

The 6th Dynasty in the Provinces

22 February 2012



...I have lost my voice...

...obviously this is horrible timing since you have an exam Friday and there are many things I want to talk about today.

At first it just got deeper, and I thought perhaps I could write a song how beautiful 6th Dynasty royal sculpture is and I could sing it to you like Barry White...

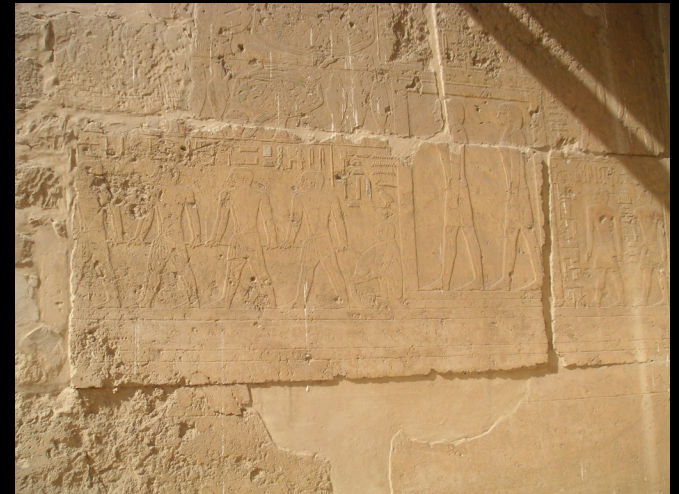
...but it is really pretty gone. Even with a mic I am not sure I can effectively tell you much.

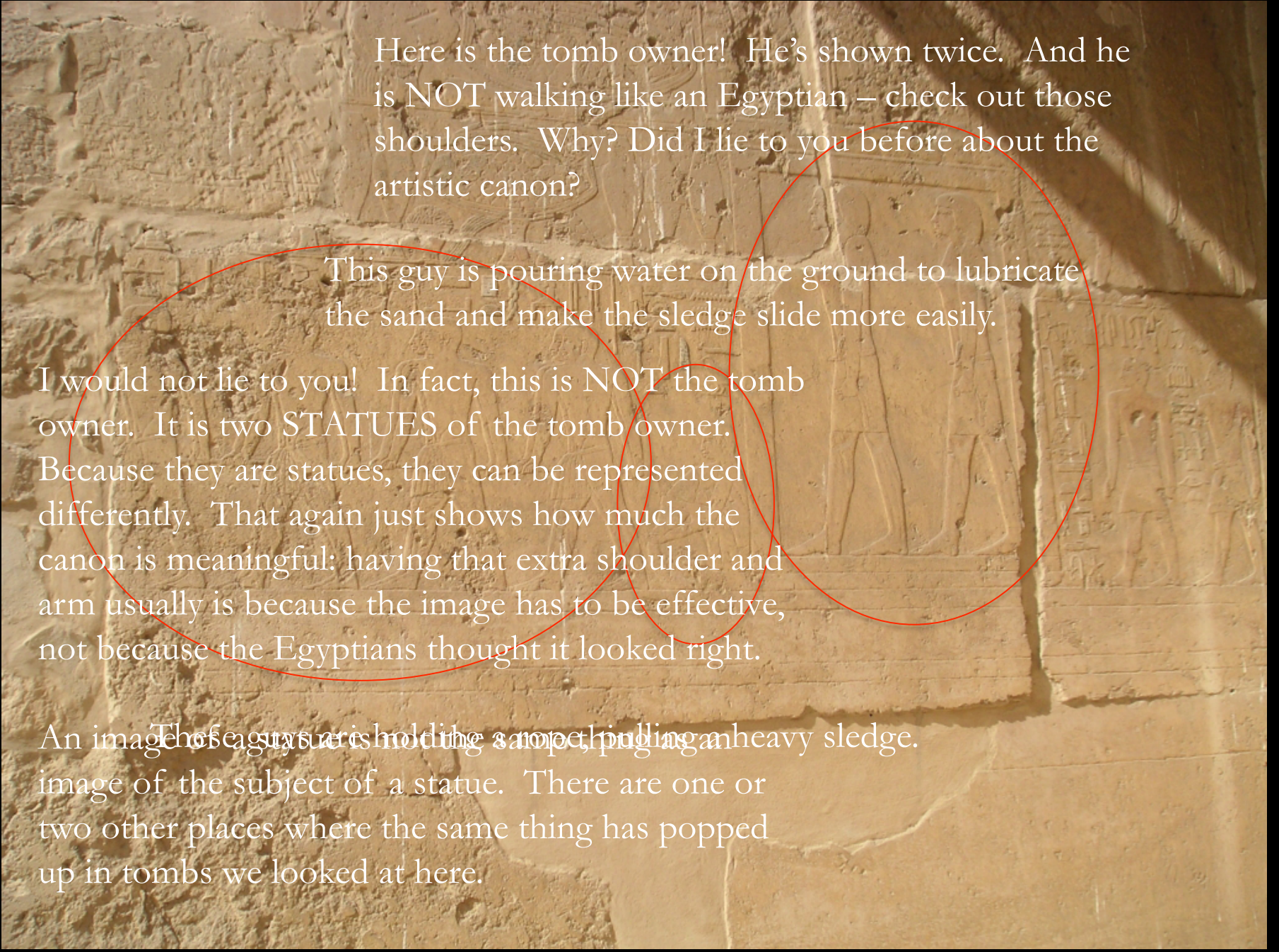
So we are going to look at just a very few things, with me croaking to you and text to help, and then you may go early to get more studying done.

First, backtracking to something very cool I noticed yesterday when talking to one of you in my office hours.

We saw this relief from Ptahshepses' tomb at Abusir. It's in many ways a normal daily life scene. BUT. The tomb owner is in here and he violates everything I told you about artistic canon and typical representations of the person who is the main point.

Look closely.



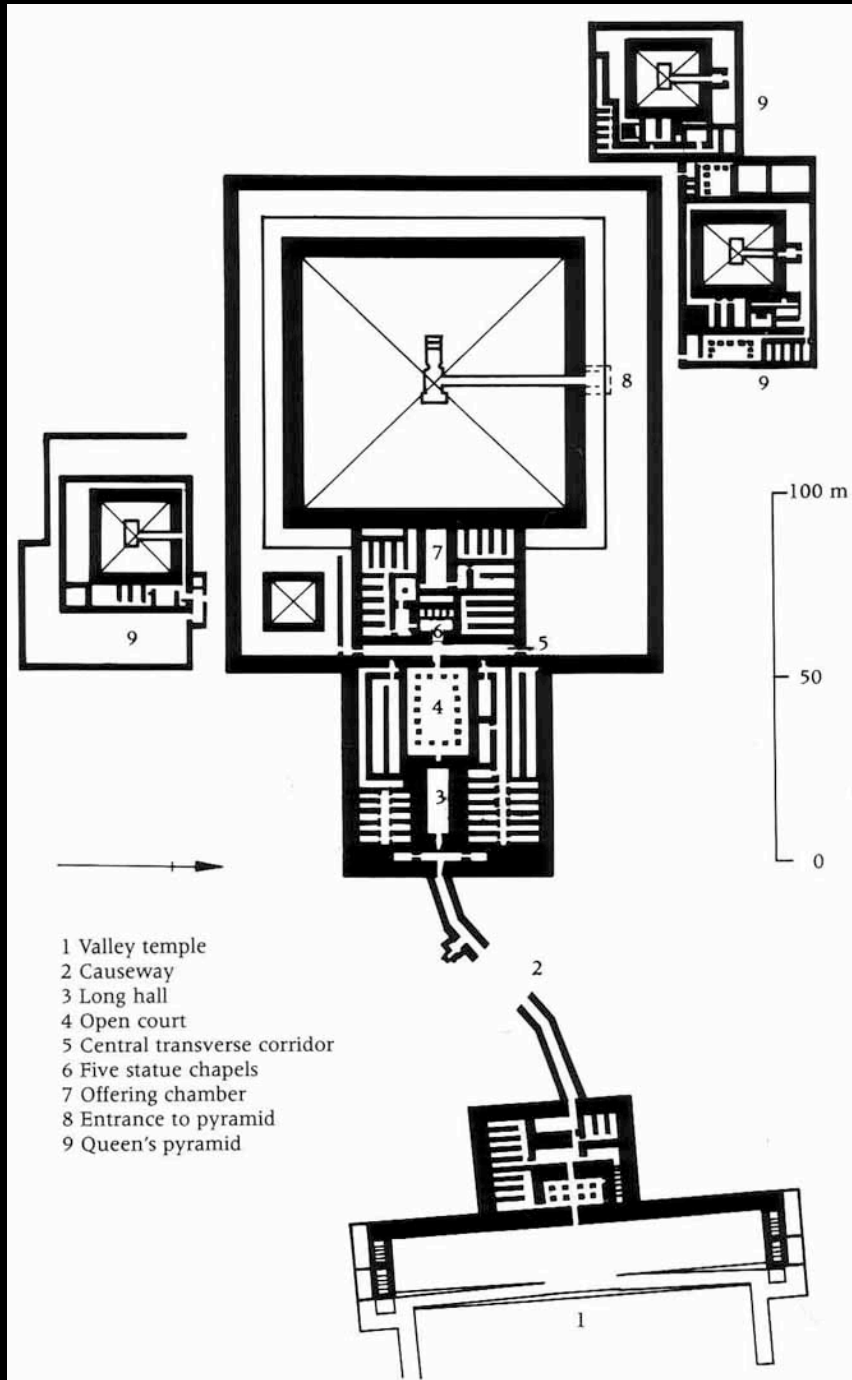


Here is the tomb owner! He's shown twice. And he is NOT walking like an Egyptian – check out those shoulders. Why? Did I lie to you before about the artistic canon?

This guy is pouring water on the ground to lubricate the sand and make the sledge slide more easily.

I would not lie to you! In fact, this is NOT the tomb owner. It is two STATUES of the tomb owner. Because they are statues, they can be represented differently. That again just shows how much the canon is meaningful: having that extra shoulder and arm usually is because the image has to be effective, not because the Egyptians thought it looked right.

An image of the subject of a statue. There are one or two other places where the same thing has popped up in tombs we looked at here.



Now back to the 6th Dynasty.
 Remember that all 6th Dynasty
 pyramids are very regular and differ
 in size by only a tiny amount
 They are 150 cubits to a side, and
 100 cubits tall.

They are all at Saqqara.

We don't have tons of the relief or
 sculpture left from the 6th Dynasty
 pyramid complexes.

Pyramid complex of Pepi II

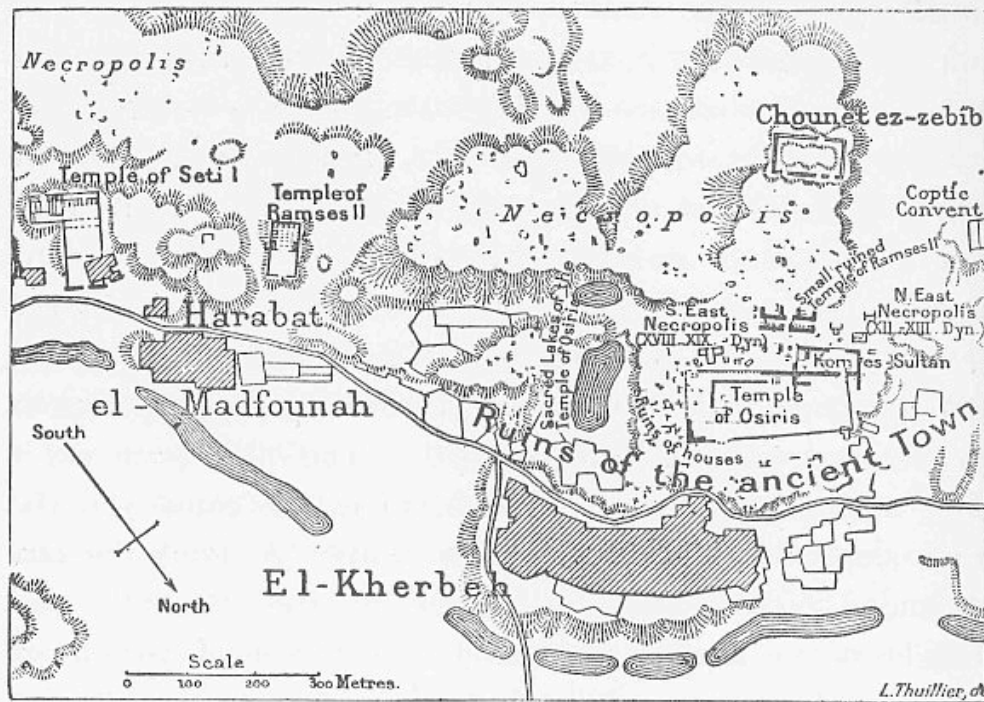


One of the types of sculpture we do have is a new type: kneeling, bound prisoners. These probably lined the causeways of the pyramid complexes. They have very regular breaks at the neck and waist. We usually interpret this as meaning they were ritually slaughtered as part of the funerary ritual of the king. If we are right, this is yet more evidence of the way Egyptians regarded statues as having real abilities – otherwise, why kill them?

Sculpture, reign of Pepi II, probably from his pyramid complex

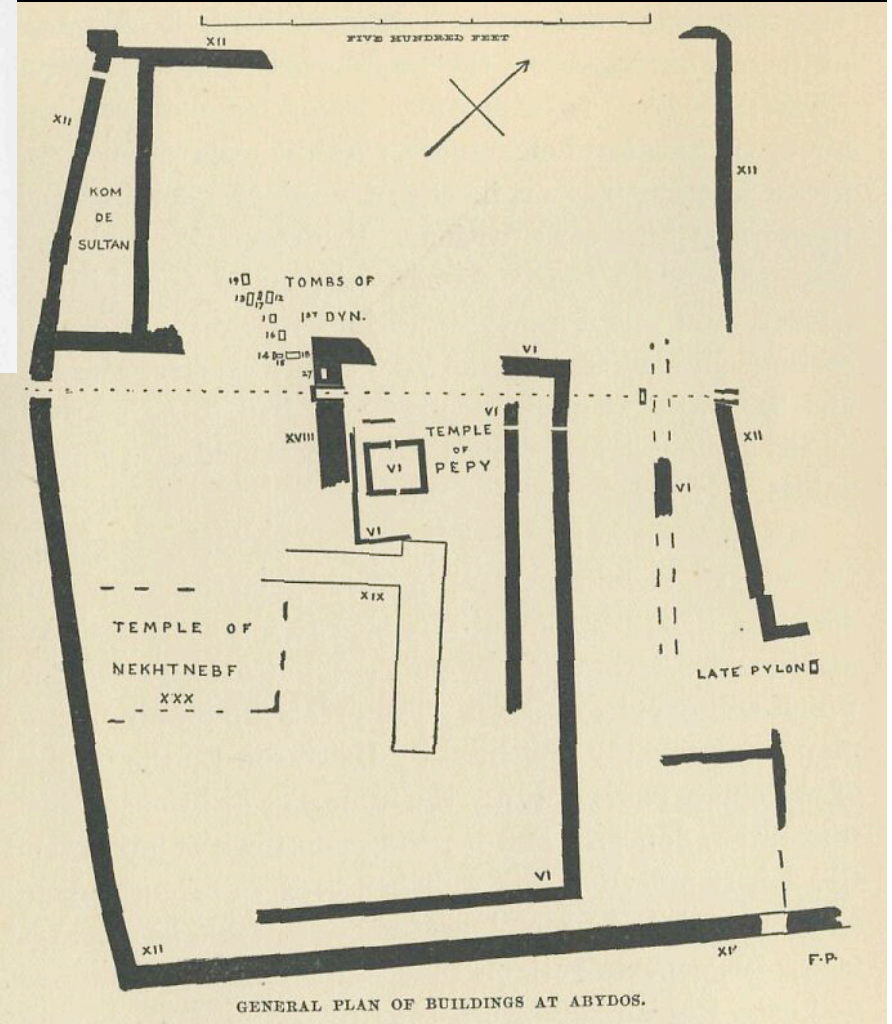
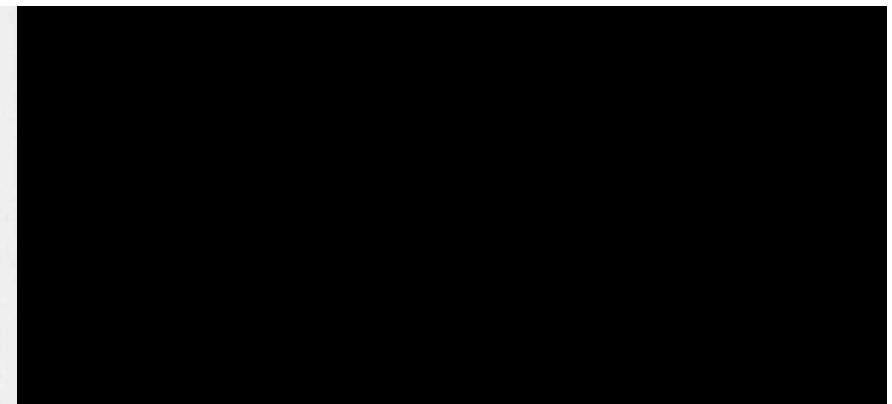
Most of the sculpture of 6th Dynasty kings that we do have comes from a new context. Rather than from the royal pyramids, we now have statues from the provinces. It is to the provinces that I now want to turn, for both royal and private material.

For the entire Old Kingdom we have focused very closely on the region of Memphis. That there is now substantial material coming from the royal workshops in the provinces is a major shift. Precisely how to interpret this is a huge debate in Egyptology.



PLAN OF THE RUINS OF ABYDOS, MADE BY MARIETTE IN 1865 AND 1875.

We don't have much at all left, because it was built over later, of the royal buildings in the provinces. We do know that the kings of the 6th Dynasty built chapels for their own Kas in multiple provincial cities. Abydos, shown here, is one. These seem to have been connected to divine temples.



GENERAL PLAN OF BUILDINGS AT ABYDOS.



In some cases, the kings can be seen to have patronized the provincial temples. This is a relief fragment naming Pepi II from the Min temple at Coptos.

The sculpture we have of 6th Dynasty kings probably came from contexts such as these, divine temples and royal Ka chapels in the provinces. Almost none of the royal statues of the 6th Dynasty have been properly excavated. They were mostly bought on the art market, meaning we cannot be certain about where they came from. It is suggested this piece came from Dendera.

The pose here is as significant as the probably provincial provenance. You can tell he's a king: look at the nemes headdress and the hole for an inlaid uraeus. But here the king is not receiving offerings but rather giving them. This is a new pose for kings in the 6th Dynasty and represents a major shift in the way royal statuary was used.

Pepi I offering *nn* pots



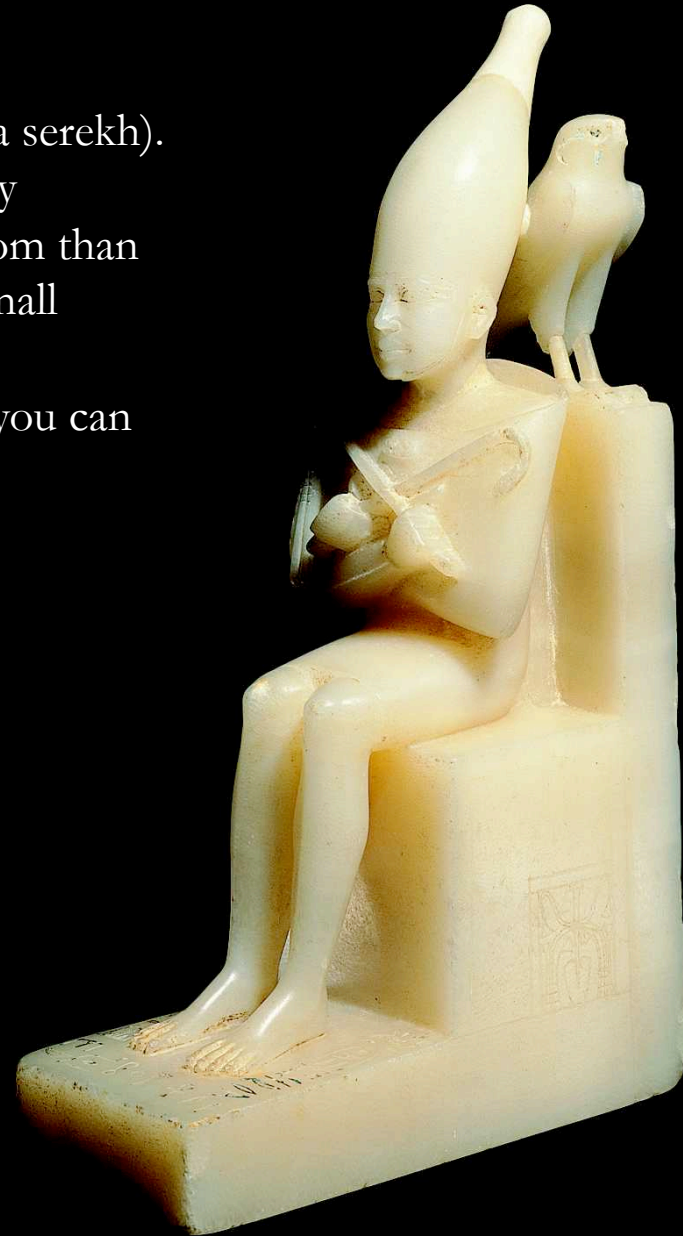


Merenre as a sphinx offering *nu* pots

Pepi I, provenance unknown.

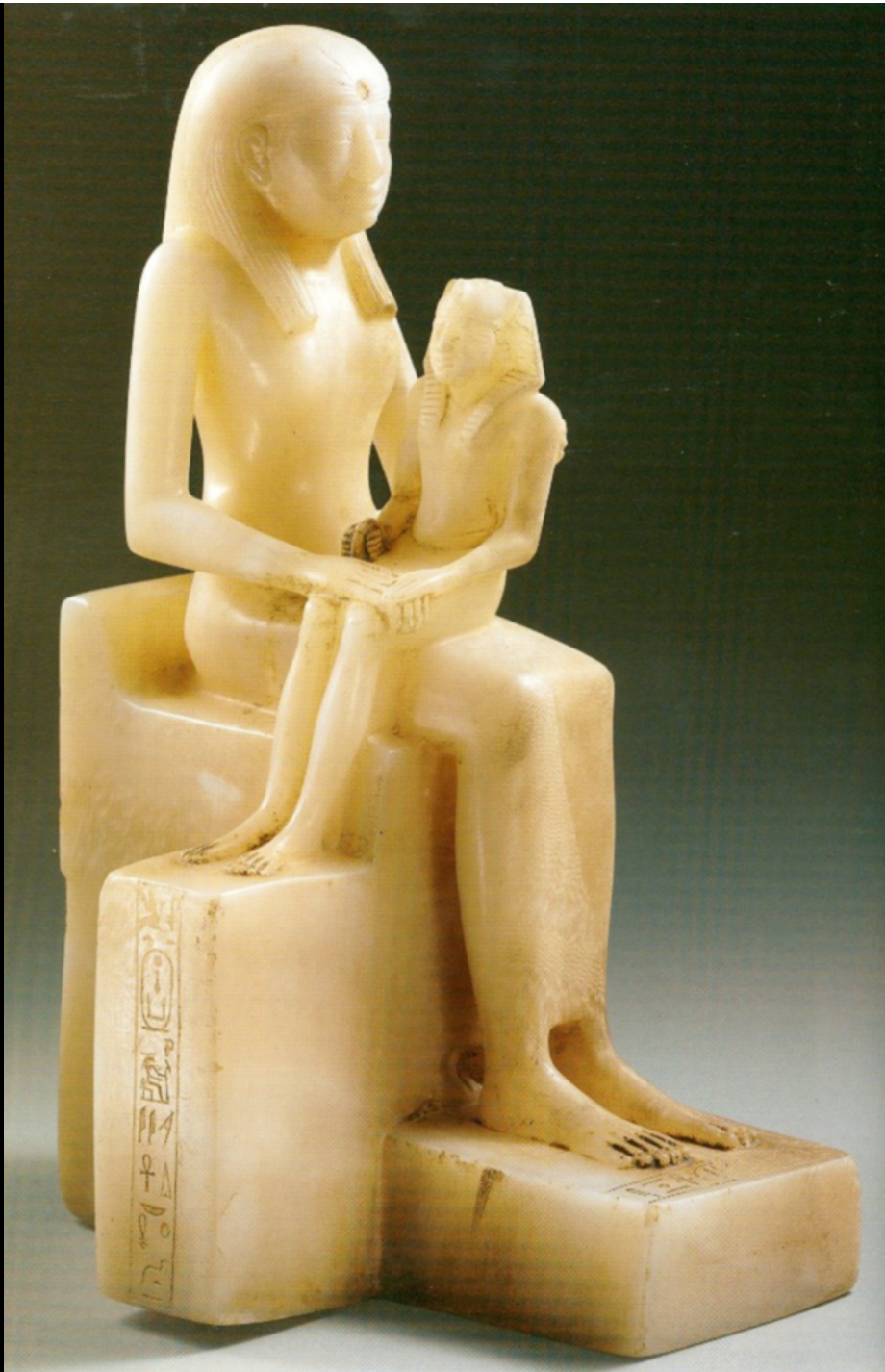
Horus is behind his head (the back of the statue is a serekh). The use of negative space in this statue more closely resembles wooden sculpture of the late Old Kingdom than the stone sculpture we are used to. This is a very small piece.

The robe the king wears is for the sed-festival, and you can see the sema tawy on the side of his throne.





Pepi I from Hierakonpolis (smaller one maybe Merenre)
These statues were made of copper hammered over a wooden core. We know metal sculpture was more prevalent than the remaining pieces we have would indicate. The Palermo stone more than once mentions the dedication of a metal sculpture. These again show royal patronage for provincial temples.



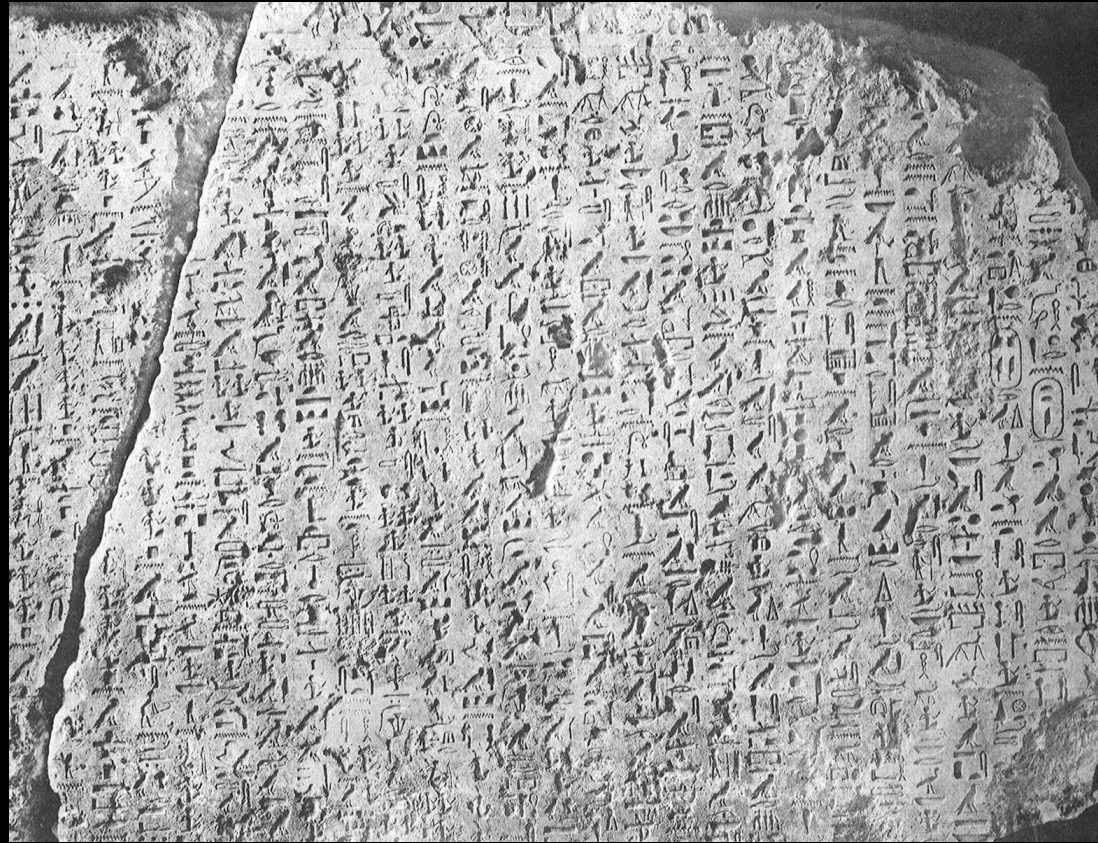
Pepi II and his mother,
possibly from Aswan

Pepi came to the throne as a child and his mother appears to have acted as regent. His size indicates his youth, but in other ways he is not depicted as a typical Egyptian youth. Note that even though these figures are at right angles to one another, each is independently a frontal statue that completely obeys the artistic canon.



Private tombs of royal officials are also increasingly found in the provinces in the Late Old Kingdom. We will look briefly at two of these as examples. Weni was buried at Abydos and Harkhuf at Aswan.

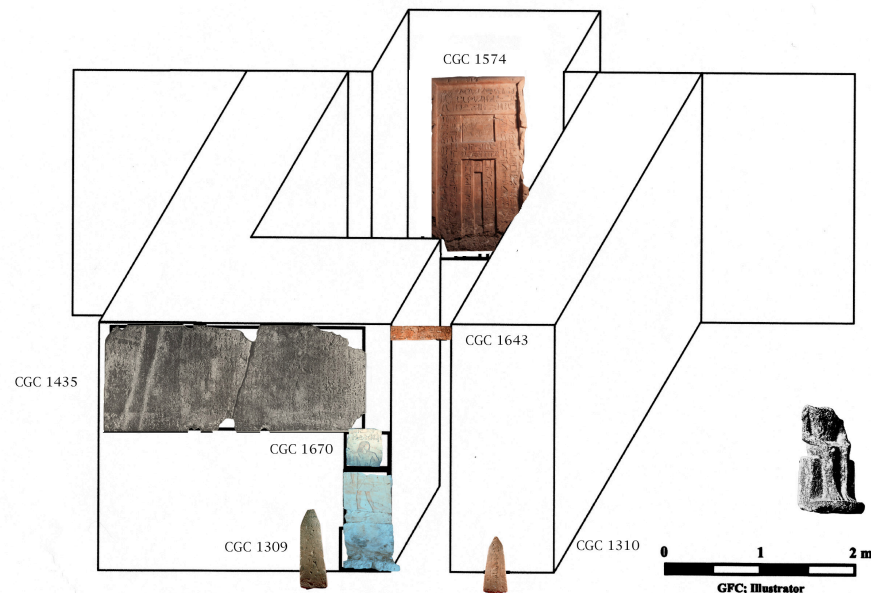
You are reading the autobiographies of these guys, which show clearly that they were not restricted to the provinces in terms of their service to the king. Quite the contrary, these two autobiographies point to a moderately international world for royal officials of the period. Know where they went!



Weni's autobiography discusses how close he was to the king – he even served as judge in a case of a harim conspiracy! That he was buried in the provinces does not mean he was not very closely tied to the royal court at Memphis.



Provincial late Old Kingdom tombs are often not mastabas, but rather vary in type by region. Weni does have a sort of mastaba built of brick at Abydos. It has a deep shaft leading to the burial chamber. The chapel outside had a false door, some relief scenes, statues of Weni, and the autobiography on the outer face where anyone could read it. There was no serdab.



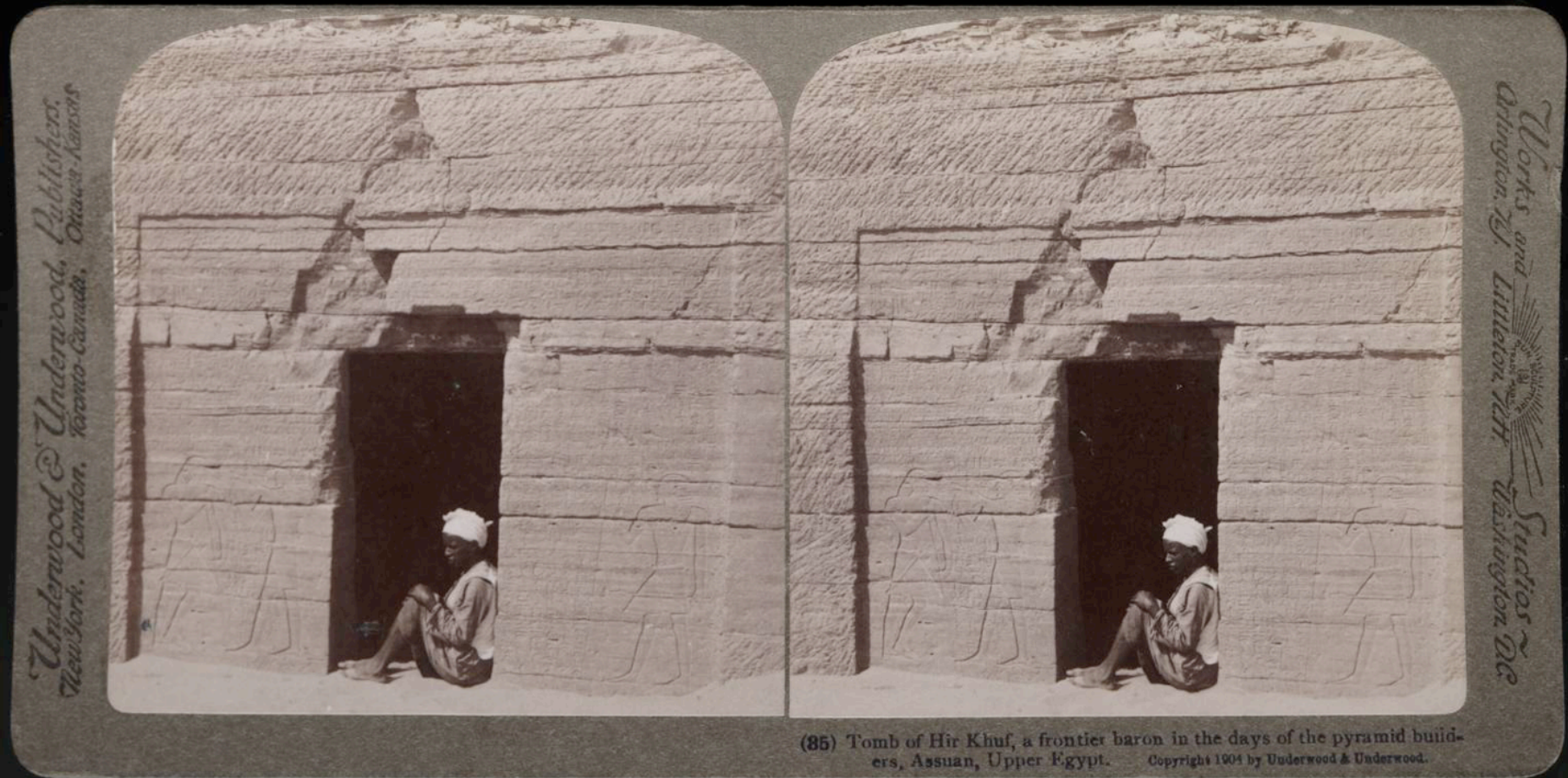
Abydos Middle Cemetery Project (1999)
Proposed Reconstruction of Weni the Elder's Chapel



Harkhuf's tomb at Aswan is not a mastaba at all. The Old Kingdom tombs here are rock-cut and sometimes have steep causeways leading down to the river. This is on the west bank of the Nile at a place called Qubbet el-Hawa. The tomb on top is more modern.



Harkhuf was also closely tied to the royal court – he even records a letter he received from the young king on his tomb. His tales of his expeditions are some of our best evidence of Egyptian interactions with the south in the Old Kingdom.



This form of tomb is very typical of Aswan but very different from Memphite tombs. The accepted Egyptian canon is very much in place, but it is utilized in slightly different ways. Not all of the interior surfaces of Aswan tombs are decorated. Here, on the outside of his tomb, Harkhuf walks toward the entrance (that is typical – Weni did, too). He walks out from the inside. The letter from Pepi II is on the right.

Go study!

Good luck!

Remember the TAs have office hours, and that there are review sessions tomorrow night. You are not expected to go to those – they are purely for your own help if you want them. They will be the same, so don't go to more than one of them.