

IV. The Visual Materials

The Metropolitan Museum's Collection of Egyptian Art

The Metropolitan Museum of Art has one of the finest collections of Egyptian art in the world. A great part of the thirty-six thousand objects in the collection was excavated in Egypt by the Museum's staff of archaeologists from 1906 to 1936. During the early decades of the twentieth century, the Egyptian government permitted foreign archaeologists to dig in their country with the following generous proviso: at the end of each excavation season there was a division of finds, half staying in Egypt and half going to the institution that had undertaken the excavation. The Egyptians had first choice of the objects and kept all unique pieces. As a result, many objects in the Metropolitan Museum have a direct counterpart in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. Other works of Egyptian art in the Metropolitan's collection have been given to or were purchased by the Museum.

An outstanding purchase is the nearly complete **tomb of Perneb**. The tomb was a mastaba (MAH-stah-bah; from the Arabic term for "bench"), a type of funeral monument in which underground rooms for the burial are surmounted by a rectangular structure with sloping sides. Like many other structures of this type, Perneb's mastaba was largely a solid block, filled with rubble. Only the mouths of two burial shafts and five chambers were spared from the fill. The most important room, an offering hall, was decorated with painted reliefs, whereas the decoration in the antechamber to this hall was left unsculpted, with outlined figures simply filled with a coloring wash. The story of how Perneb's tomb traveled from the Old Kingdom necropolis at Saqqara in Egypt to the Metropolitan Museum in New York is as follows. Over the course of about 4,500 years, blowing sands had so completely covered the tomb that its existence was no longer known. Additional sand and debris had been piled on top of it in later centuries by Egyptians searching for building stones and, at the beginning of the twentieth century, by archaeologists excavating adjoining tombs. So great was the weight of the rubble that the ceiling of Perneb's offering chamber broke, and the carved and painted walls collapsed inward.

The tomb was finally discovered in 1907. It could not be opened to the public, however, unless the offering chamber was cleared of debris and the walls dismantled to the foundations and then rebuilt from the ground up: a long, difficult, and expensive task. Other mastaba tombs at Saqqara had finer reliefs and did not need such extensive reconstruction. Consequently, in the spring of 1913 the Egyptian director general of antiquities decided to accept a proposal from the Metropolitan according to which the Museum would purchase the tomb of Perneb for shipment to New York. All the work of excavating and dismantling

the tomb was done by the Museum's archaeologists and their staff (see slides 1 and 2). A plan of the tomb of Perneb is on page 71. You may want to reproduce it for your class.

The Temple of Dendur came to the Museum as a gift. It was built as a shrine to the goddess Isis in about 15 B.C. by order of the Roman emperor Augustus not long after the Romans gained control of Egypt. The temple was built not only for the worship of the goddess but also to commemorate two brothers, sons of a Nubian chieftain, who were revered by the local population as saints.

The temple had to be dismantled and removed from its place in 1963 because the rising waters of the Nile behind the new Aswan High Dam would otherwise have submerged it. Two years later, in 1965, the government of Egypt offered the temple to the United States in its dismantled state in recognition for the aid America had provided toward saving a number of Nubian temples doomed to be permanently flooded by the construction of the High Dam. The temple blocks, which weighed more than eight hundred tons, were packed into some 640 crates and shipped by freighter to the United States. The Egyptian proposal specified that the Dendur temple be exhibited in an art or science museum and that it be maintained to ensure its permanent safety. President Lyndon Johnson appointed a commission to consider the best location. After a series of hearings, the president announced in April 1967 that it was to be placed in The Metropolitan Museum of Art (see slide 4).

In 1920 the Egyptian Art department's excavation staff made one of their most exciting discoveries when they explored the **tomb of Meketre**, a high official and chancellor under several kings of the late Eleventh and early Twelfth Dynasty. Meketre's tomb had been looted and defaced in antiquity, but a small chamber dug into the floor of the passage leading into the tomb had not been discovered. Within it were twenty-four painted wooden models of the finest craftsmanship. Their function was to provide Meketre's spirit with sustenance and magical assistance in the afterlife. Half of the models went to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo and half to the Metropolitan Museum, according to the agreement then in effect with the Egyptian government.

The tomb of Wah, overseer of Meketre's storehouse (slides 6–13), was near Meketre's tomb. It had also escaped the notice of grave robbers. It contained Wah's coffin and mummy and the remains of a funerary meal. In the division of finds at the end of the 1920 excavation season the Egyptian government allotted all the contents of Wah's tomb to the Metropolitan, where they are now on display with the Museum's Meketre models.

A plan of the tombs of Meketre and Wah is on page 77. You may want to photocopy it for your class. A second large cut-rock tomb, belonging to Inyotef, probably Meketre's son, is also indicated on the plan.

Poster Descriptions

Coffin set of Henettawy (Poster A)

Thebes, Deir el-Bahri, Dynasty 21, ca. 1040–992 B.C.
 Gessoed and painted wood, l. 79 7/8 in.
 Rogers Fund, 1925
 25.3.182–184

The "mistress of the house and chantress of Amun-Re," Henettawy died, still in her twenties, during a time of political change (the so-called Third Intermediate Period). It was, however, a period when the art of coffin decoration was at its height. Such decoration was especially important at the time because no images enriched the simple underground chambers in which even high-status people were buried—often whole families together.

Besides her rather simple personal jewelry, Henettawy's main burial equipment was two splendid coffins and an innermost mummy lid, fitting one into the other like the parts of a Russian doll. Both coffins and the innermost lid are shaped like wrapped mummies with elaborate masks fastened over the heads. The decoration of the lids reflects royal coffins of an earlier age, which had gold masks and gold arm covers, mummy covers of precious materials such as gold inlaid with glass and semiprecious stones, snow-white and red-dyed cloth, and faience bead netting. The heads and upper bodies on Henettawy's coffins are enriched with wigs adorned with floral fillets, immense floral broad collars with Horus-head terminals, bracelets, armbands, rings, and rosette ear ornaments. Richly colored emblems are depicted as if fastened to the cloth wrappings just below the breasts; two *wedjat* eyes are seen on the outer coffin and winged scarabs appear on the second and innermost lids. Nut, the sky goddess, spreads her protective wings across the waist of the mummy images, and the goddesses Isis and Nephthys mourn the death of Henettawy and protect her feet on the two outer coffin lids.

The mummy represented on **the outer coffin lid** (left) wears an elaborate pectoral in the shape of a small shrine within which are two winged *wedjat* eyes, with uraeus images holding ankhs, and Horus falcons flanking a central scarab that pushes a sun disk upward, an image of the rising sun and of rebirth. The composition is similar to the pectoral of Sithathoryunet in slide 17. At the sides of this pectoral are figures of Anubis as a jackal wearing the crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt and holding empowering scepters. Beneath the protective wings of Nut, vertical and horizontal yellow bands (again representing gold) cover the white mummy wrapping. On the center band hieroglyphs read: "Recitation by the Osiris, housemistress and chantress of Amun-Re, king of the gods, Henettawy, justified, who says: 'O my mother Nut! Spread your wings over my face and cause me to be like the imperishable stars, like the unwearied stars, without dying a second time in the necropolis!'" In the rectangular spaces between the bands Henettawy in a rich golden garment shakes a sistrum and prays to Osiris (the two uppermost scenes), the four sons of Horus stand behind altars with offerings (middle scenes), and Anubis, god of the cemetery and mummification, holds empowering scepters in the bottom scenes.

The second coffin lid (center) is painted yellow all over, imitating royal coffins made of solid gold or gilded wood, like the famous coffins of Tutankhamun. The colorful hieroglyphs and figures would have been precious inlays. The pectoral is only slightly less elaborate than the one on the outer lid. Its main feature is again a large scarab that pushes a sun disk upward to symbolize the rising sun. On each side are enthroned figures of Osiris holding the crook and flail and wearing tall headdresses with ostrich-feather plumes (note his green flesh, symbolizing vegetation, which goes through a cycle of death followed by new growth, and thus represents the rebirth into life after death). Osiris is flanked by two winged goddesses, his sisters Isis and Nephthys, who raise one hand in adoration and sound their sistrums. In front of them are tiny *ba* spirits of Henettawy.



Ba Bird

On the central vertical band, beneath Nut with her outspread wings, are (from top to bottom) a shrine with two crouching figures of Osiris flanking a scarab, Isis and Nephthys adoring the symbol of Osiris (see slide 25), a scepter flanked by winged *wedjat* eyes, and a winged scarab above the boat of the sun. Note the recurrent representations of reed mats (shown as horizontal bars with vertical subdivisions), upon which high-status people sat and on which offerings were presented; protective cobras with sun-disk headresses; floral designs; and the hieroglyphs for "stability" and "perfect" (see pages 50, 51). On each side of the central band are five pairs of shrines whose roofs are adorned with protective cobras.

Pillars in the shape of the hieroglyph *djet*, for stability, support the roofs. In each shrine the image of a deity faces outward, where, at the edge of the coffin lid, Henettawy is seen shaking a sistrum, her hands raised in adoration. The deities she prays to are, from top to bottom, the solar gods Re and Re-Harakhty, the creator god Khnum (in the shape of a ram), the four sons of Horus (in charge of the deceased's organs), and Anubis, who sits in a much lower shrine and is adored by Henettawy's *ba*.

The innermost coffin lid (right) has no pectoral on a necklace. There are, however, two emblems of the scarab that pushes the sun disk, the lower one flanked by two Harakhty falcons that face winged cobras. The lower half of the lid is painted red, indicating a red-dyed cloth wrapping. Over the cloth is a bead netting in diamond patterns, symbolizing the feather garment of a goddess, and a single vertical yellow (gold) band on which is written a spell that Osiris utters on behalf of Henettawy.

The Egyptian appreciation for patterns is amply evident. Various rhythms are created by repetitions of actual objects, symbolic figures, and hieroglyphic signs. Note also the Egyptian appreciation for clarity and balance. The numerous floral and amuletic elements are clearly set off by thickly applied dark red, green, and black colors on the yellow background, which is glowingly enriched with the sheen produced by a colorless resin varnish. With all their richness and detail, however, the images are ordered and balanced throughout by their arrangement

in vertical and horizontal rows and by the framing bands with inscriptions. It is also interesting to note the differences among the three lids. The outer coffin lid has the most structured design with the figures standing out most clearly on the white background. The second lid is the most intricate, and the innermost the most subdued and simple. The three coffin lids are, in fact, instructive examples of the principle of variations on a given theme that is an important and constantly recurrent feature of Egyptian art.

Canopic Jar Lid in the shape of a royal woman's head (Poster B)

Thebes, Tomb 55, Valley of the Kings, Dynasty 18,
Late reign of Akhenaten (ca. 1349–1336 B.C.) or later
Alabaster with glass and stone inlays
30.8.54
Theodore M. Davis Collection, Bequest of Theodore M. Davis, 1915

See slide 22 for the description and viewing notes.

Suggested Poster activities are on pages 145–146.



Slide Descriptions

The works of art in the slides are arranged in three groups: slides 1–15, photographs of Museum excavations and related artworks; slides 16–29, royal art and images of deities; and slides 30–40, tomb equipment and ritual objects. The works of art in the second and third groups are arranged chronologically.

Please be familiar with the slides and slide descriptions before starting discussions with your class. The first thing to do is to ask the class to look at each slide thoroughly and describe what they see and what they think is happening. Beneath the slide descriptions are short sections entitled "Notice," "Discuss," and "Compare." They are designed to encourage students to become comfortable in talking about works of art, expressing their ideas about what the art means, and noticing how the formal elements make the meaning clear. You can use this same line of questioning in looking at actual works of Egyptian art in a museum.

"Notice" gives starting points to encourage the group to describe the work of art.

"Discuss" suggestions help initiate dialogue about the function and meaning of the object. As the person who has read the slide description reveals more information about the work, there will be more discussion and further interpretations.

"Compare" mentions other slides to look at. Comparing the similarities and differences between works of art makes it easier for students to see the distinctive features of each. You and your students will probably think of other interesting comparisons.

The visual materials can be grouped by themes such as those listed below. Some of the exercises and discussions in section 7, "Activities," will prepare students to discuss these themes. You, or you in consultation with your class if that seems appropriate, can select the themes that are most interesting and that could provide a focus for a museum visit. You may lead the discussion yourself or assign one or more slides to students, so they can study the images and descriptions beforehand and be the "expert" when the class looks at them.

An assignment for older students could be to pass out copies of the texts describing the visual materials in this section. Assign reports (oral, written, or both) based on particular themes to individuals or small groups. Ask them to use the information in section 3 as well and to select appropriate images from the slides and poster.

The size of each work of art is noted to avoid misunderstandings about scale when looking at the slides. With the number one slot on the right side of the carousel, place the slides in the tray with the star on the slide frame showing at the top outside corner. If possible, use two projectors for the comparisons.

Themes	Slides and other visual materials
cycles of life and death	1–3, 7–13, 17, 22, 24, 25, 26, 31–33, 36, 38, 40, poster A, pages 19, 20, 27–29
gods and goddesses	4, 10, 17, 19, 21, 25, 27–29, 32, 38, 39, poster A, pages 20–27
royalty	14–17, 20–26, pages 29–32, poster B
order over chaos	4, 18, 19, 21, 25, 34
magic	3, 4, 8–10, 13, 15–17, 19, 23–29, 31–34, 36–40, poster A
symbols and attributes	8, 10, 13, 15–19, 21, 24–27, 32, 37–39, posters, pages 27, 29, 32
animals	10, 13, 16, 17, 19, 21, 25, 28–30, 32, 34–36, 38, 39, poster A, pages 20–22, 43
the human figure	10, 15, 18, 21, 24, 25, 27, 31, 33, 36, 37, 39, posters, pages 43, 44
geometric basis and measured proportions	3, 4, 15, 16, 19, 24, 31, 32, pages 38, 41
balance and symmetry	4, 15, 17, 19, 24, 25, 36, poster A, page 38
scale	10, 17, 23, 31, 33, 36, 39, poster A, page 44
color	5, 8–10, 17, 18, 27, 28, 32, 35, 36, poster A, page 45
pose and gesture	8–10, 15, 17, 18, 21, 24, 25, 28, 31–34, 36–39, poster A, page 37
the human face	16, 20–23, 40, posters
art and writing	9, 15, 17, 22, 24, 25, 30, 32, 33, 37–39, poster A, pages 47–51
artists/materials	3, 4, 12, 15–18, 20, 21, 24, 26, 27–29, 32, 34–36, 38, 40, posters, pages 52–57
families	21–23, 25, 31, 33, 36, 37, 38, 39
women	4, 10, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 22, 25, 31, 36–38, posters, pages 9, 31
costume and jewelry	10, 13, 17, 22, 24, 27, 31, 36, 37, 38, posters, pages 56, 57
furniture	15, 19, 25, 33, 37
music	8, 37, poster A
the environment	1, 3, 5–9, 14, 24, 30, 33–36, 38, pages 7, 19
archaeology	1–3, 6–15, 36, pages 59, 60, 143, 144





I. View of Saqqara

Photograph by the Egyptian Expedition, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1913

In the background is the step pyramid of King Djoser (ca. 2630–2611 B.C.), usually thought to be the earliest stone structure built by the Egyptians, nearly five thousand years ago. All around the pyramid complex are cemeteries where royal officials were buried throughout Egyptian history. Still visible are remains of Old Kingdom mastaba tombs. These had an underground chamber in which the deceased was placed and a rectangular aboveground structure with inclined sides. The mastabas were aligned along streets like houses and were meant to be eternal dwelling places for the dead. Over the centuries, windblown sand and debris partially and sometimes completely buried these mastabas.

In the middle ground on the right is the Museum excavation site. Note the tent and equipment on the sand. To the left of the camp the Museum archaeologists are looking down into a pit where they are clearing the sand away from the tomb of Perneb. Perneb lived at the end of the Fifth Dynasty (ca. 2350–2323 B.C.), almost three hundred years after King Djoser. Perneb had his tomb built near Djoser's pyramid complex because this was deemed to be sacred ground.

Notice: the site and the pyramid

Discuss: why the expedition photographer took the picture, what activities you can discern



2. Looking down into the tomb of Perneb

Photograph by the Egyptian Expedition, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1913

The area that the archaeologists were examining in slide 1 is the entrance courtyard of the tomb, shown here with two doors and a window opening into the offering hall of the tomb. In the center of the flat roof is an opening that resembles the top of a chimney but that is actually the top of the burial shaft, which descended fifty-five feet to the burial chamber. Study the plan of Perneb's tomb on page 71 to better visualize the layout.

When the mummy of Perneb and the possessions that were to accompany him in the afterlife had been placed in the burial chamber, the shaft was filled and sealed to hide its location from grave robbers. After the expedition photographer took this record shot, the archaeologists finished clearing away the sand that had accumulated around the tomb.

Notice: the layout of the tomb

Discuss: why the offering room has a window, why the body was hidden so far underground



3. Tomb of Perneb

Saqqara, end of Dynasty 5, ca. 2350–2323 B.C.
Limestone (partially painted), h. 16 ft. 7/8 in.
Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1913
13.183.3

When the numbered stones arrived at the Museum, the staff rebuilt the tomb at the entrance to the Egyptian galleries. You can go inside the rooms and examine the carvings on the offering-chamber walls and the painted scenes in the antechamber and entrance passage.

The Egyptians thought of a tomb as the eternal dwelling place for the deceased. With its doors and window, Perneb's tomb imitated ancient mud-brick houses. (Such houses are still built in Egypt today.) Note the rectangular niche that frames the central door, which leads into the offering chamber. On both sides of the door low-relief carvings of Perneb face the entrance. The images retain faint traces of the original paint. Over the two figures' heads hieroglyphic inscriptions, their red pigment now barely visible, list Perneb's titles as chamberlain and courtier to the king.

The carvings within the offering chamber, which preserve much more of the original color, portray mortuary priests and men carrying offerings of food and drink toward Perneb, who sits before an offering table in a pose similar to that of the seated official in slide 33. On the far wall is a carving of a false door through which the Egyptians believed the spirit of the deceased could pass in order to receive the offerings. The hieroglyphs that surround it record Perneb's status among the blessed dead as a gift of the king and the gods.

The doorway on the right was the original entrance into the courtyard and tomb, since the walls projecting on the right and left sides originally abutted against the wall of another mastaba that blocked the courtyard on what is now the open front side. In the chamber on the left a small opening in the back wall provides a view into an inner chamber called a *serdab*. Here, originally, a



Drawing of a figure of Perneb from the false door and facade of his tomb.

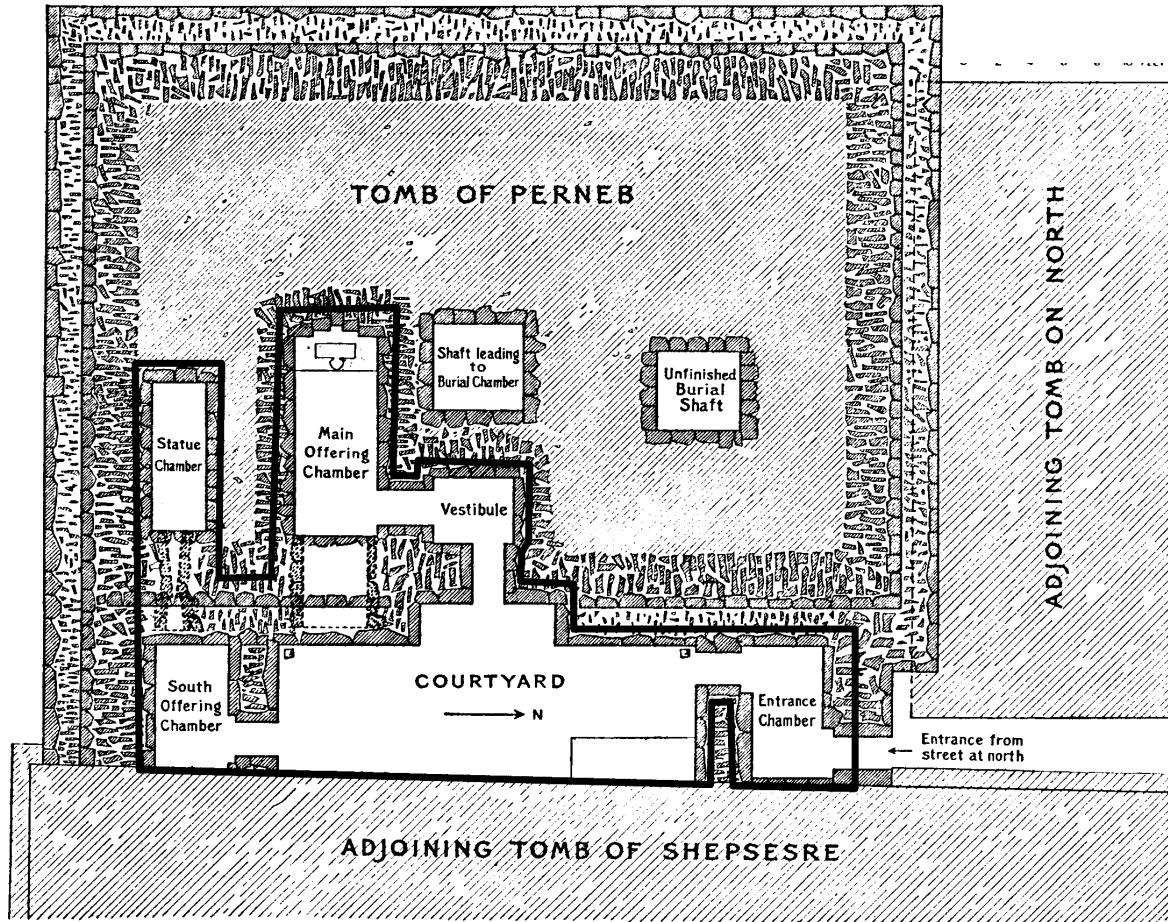
wooden statue of Perneb was placed. Through the opening in the wall the statue could smell the aroma of incense that was burned in the front room. This arrangement reminds us that, in the Old Kingdom, statues of nonroyal persons were not made to be seen but to provide a place of materialization for the deceased's spirit. (See the plan of the tomb on page 71.)

Notice: doors, windows

Discuss: function of the chambers, how the stones were cut to fit together, what the shape was for both solids and voids (the rectangle), what the front of the tomb resembles and why, why Egyptians still build houses with thick walls and small windows



Plan of the Tomb of Perneb



The thick black line encloses the part of Perneb's tomb that was moved from Egypt to New York. The lightly shaded area within the outer walls and beneath the flat stone-covered roof was completely filled with rubble and sand. Perneb's burial shaft is on the right side of the offering-chamber walls. The unfinished shaft was intended for a member of Perneb's family but, for unknown reasons, was never occupied. The adjoining tomb of Shepsesre was probably built earlier for Perneb's parents.



4. The Temple of Dendur

Nubia, ca. 15 B.C.

Sandstone, l. (from gate to rear of temple) 82 ft.

Given to the United States by Egypt in 1965, awarded to The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1967, and installed in The Sackler Wing in 1978

68.154

Egyptian temples were not simply houses for a cult image but also represented in their design and decoration a variety of religious and mythological concepts. One important symbolic aspect was based on the understanding of the temple as an image of the natural world as the Egyptians knew it. Lining the temple base are carvings of papyrus and lotus plants that seem to grow from water, symbolized by figures of the Nile god, Hapy. The two columns on the porch rise toward the sky like tall bundles of papyrus stalks with lily flowers bound up with them. Above the gate and temple entrance are images of the sun disk flanked by the outspread wings of Horus, the sky god. The sky is also represented by the vultures, wings outspread, that appear on the ceiling of the entrance porch.

On the outer walls—between earth and sky—are carved scenes of the king making offerings to deities, who hold scepters and the symbol of life. The figures are carved in sunk relief. In the brilliant Egyptian sunlight shadows cast along the figures' edges would have emphasized the outlines of their forms. Isis, her husband and brother Osiris, their son Horus, and the other deities are identified by their headdresses. These scenes are repeated again and again in two horizontal registers. The king is identified by his crowns and by his names, which appear close to his head in elongated oval shapes called cartouches, but many cartouches simply read "pharaoh." This king was actually Emperor Augustus of Rome, who, as recent master of Egypt, wisely had himself depicted in the traditional regalia of the pharaoh. Augustus had many temples erected in Egyptian style, honoring Egyptian deities. This small temple, built about 15 B.C., honored the goddess Isis and, beside her, two deified sons of a local Nubian chieftain, Pedesi and Pihor.

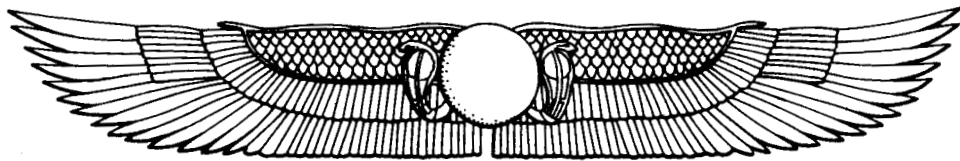
In the first room of the temple reliefs again show the "pharaoh" praying and offering to the gods, but the relief here is raised from the background so that

the figures can easily be seen in the more indirect light. From this room one can look into the temple past the middle room used for offering ceremonies and into the sanctuary of the goddess Isis. The only carvings in these two rooms are around the door frame leading into the sanctuary and on the back wall of the sanctuary, where a relief of offerings being made to Isis appears. Originally all the carving was painted in red, blue, green, yellow, and black—traces remained even less than a hundred years ago—but after the erection of a low dam at Aswan early in the twentieth century, backed-up waters of the Nile washed the last traces of colors away.

The temple, with its gate facing the Nile, was built into a hillside in Upper Nubia where the river valley is very narrow. Originally the gate was set in a high wall of mud bricks that surrounded the temple, but gradually recurrent high water destroyed the wall.

Notice: the rectangular shape of the temple, the doorways, and the gate; the carving over the gate

Discuss: symbolism, types of relief carving, colors



Winged Sun Disk



5. View of Luxor looking west across the Nile

Photograph by John G. Ross

Thebes (now Luxor), the capital of Egypt during the early Middle Kingdom and again in the New Kingdom, continued to be an important administrative and religious site throughout the rest of its history. It is the site of many of the finest ancient temples and tombs. The city of the living was on the east bank of the Nile, where today the temples of Luxor and Karnak are visited by millions of tourists every year. On the west bank beyond the green cultivated land are cliffs and wadis (dry riverbeds), where the people of ancient Thebes buried their dead. At the base of the first line of cliffs on the right is the mortuary temple of Queen Hatshepsut (slide 14). The hills and cliffs on both sides of the temple are tunneled with tombs of ancient officials. Behind the cliffs is the famous Valley of the Kings, where pharaohs of the New Kingdom were buried.

The cultivated land, the river, desert, and sky appear in horizontal bands. Perhaps such views helped to inspire the Egyptians to portray figures and events in horizontal registers on the walls of temples and tombs.

Notice: the river, narrowness of the cultivated land, the desert

Discuss: where the Valley of the Kings and Hatshepsut's temple are in this photograph, why Egyptian burial sites were in the desert



6. Tomb of Meketre, Thebes

Photograph by the Egyptian Expedition, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1920

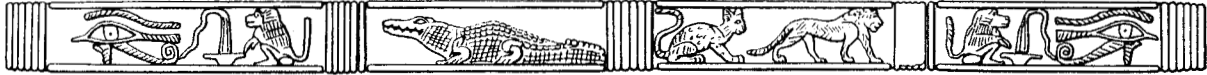
Museum archaeologists worked at Thebes for about thirty years. They made one of their most remarkable finds inside the cut-rock tomb of a Theban official named Meketre (MEH-ket-RAY), who was buried just after 2000 B.C. The entrance to his tomb was on the terrace (in shadows in this photograph) at the top of a sloping causeway.

The archaeologists knew that Meketre's tomb had been robbed in ancient times. However, while cleaning the area in order to draw an exact plan of the tomb, they discovered two places the grave robbers had missed. One was the small burial chamber of Meketre's storehouse manager Wah, whose tomb was cut into the hillside just to the right of the top of Meketre's causeway. The second was a small chamber hidden in the floor of the passageway inside Meketre's tomb.

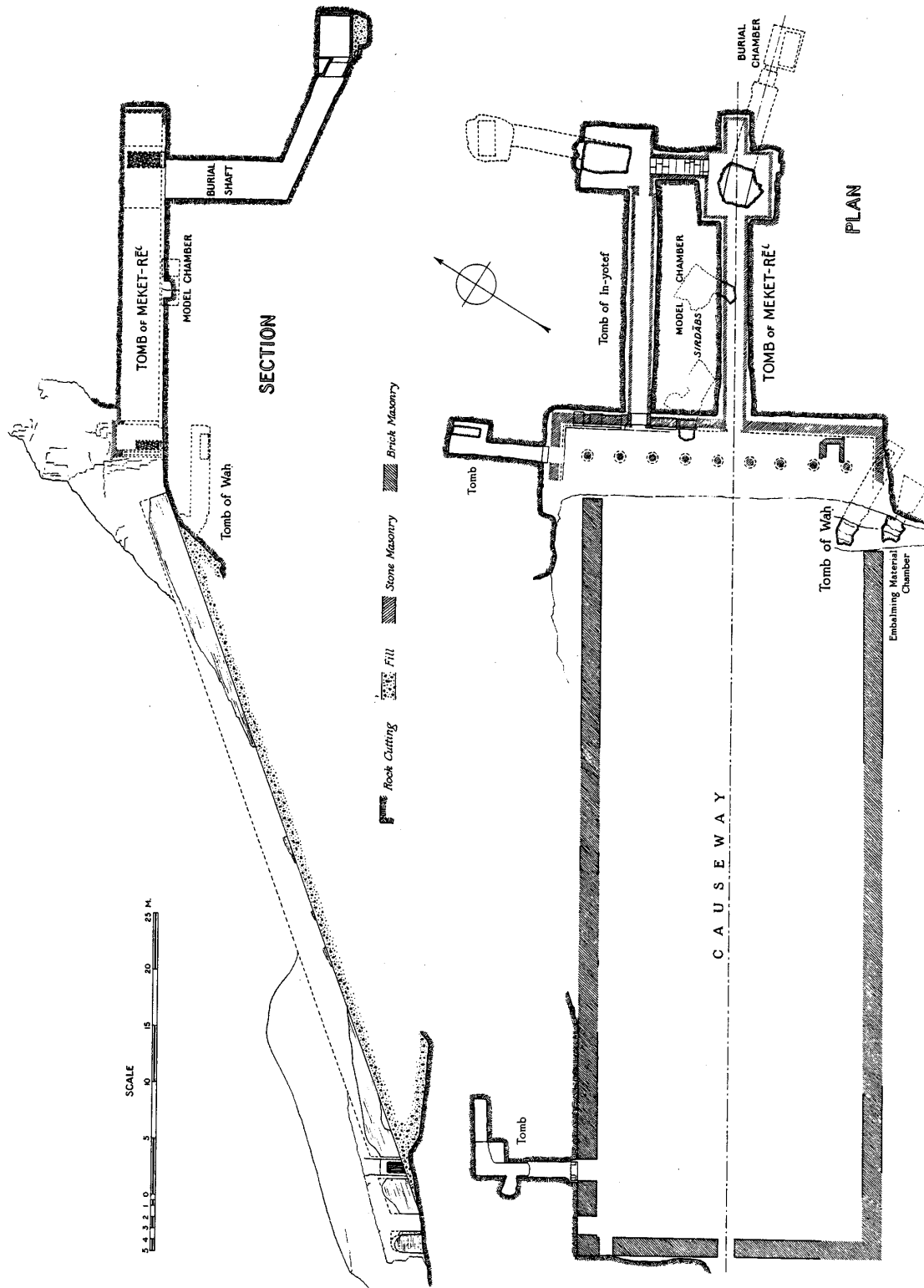
Notice: what can be seen in the photograph

Discuss: plan of tomb (be sure to have copies of the plan on page 77)

Compare: slides 2 and 3 and plan of Perneb's tomb



Plan and Section of the Tombs of Meketre and Wah



54. Plan and section of the tomb of Meket-Ré



7. View inside the chamber of Meketre's tomb

Photograph by the Egyptian Expedition, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1920

This photograph, taken by the excavation photographer, shows what the archaeologists saw when they had dismantled a mud-brick wall that closed the entrance to the hidden chamber. Although the contents were slightly jumbled due to a partial ceiling collapse, no one had entered the chamber since it had been sealed almost four thousand years earlier. Packed tightly into the space were twenty-four painted wooden models of boats, offering bearers, and buildings containing craftsmen and preparers of food. A model of a walled garden is visible on the upper right, and in the back of the room on the left is a large wooden figure of a female offering bearer.

These models are highly valued because of the quality of the carving and painting and because they are remarkably well preserved. The colors, the linen garments on some of the figures, and most of the twine rigging on the boats are original. They tell us in great detail about the raising and slaughtering of livestock, storage of grain, making of bread and beer, and design of boats in Middle Kingdom Egypt. On another level of meaning, they tell us about the Egyptian belief that images could magically provide safe passage to the afterlife and eternal sustenance once there.

Notice: contents of the chamber

Discuss: why the models were in the tomb, why they are so well preserved (the dry climate)



8. Riverboat

Thebes, tomb of Meketre, early Dynasty 12, ca. 1985 B.C.
 Gessoed and painted wood, l. 50 ³/₈ in.
 Rogers Fund and Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1920
 20.3.1

Meketre is shown seated, smelling a lotus blossom, in the shade of a small cabin, which, on an actual boat, would have been made of a light wooden framework with linen or leather hangings. Here the hangings have been partly rolled up to let the breeze through. Wooden shields covered with bulls' hides are painted on each side of the roof. A singer, with his hand to his lips, and a blind harpist entertain Meketre on his voyage. Standing in front of them is the ship's captain, with his arms crossed over his chest. He may be depicted awaiting orders, but he may also pay homage to the deceased Meketre.

As the twelve oarsmen propel the boat, a lookout in the bow holds a weighted line used to determine the depth of the river. At the stern, the helmsman controls the rudder. A tall white post amidships supported a mast and sail (not found in the tomb), which would have been taken down when the boat was rowed downstream—as it is here—against the prevailing north wind. Going south (upstream), with the wind behind it, the boat would have been sailed and the oarsmen could rest.

The boat is similar to one Meketre might have used in his lifetime. Certain details, however, suggest that on this voyage Meketre is traveling toward the afterlife. For instance, he holds and sniffs a fragrant blue lotus blossom, which opens its petals every morning toward the rising sun, thus signifying the hope of rebirth. Also, in Egyptian literature, a blind harpist sings of the transience of life.



Lotus

Notice: activities, colors, materials

Discuss: the two levels of meaning, why the Meketre models are so highly valued

Compare: slides 5 and 36



9. Granary

Thebes, tomb of Meketre, early Dynasty 12, ca. 1985 B.C.
 Gessoed and painted wood, l. 29 1/8 in.
 Rogers Fund and Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1920
 20.3.11

With the exception of the doorkeeper who guards the entrance, all the occupants in the first room of this model are scribes, as indicated by their writing equipment. The scribes on one side write on boards while those on the other write on papyrus scrolls. Each has a palette—a rectangular board with a slot to hold reed brushes and two depressions to hold red and black ink.

The grain was measured as it was brought from the field and again as it was taken away to be made into bread and beer, staples of the Egyptian diet. All transfers of grain would have been recorded by the scribes. Such records allowed administrators to calculate available supplies. Since the Egyptians did not have coinage until Greco-Roman times (after 332 B.C.), grain was also a commodity used for expressing the value of goods. Other such commodities included copper or silver.

In the main part of the granary workers are pouring sacks of grain into large storage bins. Husks of real grain still lie in the bottoms of these bins. Mouse droppings found by the excavators indicate that most of the ancient grain was eaten soon after it was buried.

Notice: activities

Discuss: poses denoting different occupations, why fragile materials such as painted wood and linen are preserved in Egypt (the dry climate)

Compare: slides 24 and 33



10. **Statuette of an offering bearer**

Thebes, tomb of Meketre, early Dynasty 12,
ca. 1985 B.C.

Gessoed and painted wood, h. 44 1/8 in.

Rogers Fund and Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1920
20.3.7

The figure holds a live duck by its wings in one hand and balances a basket of foodstuffs on her head with the other. In rural areas Egyptians still carry heavy loads on their heads, as do people in many parts of the world.

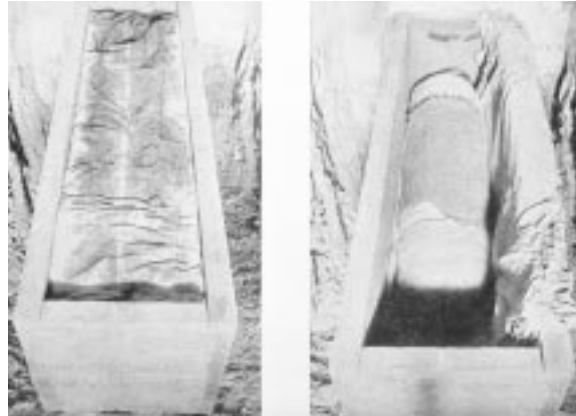
This figure is larger than the others because she embodies the products of an entire estate that Meketre determined to be the source that would provide offerings for his funeral cult in perpetuity. Her size, broad collar necklace, bracelets, anklets, and dress indicate her importance. The patterns on her dress represent small feathers, and the vertical stripes of the underskirt, long wing feathers. Goddesses are frequently portrayed in similar costumes. Here the dress probably refers to Isis or Nephthys, both of whom protected the dead in the afterlife. Interestingly, because the action of offering is important, offering women may stride—a pose usually reserved for men. The companion figure in Cairo is dressed in a garment made of bead netting.

Since this statue is made of wood, it must have been carved from the roughly cylindrical shape of a tree trunk, yet the squared base and the frontal, balanced pose conform to the rectilinear style of stone sculpture. Unlike the case in stone sculpture, however, in wooden figures the space between body and limbs is open, creating a more lifelike appearance. The colors and patterns, as well as the figure's large eyes and slender, subtly naturalistic form, are arresting. The gray-green color, especially on the wig but also on the garment, originally may have been blue, the hair color of deities. The arms, base, duck figure, and basket were made separately, then attached to the body.

Notice: pose, costume, colors, materials, contrasts

Discuss: what looks Egyptian about the figure, significance of size, symbolism, function

Compare: slides 15, 27, 28, and 39



II. The discovery of Wah's mummy

Photograph by the Egyptian Expedition, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1920

These expedition photographs show the small side tomb to Meketre's large resting place that the ancient looters missed. In the photograph on the left the archaeologists have just set aside the lid of the wooden coffin. On the right they have removed thirty linen sheets that were folded on top of the mummy for protection and use in the afterlife. Part of the hieroglyphic writing on the outside of the coffin identified the occupant as Wah, an overseer of Meketre's storehouse.

The rest of the inscription is the first part of a formula recording the royal gift of food for the afterlife. This formula is repeated in slightly varying forms from the Old Kingdom onward, the standard form being: "An offering the king gives—an offering of a thousand loaves of bread and jars of beer, a thousand of cattle and fowl, a thousand lengths of linen cloth and alabaster vessels, a thousand of all good and pure things upon which a spirit lives, to be given to the *ka* [spirit] of [the deceased]" (in this case, Wah). To the side of the coffin, not visible in the photographs, archaeologists found the dried remains of a leg of beef and a loaf of bread, and a jug containing a dried residue of beer. This had been deposited freshly brewed. During the fermenting process the expanding beer had pushed off the lid and rolled the jar over. The dried beer then formed a crust on the chamber floor where it had spilled.

Notice: photographic sequence, size of tomb chamber

Discuss: why Wah's tomb was close to his master's, why food was in the tomb



Hieroglyph for "Thousand"



12. Unwrapping Wah's mummy

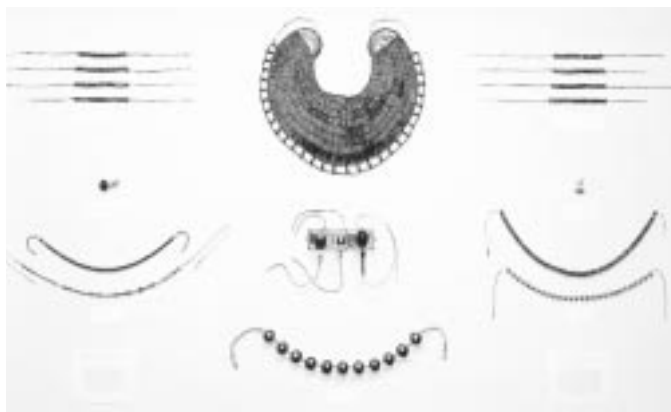
Photograph by the Egyptian Expedition, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1940

Nearly twenty years after Wah's mummy and burial equipment had been shipped to New York, the Museum staff X-rayed the mummy. The X-ray plates revealed dark shadows around Wah's neck, wrists, and ankles, indicating that jewelry had been placed on the body. The decision was made to unwrap Wah, a process shown in this slide. As the linen shrouds were carefully removed, the whole cartonnage (like papier-mâché but made with linen and gesso) mask with its stylized wig and broad collar necklace became visible. The center photo shows a layer of bandages soaked in resin, which may have been intended to protect the body from malevolent spirits. Below the resin layer were four bead necklaces. After more layers of linen bandages were unwrapped, another layer of resin-soaked bandages was found, wrapped separately around the arms and legs, preserving the mummy's human form. A broad collar and anklets of turquoise-blue beads were partly stuck in the resin. When the body had been completely unwrapped, it was given to the American Museum of Natural History for study.

Notice: photo sequence, position of the jewelry

Discuss: why archaeologists work slowly, taking detailed notes and many photographs

Compare: the different mummy enclosures of Henettawy (poster)



13. Wah's jewelry

Thebes, tomb of Wah, early Dynasty 12, ca. 1985 B.C.

Faience, silver, gold, carnelian, lapis lazuli, and other semiprecious stones; collar necklace, w. 15 1/4 in.

Rogers Fund, 1940

40.3.1-19

In ancient Egypt both men and women wore jewelry for adornment, magical protection, and as a symbol of status. Broad collar necklaces must have been particularly popular because from the earliest times they are worn by the principal figures in sculpture and wall paintings. Wah, however, could not have worn the turquoise-colored broad collar in life because there is no clasp and the ties are not strong enough to hold it on. It was made of many faience beads specifically for his burial and was simply placed on the front of the mummy while it was being wrapped.

Although Wah was only a minor official he possessed one gold and one silver necklace as well as three scarabs. The two silver scarabs are, in fact, among the finest extant from Egypt. Scarabs, often found in burials, are magic symbols of renewed life. They are beetle-shaped amulets that the Egyptians associated with rebirth because they saw how beetles of this species roll balls of dung, from which newborn beetles emerge. The flat undersides of the amulets were also used as seals. Many—especially in the Middle Kingdom—are incised with names and titles of officials. These designs were pressed into wet mud that was used to seal boxes, bags, and letters. Wah's large silver scarab is inlaid on the wings with Wah's name and that of Meketre, whose property he administered. On the underside a scroll design with the hieroglyphs for life and protection could be used for sealing. Before Wah's silver scarabs were placed with his mummy their heads were destroyed by grinding. This was done either to protect the deceased from insect bites or to "kill" the beetles and so ensure that they would follow the deceased into the afterlife.

Notice: types of jewelry, where on the body they were worn, variety of materials

Discuss: function, symbolism

Compare: slides 10, 17, 22, 32, and 37, poster



One of Wah's Scarabs



14. Discovery of fragments of Hatshepsut's sculpture, Thebes

Photograph by the Egyptian Expedition, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1929

Museum archaeologists made another remarkable discovery at Thebes, this one while they were digging near a temple erected in Dynasty 18 (ca. 1470–1460 B.C.) by Queen Hatshepsut (hat-SHEP-soot). It was her mortuary temple and a sanctuary for Amun (AH-moon), whose cult image visited the site once a year in a portable boat-shaped shrine. The archaeologists unexpectedly came upon hundreds of fragments of stone sculpture that had been buried in ancient times. Hatshepsut's name was inscribed on most of the sculpture—notice the broken statue of a sphinx. These inscriptions proved that the statues had originally been placed in and around her temple (seen in the background of the slide at the left).

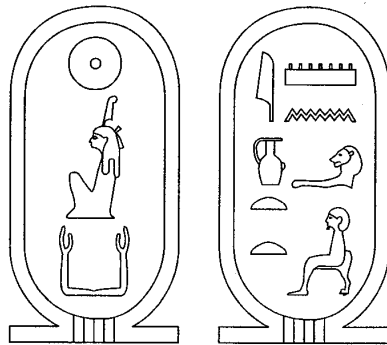
This photograph shows members of the Egyptian expedition staff sorting fragments according to the types of stone (limestone or granite), parts of the body (hands, faces, arms, etc.), and adornment (crowns, kilts, scepters, etc.) before attempting to reconstruct the statues. This process was not unlike working on a very large and difficult jigsaw puzzle. The work was much more frustrating, however, because over the centuries many of the stone pieces had been lost.

Hatshepsut was one of the most important ruling women in Egyptian history. After the death of her husband, Thutmose II, she first ruled as regent for her nephew and stepson, Thutmose III, who was a child at the time. Within a short time, however, Hatshepsut, herself the daughter of Thutmose I, declared herself co-ruler, adopting a king's titles and regalia. For twenty years she ruled together with Thutmose III as senior of the two pharaohs. After her death Thutmose III expanded Egypt's sphere of influence in western Asia by a series of brilliant military campaigns. Hatshepsut's own drive had been directed mainly southward, as testified by the expedition she sent to Punt (Somalia). Some twenty years after Hatshepsut's death, when Thutmose had been king on his own for a long time, he ordered her name to be erased wherever it appeared and her statues to be smashed. The reasons for this are not entirely clear, but the order may have been politically motivated and not a belated act of personal hatred.

Notice: stone fragments, temple site

Discuss: how the archaeologists knew the statues belonged to Hatshepsut, why the statues might have been broken and buried (the exact reasons are not known)

Compare: slide 5



Cartouches of Hatshepsut