be drawn excessively to an area of damage (discussed further below), which could dramatically distract from the impression of the whole (compare images of a wall before and after damage (Guksch (1995), taf. 12 and taf. 11)). In many cases, a photograph of a wall might reveal nothing about the decoration on it. Instead, more information can be gained from minute examination and a subsequent line drawing. An excellent example from the work of the Epigraphic Survey is the acrostic hymn to Amun in the tomb of Kheruef at Thebes, although the photograph is not included in the publication (Epigraphic Survey (1980), plates 11–15). A drawing can minimize the visual impact of such damage: the photograph, which should ideally accompany the drawing, allows examination of the damage, if that is what the reader seeks; plans (see below) can put everything into full context.

However, practical considerations, not just scholarly opinions on the merit of one scheme or the other, have often prevented the “ideal” being realized. Often the research budget available cannot cover the reproduction of both photographs and drawings. In the realm of traditional reprographics and printing, it was always considerably more expensive to reproduce photographs than black and white artwork; the use of color was even more limited for the same reason. It was thus down to the author to consider his or her

priorities, and traditionally the mixture, except in rare well-funded cases, has been for complete line drawings plus a representative/critical selection of photographs. Modern technology, however, has now evened out the cost of printing most of these elements, although there is still likely to be a premium for the reproduction of color images, as they benefit from printing on higher-quality paper.

## *Color*

The recording and reproduction of color has been in many ways the “Achilles Heel” of Egyptian epigraphy. Until the second half of the twentieth century, there was no real alternative to the use of colored paintings of the originals in publication. The best examples of this are the works of Nina de Garis Davies and of Calverley and Broome (e.g., Davies and Gardiner 1936 and Calverley, Broome, and Gardiner 1933). Davies worked with a modified form of the technique used for making line drawings, whereby the traced image was transferred to the painting medium, but from there the remainder of the scene was painted in by hand (Strudwick (2004), 199–200). Calverley and Broome began with monochrome photographic prints produced in such a way as to record only the reds of the originals; these were then painted on to produce the final images (Calverley et al. (1933), viii; Baines (1990), 71–72). The results of both were remarkable. However, the process was time-consuming (Davies once indicated in 1952 that one unspecified painting had taken her almost three months) and expensive, and could only be used for a small selection of the most spectacular originals. These methods also required artists of exceptional quality who were prepared to undertake the work.

The subsequent development of color photography has led to the reproduction of more images in color. Nonetheless, the reproduction of color photographs was very expensive until the end of the twentieth century, and these images are still subject to the drawbacks of the photographic method outlined above. Until the 1980s, there was also no serious objective attempt to quantify the colors themselves, and basic elements such as color bars are still not standard in most publications. See the second part below for more recent developments.

## *Damage*

Damage to the original work is a major problem for the epigrapher. In a photograph, the eye can be unduly drawn away from the decoration by the presence of a badly damaged area. In tombs that have been (often for touristic reasons) the subject of considerable conservation and restoration, particularly painted ones, the tendency has always been physically to fill gaps with plaster or mud to prevent further damage; this coincidentally improves the appearance of the wall (illustrated, for example, in Beinlich-Seeber and Shedid (1987), tafs. 8–9). This does have the disadvantage of removing important archaeological/historical information from the damaged area, although this can be handled by adequate documentation at the time of restoration. Sometimes, such infills can actually damage the originals: near the end of his life, Norman de Garis Davies railed against some of the unsatisfactory ways in which the work was undertaken (Davies 1939, 1940).

How should damage be represented in a facsimile? It would be an unproductive use of time for all the details of the damage to be represented when a photo or plan would be more effective. Some copyists mark the damage in some detail, while others outline it. The Epigraphic Survey uses various forms of textured stippling to minimize artificiality (Bell (1987), 49), and Nina de Garis Davies used what she termed “indeterminate washes” to achieve that effect in her paintings (Strudwick (2004), 200). In neither method is the eye unduly drawn to the damage. This author’s approach to painting is to put a broken line around a damaged area, not unlike that done in drawings by the Davies. The Ramesside Tombs Project in Heidelberg has tended to use a partial fill of oblique lines in the damaged area adjacent to the decoration, which can sometimes be distracting (Seyfried 1990). The British and Australian approach to relief tends not to mark damage at all, which is perhaps a little minimalist, and gives a less convincing image of the wall with a series of large blank areas (Kanawati 2001; Lloyd, Spencer, and el-Khouli 2008). Regardless of the convention adopted, the damage should be described in the text to aid the reader’s interpretation, ideally accompanied by a photograph.

### *Scales*

It is easy to overlook the fact that drawings need scale information. Several different solutions are possible: if one is fortunate enough to have a monument or publication format which allows all to be the same size, then it can be mentioned in the commentary. However, the problem with that is that drawings are often scanned and passed on, or republished, and if the scale is not evident in the reproduction, then it is all too easy to lose this vital information. The best practice is to place an actual scale on the image (e.g., Strudwick 1996). Less satisfactory is to indicate the reproduction ratio in the caption (e.g., 2.9, Davies 1943), as this can be misleading if the drawing and caption are reproduced at a reduced size elsewhere.

The issue of scales should also apply to photographs, but it is very rare to find a photo with an attached scale. If the photographs accompany complete line drawings, then this is not really an issue, as the scale should be on the line art. However, many of the highest quality photograph-only tomb publications omit a scale; this is an improvement that is crying out to be made (again in the otherwise superb DAI publications). The reader can be more forgiving of shortcomings in photographs when they are there to complement the line drawings.

### *Reconstructions?*

Should one reconstruct missing decoration? According to this author, the wall should be primarily documented as the researcher sees it; if older records survive indicating some of what is now missing, then it is permissible to add a second drawing including the additional sources. Speculative reconstructions are not to be discouraged, but should, however, be separated from the primary documentation, for example, in the explanatory text. Norman de Garis Davies did not shrink from the occasional reconstruction, but he used to put them in his primary documentation; the danger of this is that suggestions can

be taken as the firm truth (such as his erroneous reconstructions in TT 254 (Strudwick 1996), 82, fig. 4.6, with n.1). Those working in damaged tombs should be encouraged to make separate large-scale reconstructions, such as those produced for TT63 (Dziobek and Abdel Raziq (1990), tafs. 31–40).

## Plans

Plans are an essential element of the documentation and publication of all monuments and excavations. The following general comments are made from the point of view of the user. First, there should be no excuse, except in the case of a monument that no longer exists, for using anything other than carefully made, fully measured plans. Sketch plans as part of the final publication are unacceptable; diagrams based on those in Porter and Moss, *Topographical Bibliography* are too often used as substitutes for proper planning (e.g., Manniche 1988). The plans in the *Topographical Bibliography* are there to enable location of the scenes and references, not to provide a proper layout of the tomb. Plans are part of the whole publication of the monument, and should be treated as of equal importance to the rest of the documentation. As for the other categories of plans, a multiplicity of sections through the structure/complex are necessary, so that an overall picture can be built up by the reader. If this can be complemented by a three-dimensional drawing, then so much the better, particularly for tombs with complex substructures (Weeks 2000).

Particularly relevant in decorated monuments are plans that show both the locations of the decoration and the various constructional features. Key plans are common in publications today, serving as a way of putting together all the different scenes into context—as otherwise there is a risk that the reader might see them as isolated items and not part of a connected structured whole. In his work in TT 63, Eberhard Dziobek added another dimension to the possible documentation of walls: he appears to have been the first Egyptologist to come up with the concept of the “wall plan” (Dziobek and Abdel Raziq (1990), taf. 31–40). These are smaller-scale line drawings of an entire wall, showing not just the location of the decoration, but attempting to document the different types of plaster, damage and so on. These diagrams work particularly well for badly damaged tombs, since they allow the easy location and contextual comprehension of the disparate fragments which might be all that is left of one wall—as observed earlier, Dziobek used them also as a basis for further speculative reconstructions. For a well-preserved wall, these key diagrams add little for the Egyptologist and have been in existence for many years, see, for example, Davies (1943). But, for the conservator, these diagrams can be a wonderful canvas for the superimposition of conservation condition reports to indicate where treatment has been applied (such as Mora et al. 1987). Key diagrams could even be used to mark off areas of the walls that were completed by different artists, as in the publication of TT 92 by Betsy Bryan (Bryan 2001). These diagrams are not easy to produce, as they involve either squaring off the entire wall in a grid and drawing by hand, or the careful assembly of whole-wall photos and drawing on them, but they are well worth the time they take to create.

## *Text*

Although not strictly part of this chapter, it is important to stress the importance of the interpretative text that accompanies the documentation just considered. One school of thought suggests keeping the text to a minimum, dictated by the fact that the writing-up of it seems to take longer than producing the original fieldwork, largely due to work pressures (and one suspects some scholars find it less enjoyable). While this argument does have some merit, the detailed knowledge of the epigrapher and project team is paramount, so it seems better that they, who know the monument best, should provide the fullest possible account of it in text and images as a permanent record. It is intriguing that the text which accompanies Epigraphic Survey volumes is remarkably brief, which this author has always found surprising in view of the amount of work and research which has gone into the volumes (e.g., Epigraphic Survey 1980). Also, only minimal textual notes accompany the magnificent work in the temple of Sety I (for example, Calverley et al. 1933). In all cases, the author should also think of the reader when arranging the book, using meaningful section titles and cross references and always including good indexes, so that readers can navigate with relative ease. A happy reader, if nothing else, is more likely to be a sympathetic one.

## *Reproduction*

Presented above is the view that tracing the original is the least complex procedure with the best value per square meter of the original. The principal technical obstacle is obtaining a reduced drawing for the publication. Over the years, the cost of this has waxed and waned. Thus, in the days of traditional printing and reproduction of images, several printers had the ability to photograph a full-size drawing and then reduce it to a printable version. However, with the onset of computer publishing, scanning, and the like, there was a period when it was not easy to find a printer who had the equipment to handle such large drawings (this problem occurred in the preparation of Strudwick 1996). In the twenty-first century, large scanners are now available which can scan entire full-size drawings quickly and at a remarkably low cost, giving digital files which can be readily incorporated into publications. Working from photographic originals does not have this side effect; the “Chicago House method” is based on photographic images that have already been scaled to the final intended size of the printed illustration.

## **Possible Productive Future Approaches**

### *Three-dimensional sculpture*

There is really now no place for drawings as primary publications of large, true, three-dimensional objects such as sculpture. This leaves the principal method of

recording them as photographs. However, to capture all the nuances of a three-dimensional object, it is necessary to publish images from as many views as feasible, including angular views, which are the only way of capturing the three-dimensionality and the sculptors' nuances. The author knows of only one paper on this subject (Bothmer 1978; I am grateful to Ann Russmann for confirming this). While the article that appeared in Hans-Wolfgang Müller's *Festschrift* is mostly about Müller's ability as a photographer, it does also stress the above points, accompanied with plates illustrating how such photography should be done (Bothmer (1978), taf. V–XVI).

One further observation: it tends to be unfashionable—perhaps unartistic?—to include scales in the photographs of statues. While this will not appeal to the connoisseur in us (can the reader imagine Michelangelo's *David* with a scale?), if done thoughtfully and unobtrusively, it does provide the viewer with a point of reference about the size of the piece.

Because of the speed with which technology changes, it seems pointless to document specific new techniques of publishing sculpture in detail, since they will change with the alarming regularity of technological advance. It is now possible to use computer technology coupled with sophisticated scanners to produce three-dimensional computer models of artifacts by non-invasive means. The size of the original is only limited by the ease with which it can be manipulated so that the data can be collected. The techniques used are constantly evolving, but, in essence, a laser scanner takes a vast number of readings over the surface of the object, from several perspectives, and these are then combined using computer software into what is termed a “point cloud.” Several of these stages are described in relation to the scanning of the copper statue of Pepy I from Hierakonpolis (Heinz (n.d.), 1–5). Further software can then turn these clouds of reference points of the original into a three-dimensional model, which can then have various textures applied to it. If an object is highly pigmented, color photographs can be mapped onto the model to enable this aspect to be applied quickly. While laser scanning and color mapping were very time-consuming when they first appeared, the underlying hardware and software are constantly increasing in speed and sophistication, making the production of a computer model even quicker. The models thus produced can be published electronically, and even made instantaneously accessible online.

It is also possible to use this three-dimensional model data not only to provide computer-generated pictures and editable computer models, but to replicate the originals themselves: Statues (La Pensée 2011), and walls of whole tombs such those of Sety I, Thutmose III and Tutankhamun (Madrid 2011).

## *Relief*

A strong case is made above for the production of drawings, regardless of method, as the basic method of reproducing two-dimensional art. The development of personal computer technology during the 1990s raised many exciting new possibilities for additional ways of producing line drawings. The principal approach uses line art drawing software such as Adobe Illustrator in conjunction with a graphic tablet (so that the user employs a pen rather than a computer mouse) to trace over a photographic template. A leading exponent of such methods has been Peter Der Manuelian (1998), who has used the

technique in publications of Giza reliefs (Manuelian 2003), although the quality of the template itself may be an issue. Of particular interest is the use of the three-dimensional laser scanner to produce a template employed by the Czech expedition at Abusir, with the aim of rapidly producing an undistorted template image (Malatkova 2011). This is then drawn over using the method just described.

As ever, there are advantages and disadvantages to these methods. Some will feel that working with a computer pen will never be as accurate as working with ink; computers can also give an excessive smoothness of line, but this depends on the skill of the operator. Adding “sun and shadow” effects is much easier, as this can be done by duplicating a line and offsetting it by the chosen amount. This enables those who may not have a great deal of artistic expertise to create this effect. Areas of damage can be more easily indicated with various fills, although the almost excessive consistency of these can seem harsh to the eye that is used to the more artistic creations of some epigraphers.

It is the author’s opinion that the largest single drawback is whether such novel techniques can be employed easily in the field. It has been argued above that the ideal is to complete one’s tracings in Egypt—if not in front of the wall, then at least at the mission’s house, so that the result can be checked with the original very easily. This technique requires accommodation of a computer and printer; a standard to which many expeditions cannot aspire. Bringing sophisticated equipment into Egypt is easier now than it ever was, but there are still risks (e.g., technical and power issues) that do not affect traditional methods.

### *Painting and color*

Much of what has been said about the current and possible future techniques for recording relief can be applied to painting without further repetition. While, of course, it is possible to replicate the variable width line of the brush on a computer, it appears easier to achieve with the stroke of a pen than the movement of a mouse. The publication of the tomb of Menna will be an interesting test of the production of drawings of paintings by computer (Hartwig 2013).

Of greater concern is that few, if any, scholars have fully come to terms with the documentation of color, whether painted relief or pure painting. In the past Nina Davies did an excellent job by providing painted facsimiles of selected tomb scenes which took many hours to paint and then much proof-checking until they were correct; color photography has been used; and some use has been made of color charts. Some publications have tried, not always successfully, to indicate color in shading or stippling applied to features of the decoration (Seyfried 1991). Until recently, this author seems to have been the only Egyptologist to attempt to use technology to give objective, quantifiable readings by the use of a colorimeter (Strudwick 1991, 2001). The problem with color charts is that there are just too many variables for a reading made in one tomb to be usable in another, or indeed under a different light source. A colorimeter can be easily taken to Egypt, and they will be much smaller and more efficient now than the 1989 model described in Strudwick 1991. More recently, other projects, in particular that in the tomb of Menna (TT 69), have used various forms of spectroscopy to record color readings. Those colors will not be indicated as such on the drawings but will, as in Strudwick (1996), be summarized in

a chapter of the publication (Hartwig 2013; the author is grateful to his editor for help with this; see example of digital drawing in Hartwig, "Style," Figure 3.3).

Ideally, painted decoration (or colored relief) is probably best documented with a mixture of drawings (for clarity), color photographs for the overall impression (with a color bar), and data-files of the color readings. Only in this way is it possible to produce full objective documentation of the color palette of the monument. The method of three-dimensional scanning and reconstruction considered above for statues can also be applied to rooms, and allows the addition of another dimension to the documentation that was not possible before. In the early twenty-first century, the price of color reproduction has decreased in relative terms, but it is also now possible to provide the reader of the publication with a range of images in other electronic media to supplement that which it is still possible to produce on paper.

## Conclusion

As stated at the beginning, none of the recording techniques considered here are of use if the work is not published. Publishing complex works such as a tomb volume is never easy, and certainly not cheap. The rise of the Internet permits electronic publication with relative ease, cutting out at least the printing stage, but, given how the Internet changes and formats become obsolete, there is a danger of lack of permanence not encountered with paper. However, the merits of these different methods should be carefully considered by all who publish monuments (see a survey in Strudwick 2009).

Sculpture, relief, and painting form a considerable proportion of the artistic output of the ancient Egyptians, and it is incumbent on Egyptology to do its utmost to preserve them. We must ensure that we do justice to the work of our forebears, but we must also take advantage of every practical technology to enable us to do justice to the originals. The responsibility on us is huge; never let it be said that field recording is the poor relative of conventional research.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The reader should begin the subject of epigraphy and recording with Dorman 2008; Caminos 1976 is a historical review of recording, but it is now rather outdated and does not reflect current practices. Many descriptions exist of the "Chicago House method," but the most accessible is perhaps University of Chicago-Oriental Institute (2011). The present author discussed many of the issues concerned with the recording of paintings in Strudwick (2001).

There is no substitute for evaluating and examining methods but to view some of the publications which typify the different approaches. For the nineteenth century CE, see the *Description de L'Egypte* and Lepsius's *Denkmaeler*. The pivotal link between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was the work of the Egypt Exploration Fund's Archaeological Survey, for which see James 1982. The best work of the first half of the twentieth century was that of the Davies and of the Chicago Epigraphic Survey, for example Davies (1925) or Epigraphic Survey (1930). While it is invidious to name names, varying different approaches in use today, in this case for Theban tombs, can be seen, for example, in Strudwick (1996), Dziobek and Raziq (1990), Seyfried (1990, 1991), Guksch (1995), and Polz (1997).

The reader will perhaps learn the most about the background to the copying of monuments by examining various biographical works of epigraphers or studies of individual expeditions. Thus for Norman and Nina de Garis Davies see Strudwick (2004 and 2012); for Calverley and Broome see Lesko (2004), Ruffle (2004), and Strudwick (2012); Robert Hay, Tillett (1984); John Gardner Wilkinson, Thompson (1992); for Lepsius, Freier, Grunert and Freitag (1985).

The best overall survey of approaches to documentation with computers is Manuell (1998), even though technology has changed and improved considerably since then; see Malatkova (2011) for a very recent example of such techniques. Various general issues of technology in Egyptology are covered in Strudwick (2009), although this ranges well beyond the scope of the article in the present publication.

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## CHAPTER 26

# Technology

*Richard Newman*

For many decades, scientific analysis has provided insights into ancient Egyptian technology. Alfred Lucas' groundbreaking 1926 book *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries* (revised several times, culminating in the fourth edition in 1962) continues to be an important reference. Inspired by Lucas' original work, *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology*, edited by Paul T. Nicholson and Ian Shaw, was published in 2000. There is still much still to be learned. This chapter provides a highly selective glimpse into what modern science has been able to contribute to the understanding of ancient Egyptian culture.

### Questions Science Can Address

Scientific research is invaluable in conservation and preservation of ancient Egyptian monuments and artifacts, as discussed by Gänische in this volume. State-of-the-art radiocarbon dating, a technique long used in archaeology, has refined the dates of some ancient Egyptian dynasties (Bronk Ramsey et al. 2010; Bruins 2010). DNA analysis, which in recent years has been applied successfully to numerous archaeological problems, was applied to research on Tutankhamun (Hawass et al. 2010; Markel 2010).

Understanding material used in ancient Egyptian artifacts often begins with ancient documents, which, while of considerable importance, can be perfunctory and difficult to interpret. The most useful information often comes from surviving artifacts, although this too is not always easy to interpret. In Lucas' day, scientific analyses required relatively large samples, and some materials could not be analyzed in any detail given the available techniques. Now, a wide array of analytical techniques is available, many providing extremely detailed information on very small samples. Analysis in certain cases can be carried out directly on the artifacts themselves. Some studies focus on the development

of materials in the ancient world, determining the nature of raw materials, how they were processed, and ultimately made into the desired final product. Raw materials or processed materials were widely traded in the ancient world, and the goal of some research is to shed light on this trade. More focused projects can use scientific information to address specific archaeological questions.

The beginning point for research on artifacts made from inorganic materials (metal, ceramic, stone, faience, and glass) is a compilation of reliable data on chemical composition. Mining such a database can help reveal relationships in the place or period of manufacture between various artifacts. Little such data was accumulated at the time of Lucas' book, but since then, hundreds of artifacts have been analyzed. The basic nature of the material in an inorganic artifact is often defined by the chemical elements that are present at levels of about one percent or more by weight. In a general way, combinations of these elements define the different raw materials that went into the making of the processed material (such as the different ores that went into making of metal alloys or the minerals that went into forming the pliable material used to make a ceramic).

Artifacts also contain many elements at much lower (trace) levels, down to parts per million (one part per million is 0.0001 percent by weight or one ten-thousandth of a percent) and less. Some of these elements may be characteristic of a raw material, providing a kind of fingerprint that is characteristic of a specific source for the material. Also important for the purpose of sourcing materials are the ratios of the different isotopes of certain elements; the study of isotopes of lead (an element that is found in a wide range of inorganic materials) is particularly useful.

Many analytical techniques have been, and continue to be, used to determine major and minor elements in inorganic materials. Instrumental neutron activation analysis (INAA) has been the most widely utilized technique for trace element analysis in the past; the more widely available inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (ICP-MS) has become more prevalent in recent years. Both techniques, which begin with a drilled powdered sample, can also analyze elements present at higher levels to provide comprehensive analyses.

One version of ICP-MS, laser ablation (LA), uses an attached laser to sample the material being analyzed. This makes it possible to directly analyze small, prepared samples or actual small objects (such as beads). LA leaves a shallow crater (0.1 millimeters or less in diameter) at the site analyzed, and can produce accurate data on many elements, at levels down to parts per million. It is particularly useful for glassy materials and individual mineral grains in rocks (for an example of the latter, applied to basalts utilized in pharaonic Egypt, see Mallory-Greenough, Greenough, Dobosi, and Owen 1999). Lead isotope analysis can be carried out by ICP-MS, but the technique of choice is thermal ionization mass spectrometry (TIMS).

Also utilized for major, minor, and trace element analyses are various forms of X-ray fluorescence (XRF). This technique can be carried out directly on artifacts or on samples from artifacts. Most analyses require samples (sample sizes varying according to technique and material), and a number of the techniques require careful and complex preparation of samples for analysis, and thus are expensive and time-consuming. Modern analytical techniques are very sensitive, but the sample size must be large enough so that an analysis of it can be considered to represent the composition of the entire artifact. In some cases, analysis of individual components in inhomogeneous materials is crucial. Individual

components can be quite small, and a useful technique for this kind of analysis is scanning electron microscopy (SEM) with an attached X-ray spectrometry system (SEM/EDS) or electron beam microprobe microanalysis (EPMA). Typical samples are small solid chips (which can be a millimeter or less in size), which are prepared as a polished cross-section for analysis. Comprehensive studies of ancient materials often require multiple samples and analytical techniques.

Analyses of inorganic pigments can be carried out by many techniques, including X-ray diffraction, a technique that identifies crystalline compounds. Molecular spectroscopy techniques (Fourier transform infrared and Raman) have versions integrated with microscopes that make it possible to analyze vanishingly small samples. These techniques are also used to identify crystalline compounds in ceramics and glass. Organic materials require other analytical techniques, among the most commonly utilized of which is gas chromatography coupled with mass spectrometry (GC/MS).

## Pigments and Painting

Although the overall Egyptian palette was limited, careful study of mixtures of pigments, different densities and thicknesses, even different degrees of grinding, can further our understanding of Egyptian painting. An exemplary instance of a comprehensive study of ancient Egyptian painting technique (and the materials) focuses on the eleven wall-painting fragments from the Dynasty 18 tomb-chapel of Nebamun (Middleton and Upchard 2008). Details of the use history of different pigments continues to be refined (e.g., the blue minerals lapis lazuli and azurite have recently been identified for the first time as pigments used in ancient Egypt; see Heywood 2010).

Egyptian blue, the world's earliest known synthetic pigment, was by far the major blue pigment of Egyptian history. Becoming common in Dynasty 4 tomb paintings, Egyptian blue was recently found on an object dated to the reign of King Scorpion, about 3100 BCE (Newman 2010). The pigment was made from ground quartz, copper, limestone, and a source of alkali, heated together at a temperature of around 850–1000°C. The blue color is due to a specific crystalline compound, but the finished product usually contains other materials (including some glass) (Hatton, Shortland, and Tite 2008). Closely related to Egyptian blue is the turquoise green material now usually called "green frit," which was manufactured from the same materials but in different ratios as Egyptian blue and heated to about the same temperature. The earliest known occurrences of green frit in the First Intermediate Period (ca. 2118–1980 BCE) are from nearly a millennia after Egyptian blue was found (Pages-Camagna and Colinart 2003). Both Egyptian blue and green frit were made (at least in some periods) in small rounded balls placed inside ceramic containers and fired in a kiln. The pigment used in paintings was likely made by grinding up these cakes. Ground material, probably adhered together with a natural binder, was made into small objects that were re-heated to burn away the binder and fuse the glassy part of the ground Egyptian blue cake. Green frit was used in the same way. Green frit and Egyptian blue usually are not found together, although samples often contain some of the same compounds.

One research group has claimed that green was a very unusual color in Egyptian painting until the advent of green frit. Based on analysis of pigments from tomb paintings,

they argue that areas that are green in paintings prior to the First Intermediate Period are usually that color as a result of degradation of Egyptian blue to green compounds (Schiegl, Weiner, and El Goresy 1992), mainly malachite and copper chloride. Another research group that worked with tomb paintings and other kinds of painted artifacts concluded that both malachite and copper chlorides were used in their own right as pigments (Pages-Camagna and Guichard 2010). There is little doubt that both malachite and copper chloride can form as Egyptian blue degrades in tomb paintings, but these processes are much less likely to take place on other substrates such as wood. The mineral malachite was certainly known very early on, having been used in eye-paint from the Badarian period until the middle of the Old Kingdom; it would not be surprising that it was also used as a pigment. If used as a pigment, copper chloride green was probably man-made. A very unusual property of Egyptian blue can be used to identify its presence on artifacts (Verri 2008). When exposed to visible light, the pigment gives off radiation in the infrared region, an inexpensive but very sensitive way of identifying the pigment without taking a sample from the artifact.

Plant gums appear to have been common binders in wall painting as well as painted objects, and perhaps also animal glue (Newman and Serpico 2001). Identification of organic binders in paint samples is a subject of considerable current research, and refinements of such standard techniques as GC/MS and new techniques such as ELISA (enzyme-assisted immunofluorescence staining) could well lead to new insights into ancient Egyptian paint binders.

Organic pigments are less likely to survive weathering than inorganic pigments. A specialized type of Raman spectroscopy, SERS, was used to identify red from madder plant roots on a painted leather quiver fragment from the early Middle Kingdom (1980–1760 BCE) (Casadio, Leona, Lombardi, and Van Duyne 2009). This is several hundred years earlier than the period (Dynasty 18) when madder was first considered to have been imported into Egypt.

## Vitreous Materials

In order of appearance, the vitreous materials used in ancient Egypt are glazed steatite, faience, Egyptian blue and green frit, and glass. Small steatite beads with blue-green glaze appear in the Badarian period, ca. 5500–4000 BCE, and continue to be produced beyond the New Kingdom. A study of a Badarian necklace indicated that the beads were likely made by heating while embedded in a mixture of an alkali and a copper mineral (Tite and Bimson 1989). Later beads, from the Middle and New Kingdoms, were also made by direct application of the glaze.

The development of faience probably took place not long before the beginning of the pharaonic period. It is not known whether faience technology was developed in Egypt itself or came from Mesopotamia, where faience from roughly the same period (or perhaps even earlier) was found (Moorey 1999). For nearly 1,500 years, the only colors of faience were turquoise blue (the color from copper) and brown or black (color from manganese). One of the methods used to apply the turquoise glaze on faience (cementation) was identical to that used earlier for glazing steatite. Two other glazing methods (direct application and efflorescence) were also used, and perhaps came into use later than the

cementation method (Nicholson 1998). Few raw materials were needed to make faience: quartz, an alkali, and metallic element(s) to create the color. There are two possible alkali sources: natron (a natural salt), and plant ash that was a processed and possibly more expensive material for the ancient Egyptians to produce. The major advance in faience technology over the course of Egyptian history, aside from the expansion of techniques by which the glazing was done, was the introduction of other colors.

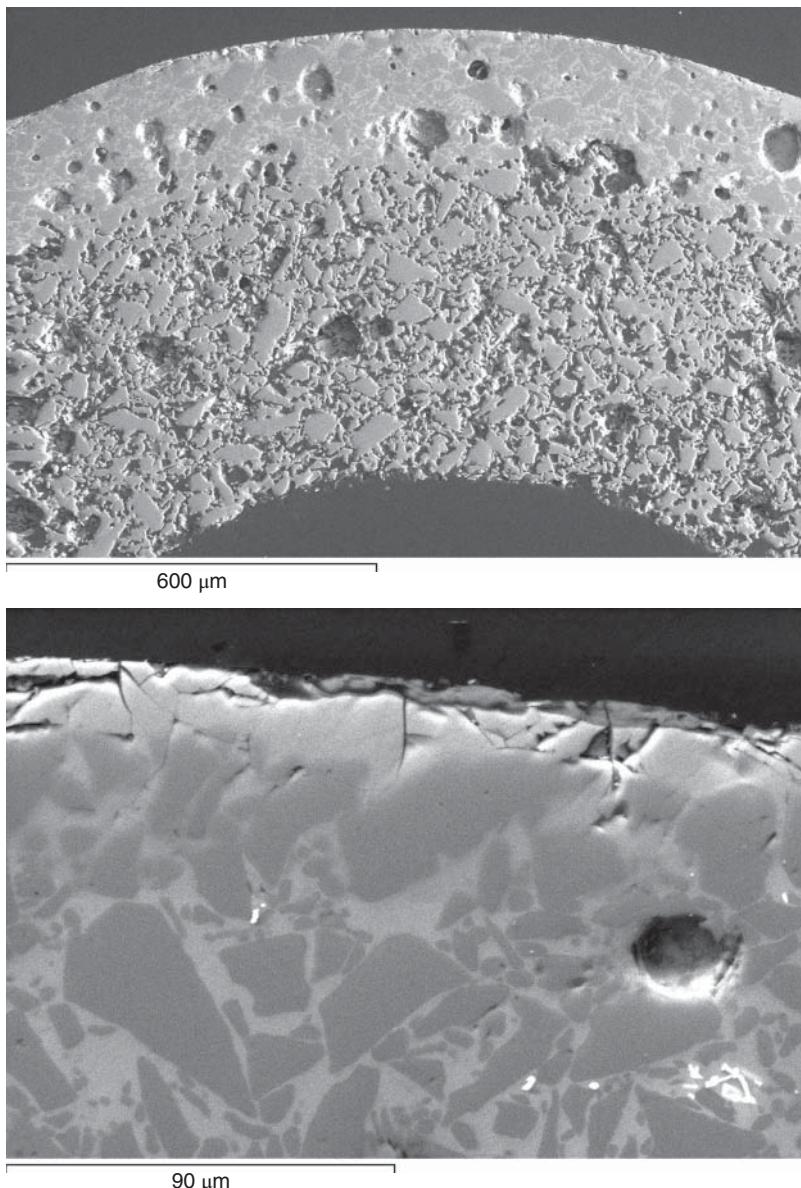
The sample of choice for studying faience examination is a chip that is prepared as a cross section (Figure 26.1a and Figure 26.1b) or as a thin section (a transparent slice about 30 micrometers thick). SEM/EDS can analyze the glassy glaze, which incorporates elements of the alkali into its composition. At least some glassy material holds together the quartz grains of the body. The amount of glass in the body varies with the glazing method. The glass in the body and the glass near the surface do not have identical compositions, due to differential movement of salts from the alkali source during firing. Experiments with reproducing the ancient technology are now an important part of research on faience, providing insights that are crucial to interpreting what is found in artifacts.

Faience from Nubia, which has not been extensively studied as yet, has a slightly different composition, most likely a reflection of a difference in alkali sources (Lacovara 1998). Unusual types of artifacts, unique to Nubia, are glazed quartzite pebbles and small quartzite sculptures. The turquoise-blue glazes on these objects are similar in composition to the glazes on faience. They are free of quartz inclusions, so could not have been made simply by grinding up faience and using this ground material as a frit (Ellis, Newman, and Basanti 2008). It is very difficult to glaze this type of stone with a glaze made from raw ingredients, so perhaps a glassy frit was ground, mixed with water or a binder, and then applied to stones that were heated to completely fuse the frit. The use of such frit for glazing is generally thought to have not occurred in Egypt until after the development of glassmaking technology, which, as far as we know, took place toward the end of the period to which these objects have been dated (1700–1550 BCE). The Nubian objects may represent an early use of a glass frit.

## Glass

The earliest securely dated glass from Egypt is probably beads from Qau that are dated to Dynasty 18, ca. 1539 BCE (Lillyquist and Brill 1993). Glass objects first appear in abundance in the Wady Qirud tomb of the three foreign wives of Tuthmose III, dated about 1425 BCE. By definition, glass objects are made up only of glass, sometimes with crystalline phases that give opacity or provide color. Overheating of faience may have occasionally created a true glass much earlier. Some faience, called “glassy faience” by certain researchers, is an intermediary state between the usual faience and true glass but still contains a substantial amount of undissolved quartz, though far less than ordinary faience.

Some of the earliest glass found in Egypt was clearly imported, but the beginnings of glassmaking and glassworking in ancient Egypt and the Near East are still unclear. To date, no early glassmaking sites have been found in Mesopotamia, while three have been identified in Egypt, two from the mid-fourteenth century BCE (Amarna and Malkata) and one from the thirteenth century BCE (Qantir). Both glassmaking and glassworking



**Figure 26.1** (a) Photomicrograph, taken in a scanning electron microscope (back-scattered electron image), of a cross section from a blue-colored faience tubular bead. The outer surface is glazed, but not the inner surface. The porous body consists of angular quartz grains held together by a little glass. Tube walls are about 0.7 mm thick. Photograph: Richard Newman. (b) Detail of Figure 26.1(a). The glaze, now partially deteriorated, forms a very thin layer on the surface (light gray) and has sunk some distance into the body, surrounding quartz grains (dark gray). Photograph: Richard Newman.

were carried out on a small scale at several locations in Amarna, and multiple colors were being produced. A century later at Qantir, glassmaking was being done on a larger scale. Apparently only certain colors of glass were being produced there; little or no glassworking took place at the site (Degryse et al. 2010).

Were raw glass ingots traded, and then remelted at glassworking sites, perhaps mixed with locally produced materials (such as colorants)? Were there specialized glassmaking shops that made only certain colors of glass? How were glass colorants developed, since some of these first appear about the same time as glass became abundant? These are questions that detailed chemical analysis of firmly dated glass objects can potentially answer.

Transparent, colorless glass was made from the same materials that were used for centuries for other vitreous materials: quartz and an alkali source. The ultimate proportions of alkali elements (sodium, magnesium, potassium, and calcium) in the finished product are affected not only by the composition of the alkali source (plant ashes or natron), but by the manufacturing procedure. Calcium has been found as a separating layer in crucibles in which glass was made in ancient Egypt, which made the removal of the glass from the crucible easier. Some of this calcium entered into the glass being made in such a crucible. The natural chloride content of halophytic plant ashes (from plants that grow in salt-containing soil) also influenced the alkali content of the final glass (Tanimoto and Rehren 2008).

Quartz is a mineral that contributes no major elements to glass other than silicon and oxygen, but there are traces of other elements associated with minerals in the geological setting from which the quartz originated. Quantities of certain trace elements appear to be different in glass from Egypt and Mesopotamia (Shortland, Rogers, and Eremin 2007). Using this trace element criteria, some Mycenaean Greek glass beads from 1400–1300 BCE were found to originate from Egypt, others from Mesopotamia (Walton 2009). Isotopes of neodymium (an element from trace minerals associated with quartz) appear to allow the discrimination between Mesopotamian glass from two different sites, Nuzi (probably early fourteenth century BCE) and Tell Brak (fourteenth to thirteenth century BCE). This is the first analytical information by which this distinction can be made (Degryse et al. 2010). Trace element analysis of glass can easily be carried out by laser ablation (LA) ICP-MS. The isotope analysis, however, is more complicated, requiring TIMS.

An example of a typical early opaque blue glass is a small bead from the reign of Amenhotep I (1514–1494 BCE) in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. This bead could be directly analyzed by LA-ICP-MS, which could very well determine whether the glass was locally made or imported. Given the body of data now available on early Egyptian and Mesopotamian glass, detailed chemical analysis of Egyptian glass-containing objects without archaeological provenance could be valuable as a means to better understand the origins of such artifacts.

With the advent of glass, new compounds that produced opacity or different colors in vitreous materials made their first appearance, but exactly how these substances were discovered and first used is not certain. Opacity in glass was produced by a white crystalline compound—calcium antimonite. Antimony, whose source is currently unknown, was added as a metal or as an oxide, either with the other raw ingredients, or to previously manufactured transparent glass. The opacifying compound was formed during remelting and cooling (Shortland 2002).

Yellow was created by a crystalline oxide of lead and antimony. This compound was made separately and then added to (colorless) glass to make it yellow, or to blue glass to make it green. The yellow compound could have been made by reacting lead and antimony compounds, but it has also been suggested that the compound was first observed as an accidental byproduct of silver refined from lead ores (Mass, Wypyski, and Stone 2002).

A major source for cobalt, used to color blue glass, was a type of ore from Egypt, which contributed a very characteristic suite of other elements (associated with the ore) to the glass, in addition to cobalt itself. This makes it relatively easy to determine, by scientific analysis, whether early blue glasses were colored with this particular ore (Rehren 2001). It is possible cobalt glass was made in one specialized workshop that made few other kinds of glass, and then was distributed to glassworking sites. For a period of time, mainly between 1400–1200 BCE, a cobalt-containing spinel was used as a pigment on ceramics, a colorant based on cobalt that originated from a different source than the cobalt used in blue glass (Shortland 2006).

## Metals

Over the years, a very large number of analyses have been carried out on Egyptian metal artifacts, primarily those made from copper alloys (see Cowell 1987). One role of such analysis is to determine the original metal or alloy composition. Because surfaces can be corroded or otherwise altered, the analysis is best carried out on a drilling of unaltered interior metal. Some trace or minor elements can be important when linking the materials in artifacts to potential ore sources; lead isotopes are often more useful.

Bronze is made from two types of metals, copper and tin, which come from separate ore sources (although the two could be in close proximity). In Egypt, sources of copper ores are usually stated to have been in the Eastern desert or, more likely, in the Sinai. The Egyptians made forays into the Sinai, perhaps before the pharaonic period. Timna, a major copper ore mining and smelting area in the Eastern Sinai, was under Egyptian control by Dynasty 18.

Using a combination of trace element analysis and lead isotope analysis, researchers determined that the copper used in 10 of 16 Dynasty 18 bronze artifacts excavated at Amarna came from an unknown source, apparently not Egyptian, and had an unusually high trace gold content. The other six were made from ore that almost certainly came from Laurion, Greece, the source of a considerable amount of copper used around the Aegean in the Late Bronze Age, 1550–1200 BCE (Stos-Gale 1995).

The earliest intentional copper alloy, in Egypt as in other parts of the ancient world, was a mixture of copper and arsenic. Alloys with more than about 1 percent arsenic are usually considered to have been intentionally produced by mixing a copper and arsenic ore. Scrap copper alloy seems to have been used for the production of Egyptian blue pigment from very early times: one study found arsenic and copper in blues dating from Dynasty 5 into Dynasty 18 (El Goresy, Schiegl, and Weiner 1995). Rather abruptly, during the reign of Thutmose III (1479–1425 BCE) bronze scrap metal seems to have replaced arsenical copper as the source of copper in Egyptian blue. Analysis of metallic objects shows that copper–tin alloys were used earlier, while copper–arsenic alloys continued to be utilized

at the same time as bronze. Lead was rarely added to copper until the late New Kingdom, and occurred in Egyptian blue made from such scrap alloy. The sharp demarcation between copper–arsenic and copper–tin in dated Egyptian blue samples is somewhat mysterious, since there was no such sharp changeover in the alloys of metallic objects.

The original appearance of ancient metalwork surfaces is often difficult, if not impossible, to establish. Gilding, the application of paint, and other metal inlays were all used to decorate copper alloy objects in ancient Egypt. Intentionally applied chemical patinas, made by reacting the surfaces of metallic objects with certain chemicals, were not particularly difficult to create. But they are quite easily obliterated by wear and corrosion, therefore almost nothing is known about their use in antiquity. One possible type of such a patinated copper in ancient Egypt is *hsmn km* (“black copper”) (Craddock and Giumlia-Mair 1993). This material may be linked to a chemical patination process developed around the middle of the second millennium BCE in the Middle East/eastern Mediterranean region. In ancient Egypt, such black-patinated bronzes may have been made to be inlaid with gold or silver. It has been suggested that the development of the black patina may have been encouraged by intentionally adding a small amount of gold to the alloy. Due to the paucity of surviving examples, it is difficult to speculate about whether a special alloy, distinctly different from that used for more common bronzes, was created in order to be patinated in this special way. But there is an intriguing example from ancient Egypt, a statuette of Thutmose III: the alloy contains 4.3 percent tin and 6.1 percent gold, and clearly was a low-tin bronze to which gold was intentionally added (Hill and Schorsch 1997).

Silver metal in antiquity came from a number of sources such as native gold–silver alloys, silver ores, and lead ores. In Egypt, the earliest silver artifacts were likely made from native silver-rich alloys, perhaps from some of the same deposits within Egypt from which gold was obtained. The main sources for silver metal throughout the ancient world were lead ores, which contain small amounts of silver that could be effectively separated by special smelting procedures from the lead. Silver from such ores usually contains a little lead, which cannot be completely removed, and a small amount of gold (the ratio of silver to gold in the ore usually is carried over to the silver refined from the ore). The few silver artifacts that have been studied to date by lead isotope analysis were apparently not made from Egyptian ores (Gale and Stos-Fertner 1978).

### *Lead isotopes*

The element lead consists of four different isotopes, three of which form over extremely long periods of time through decay of radioactive uranium and thorium, and the other one is primordial (meaning that it existed in that form when the earth was formed). The relative abundance of the isotopes in a given lead ore source depends on the geological age of the ore deposit and its history. It is (sometimes) possible to identify the likely source of the lead found in an ancient material if reliable data is available on the possible ore sources themselves, and if there are no overlaps in isotope ratios of lead from these different sources. Ancient Egyptian materials from which lead isotope ratios have been analyzed include galena (a lead sulfide used in eye makeup); lead metal, lead antimonite

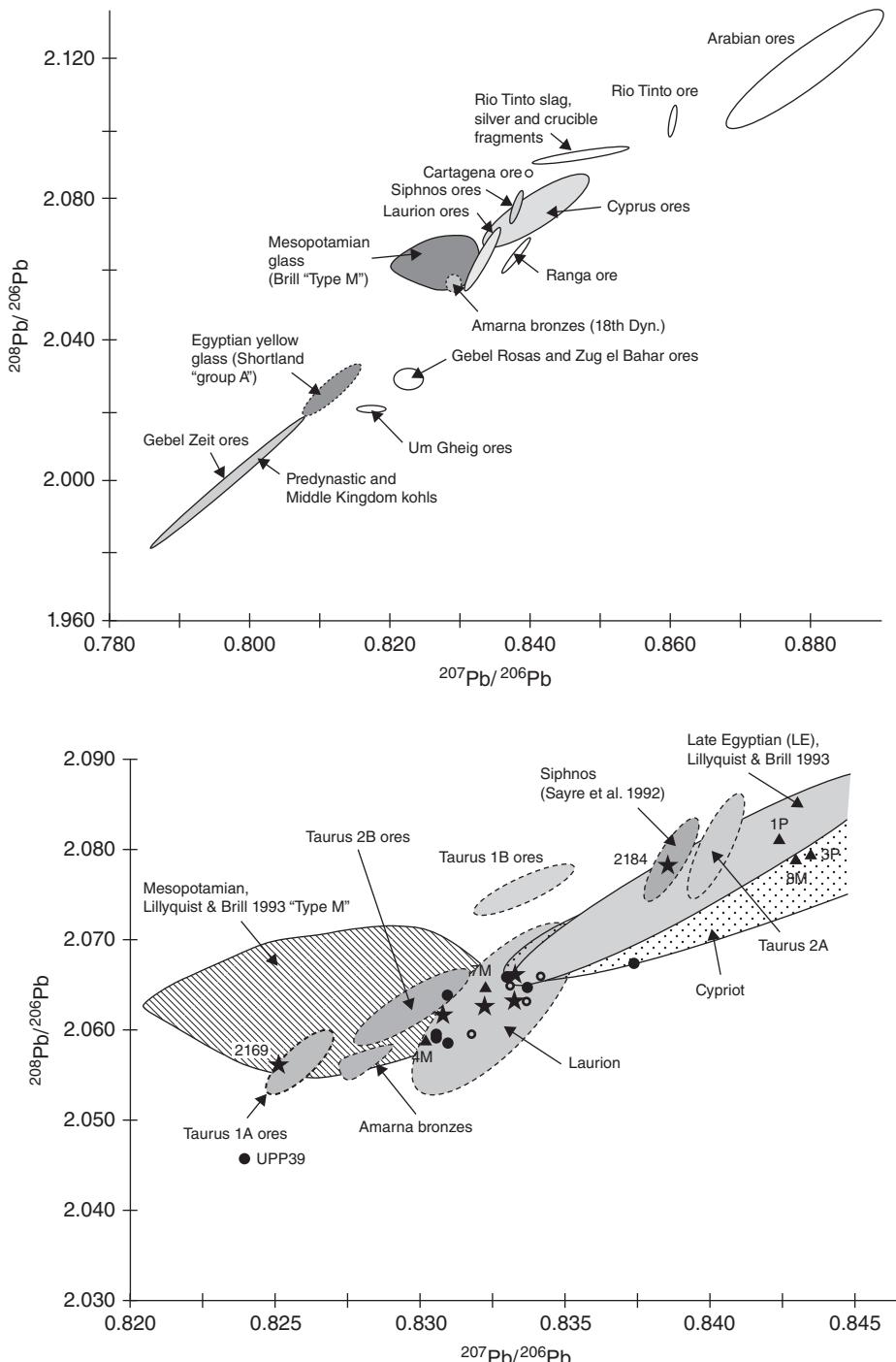
(the yellow colorant in glass and faience), silver objects (which were usually made from silver refined from lead ores), and copper-containing materials (since copper ores contain small amounts of lead). These copper-based materials include faience, Egyptian blue, green frit, and blue-colored glass, and metal objects containing copper. Isotopic data is usually displayed in graphs of ratios of different isotope pairs. Most isotopic analyses have been carried out by the traditional and most accurate technique, TIMS.

Figures 26.2a and 26.2b plot isotope “fields” for a number of ancient lead-containing ores and some groups of artifacts. In this typical type of plot, “fields” for a given ore source are usually elongated blobs, all grouped roughly along a line running from the lower left to upper right (from sites such as Gebel Zeit, Um Gheig, Gebel Rosas, Zug el Bahar, and Ranga on the western shores of the Red Sea; Laurion in Greece; Taurus in Anatolia; Cartagena and Rio Tinto in Spain; Siphnos in the Cyclades islands group; Cyprus; and various Arabian ores). “Fields” for objects are simply drawn around the data points for those objects. Researchers have thus far defined three major groups among ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian (and Iranian) glass: “Group A” (Egyptian yellow glass and faience from Dynasty 18); “Type M” (Mesopotamian and Iranian glass, mainly dating before 700 BCE, presumably made in those regions); and “Late Egyptian” or “LE” (all objects in this group date after Dynasty 18). Possibly some “Group A” objects were made with Egyptian ores from Gebel Zeit, but most Egyptian objects in this group and all in the “LE” group would seem to have been made from ores that came from outside of Egypt. Objects in “Group A” could include some that contain mixtures of Egyptian and foreign ores (with lead mixtures with isotope ratios falling between the very low Egyptian ores and the higher foreign sources).

Galena (lead sulfide), which was ground to make kohl from the Predynastic Period through the Middle Kingdom, probably came from Gebel Zeit, the major Red Sea source. To date, a few New Kingdom yellow faience fragments are the only Egyptian objects found made from this native lead.

Although some of the earliest dated glass found in Egypt, from the tombs of Thutmose III, his three foreign wives and his son, Amenhotep II (1425–1400 BCE), was imported, other objects are in an Egyptian style, implying that they were made in Egypt. Lead isotope analyses of some foreign-manufactured objects fall into the “Group A” field, indicating (not unexpectedly) that the lead in them comes from a non-Egyptian source. But one vessel fragment from the tomb of Thutmose III, made in a clear Egyptian style, falls in the “LE” field, which implies that while the object was made in Egypt, at least its yellow colorant was imported. The mixing of old and new materials, some imported and some locally made, is always a potential source of uncertainty in determining origins of materials, and some of these uncertainties will probably never be fully resolved. In the case of colored glass, colorants could be manufactured in one place, then shipped to another for incorporation into glass, and the colored glass itself could be shipped to yet another location to be made into an object.

Numerous Egyptian blue and green frit samples from Dynasty 19 El Rakham, some Dynasty 18 lead weights from Amarna, and a few silver objects from the Middle Kingdom fall into the Laurion field, possibly indicating that the lead and copper ores used to make these diverse objects all originated from that well-known major ancient Greek source. There is some uncertainty, however, since the Laurion field overlaps with some



**Figure 26.2** (a) Plot of ratios of two lead isotope pairs from various ancient ore regions and a few artifacts. This is not a highly accurate view of this data, but is intended to give a sense of what such graphs look like. (b) Detail of Figure 26.2(a), showing additional ore regions and Egyptian artifacts. Individual data points for some objects are shown and fields for larger groups of objects are outlined. Stars indicate individual lead weights from Amarna; solid circles are Egyptian blue samples from El Rakham; unfilled circles are Egyptian green frit samples from El Rakham; triangles are silver objects. Images: Richard Newman.

other (foreign) ore fields. Other objects fall in the same general area, but outside of any currently defined object or ore source field.

Already in the Predynastic Period, silver artifacts made with silver refined from lead ores are known. As in the case of copper metal, the silver metal seems to have originated outside of Egypt. The few analyzed objects were plotted around the Laurian and Cyprus fields (Figure 26.2b).

## Ceramics

One of the great successes of detailed chemical analysis in the study of archaeological materials over the last few decades has been the determination of the sources of ceramics. The major starting material of ceramics is usually a clay mineral or minerals. Other materials are mixed in, since pure clays are difficult to form into different shapes that will successfully survive the firing process. Clays are extreme weathering products of different types of rocks, and incorporate many elements at trace levels that mostly come from minerals in their source rocks. Added materials such as temper (which could be ground up pieces of previously fired ceramic, or rock fragments, for example) affect the chemical composition of a fired ceramic. When the contributions of the temper to the overall chemical composition are taken into account, a pattern is left that is a fingerprint of the clay in the ceramic. It may be possible to directly relate the chemical composition of a fired ceramic sample to the chemical composition of a raw clay deposit. Of greatest value are trace elements, which must be analyzed by sensitive techniques such as neutron activation or ICP-MS. Even if raw sources cannot be pinpointed, the chemical compositions of groups of ceramics can be compared in order to estimate whether they are likely to have been made from the same raw materials.

One of the major raw materials used throughout Egyptian history was Nile River silt, the alluvium deposited along the river's banks. The silt used by ceramicists had very similar chemical compositions regardless of its place or period of origin throughout thousands of years of ancient Egyptian history. However, the composition was not absolutely identical in sediments of different ages, since the contributions from the two major drainage basins (the White Nile and Blue Nile) are not constant, and processing (separation of finer-grained from the coarser-grained materials found in the raw sediment) can affect its composition. Site-specific studies use detailed compositional data to inform our understanding of details of ceramic production. The area around the walled town of Nekhen (ca. 3100–2230 BCE) had extensive Predynastic (ca. 4000–2950 BCE) settlements and cemetery complexes from which large amounts of ceramics are known. Detailed analysis shows that potters were using silt available in the immediate vicinity of their workshops (Allen, Hamroush, and Hoffman 1989). Calcium carbonate was deliberately added to the silt used to produce Hard Orange Ware (which was most popular after about 3400–3200 BCE), replacing an earlier type of ware (Plum Red) made from the same silt, but with no addition of calcium carbonate. This change occurred about the same time as settlements shifted from the desert to the flood plain, closer to the river. Patterns of Nile flooding also changed about this time. The interrelationship of all of these events is not yet known.

Small groups of ceramics from the New Kingdom at Karnak (ca. 1350 BCE) and First Intermediate Period (ca. 2118–1900 BCE) and Third Intermediate Period (ca. 1076–723 BCE) Mendes (a site which is 400 miles north of Karnak) could be distinguished on the basis of certain trace elements present at levels varying from a few parts per million up to about sixteen parts per million (Mallory-Greenough et al. 1998). These ceramics are thought to be made from pure Nile silt, to which only organic temper was added (a type of temper that does not significantly affect the trace element composition of the ceramic itself).

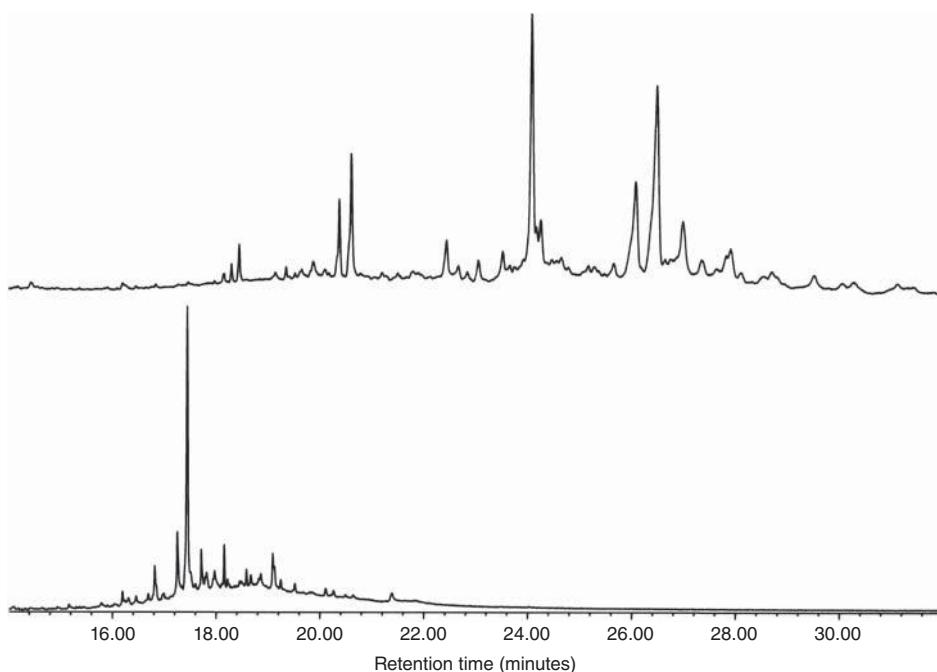
A recent study addressed the interaction between Egypt and Nubia between the New Kingdom and Late/Napatan Period (1539–650 BCE). In the New Kingdom, much of Nubia was under direct Egyptian imperial control (Carrano, Girty, and Carrano 2009). Egypt abandoned this region during the Third Intermediate Period, and shortly thereafter the indigenous Napata rule arose. The Napatan Period was a complicated cultural mixture of Egyptian and indigenous Nubian elements. Nubian and Egyptian styles of pottery, visually quite distinct, coexisted throughout the period of colonialism and Napatan rule. Both traditional petrographic analysis (using thin sections of ceramic bodies) and chemical compositional analysis suggested that both types of pottery used Nile silt, quite possibly from the same local sources. Nubian objects, however, tended to show greater chemical variability. One conclusion is that the production of Egyptian-style ceramics involved tighter control over the silt source material. The conclusion from the study was that local Nubian-style ceramic manufacture existed alongside production of Egyptian-style objects, the latter perhaps made by an Egyptian system of fabrication.

## **Organic Materials Used in Coatings, Paint Binders, and Adhesives**

Natural organic materials, or mixtures of several such materials, were used by many ancient cultures as adhesives and other purposes. There was no way to accurately identify these in Lucas' day, but currently many sophisticated analytical techniques are available. Among the most useful is gas chromatography/mass spectrometry. "Chromatography" is the name for a family of separation techniques. For example, a sample that consists of a mixture of many individual organic compounds can be separated into its constituent components (by the chromatograph), and these can then be separately identified (from mass spectra produced by the mass spectrometer detector). Among the natural materials used by the ancient Egyptians that have been studied by GC/MS are plant gums (used as paint binders), proteins such as animal glue (used as a paint binder), natural plant resins (used in mummification and in varnishes on painted artifacts), waxes, and bitumen. An unusual Second Intermediate Period (1759–1539 BCE) pillow made from plant fiber (Tigernut grass) impregnated with wax was studied in which the source of the wax, which is likely mineral in origin, could not be specifically identified, although it could well have come from a seepage around the Dead Sea (Seath et al. 2006).

Natural plant resins used in cultural artifacts have been extensively studied by GC/MS. There are four species of the shrub-like plant pistacia that could have been important sources of resin around the Mediterranean in ancient times, only one of which is native

to Egypt itself. Pistacia resin was a major item of commerce, and is known from a fourteenth-century BCE shipwreck found off the coast of southwest Turkey; among the cargo were about 150 Canaanite amphorae filled with this resin. Pistacia has been identified in Canaanite amphorae found at Amarna, showing that the resin was imported into Egypt, where it was used in varnishes and coatings on painted objects, incenses, and for mummification (Serpico 2000). Because the resin compositions from the different pistacia species are not distinguishable, it is not known whether the resin was indigenous or imported. It is by far the main varnish identified on painted ancient Egyptian objects to date. Now discolored yellow, but probably originally much less intensely colored, the resin was generally applied in an uneven rather thick coat. As collected from the source, the resin is a sticky liquid, and could have remained so if transported in well-sealed containers. The resin may have needed to be heated in order to be liquefied and viscous enough for application, since the ancient Egyptians did not have a solvent for dissolving it. As with other materials in ancient Egypt, pistacia varnishes may have had religious significance, which could in part explain the haphazard manner in which they were applied to objects. Figure 26.3 shows chromatograms from GC/MS analysis of deep amber-colored cakes of two kinds of resin found in a Middle Kingdom tomb. The viscous resins were apparently poured onto a piece of textile, the impression of which remains on the bottom of the broken pieces.



**Figure 26.3** Chromatograms from gas chromatography/mass spectrometry analysis of two different resins found in a Middle Kingdom tomb. Top: Pistacia resin. Bottom: Pine resin. Each of the peaks are different chemical compounds found in the resins that come out of the instrument at different times. Although many of the peaks cannot be identified, compounds positively identified in each make it possible to identify the type of resin. Images: Richard Newman.

Complex mixtures of organic materials require multiple preparation steps and analytical procedures for full characterization. One example involved organic residues from four well-known blue-glazed faience jars that bear the cartouche of Ramesses II (who reigned from 1279–1213 BCE). Dark-colored residue stuck inside the jars was identified as animal fat (possibly from pigs) based on detailed chromatography analysis (Charrie-Duhau et al. 2007). This analysis used a mass spectrometer detector that identifies the different isotopes of carbon and oxygen, by which fat from different kinds of animals can be distinguished. Probably these were remains of a cosmetic, in which animal fat was a major component. Radiocarbon dating of another portion of the residues indicated that they dated to about 1000 BCE, around two centuries after Ramesses II died, which proved that the material was from a later reuse of the jars. Also found in the jars was linen soaked with pistacia resin (the use of which is not entirely certain) which was found to date to about 275 BCE, indicating an even later reuse, perhaps as canopic jars. The original use of the jars is not known, although, without the dating of the organic remains, incorrect conclusions could easily be made.

Lucas described two types of varnishes that were used on painted objects in ancient Egypt, including tombs, wooden sculptures, and mummy cases, but could not identify them given the tools available at the time. Both varnishes seem to have become common only in Dynasty 18; as with some other Egyptian materials, the circumstances and manner in which they were used probably had religious significance or symbolic meaning in some instances. A varnish, probably originally colorless but which now appears yellow when thinly applied and orange-red when thick, was apparently often made from pistacia resin (Serpico and White 2001). A black varnish, probably originally black when applied, had a variable composition, but pistacia resin, when strongly heated, was found to be a major component in most samples that have been analyzed. Lucas also described anointing liquids or semi-liquids that at certain periods were poured over coffins or viscera in canopic jars. He noted that fatty material seemed to be an important component of these. Analysis of one such dark libation material detected vegetable oil, some wax, and natural resin.

## Conclusion

As the few examples in this chapter indicate, modern scientific analysis can provide many insights into the materials and techniques used by the ancient Egyptians to make their artifacts. This information helps us to better understand sources of raw materials and the trading of those materials. In spite of the vast amount of new information amassed over the last eighty-five years, since the first publication of Lucas' book, there is still much to learn as sophisticated modern analytical tools are applied to these ancient materials.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

*Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology*, Nicholson and Shaw, eds. (2000) is an excellent source for research before 2000. The literature on subjects covered in this book is voluminous, scattered among museum catalogs or special publications and scholarly articles, many in specialized scientific journals.

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## CHAPTER 27

# Conservation of Egyptian Objects

*A Review of Current Practices in the Field  
and in Museum Settings*

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*Susanne Gänsicke*

## Introduction

Ancient sites and the artifacts associated with them have commonly experienced extensive alterations over long periods of time. Changes in societies lead to changes in use or the abandonment of patrimony. Deterioration frequently sets in shortly after use ends at any given moment. Cultural landscapes are altered by naturally occurring and man-made changes to the topography. Periodically, reappropriation of architecture and works of art occurs at a later point, a practice that is also observed in ancient Egypt. The act of preservation of cultural property takes place within the framework of a particular society and at a specific point in time. Over time, views change in regard to which objects or structures are valued, judged to be meaningful and, therefore, worthy of safeguarding. Physical measures chosen to stabilize, repair, or reconstitute artifacts are guided by the philosophical principles of the times in which they were executed, as well as by the available materials and technologies.

This chapter introduces the conservation of movable cultural property with a particular reference to Egypt. Two different aspects are considered: conservation in the field during excavation, and conservation within collections and museums. The latter subject also includes a discussion of collections-related activities such as traveling exhibitions, which affect long-term preservation. Past and present practices are reviewed and illustrated by numerous case studies. The different choices that exist for treatment approaches and materials used in exterior versus interior environments are discussed.

## The Nature of Egyptian Collections

In Egypt, artifacts have been retrieved from sites since antiquity and have been brought to light during archaeological excavations. In addition to the removal of smaller portable

objects, large-scale sculptures and architectural elements such as columns, capitals, even sections of tomb chambers, were taken out of their original context and brought into western collections. During the second half of the twentieth century architectural heritage was once more removed from its original location in Egypt. A number of smaller temples and one temple gateway were presented to foreign governments in a generous gesture to acknowledge support during the UNESCO-led International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia.

Current archaeological practices have greatly changed from the early explorations of Egypt. Nowadays, all newly exposed finds remain in Egypt. Depending on material and size, they are preserved in protected environments either on site, within the site, in museum storage facilities, or on display in museums. Egypt is currently experiencing a growth of site and regional museums, which offers a much wider range of display opportunities than ever before. Preparations for the Grand Egyptian Museum in Giza have been underway for many years and will result in the relocation of a substantial part of the collection currently in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo. In recent years, significant numbers of objects from museums in Egypt have been made available to international audiences by means of large traveling exhibitions.

Collections outside Egypt were formed in a variety of contexts such as university, natural history, and fine art museums, as well as in privately held collections. Today, the growth of Egyptian collections outside of Egypt is limited to acquisitions through the art market, while a tight focus on proper provenance has recently imposed strict rules on acquisition policies of museums (Brodie 2006).

## The Conservation Profession and Current Trends with Special Reference to Egypt

Since the late nineteenth century, the conservation profession has evolved from a largely crafts-based discipline to one founded on scientific principles. In the English language, this development is also reflected by a change of terminology: the older term *restoration* has been superseded by *conservation*. While restoration, or the replacement of lost substance, retains an important function within preservation activities, conservation describes an expanded, holistic approach to the long-term preservation of all tangible and intangible aspects of cultural heritage.

Practices are guided by codes of ethics and guidelines of practice. The first formal document addressing this subject, developed in 1961, was The Report of the Murray Pease Committee: IIC American Group Standards of Practice and Professional Relations for Conservators (Corp. author 1964). Comparable codes of conduct, expanded to include current standards, have been adopted by conservation organizations worldwide. Central to these documents is the principle that conservation interventions shall not negatively affect or alter cultural property, nor hinder future examination or treatments. Documentation is identified as an integral aspect of conservation, as is examination and analysis by various analytical techniques, which often accompany treatment as a diagnostic tool.

## *Training programs*

Today, the discipline of conservation is most frequently taught in undergraduate and graduate university programs, although other training courses also exist. A few conservators choose to pursue a PhD, often at an advanced point in their career. Conservators specialize in different types of materials, for example, paintings, furniture, works on paper and photography, textiles, sculpture or three-dimensional works of art. A small number of training programs worldwide offer a special focus on archaeological materials. Further specialization in even more specific subgroups of materials, such as ceramics, glass, stone, metal, or organic materials, is based on the needs of a particular institution or is anchored in conservation traditions of countries, where conservators tend to be focused on one particular material. In the United States, by contrast, the discipline of objects conservation comprises all three-dimensional art in all materials from all historic periods.

Conservation of Egyptian materials belongs foremost to the sphere of archaeological conservation. The specific materials and techniques used in ancient Egypt, however, require further specialization. A thorough knowledge of ancient Egyptian technology is imperative for proper treatment. Institutions outside of Egypt with Egyptian collections often employ conservators who have developed a special expertise in this particular type of field material after having received a degree in objects conservation or archaeological conservation. Conservation of Egyptian textiles, papyrus, and encaustic mummy portraits is often executed by conservators who focus on these specific media.

In Egypt, the principal conservation departments are located at Cairo University and El Fayum University. Both offer a BA in conservation, while further opportunities for academic studies at MA and PhD level also exist (S. Hamed, personal communication 2011). Conservation institutes in Luxor and Minya offer training for conservation technicians in addition to a small number of other private and governmental conservation training programs. A growing number of Egyptian conservators are participating in international training and fellowship programs.

Collaborations with foreign missions in Egypt have presented ongoing training opportunities. From 2004 to 2007, the “Egyptian Museum Requalification System” by the Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione e il Restauro (ISCR) offered a course in the museology and conservation of the Egyptian cultural heritage. Organized by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the General Secretary of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities in Cairo from 2008 to 2009, it provided training to one hundred participants from five museums in Cairo. A project for the Grand Egyptian Museum conservation center was developed by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA, see [www.jicagem.com/](http://www.jicagem.com/)) and focused on specific materials, such as textile paper and metals. From 2007 to 2010, a conservation field school was taught in Luxor as part of the Luxor East Bank Groundwater Lowering Response Project, by the American Research Center in Egypt. The current five-year project of Conservation and Management of the Tomb of Tutankhamen presents a new training opportunity for site conservation and management by the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI, see [www.getty.edu/conservation/](http://www.getty.edu/conservation/)).

## *Methods of conservation*

Approaches to conservation treatment evolve continuously. Materials and methods used during conservation treatment should not interact in any damaging way with the original substances, and must remain readily detectable and, in theory, reversible. Conservators today understand their roles as the custodians and caretakers of the artifacts with which they work and are aware of the lasting consequences of their interventions.

The original materials of archaeological objects are often highly compromised. They may contain signs of original use, ancient repair, or even reuse. Due to long-term burial, the once intended surface appearance, shape, and function are frequently lost and the chemical composition of the original materials may be significantly altered.

As expressed eloquently by Pye, “we have long understood that objects are not static, that both material and meaning can be changed by events such excavation, and that it is possible to manage material change, but seldom to eliminate it” (Pye (2009), 136).

Today, examination, documentation, treatment, and preventive conservation are integral elements of conservation. Treatments may include cleaning, stabilization and containment of deterioration processes, reassembly, repair and integration of losses. Materials and techniques applied in these processes are often borrowed and adapted from other professions and industries. A large variety of synthetic resins, for example, find application in the stabilization of materials as diverse as metals, stone, and polychrome wood. Specific conservation materials are chosen based on many factors, such as stability, chemical compatibility and pH level, solubility, and adhesive strength. Some of these parameters can be manipulated, and the manner in which modern resins are applied is sophisticated. For example, different tools allow for a high level of control during treatment, ranging from injection to misting or vacuum impregnation.

With the knowledge that any treatment may harbor irreversible change, conservators today may choose to limit and delay intervention until the appropriate methods and resources become available. The stabilization is aided by proper housing, mounting, storage, and display systems. As with modern medicine, the processes and materials used in treatment and examination continue to evolve as technological processes develop. The standard examination techniques used to characterize ancient materials, manufacturing processes, provenance, and deterioration products are discussed by Richard Newman in this volume.

Examination in ultraviolet (UV) and infrared (IR) light reveals surface conditions not visible to the naked eye, such as layers of paint and binders, or previously used treatment materials. X-radiography is used to examine the internal structure of objects, for example, to identify casting and joining techniques of metal objects. CT scanning (computed tomography) allows further, highly sophisticated non-destructive visualization of internal structures of objects, although this technology is not available in museum laboratories and must be arranged through collaboration with other institutions.

CT scanning of the wooden portrait head of Queen Tiye from Dynasty 18 in the Egyptian Museum-Berlin led to a groundbreaking discovery; the royal headdress, fabricated from gold and silver, was hidden under the current outer linen cap, which

was once covered with blue glass beads (Wildung 1995). The physical removal of this added, ancient layer is ethically not possible, as it reflected a change of Queen Tiy's status from royal wife to divine widow. Yet, computer simulation allows the creation of virtual images of the original headdress. Similarly, CT imaging revealed complex layers of gesso that were applied during manufacture over the carved limestone core of the bust of queen Nefertiti from Dynasty 18, also in the Egyptian Museum-Berlin (Huppertz et al. 2009). Not only does the information add to the understanding of the ancient sculpting process, but it also reveals internal cracks and fissures, and thus, the vulnerability of the object to handling.

A recently developed photography technique, reflectance transformation imaging (RTI), allows the visualization of surface textures not readily apparent to the naked eye. RTI provides important information about the stability of an object, and the tools used in its manufacture (Cultural Heritage Imaging, see <http://culturalheritageimaging.org/>). Rapid prototyping and three-dimensional models are also applied in conservation processes and museum presentations. An example is the recent exhibition of the funeral complex of King Sahure at Abusir (Dynasty 5) at the Liebighaus, Frankfurt, that displayed replicas of limestone reliefs preserved *in situ*, which otherwise would never have been viewed outside of Egypt, alongside with isolated blocks in the same compound from museum collections (Brinkmann 2010). Digital technology also offers tools for virtual reconstruction to aid in the process of developing actual treatments (Kotoula 2011).

### *Conservation literature*

Over the last decades, a substantial body of conservation literature on Egyptian materials has developed. Since the late 1980s, three conservation conferences on Egyptian materials have been held in the United Kingdom and have produced proceedings. In addition, many highly focused articles on specific treatments and examinations have appeared in conservation journals, proceedings of Egyptological conferences, and as technical chapters of exhibition catalogues, as, for example, in the catalogue of Egyptian funerary portraits in the Petrie Museum (Picton, Quirke, and Roberts 2007). Collaborative research between conservators and curators can be imperative in the development of exhibitions and publications (Hill and Schorsch 2007; Corcoran, Svoboda, and Walton 2010). The body of literature on scientific analysis, discussed by Richard Newman in this volume, has experienced similar expansion. Reviews of the conservation history in major collections provide a wealth of archival information as well as insight into past treatment choices (Becker and Schorsch 2010; Gänsicke et al. 2003a, 2003b). Conservation information and technical studies of works of art are also increasingly incorporated into museum and university websites, social media, and video.

Most documentation today is carried out in digital format and linked to museum databases. Increasingly archival information is made available online, such as Lucas' notes on the treatment of Tutankhamun's tomb (Griffith Institute Archive, University of Oxford, see [www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/4elres.html](http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/4elres.html)). An online Arabic–English conservation dictionary, developed by the Athar Programme for the Conservation of Cultural Heritage in the Arab Region (ICCROM), offers an important new language resource (Mahdy 2008). However, the incorporation of Arabic abstracts into western

publications remains an isolated phenomenon as in the journal *Metropolitan Museum Studies in Art, Science, and Technology*.

## Egyptian Materials and Their Deterioration

### *Causes of damage and deterioration*

The context from which objects derive in Egypt is as diverse as the historical periods in which they were created. It includes architectural structures such as tombs, temples, palaces, settlements, workshops and manufacturing sites, quarries, storage caves, that may also, today, lie under water. The sites are located on different soils and geological settings ranging from arid desert environments to the irrigated Nile Valley and former inundation areas, as well as rock-cut chambers and harbor sites, all of which may offer different environmental conditions.

The condition of objects unearthed during excavation depends greatly on the natural environment. Deterioration and corrosion are caused by exposure to different elements such as moisture, chemical compounds, and biological deterioration agents. Objects, sculpture, architectural elements, and wall paintings *in situ* suffer from erosion caused by changes of temperature, rising ground water, and abrasion by wind-borne particles. Human activity may yet exert the greatest destructive force. Ever-expanding worldwide urban development encroaches on archaeological sites, accompanied by rising levels of pollution and vibrations due to road traffic. Growing numbers of visitors overburden sites. And yet perhaps the most unfortunate form of destruction caused by humans is related to vandalism and war. Museums and heritage sites are no safe haven for cultural property at times of armed conflict and unrest, and have been subjected to plundering and other types of abuse, as events in Iraq, Afghanistan, and most recently Egypt have demonstrated. One reflects as well on the extensive damage inflicted on cultural heritage in museums during World War II. Even with international heritage conventions in place including the 2003 UNESCO Declaration Concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003), in times of active violence, the safeguarding of cultural heritage remains highly problematic.

### *Ancient Egyptian materials*

Egyptian material culture dazzles with its beauty, technical ingenuity, and often, the seemingly perfect state of conservation of objects, despite their age. At the same time, the burial conditions wreak havoc on objects, which results in their excavation in a highly unstable state. In broad terms, materials are grouped into organic versus inorganic substances. Specific materials and their use have been summarized by Lucas and Harris (1962) and Nicholson and Shaw (2000). The paragraphs below provide a brief summary of the most common materials and their typical damage patterns (Gänsicke 2008).

#### *Ceramics and glass*

Different types of clay were used widely in the creation of hand-built, wheel-thrown, and mostly low-fired, ceramic vessels, figures, coffins, and molds. Typical decoration includes

burnishing and painted surfaces, and molded shapes. Egyptian faience, a silica-based frit with glazed surface in often-vibrant colors, was molded into beads, amulets, tiles, vessels, and small sculptures. Glass, introduced during the New Kingdom, was fashioned into vessels, amulets, beads, and inlays, and the glazing of stones was also practiced. In addition to breakage, ceramics and faience are most often affected by soluble salts, which penetrate their fabric during burial. Salt activity can lead to loss of surface decoration and detail, and to the object's complete destruction.

### *Stone*

Egypt is rich in geological formations and many varieties of rocks were exploited for buildings and their sculptural elements, as well as for sculptures, sarcophagi, and smaller utilitarian objects, such as stone vessels. The frequently occurring stones include a variety of different igneous rocks (granite, granodiorite, quartzdiorite, basalt, porphyry), metamorphic rock (marble, gneiss, serpentine) and sedimentary rocks (schist/greywacke, sandstone, quartzite, limestone, calcite, anhydrite). Precious and semiprecious stones, many of local origin, some also imported, found use in decorative applications such as inlay for sculpture, jewelry, and other prized items. A great number of sculptures and architectural elements were made from sedimentary rocks like limestone and sandstone, with often inherent instabilities, which are readily eroded either above ground or during burial. Harder metamorphic and igneous rocks suffer from exposure to weathering through wind abrasion and changes in temperature, as well as by soluble salts and other weathering mechanisms.

### *Metals*

Precious metals readily available in Egypt include gold, which was used for jewelry, vessels, funerary items, and gilded surface decorations, and electrum, which was utilized for jewelry and vessels. Silver, not locally mined, was valued more than gold during the Old and Middle Kingdoms, and was first used for small-scale jewelry and vessels, prior to much more expansive usage in later times. Copper was utilized widely from predynastic times for sculptures and figures, vessels, utilitarian items, blades, but also for larger architectural elements. The alloying of copper to produce bronze became widespread in the New Kingdom and allowed for the mass production of cast sculptures and other shapes. Iron was not used widely until the Late Period. Lead and tin occur far less frequently, but were important as alloy elements.

Alkaline or acidic environments promote the corrosion of silver, cupreous metals, iron, and tin: this process alters original substances and appearances forever. As metals corrode, their original surface finish, such as metallic luster and other surface treatments (which may include patination, gilding, and inlays) are often disturbed or lost. In its advanced state, corrosion may lead to partial or full mineralization of the original metal object and its shape can be severely changed. Even gold, which in Egypt is often a natural alloy of gold and silver of varying composition, can experience alteration such as surface tarnish, in addition to physical changes of often thin-walled and fragile shapes.

### *Organic materials*

A very large variety of local and imported organic materials was utilized ranging from local plant fibers and woods to ivory, ebony, fancy furs, and feathers, imported from Nubia and other regions of the Mediterranean. These materials found wide application in the manufacture of clothing, basketry, wigs, coffins, cartonnage (a material particular to ancient Egypt), and items of daily use, ropes, linens, sails, as well as large-scale items such as furniture, boats, chariots, and architectural elements. Liquid or malleable substances include resin, varnish, ointments, wax, and other embalming materials. Surfaces of organic materials may be decorated by a large variety of means, such as paint, gilding, and inlays. Particularly complex are composite organic materials, which may incorporate diverse substances, adhesives, paint layers, and varnishes.

The dry desert environment of some sites in Egypt has aided in the preservation of organic materials, which have been recovered in remarkably good condition in some locations, such as in the tomb of Tutankhamun. This is not the case when tombs have moist conditions and where salt and fungi activity have caused major damage. Insect damage can be devastating: the wooden cores of objects can be completely consumed, while the outer shell of gesso, paint, or other applied decorations survive, as for example in the gold metal casings on the wooden funerary furniture of Queen Hetepheres, Dynasty 4, from Giza.

The scientific study of mummies has led to fascinating medical discoveries about the process of mummification, nutrition and disease in antiquity, and the exploration of DNA lineages. Yet, the physical preservation of humans and animals is carried out with technologies typically used on material culture, far removed from medical procedures. A selected group of royal mummies are preserved in exhibition cases in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, in an ideal, oxygen-free atmosphere. Ethical, emotional, and practical issues of dealing with physical remains and the context of burial issues are discussed by Balachandran (2009).

## **Field Conservation**

Excavations operate on different levels and in different localities. Some site excavations have well-equipped field laboratories, while others take place in remote locations with limited provisions and lack of access to supplies. Throughout Egypt, site conservation projects have been ongoing over centuries in collaboration with foreign missions. Recently, the dewatering of cultural heritage sites in Egypt, for example at Luxor and Karnak temples and at the mortuary temple of Amenhotep III at Thebes, has allowed for new large-scale excavations, which were previously not accessible. In response to the dewatering of Luxor and Karnak temples in 2008, a field laboratory was built at Karnak temple by the American Research Center in Egypt.

A number of conservation supplies, selected adhesives, consolidants, support materials, and mechanical equipment can only be obtained internationally and must be shipped to Egypt prior to excavation. However, basic supplies and solvents are available in Egypt.

Conservators working on excavations need a great amount of ingenuity and flexibility to adapt their techniques with limited resources while coping with unforeseeable events and discoveries.

### *Recovery of objects*

The removal of an object from the ground, or from a particular environment of long-term exposure such as a tomb chamber, can be traumatic. Even though the conditions may not have been dry or always stable; over time the object can settle into a fragile equilibrium. The processing of materials recently exposed during excavation is a critical step in the transition of highly altered and friable substances from one environment to another, while attempting to preserve their full integrity. Objects are rarely fully treated during recovery, but often require some type of stabilization to allow them to be lifted and moved to a protected space for treatment.

During the widespread excavations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, limited methods and materials were available to accomplish object lifting and immediate stabilization. Wax, animal glue, and shellac were prime resources used to impregnate unstable materials (Petrie 1904; Rathgen 1905; Lucas 1932). Treatments were often aimed at preserving the objects' physical integrity without much consideration for the limitations that these applied substances might pose for future treatments and scientific analysis.

Conservators in the field are often the first to handle and document newly exposed materials and must make informed decisions about the immediate measures to be taken in order to stabilize a substance and prevent further deterioration. The first detailed examination of an object records observations about its specific materials, methods of manufacture, original use, and traces of substances such as pigments or fibers. The work of conservators on site can, thus, be compared to that of forensic scientists. Hasty cleaning or stabilization with modern substances may remove important evidence or contaminate the ancient materials in a manner that interferes with future analysis (such as Carbon 14 dating).

Mindful of the long-term stability of substances applied to an ancient object, as well as the possible interactions with original compounds, conservators make use of a wide range of modern materials. In last two decades, for example, Cyclododecane, a wax-like synthetic hydrocarbon that sublimes over time without leaving a residue, has allowed temporary consolidation for the successful lifting of extremely fragile materials (Rowe and Rozeik 2008). Another important concern for objects retrieved from moist environments is the proper slow drying of the object to prevent soluble salts from causing damage, such as deformation, cracking, corrosion, and even disintegration.

The extent of treatment in the field depends on the future destination of artifacts, as some may go on to be treated in a specialized museum laboratory while others may be destined for long-term storage, with little future review of their condition. Treatment choices are also influenced by the timeframe and funding of a particular excavation. Excavations are mostly seasonal and, frequently, the reburial of trenches and of exposed architecture or other finds occurs between seasons.

## ***Large-scale sculptures and architectural fragments***

Larger sculptures and architectural elements exposed during excavation are often preserved and displayed on site. The ongoing excavations at the funerary temple of Amenhotep III by the German Archaeological Institute, for example, recently uncovered hundreds of sculptures or sculptural fragments, which are being cleaned and assembled on site in what resembles a large field hospital. Sometimes, the long-term preservation of exposed fragmentary monuments and sculptures *in situ* can be so problematic, however, that only relocation to a museum or shelter will guarantee their survival.

Architectural elements reappropriated in antiquity, often as fill material for walls or in foundations, are also exposed during excavation. Such finds provide significant information about the use history of structures but also pose a storage problem. For example, Luxor and Karnak temples contain large areas of block storage. Recently exposed decorated relief blocks from earlier structures in the Mut Temple at Karnak, excavated by the Johns Hopkins University Expedition, are protected by custom-made shelters.

The Luxor Temple block yard conservation program led by the Epigraphic Survey of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, has been active for many years. Here architectural fragments are documented, consolidated, and rearranged on mastaba platforms to remove them from the ground to eliminate the threat of constant moisture.

The transfer of objects from one climate zone to another presents multifaceted complications as the case study of the odyssey of a pair two obelisks illustrates (Ashurst 2001). Originally erected by Thutmose III around 1500 BCE at Heliopolis, they suffered damage due to fire when the temple was vandalized in the sixth century BCE during the Persian occupation. In the first century BCE, they were re-erected near the shore in Alexandria until an earthquake toppled one of them around 1301 CE. In the nineteenth century, the pair were excavated once more and separated. One obelisk was shipped to London, and the second one to New York. Both suffered immersion in seawater prior to shipping and have since been exposed to the climate conditions of their respective new home countries. Both also were, almost immediately after their arrival in their new location, intensely scrutinized for damage and weathering, as both exhibit fractures in the surfaces, and have been an ongoing subject of investigation, as well as news headlines.

## **Conservation in Museums**

Museums are not static repositories for objects, but promote constant changes in display and interpretation of collections. Museums also continue to reinvent themselves and to expand, a current international trend that is also shared by institutions in Egypt. The focus of a particular museum or a temporary exhibition dictates the choice for object installation and treatment. Demands on the objects can be manifold, and over time, objects can acquire different values or meanings, which results in different treatments and displays.

## *Work in museum laboratories*

Quite a few museums have well-equipped conservation laboratories. In the United States, most museums employ a core staff of conservators and use additional freelance consultants for large-scale projects. Most of the larger museums are equipped with some analytical capacity, but only a few have fully equipped scientific facilities. In addition, conservation institutes, some connected with universities, are conducting research on conservation materials and methods, as well as technical studies on works of art.

Ancient materials are often severely altered, resulting in loss to their original appearance. While some substances appear whole, they may be structurally altered and unstable, rendering them unable to withstand repeated handling and display. Stable objects in storage may not be stable enough for display, or even less so for traveling exhibitions and repeated exposure. Therefore, conservators are integral in the decision-making process about which objects can be exhibited and under what conditions. Likewise, large-scale treatments and installations often require collaboration with other professionals—scientists, engineers, riggers, mount makers, and art shipping companies—whose expertise is not always readily available in museums.

## *Evolution of treatments*

Objects in older collections have often undergone multiple interventions in their lives. The point in time during which an object is treated has a great influence not only on its appearance, but also on its long-term performance. Frequently, interventions that were carried out in the past with best intentions but with a lack of knowledge about interactions of materials or appropriate materials, have led to further damage. Old adhesives, such as animal glue or shellac, darken and cause staining over time, and lose adhesive strength. Chemicals used to treat corrosion or to remove tarnish may produce secondary corrosion on metals. Hygroscopic modern fill materials may activate soluble salts in the original material. The lack of early treatment records presents a problem in many institutions and retreatments often require a substantial amount of investigation.

A brief discussion of the treatment history of metals, specifically of silver, copper, and its alloys, illustrates the evolution of conservation treatments and approaches. Most metals are less stable in their refined and processed state than the ores from which they were smelted, with the exception of precious metals, gold, and platinum materials. While silver is often included in the group of precious metals, it does not survive well during long-term burial. In the early history of metal cleaning, the removal of all corrosion layers was deemed desirable to stop corrosion processes and restore metallic luster. Chemical and electro-chemical treatments produced the often-porous metallic surfaces on ancient bronze and silver objects seen in museums worldwide. Occasionally, some objects are mineralized by the corrosion process and have lost their original metallic state altogether. However, in such cases, their original shape is preserved by minerals that are often highly brittle and unstable (Figure 27.1). Furthermore, corrosion does not always occur in an even pattern on an object, and some parts of it may be better preserved than others. In these cases modern reproductions can be helpful to recreate the object's original appearance (Figure 27.2).



**Figure 27.1** The post-excavation image documents the fragmented and highly mineralized state of silver bracelets, which are decorated with butterfly shapes inlaid with carnelian, turquoise, and lapis. MFA 47.1700. Tomb of Hetepheres (G 7000 X), Giza, Egypt. 2575–2465 BC. Neg. B 6156\_NS (1927). Courtesy of Harvard University–MFA Expedition.



**Figure 27.2** On the left the original bracelet fragments after treatment mounted onto a Plexiglas support. On the right an electrotype reproduction, inlaid with colored plastic, fabricated by William J. Young. MFA 47.1700 and MFA 52.1837. Tomb of Hetepheres (G 7000 X), Giza, Egypt. 2575–2465 BC. Outer D × inner D × W: 10 × 7 × 2.4 cm. Neg. SC 209057 (2008). © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

The stripping of corrosion by chemical methods has, by and large, been abandoned today. Now, the preservation of corrosion layers is even viewed as significant, since the different minerals formed during burial attest to specific conditions and materials that were in contact with a metal object. Sometimes those materials have been lost and only small amounts of textile or plant fibers, for example, remain embedded between the corrosion products or are preserved in the form of pseudomorphs. Ancient surface treatments such as patination may never be retrieved but can be identified within the minerals that have formed above and below such layers. Less thoroughly corroded metal can be cleaned by mechanical means, sometimes supported by local consolidation, a process that is helpful in order to expose details of the original surface, its decoration, as well as provide insight into manufacturing techniques and ancient repairs. This type of cleaning is extremely time-consuming and complicated, but can produce astonishing results, as for example in the treatment of two male statues created from hammered copper sheets during the reign of Pepi I, Dynasty 6, carried out in the 1990s at the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (Eckmann and Shafik 2005). The process also revealed a wealth of technical information about the sculptures and the process of their manufacture, which was previously not known.

### ***Restoration and reconstruction of sculpture***

Historic restoration of ancient sculpture has become a subject of scholarly study and debate, and the preservation of previous restorations may be desirable under specific circumstances (Podany 2003). While the shape and decoration on older fills and additions to these objects may be questionable today, previous restorations give testimony to the thinking at the time. Many heavily restored objects have become textbook images, and their de-restoration raises complex issues along with possible damage to the original substance.

The colossal sculpture of the Egyptian pharaoh Menkaure at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), presents a massive and complex reconstruction. Originally carved from one block of Egyptian alabaster, it was deliberately destroyed in antiquity. In 1907, the Harvard University–Boston Museum of Fine Arts Expedition recovered the head and fragments from the torso and throne base, yet its first installation at the MFA displayed only the head and the base (Figure 27.3). Various stages of restoration, completed in 1935, led to the full restoration that visitors see today (Figure 27.4) (Dunham 1935).

Relocation of the sculpture was required in 2010 as part of the museum's master plan, designed by Foster and Partners, that included the building of a new wing for the Art of the Americas with additional gallery renovations. Gamma radiography was used to visualize the extent of the existing restoration of the sculpture and revealed that the original stone fragments were not securely connected. The 1935 reconstruction did not anticipate the sculpture's future relocation and resulted in a complex, three-dimensional patchwork of ancient and modern materials with an estimated weight of more than 4,000 pounds (Figure 27.5). Multidisciplinary teamwork between conservators,



**Figure 27.3** Head and lower torso fragment of the colossal statue of Menkaure as first exhibited in the Hall of the Mastabas in 1909. MFA 09.204. Menkaure Pyramid Temple, Giza, Egypt. Old Kingdom, Dynasty 4, 2490–2472 BC. Neg. C166 (1909). © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

engineers, and other technicians developed a mechanical support and moving apparatus with temporary wheels, which was incorporated into the base of the old restoration. Taking into consideration elevator weight limits and door openings, the statue was transported through the larger parts of the building (Figure 27.6), while the full preservation of the reconstructed statue was accomplished during this relocation.

Old restorations, however, may also falsify works of art and lead to misinterpretation. Historic restorations and fills, not previously noted on a fragmentary colossal sculpture of a royal seated figure in the Egyptian Museum-Berlin, were exposed by damage suffered during World War II. Originally discovered by Lepsius at Medinet Habu, it was first published in 1855 in a misleading line drawing depicting the already fully restored shape that covered large parts of the face and the chest (Lepsius 1849–1859). Only the more recent damage and the ensuing de-restoration allowed the sculpture to be identified as an image of King Tutankhamun (Wildung 2005). In contrast, recently unearthed greywacke fragments belonging to a sculpture of Mut were excavated by Johns Hopkins University Expedition at the temple of Mut in Karnak and are exhibited now at the Luxor Museum. Losses were intentionally left open to allow access in case additional

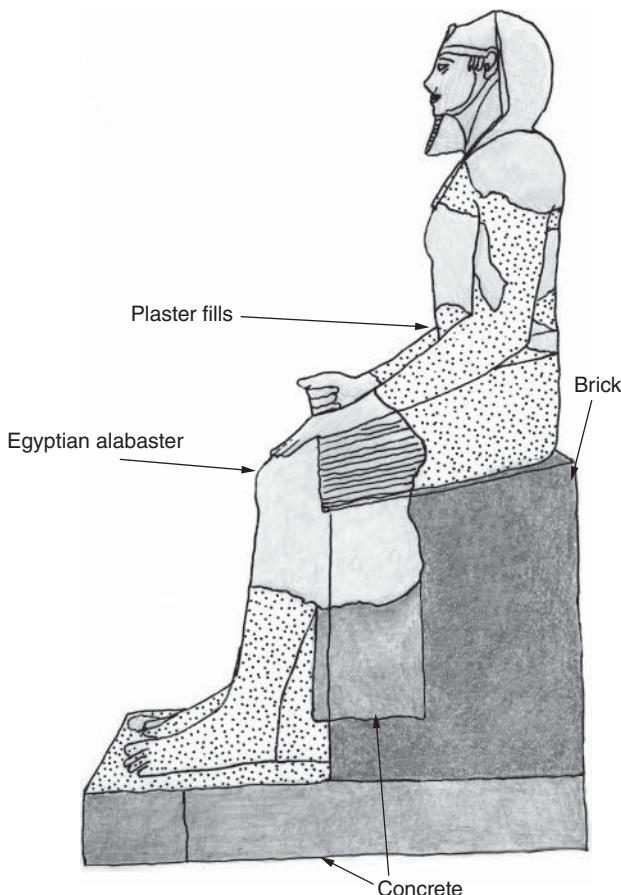


**Figure 27.4** The colossal statue of Menkaure in its current form, which was created during the 1935 restoration campaign. MFA 09.204. Menkaure Pyramid Temple, Giza, Egypt. Travertine (Egyptian alabaster). H × L × W 243.8 × 115.6 × 83.8 cm. Neg. SC 11182 (2001). © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

fragments are excavated in the future—a work in progress, befittingly exhibited in a large sand box.

### *Ancient architecture in museum settings*

Quite a few museum collections contain significant portions of Egyptian architectural structures. Most were installed decades ago as galleries were first designed. The presentation of monuments within galleries is currently being reconsidered, and more than one institution has grappled with the question: how can a sense of the original context be translated into a museum display? Three recent reinstallations of Old Kingdom tomb



**Figure 27.5** Schematic drawing of the different materials, ancient and modern, that constitute the sculpture of Menkaure today. Courtesy of Susanne Gänsicke.

chapels or parts thereof, and a fourth installation of New Kingdom tomb paintings, will be discussed to compare and contrast presentation and conservation choices.

The Old Kingdom chapel of Perneb from Saqqara dating to Dynasty 5, at the Metropolitan Museum, was restored a few years ago during the gallery renovations that also addressed its presentation (Heywood and Gat 2004). Unstable and dissatisfactory fills were replaced, and research provided insights into the older treatment campaigns. The previous discolored glass was replaced by non-reflective glass in order to protect the wall surface from damage by accidental touching or vandalism. In order to provide context, the vestibule, that was fully exposed during previous exhibition but was originally entered through a narrow passage in the ancient setting, was partially masked by the installation of a modern wall. Blocks cut from Egyptian limestone were built up into a jagged wall to create an experience that resembled the original setting of the tomb.

The Egyptian Museum in Berlin reopened the New Museum in 2009 with the offering chambers of Metjen (Abusir, Dynasties 3 to 4) and of Merib (Giza, Dynasty 4) displayed



**Figure 27.6** The required relocation of the sculpture from the second to the first floor led to a journey through the Ruth and Carl J. Shapiro Rotunda and Colonnade and numerous galleries in different wings of the museum to the final destination into the Old Kingdom Sculpture gallery. MFA 09.204. Menkaure Pyramid Temple, Giza, Egypt. Old Kingdom, Dynasty 4, 2490–2472 BC. H × L × W 243.8 × 115.6 × 83.8 cm. Travertine (Egyptian alabaster). Neg. SC 243092 (2010). © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

in a new and unique fashion. Rather than rebuilding the small chambers on their original floor plan, their walls are displayed at a distance, in an “exploded” fashion. The blocks appear to rest on each other, while missing sections on their back sides were filled with cast modern blocks, into which the ancient fragments were set to supply structural support. Extensive three-dimensional modeling was used in the process of developing the current display. Exhibited in a large gallery, the walls stand freely and visitors are able to view the blocks in the round and walk behind the original walls. This display offers a rare insight into the materiality of Egyptian architecture in a manner that was never anticipated in the ancient context, where only flat interior surfaces would have been visible.

In 2010, a relief wall from the tomb of Senenuka (Giza, Dynasty 4) in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, was moved from an early twentieth-century installation into a new gallery. Its nine large blocks were previously shown stacked on top of each other with minimal structural security. The accumulated weight of the upper levels exerted a great deal of pressure on the lower lying blocks and their fragile edges. During their recent remounting, the blocks were installed, free hanging, into a substantial movable steel frame. The assembly was subsequently wheeled into a narrowly designed exhibition case, in which a microclimate could be maintained. Only the surface and uppermost edges are now exposed to view. Senenuka's wall is much smaller than the previous two monuments and is treated rather as a single object, while the frame provides future mobility.

Three of the Old Kingdom tomb chapels' surfaces show finished reliefs and working sketches in addition to only roughly dressed surfaces, thus also illustrating the ancient decorating process. From ancient to modern times, these chapels remain a work in progress.

In the British Museum, London, retreatment and reinstallation of eleven wall paintings from the tomb of Nebamun (Thebes, late Dynasty 18) exhibit each fragment separately, set into slightly slanting flat panels in large wall cases (Middleton and Uprichard 2008). Mounting in this fashion allows for the optimal viewing of these magnificent paintings, shown together for the first time in the context of their original setting. The installation of these fragments at an angle also minimizes the risk of delamination of the paint layers from their ancient ground. Vibration dampening also helps to prevent such damage. The current installation also exposes the outer rough edges of the underlying mud plaster ground that was originally applied to the rock-cut walls of the tomb to provide a smooth surface to be decorated. Extensive examination of painting materials, methods, and conservation history also accompanied the project.

Display and design choices impact the conservation measures involved in the handling of architectural elements, methods of installation, loss compensation, and protection from visitor handling or other damage. The condition of the ancient materials may require sealed microclimates and other measures of surface protection. Architectural installations demand extensive planning and resources and should be developed with consideration to future needs and access.

## *Preventive conservation*

Preventive conservation comprises a range of activities that minimize the potential hazards to objects on display, in storage, and during transit. As discussed under field conservation, the environment to which materials are exposed impacts their long-term behavior. The control of factors which contribute to deterioration is also relevant in museum displays and storage facilities. Stable levels of relative humidity (RH) and temperature can prevent shrinkage and expansion of materials, corrosion and tarnish, and other destructive chemical processes. Exposure to light causes accumulative and non-reversible damage to many organic materials, such as textiles, plant fibers, hair, feathers, ivory, wood, varnishes and resins, pigments and dyes. Display light levels are highly controlled and recorded in conservation records for specific objects in order to track exposure.

The control of pollutants in display and storage environments has become an important aspect of preventive conservation (Hatchfield 2002). Materials used in the construction of cases and risers, gaskets, paints, fabrics, labeling board, paper, and ink, undergo rigorous testing prior to being approved for use. In recent years, international conservation organizations have been re-evaluating previous climate standards in an effort to face climate change, and its impact on buildings and collections (Cassar 2011; Corp. author 2011; Hatchfield 2011). Sustainability of museum activities along with cost-saving measures have led to the development of new guidelines for loan and exhibitions that allow a greater range of parameters while still safeguarding collections. As a result, microclimates in museum cases play a more important role in order to address specific material requirements. Pest control, mount making, art handling and packing are other important functions of preventive conservation, and are often carried out by collection care specialists.

## *Exhibitions*

The sharing of collections is a mandatory and vital aspect for many museums, and drives many activities. Ranging from modest gallery rotations to major international traveling exhibitions with multiple lenders and venues, conservation input is required to ensure the physical safety of the objects. The traveling of objects during times of renovation or to relieve storage capacities has become an international trend. Issues of concern include environmental factors and other aspects of preventive care, touched upon in the previous section. Depending on the size of objects and scope, exhibitions are often planned many years in advance and logistics can be complex. Conservation professionals travel frequently as object couriers, who check their condition and install them at loan venues. Many exhibitions are also supported by special funding and grants. Conservation of selected objects or collections may form the impetus for such exhibitions. Thus, exhibitions offer an opportunity for new technical research, expansive treatments, and remounting, which otherwise may never be realized within the budgetary constraints of an institution. Yet, despite the many benefits, the traveling of objects always poses the risk of overexposure and wear.

## **Conclusion**

Conservation and the long-term preservation of artifacts require an informed dialogue between the different stakeholders, curators, designers, conservators, and other professionals. New and evolving technologies increasingly afford such cooperation. Conservation treatment and examination offer new insights into materials and techniques, which can lead to new interpretation or evaluation of an object. Yet, as any conservation measure may forever alter the nature of an object, it must always be carefully considered and all consequences of an intervention must be fully evaluated before it is applied.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

An illustrated introduction into conservation and conservation science is found in Newman (2011). Conference proceedings of meetings that focused exclusively on the conservation of Egyptian materials are Brown, Macalister, and Wright (1995), Dawson, Rozeik, and Wright (2010), and Watkins and Brown (1988). An extensive compilation of recent conservation projects in the field and museums, which were carried out under the auspices of the American Research Center in Egypt, has been published by Danforth (2010). For background information on archaeological conservation, see Cronyn (1990), Peachey and Williams (2011), and Pye (2001). For a standard textbook on museum environment see Thomson (1986).

And, for web-based conservation resources, the code of ethics and other core documents pertaining to the conservation profession in the United States can be found at the website of the American Institute for Conservation (AIC) [www.conservation-us.org/](http://www.conservation-us.org/); see also the International Institute for Conservation for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works [www.iiconservation.org/](http://www.iiconservation.org/), and the International Council of Museums – Committee for Conservation [www.icom-cc.org/](http://www.icom-cc.org/). For abstract databases on conservation and conservation science, see: AATA online, Abstract of International Conservation Literature <http://aata.getty.edu/nps/>, and BCIN, the Bibliographic Database of the Conservation Information Network [www.bcin.ca/](http://www.bcin.ca/). The National Park Service (NPS), Museum Management Program provides a host of information on specific topics of conservation, the museum environment, material identification and deterioration, health and safety and more, in an online leaflet format [www.nps.gov/museum/publications/consveogram/cons\\_toc.html#collectionpreservation](http://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/consveogram/cons_toc.html#collectionpreservation).

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# Plates

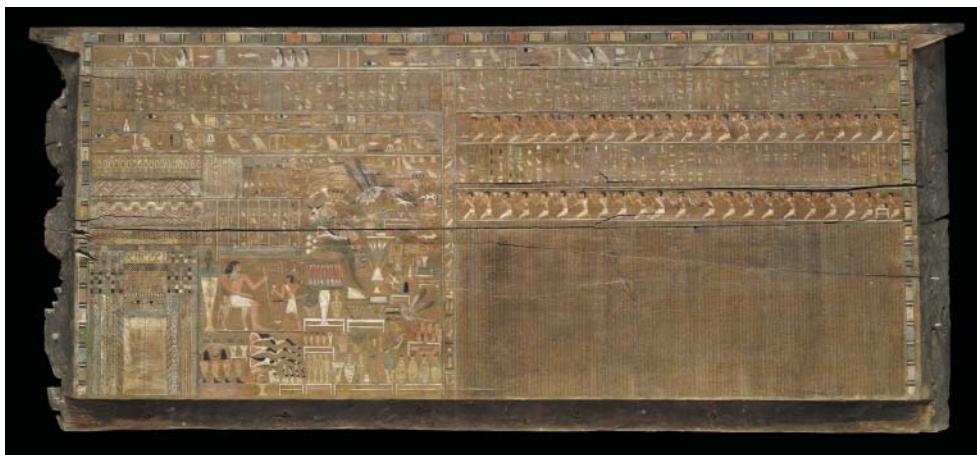
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**Plate 1** Episode in the funeral of Minnakht, set in a garden. A boat bearing the coffin navigates the pool; a temple is shown in plan to the right. Theban Tomb 87, inner room, southeast wall, New Kingdom, mid Dynasty 18. After N.M. Davies and A.H. Gardiner (1936), *Ancient Egyptian Paintings*, 3 vols, vol. I, pl. xxv. Chicago.



**Plate 2** Banquet scene: fragment of a wall painting from the Tomb of Nebamun, British Museum, London, EA 37986. © Trustees of the British Museum.



**Plate 3** Front side panel of outer coffin of Djehutynakht, Egyptian, Middle Kingdom, late Dynasty 11–early Dynasty 12. Findspot: Egypt, Deir el-Bersha, Tomb 10, shaft A (Djehutynakht). Cedar.  $115 \times 263$  cm ( $45\frac{1}{4} \times 103\frac{9}{16}$  in.). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Harvard University—Boston Museum of Fine Arts Expedition 20.1822. Photograph © 2014 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



**Plate 4** Detail of a facsimile painting of a swamp scene: a papyrus thicket, tomb of Kenamun (TT 93), reign of Amenhotep II, Dynasty 18, New Kingdom from Thebes, Egypt. Tempera on paper facsimile by Hugh R. Hopgood (1914–1916). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 30.4.60. Rogers Fund, 1930. Photograph by Valérie Angenot.



**Plate 5** The Geese of Meidum, mastaba of Nefermaat and Atet, Old Kingdom, beginning of Dynasty 4, Meidum, painted plaster. Photograph: Francesco Tiradritti.



**Plate 6** Papyrus thicket, tomb of Ankhtifi in Moalla, First Intermediate Period, mid to late Dynasty 9, Moalla, painted plaster. Photograph: Francesco Tiradritti.



**Plate 7** A detail of sunk relief painted with the red and blue symbolizing darkness and light, water and earth, humidity and dry, divine and human, death and life, seventh century BCE, Assasif. Photograph: MAIL (Italian Archaeological Mission to Luxor); © Ass. Cult. Per lo Studio dell'Egitto e Sudan NGO.



**Plate 8** Seated silver cult statue of a falcon-headed deity, New Kingdom, Dynasty 19, Miho Museum, SF04.070. © Miho Museum, Japan.



**Plate 9** Seated Harpocrates, wall painting in alcove of House C65CF4, painted by Hamzeh Carr, 1928. © Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, University of Michigan.



**Plate 10** Portrait of King Tanwetamani (Tantamani), Kurru Pyramid 16, el-Kurru, Nubia. Photograph by Peter Lacovara.

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