

INTRODUCTION

IT may seem to the reader a very long time since February 2, 1925, when the photographer's tripod struck a curious patch of plaster which had been laid down to conceal the entrance to the burial shaft of Queen Hetep-heres I. It is indeed more than twenty-five years, but on looking back, it would seem that this time has not been unprofitably spent in dealing with the unique problem which the decayed objects in the underground chamber presented to Dr. George Andrew Reisner and his assistants. It was really possible to undertake a complete survey of the contents of that tomb only after a long period of intermediate study and patient reconstruction of the material. The main lines of the story were brilliantly laid down in 1927 by Dr. Reisner.¹ The succeeding steps of the reconstruction of the furniture were published in preliminary reports in the following years, beginning in 1928 with an article discussing the empty sarcophagus of the queen, the reconstitution of the carrying-chair, and work on some of the smaller objects.² In 1929 the gold armchair, the bed, the gold-covered box, and the inlaid silver bracelets which it contained were ready to be delivered to the Cairo Museum with some of the toilet implements, and the work on these objects was again reported.³

At this point Mr. W. A. Stewart, who had until then undertaken the reconstruction work, left the Expedition to begin new work in Palestine. He had been aided by Dows Dunham, who with Dr. Reisner, had worked out some of the preliminary steps, and by Miss Marion Thompson (Mrs. Dows Dunham), who accomplished the difficult task of inserting the tiny gold hieroglyphs into the ebony panels of the carrying-chair. Mr. Bernard Rice now began the work of reconstructing the large bed canopy with its magnificent inscriptions which give the titles and name of the husband of Hetep-heres, King Sneferu. This was delivered to the Cairo Museum in 1932, and again Dr. Reisner published preliminary reports.⁴ Still another step in completing the work was made, after a lapse of seven years, when Haggi Ahmed Youssef Moustafa of the technical staff of the Cairo Museum finished in 1939 the intricate task of assembling and mounting the exceedingly fragile inlays of the long box which seems to have contained the curtains of the bed canopy.⁵

For some time before World War II, I had been helping Ahmed Youssef to assemble the inlays of the curtain box and at the same time worked over a number of the remaining inlays. The original purpose of these inlays was not yet evident from the records and drawings made by George Reisner, Dows Dunham, and Noel Wheeler as the tomb was being cleared, although elements of the design were well established. Several of these were published in my *History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom* (1946), figs. 55-59. It is still not understood how the gold-leaf figure of the queen was used (*loc. cit.*, fig. 55), although it is now possible to suggest how the other designs were employed. The work was interrupted by the war and could not be taken up again until the winter of 1946-7. At that time Mr. Dunham and I worked over the remaining material in the Harvard Camp workshop and then delivered it, packed in as secure a fashion as possible, to the Cairo Museum, where it was stored in the basement under the Temporary Registration Number: 18th of April, 1947, No. 5.

¹ 'Hetep-heres, Mother of Cheops,' *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* (Boston), special supplement to vol. XXV, May 1927. See also *Illustrated London News*, March 12, 1927, pp. 436-437; March 26, 1927, pp. 538-539.

² 'The Empty Sarcophagus of the Mother of Cheops,' *B.M.F.A.*, vol. XXVI, no. 157, pp. 76 ff., October 1928. See

also *Illustrated London News*, November 24, 1928, pp. 958-959.

³ *B.M.F.A.*, vol. XXVII, no. 164, pp. 83 ff., December 1928. See also *Illustrated London News*, August 24, 1929, pp. 344-345.

⁴ *B.M.F.A.*, vol. XXX, no. 180, pp. 56 ff., August, 1932; *Illustrated London News*, May 7, 1932, pp. 767-769.

⁵ *Illustrated London News*, November 18, 1939, pp. 757-759.

It had still not been possible to suggest a restoration for the inlaid panels which contained flower elements, hawks with outspread wings, and the standards with crossed arrows and shields of the Goddess Neith (*loc. cit.*, figs. 58, 59). However, in 1949, in once more studying the original tomb records, photographs, and drawings, it finally became evident that these panels were closely connected with the four legs of a second chair which had been known to exist from the time the tomb was first viewed. Gradually the measurements and shape of these inlaid panels, checked painstakingly with the positions in which they had fallen on the floor of the tomb, provided the evidence that they had formed the back and arms of this second chair, and it was possible to restore the piece, at least in a drawing (see Fig. 32). Similarly, a restoration can be suggested for the gold-covered box with the queen's name on the inlaid lid (see Figs. 38-40).¹ It is to be hoped that the Cairo Museum may eventually find it possible to reconstitute the armchair and inlaid box from the very fragile elements which are at present arranged in trays according to their various patterns and packed away in storage (Cairo Temporary Registration No. 18, 4: 47, 5).

It would be difficult to overestimate the debt of gratitude which is owed to Dr. Reisner for the extraordinary planning and execution of such a formidable archaeological task as the clearing of the burial chamber of Queen Hetep-heres I and the preservation of the objects found in it. Every step was accompanied by a thorough photographic record in addition to thousands of drawings and sketches that were made day by day as each fragment, whether large or infinitesimal, was removed, sometimes only with the aid of tweezers and camels'-hair brushes. At almost any stage of the work an incautious decision or a clumsy movement could have irretrievably destroyed evidence. As it is, the material remains after twenty-five years clearly legible in the record and can be controlled, as the writer has gratefully realized in the course of preparing the present publication. What might have remained an inextricable tangle of pieces of gold sheeting if carelessly handled can now be examined as unique pieces of complete furniture in the Cairo Museum and in the excellent copies made by Joseph Gerte for the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (with the technical assistance of William J. Young, Head of the Museum's Research Laboratory).

So important has this work been as an example of archaeological method that it may be useful to insert at the conclusion of this introduction a brief timetable of the progressive steps in the clearance of the tomb. In this way the very important contributions made by a succession of Dr. Reisner's assistants will also be made clear. Perhaps this is the most adequate way in which to emphasize and acknowledge their patience and ingenuity. In addition to those who are mentioned here and in other parts of this introduction, I should like gratefully to list the names of Miss Suzanne Chapman, Mrs. Stephen Weld (Elizabeth Eaton), Alexander Floroff, Nicholas Melnikoff, and Hansmartin Handrick, whose drawings along with my own appear in the text and appendices.

Dr. Reisner has many times expressed his regard for Reis Said Ahmed Said, who died in 1926 while work on the tomb was progressing. He was the father of Reis Mohammed Said Ahmed and Reisner's secretary, Mahmud Said Ahmed, both of whom served him so devotedly in his last illness. Said Ahmed Said was succeeded by his brother Mahmud Ahmed Said, 'El-Meyyet', the father of Duwy Mahmud Ahmed (Reis from 1933 to 1935), who was in charge of completing the clearance of the tomb. The members of this family and the Qufti workmen will always be remembered with affectionate esteem by members of the Harvard-Boston Expedition. It should also be remembered that during the work on the Hetep-heres objects the Expedition was able to avail itself of the valuable technical assistance of Mr. A. Lucas, Honorary Consulting Chemist of the Egyptian Department of Antiquities.

¹ See also W. S. Smith, 'The Tomb of Hetep-heres I,' *B.M.F.A.*, vol. LI, no. 284, June 1953, pp. 23-30.

1925

- Feb. 19 First record made of pavement concealing entrance to tomb. Reisner absent in America; Alan Rowe in charge of the Expedition, with the assistance of Mr. T. R. D. Greenlees.
- Feb. 20–March 6 Clearance of stairway and shaft.
- March 8 Removal of stones blocking entrance to chamber; first view of chamber.
- March 12 Reisner ordered tomb closed again pending his return.

1926

- Jan. 21 Chamber reopened and work commenced. Reisner in charge, assisted by Dows Dunham.
- Jan. 22–July 15 Clearance of armchairs, carrying-chair, ointment vessels, bed, inlays of second armchair, and some of the pottery. Dunham left for America on May 4, and Noel Wheeler took up his work in the tomb.
- July 16–Oct. 22 Area cleared containing bracelet box at southwest corner of sarcophagus; also the part of the room south of the sarcophagus with the mass of pottery and stone vessels.
- Oct. 23–Dec. 16 Clearance of pieces of bed canopy and inlays of curtain box on the lid and in area adjoining sarcophagus. Dunham returned from America on November 12 and joined Reisner and Wheeler in work. Work in abeyance in tomb after December 16 while material removed to camp house was studied.

1927

- March 3 Lid of sarcophagus lifted and box found to be empty.
- April 18 Sarcophagus weighing 2.2 tons raised out of pit.
- May 21 Blocking of niche in west wall removed to reveal canopic box.
- May 23 Canopic box removed.

Dr. Reisner in his first report makes the seemingly rash statement that from the records it would be possible to replace every object in the tomb should anyone be so unreasonable as to make such a demand. The reconstructed drawing in Fig. 20 virtually amounts to such an attempt on paper and fully justifies Reisner's claim. It is truly remarkable how the exact notation of every scrap of material allows one to replace each object in the tomb in its former position and to suggest what was its original shape. It is hoped that the reader when comparing the reconstruction with the plan in Fig. 19 and the photographic plates showing the condition of the various objects as they lay decayed upon the floor may enjoy some of the same excited pleasure that the writer experienced in piecing this material together bit by bit. At any rate, he will be spared the fatigue of constantly thumbing through the 1,701 pages of plans, notes, and sketches and the 1,057 photographs which constitute the original record made during 321 working days in which Reisner and his assistants worked in the tomb of the mother of Cheops.

The following text, based on Reisner's record, is written in my own words. I have tried to indicate clearly where a few conclusions differ from Reisner's own, as the result of archaeological discoveries and further study in the years that have elapsed since Reisner's death in 1942.

WILLIAM STEVENSON SMITH

A HISTORY OF THE
GIZA NECROPOLIS

THE TOMB OF HETEP-HERES
THE MOTHER OF CHEOPS

