

Egypt Exploration Society

The Austrian Excavations, 1914: Excavations of the Vienna Imperial Academy of Sciences at the Pyramids of Gizah

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



General View of the centre portion of the Tomb-field near the Pyramid of Cheops.

This shews how about this time the hitherto observed principle of a complete lack of ornament in the chamber in which the dead man was laid was broken through, and doubtless to be taken in connexion with this is the fact that Unas is the first king to have the interior of his pyramid provided with spells.

Besides this we now see the statue-chamber approaching nearer and nearer to the tomb-chamber. In most cases it was brought up near the shaft; once, in the case of the priest of Hathor, Tena, to a side room half-way up the shaft. And in the tomb of Mery-ib a wooden figure seems to have stood near the coffin, as was the rule in the succeeding period. Also in the *serdâb* new types appear, which we know from the graves of the Middle Kingdom, such as the boat with rowers and cabin, and the peasant-women who bring food in baskets.

Further, the coffins of the tombs we are describing shew that we are no longer in the Sixth Dynasty: one would at first sight ascribe them to the Middle Kingdom.

The coffin of Mery-ib (Fig. 1) stood in an outer coffin, which was decorated in the same way as the inner one. All round the upper part runs a band of inscription. At the east end, turned towards the exit of the tomb-chamber, are placed the eyes () at the foot-end are the legs () and at the head-end the head (). The inner coffin bears in addition inside on the east side, before the eyes of the dead man, the great list of offerings.

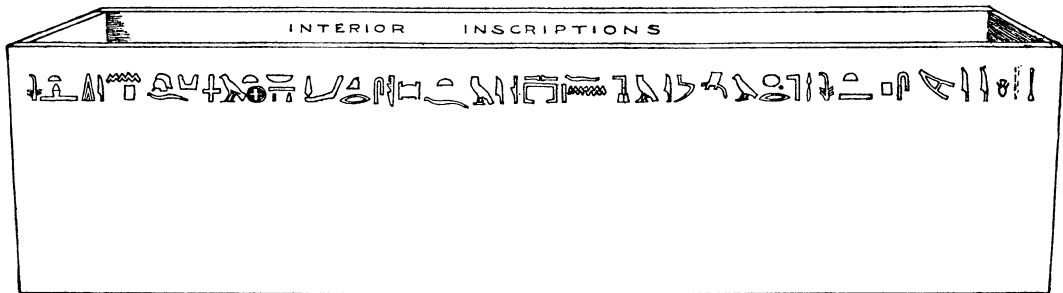


Fig. 1.











The coffin of Idew (Adu) II was similarly decorated. Here also are the bands of inscription all round and on the lid, and the eyes on the east side; but the signs of the legs and head are absent: in their stead stood outside the coffin at the foot a pair of real sandals, for the dead man to use when he left the coffin. Inside stands again on the east side the great list of the food-offerings, but with before it the richly decorated palace-gate¹, immediately opposite the eyes represented outside, so that there can be no doubt as to the symbolism of the representation. On the inner northern small side are painted the seven vases of ointment, with under them the titles and name of the deceased².

To the dead man were given, besides the personal decoration, two balls of linen, one of coarser the other of finer weft, as well as seven walking-sticks, the knobs of which were covered with goldleaf.

¹ So also on the coffin of *Mrr.t-iti* (Mereretitis, = "Mertitefs") of the same epoch.

² So we see the gradual development of the complete painting of the interior of the coffin, which was usual in the Middle Kingdom.

We must say another word as to the inscriptions on the coffins. They distinguish themselves clearly from the coffin-inscriptions of the foregoing epochs, first of all as regards their contents. Instead of the earlier offering-formulae now appear prayers or spells, which clearly are of the same style as the Pyramid-texts. So we read on the coffin of Mery-ib: "May he unite himself with the earth, may he pass through the waters of heaven, may he mount up to the great god!" Similarly on the coffin of *Ny-ih.t* (Niakhhet). In connexion with this stands the fact that the inscriptions of the false doors of this time contain in part similar ideas: so in the tomb of Ity: "May the West stretch out its arms towards him, may he be accompanied on the noble ways by his *kas*!", and so forth.

Orthographically these coffin-inscriptions differ materially from those of the cult-chambers and false doors, and comparison brings a brilliant confirmation of the rules that Lacau has lately laid down in his article "Suppressions et modifications de signes dans les textes funéraires¹." In the latter were written for example  and , in the former on the contrary  and ; in the latter were used , , ; on the coffins instead of these , , . As one is dealing with contemporary inscriptions, which were perhaps executed by the same people, only the explanation brought forward by Lacau is satisfactory, namely that it was believed the signs might be able in some way to harm the dead.

East of these graves of the Sixth Dynasty is a wall, which runs parallel with the pyramid; and parallel with it the rock has been cut away to some extent. There can be no doubt that this is the remains of the dividing line that separated the pyramid-field from the cemetery, the western wall of the great pyramid-temenos, which one must suppose to have existed.

Of the further results of the expedition I should like to mention here merely two which are of special interest:

1. In two graves we found the body covered with a layer of stucco-plaster, a method of treatment which is entirely peculiar. First of all the corpse was covered with a fine linen cloth, with the special purpose of preventing the mass of plaster from getting into the mouth, ear, nose, and so on. Then the plaster was put on, and modelled according to the form of the body, the head being in one case so accurately followed that one can clearly see the fallen-in nose and the twisted mouth. The explanation of this handling of the body is not difficult. The time was one in which the art of mummification was not yet known as it was in later days. It was then sought in this way to keep the dead man at least outwardly in perfect condition, which should guarantee him the enjoyment of the life on the other side. It is easily explicable why in the succeeding period this method was not followed, since already the real preservation of the body had been attained by means of mummification.

In two further cases it was not the whole body that was covered with this layer of stucco, but only the head; apparently because the head was regarded as the most important part, as the organs of taste, sight, smell, and hearing were contained in it. A similar idea led to the painting on the linen-enveloped head of the body of Idew II

¹ *Äg. Zts.* Vol. 51 (1914), pp. 1 ff.



Fig. 1. Plaster mask of the dead.



Fig. 2. Plaster mask of the dead.

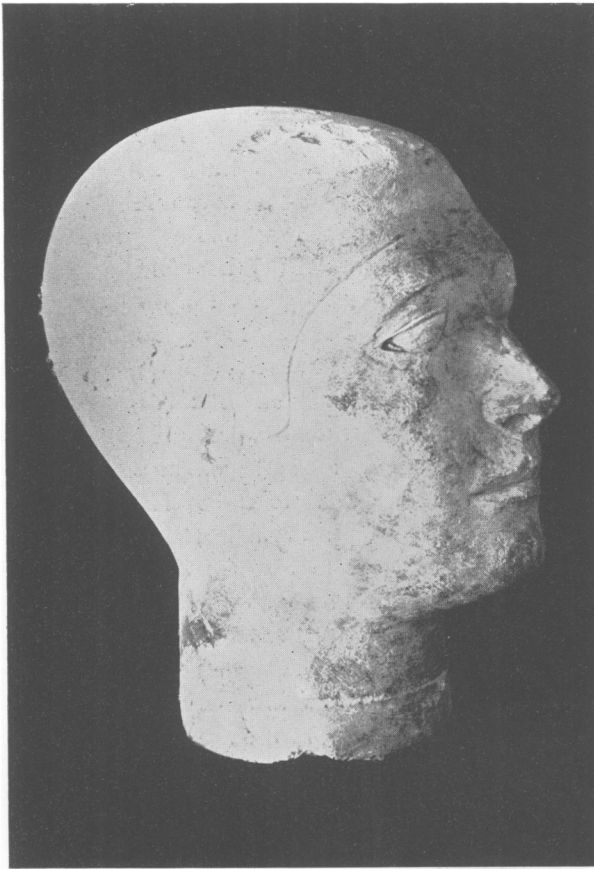


Fig. 3. Substitute-head of a man.

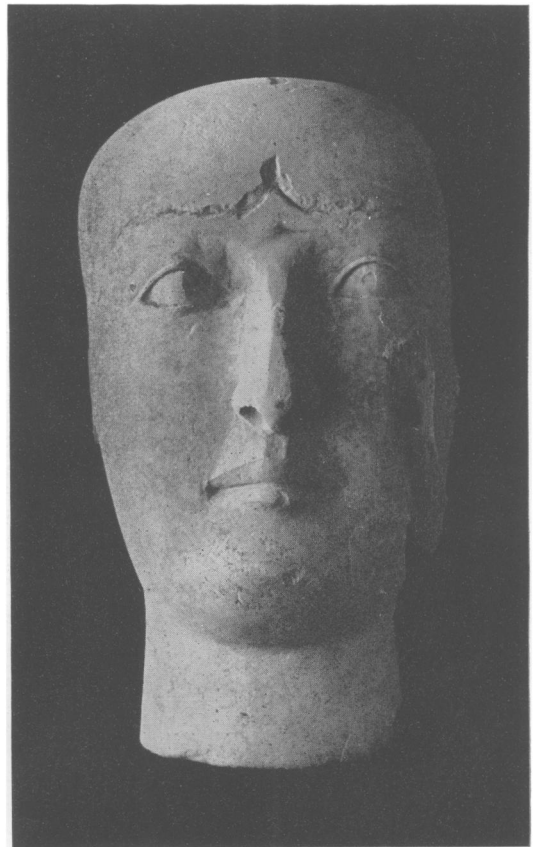


Fig. 4. Substitute-head of the Princess Iabtet.

(which already shews the beginning of mummification) of the face. In both cases the head of the dead at any rate was to preserve an unaltered appearance.

2. Now I believe that an inner relation existed between the plaster-covered heads and the so-called "reserve heads." By these one understands the heads, specially made as such, which appear among the paraphernalia of the dead at the beginning of the Old Kingdom, and are generally made of fine limestone¹. We found four of them in our campaign of this year (Plate XL); they all lay in the tomb-chamber, and all the other examples were found in the same place, so far as I can find out. They were therefore considered as belonging to the corpse itself. Now it occurs to me that their function with regard to the corpse was not that of an amulet or a genuine magical object, but simply that of a substitute for the fallen-away and decayed head, which however ought before all else to remain undamaged, if a happy further existence in the other life was to be made possible. So the substitute-head had the same function as the later plastered head. With this agrees extremely well the fact that the substitute-heads are mostly portraits, and what is of even more importance, were all made of the natural size. Further than this, it is no chance that the substitute-heads, so far as I can see, entirely or at any rate chiefly are found in the tombs that have no statue-chamber and probably possessed no statues. The statues certainly were made at any rate partly with the intention that they should take the place of the decaying body, although later the idea was modified. The placing of the substitute-head in the mastaba therefore became unnecessary at the moment when the complete figure of the dead was introduced.

¹ An example made of Nile-mud was found by us in a shaft before the grave of *Weneš.t* (Weneshet).