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DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE IN ANCIENT EGYPT



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PROVISIONING THE DEAD

The custom of providing the dead with material things for their comfort and wellbeing has been practically universal in all societies. Even today, the placing of gifts or treasured possessions in the coffin may help to assuage the sense of loss or ameliorate feelings of guilt on the part of those left behind. In ancient Egypt, providing for the dead was not merely a reaction to bereavement – it was essential to survival beyond the grave. Without proper provisioning there could be no afterlife.

NOURISHING THE DEAD

The most basic requirement for human survival, the need for food and drink, was a major consideration in funerary preparations at all periods. For the Egyptians, the simplest way to satisfy this need on behalf of the dead was to place supplies of foodstuffs in the grave or burial chamber. This practice is well attested during the late Predynastic and early Dynastic periods, when all but the poorest graves contained storage jars of stone or pottery filled with grain, water, beer or wine. Substantial quantities of such supplies have been found in some graves of the 1st and 2nd Dynasties. In some of these, the raw materials for food production, rather than the finished product, were provided, but there were exceptions. Loaves of bread, cakes, and cooked meats were sometimes placed in the grave, and occasionally the food was laid out on plates and in bowls as a meal, consisting of several courses. One such feast for the dead, found in a tomb of a woman of the 2nd Dynasty at Saqqara, included a porridge of ground barley, a quail, a pigeon stew, a cooked fish, ribs of beef, cooked kidneys, wheaten loaves and cakes, fruit and cheese.

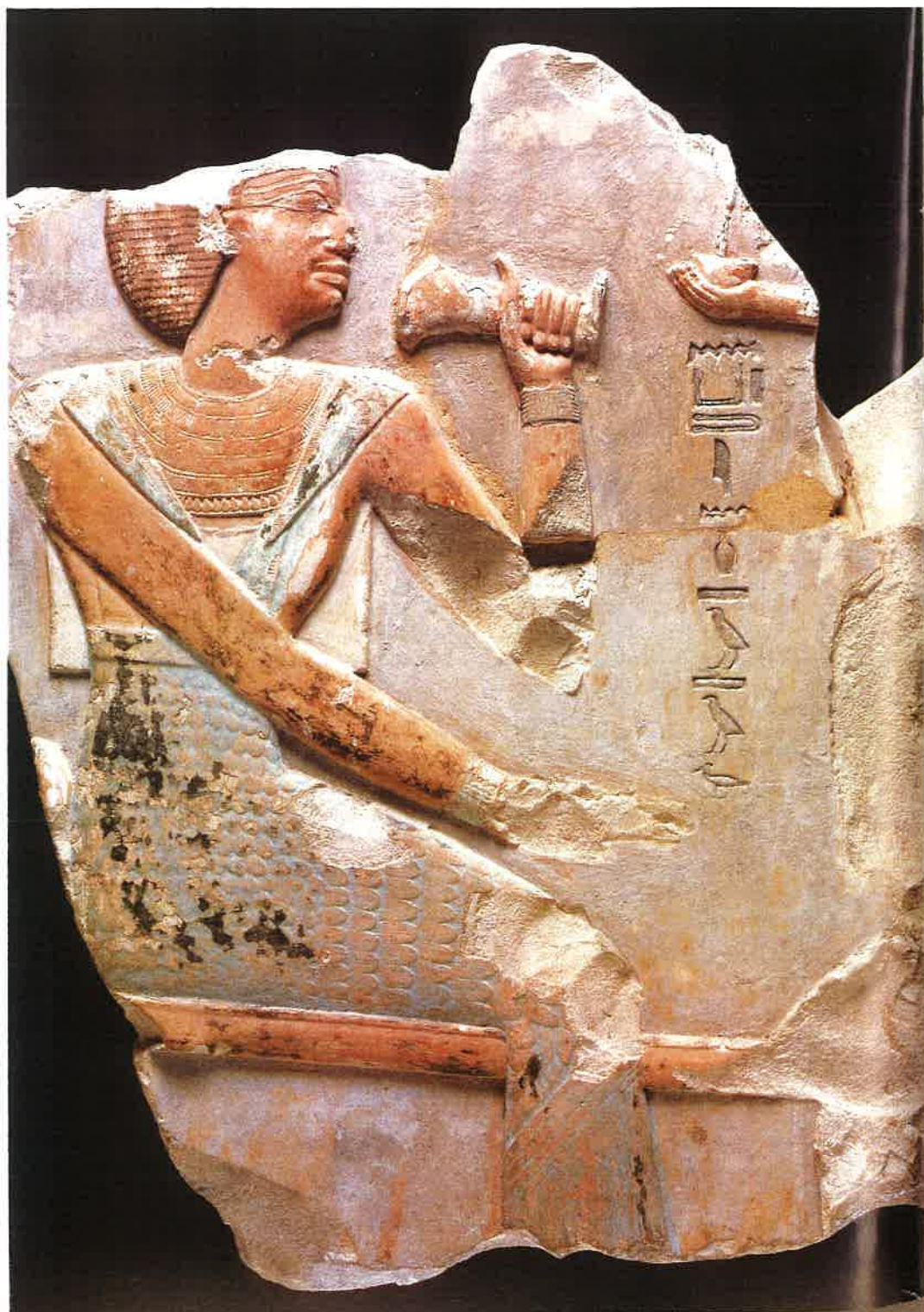
Trussed birds, joints of meat (including ox and calf), bread and cakes were placed in tombs of the Old Kingdom, sometimes enclosed in limestone boxes carved to represent their contents. By this period, however, the nourishing of the dead was usually being taken care of by magic and ritual, and the custom of providing real comestibles appears to have waned until the New Kingdom, when

there was a resurgence of the practice. Many loaves, cakes, fruits and other items have been found in tombs of the 18th to 20th Dynasties, particularly at Thebes, where local conditions are especially favourable to the survival of such impermanent items (see figs 54–5). The tombs of the kings and other individuals of high status also contained portions of meat which had been mummified and wrapped in linen, sometimes coated with resin or oil. These provisions were enclosed in wooden cases carved in the shape of the contents, which usually included geese, ducks, pigeons, joints of beef and portions of sheep or goat. A black-painted wooden box in the British Museum, perhaps from the burial of the high-ranking Theban woman Henutmehyt (c. 1250 BC) contains enough meat for a substantial meal, comprising a selection of linen-wrapped fowl and joints cut from a small quadruped, possibly a goat.

Clearly, limited food supplies of this kind were not meant to be replenished,

54–5. Above, pottery jar containing loaves of bread, heavily contaminated with impurities, from a grave at Hierakonpolis, about 3500 BC. The burial of real food was later partly superseded by the offering cult and the magical role of images and models, but a resurgence of the custom seems to have occurred in the New Kingdom, from which period the loaves below probably date. Probably 18th or 19th Dynasty, about 1550–1186 BC. From Thebes. Diam. of palm-fibre plate 19 cm.





56. Painted limestone relief from the shrine or funerary chapel of Kemsit, one of the wives of King Mentuhotep II (about 2055–2004 BC). Kemsit is depicted savouring the scent of a jar of perfumed ointment and stretching out her hand to receive offerings. On the right, a servant, whose figure is lost, was shown pouring a drink into a cup and uttering the words inscribed in a vertical line: 'For your *ka*, gifts and offerings'. From Deir el-Bahri, Thebes, H. 37.5 cm.

and therefore could not be expected to nourish the deceased for eternity. Such food must in fact have fulfilled a symbolic rather than a functional role. This has been borne out by microscopic examinations of samples of the loaves and cakes recovered from tombs. These are frequently found to be composed of standard ingredients, heavily contaminated with waste products which would have made them extremely unappetising. However, this would not pose a problem if the food-offerings were regarded simply as tokens, and there is evidence to suggest that this attitude was indeed held from the earliest times; loaves found in jars in the Predynastic cemetery at Hierakonpolis, dating to about 3500 BC, proved to be made predominantly of chaff, and hence would have been inedible (see fig. 54). Bread and cakes from New Kingdom tombs in the British Museum have also been discovered to contain a high proportion of chaff, in addition to other contaminants.

PROVISIONING BY MAGIC

The offering cult

Throughout most of the pharaonic period the sustenance of the dead was taken care of by magical means. Funerary texts indicate that it was not the physical body but the *ka* which required feeding (see Chapter 1) (see fig. 56). The *ka* was dependent on the world of the living to make this possible. This need was met chiefly through the establishment of a mortuary cult, served by relatives of the deceased or by priests, whose duty it was to present offerings to the dead in the context of a formal ritual. This took place in the tomb chapel, to which the *ka* ascended from the burial chamber below (see Chapter 5), passing through the false-door and taking up temporary residence within the statue of the deceased in order to receive its sustenance. In terms of its procedures, the offering ritual was closely related to the magical purification and provisioning of the images of the gods which took place every day in the great cult temples. The *ka* of the deceased, like the divinity embodied within the cult-statue in the temple, consumed only the essence of the foodstuffs placed on the offering table. The offerings then 'reverted', or, in other words, were eaten by the priests or by those who had performed the ritual. The underlying notion that physical digestion did not take place removed the obligation to 'neutralise' (through offering them to the dead) much-needed provisions which might otherwise be consumed by the living.

Mortuary cults were established with great care to ensure that the funerary rituals would continue to be performed from one generation to the next (see Chapter 5). However, despite the most elaborate precautions, it was the fate of all such cults ultimately to fall into abeyance. Though the spirits of long-dead kings might continue to be maintained through temple cults, with the support or consent of the reigning pharaoh, for non-royal individuals cults of remote ancestors (even grandparents) were probably rarely maintained for more than a generation or two. The Egyptians were well aware of the futility of trusting to tomb and cult for eternal survival, as literary compositions often emphasise (see p. 45).

One text exhorts the reader to make himself remembered by his writings; only thus are the names of the wise men of the past recalled, for 'their portals and mansions have crumbled, their *ka*-servants are [gone]; their tombstones are covered with soil, their graves are forgotten'.

The written word: the offering formula

To circumvent this difficulty, recourse was had to the magical power of word and image. The most important part of the offering ritual was the invocation to the gods to provide supplies, which was expressed in a standard form of words. This 'offering formula' encapsulated the relationship between gods, men and king which was crucial to the survival of the dead. In its simplest form the wording runs:

An offering which the king gives to Osiris so that he may give a voice-offering consisting of one thousand loaves of bread, one thousand jugs of beer, one thousand fowl, one thousand oxen, and every good and pure thing on which a god lives, for the *ka* of [the deceased].

The introductory phrase here alludes to the concept that, in theory at least, offerings to the dead came from the king or the gods. Under a reciprocal arrangement the king made offerings to the gods, who in turn provided for the dead (alternatively, it may have been supposed that the king and the god together presented the offering to the deceased). Of the many deities who are invoked in the formula on different monuments, Osiris and Anubis, on account of their special connections with the dead, are the most frequently encountered. The offering itself is termed a *peret-kheru*, i.e. 'going forth at the voice' (or 'voice-offering'), an expression which stresses the importance attached to the speaking of the words aloud in order to accomplish the purpose of the ritual. The offerings requested generally begin with bread, beer, oxen and fowl – regarded by the Egyptians as the staples of a good diet – and are often accompanied by 'alabaster [vessels], incense, and clothing'. Sometimes other commodities such as wine or milk are added to the list. The goods are usually enumerated in quantities of one thousand to symbolise the notion of abundance.

This text was inscribed on the stela in the tomb chapel, and often on the coffin, on statues and on other monuments besides. Every time the words were spoken the beneficiary received a renewed supply of the articles named. All those who entered the tomb chapel were expected to pronounce the formula, and on many stelae the owner of the tomb personally addresses future visitors with an appeal to recite the appropriate words for his benefit. The appeal on the stela of Minnefer (12th Dynasty) reads:

O living ones upon the earth, the *hem*-priests and *hem*-priestesses, and the *wab*-priests of this temple, may you say: 'One thousand of bread and beer, oxen and fowl, for the revered one, the overseer of the chamber Minnefer, justified.'

The exhortation is often preceded by an account of the deceased's exemplary conduct on earth to assure the visitor that the desired offerings were indeed well-deserved. As an added incitement the visitor who speaks the formula is promised benefits to himself, as on the stela of Nebipusenusret (12th Dynasty).

You shall be in the favour of your sovereign, you shall hand over your offices to your children . . . you shall not hunger, you shall not thirst . . . according as you shall say: 'An offering which the king gives . . .'



57. Part of a list of offerings from the limestone false door in the tomb of Rahotep at Meidum. The compartments contain the names of items of furniture and sacred unguents. This piece was originally situated to the left of the offering scene (see fig. 109). Early 4th Dynasty, about 2600 bc. H. 105 cm.

The mere presence of the text in the tomb was itself of value, for it was a fundamental tenet of Egyptian magical practice that the written word itself possessed the power to bring about desired results, and to bring what was written into substantial existence. So the offering formula was inscribed on a wide range of objects destined for the tomb, including items which were not intended to be seen by visitors, such as the coffins. The presence of the words in the deceased's funerary environment sufficed to activate the spell and to produce a limitless supply of food and other necessities.

While the offering formula concentrated on the most essential commodities, a wider range of offerings was specified in other texts. The walls of many tomb chapels and coffins of the Old and Middle Kingdoms are inscribed with extensive lists of offerings which the deceased required for his survival and comfort in the next world. Among the items mentioned are various kinds of bread, meat, fruits and wines, together with the 'seven sacred oils' used in the ritual of the Opening of the Mouth (see Chapter 5). These are often arranged in tabular

form, each compartment specifying a particular commodity needed for the after-life or for the adequate performance of the offering ritual (see fig. 57).

Two- and three-dimensional images

No less efficacious was the image, which – like the written word – was believed to embody the power to become reality. Depictions of food, drink and other items were therefore an important part of the environment of the tomb (see fig. 58). Among the earliest images to appear in this context was that of the deceased seated before a table of offerings, a scene which first occurs on the slab-shaped

limestone funerary stelae of the 2nd to 4th Dynasties. It was subsequently incorporated into the decoration of the false door, the focal point of the offering chapel (see Chapter 5). The deceased stretches forth one hand towards the offering table, which may be temptingly heaped with a variety of foodstuffs, or may support a rather more austere row of stylised conical loaves of bread. The scene is usually accompanied by the offering formula and offering list.



58. Images of food offerings for the deceased, carved on the false door from the *mastaba* of Ptahshepses. 5th Dynasty, about 2400 BC. From Saqqara. H. of false door 366 cm.

By the early Old Kingdom, new scenes were added to the false door and to the walls of the tomb chapel. These showed rows of servants bringing supplies for the tomb owner. These figures are usually female, and personify the mortuary estates which (in the case of a person of wealth) provided the supplies for the offering cult and the stipends for its personnel. Other scenes show representative stages in the production of food and other essentials, a logical extension of the compartmentalised lists of provisions found in earlier tombs (see fig. 59). Chief among these are the standardised depictions of agricultural activities – servants harvesting crops, making bread and beer, and butchering cattle – but the weaving of cloth and the construction of household and funerary objects by craftsmen are also shown. By the principle of magical substitution it was believed that the things and the people depicted would come into existence in the tomb and serve the owner eternally, providing him with a staff of attendants who would go about the tasks which they were depicted performing for as long as he required them. The introduction of these representations in about the Third Dynasty coincides with the disappearance of the custom of filling tomb-magazines with large quantities of foodstuffs and furniture.

The inscriptions which accompany the activities sometimes include the statement that it is for the *ka* of the owner that the actions are carried out. Occasionally there is even a hint as to the Egyptians' attitude towards these representations. In the *mastaba* tomb of Nefermaat at Meidum (4th Dynasty), one of the earliest tombs to possess a chapel with full wall-decoration, the enduring quality of the images (which are referred to as 'gods') is expressed in a eulogy of the tomb owner: 'It is he who made his gods as representation that cannot be obliterated.' A later Old Kingdom tomb inscription from Saqqara identifies the carved figure of a funerary priest as the medium (literally 'door') by which the priest is to 'go forth' to serve the master. These statements emphasise that for the Egyptians the images carved and painted in tombs and on coffins were primarily functional. This does not of course mean that they did not take pleasure in fine draughtsman-



59. Limestone relief showing two servants leading an ox which is to provide sustenance for the *ka* of the owner of the tomb. The figures are carved in the style of provincial workshops of the First Intermediate Period, about 2181–2025 BC. From the tomb of Mereriqer at Dendera. H. 34.3 cm.

ship and skilful sculpting – some scenes even contain humorous details probably placed there for the amusement of future visitors.

Model figures for the tomb

The notion that images of servants could act as substitutes for real ones marks an important step forward in cultural development. During the 1st Dynasty the king had been accompanied in death by attendants whose graves were located around that of their master. They were in all probability put to death at the time of the royal burial so that the ruler would not be deprived of their service in the

afterlife. This practice had been abandoned in Egypt by the beginning of the Old Kingdom (although it occurred in Nubia during the Classic Kerma phase c. 1750–1600 BC) and the prevalence of images in the tombs of the elite during the following centuries indicates that magical substitution had become the norm. In the 4th to 6th Dynasties, further developments took place. The two-dimensional figures of servants on the walls of the tomb chapel began to be augmented by statuettes which represented a comparable range of activities. The earliest of these are limestone figures of the 4th to 6th Dynasties, examples of which have been



60. Limestone statuette of a servant grinding corn on a quern. Individual servant statuettes of this type stand at the beginning of the tradition of providing substitute servants in the tomb to supply the needs of the deceased in the afterlife. 6th Dynasty, about 2345–2181 BC. Provenance unknown. H. 22 cm.

found chiefly in tombs at Giza and Saqqara. Each represents an individual male or female servant; several are kneeling in the act of grinding grain on a quern (see fig. 60); others are represented straining mash through a sieve into a vat to make beer. Less common types depict other activities including baking, butchery and the manufacture of stone and pottery vessels.

After the Old Kingdom, the limestone figures were replaced by statuettes of painted wood, which had first begun to appear during the 6th Dynasty. These statuettes represented servants both singly and in groups, engaged on various tasks. Examples have been found at sites throughout Egypt, and date chiefly to the First Intermediate Period and the early Middle Kingdom. In undisturbed tombs, the models have been found placed on top of the coffin or at its side. A single tomb might contain many models; the tomb of the provincial governor Djehutynakht at Bersha was stocked with forty-five models of scenes and servants and fifty-five model boats. The most imposing group are the twenty-four models found in the tomb of the official Meketra at Thebes, dating to the late 11th Dynasty. These encompass a wide range of activities, and the models are exceptional for their detail and fine workmanship.

An astonishing range of activities is represented in tomb-models. The quality of craftsmanship varies enormously, from crude stick-like figures with angular faces and hastily-daubed painted features, to exquisitely modelled sculptures finished in painstaking detail. Even the crudest groups present

a vivid picture of the everyday lives and activities of the ancient Egyptians, and the models are of inestimable value for understanding how basic activities were carried out.

The production of foodstuffs is depicted in great episodic detail, with models of various stages in the agricultural process. The preparation of the ground for sowing is represented by a single figure from a tomb at Asyut. He wields a hoe, the standard agricultural tool of the Egyptian peasant (see fig. 61). Several group-models represent ploughing with a pair of horned oxen yoked to a simple wooden plough; one man is shown guiding the plough as it cuts the furrow, while a second urges the draught beasts onward with a goad. The rest of the cultivation process is not usually depicted in models, though ploughing scenes sometimes include a figure scattering seed. Other models represent animal husbandry, chiefly the management and slaughtering of cattle. The most elaborate model of this type is a large group from the tomb of Meketra, showing the tomb



61. Painted wooden model of a peasant wielding a hoe with which to break up the ground for the planting of crops. Limestone figures were superseded by wooden models from the late Old Kingdom. 6th Dynasty, about 2345–2181 BC. From Asyut, tomb 45B. H. 33 cm.



62. By the First Intermediate Period, servant models had evolved; they were now usually made of painted wood and very often represented groups of servants engaged in a variety of activities. This group from the tomb of Sebekhetepi at Beni Hasan shows male and female servants grinding corn and baking bread, brewing beer in vats and slaughtering an ox. Another man carried two jars slung over his shoulders on a yoke. Probably late 11th Dynasty, about 2000 BC. 49.6 x 24.3 cm.

owner and attendant scribes inspecting a herd of nineteen cows – a substantial number which reflects the high status of their owner. This model, however, is unique; most models of cattle show the process of butchering, the animal lying on the ground, its legs bound together and its throat cut (or about to be). In the most detailed models of butchery, such as that of Meketra, cuts of meat are seen hanging up to dry on strings on the upper level of the abattoir.

The preparation of bread and beer are among the most commonly depicted tasks, and after the Old Kingdom both processes were usually represented in a single group (see fig. 62). Several models depict bakers modelling loaves and cakes and tending an oven or a stack of filled breadmoulds heated over a fire. The making of beer is usually represented by one or more standing figures straining mash through a sieve or cloth into a large vat.

A highly important category of model is the granary – a miniature storehouse filled with samples of grains used to make bread and beer. These models are among the most informative of all for they often represent the complete building with walls and working door, ramps, ladders and grain silos with movable hatches. A granary from the tomb of Sebekhetepi at Beni Hasan is occupied by figures of men carrying the grain while a scribe records the quantities on a writing board (see fig. 63). An example from Thebes has a courtyard in which a

63. This granary, which comes from the same tomb as the group in fig. 62, depicts men depositing or removing sacks, while a scribe holds a writing board, on which he is keeping a record of the quantities of grain. The storage bins are filled with actual grains and with juniper berries. Probably late 11th Dynasty. From Beni Hasan, tomb 723. H. 21 cm.



64. Model of a female servant grinding corn on a quern supported on a table. The figure comes from a model of a granary found in a tomb at Thebes. 12th Dynasty, about 1850 BC. H. 13 cm.



65. Model of a female servant bringing offerings for the owner of the tomb. On her head she carries a basket of bread and cakes and the head and foreleg of an ox. The right hand probably held a bird (now lost). The figure is made from an indigenous timber, probably tamarisk. Said to come from the tomb of the physician Gua at Deir el-Bersha, 12th Dynasty, about 1850 BC. H. 39 cm.

woman stands grinding corn on a quern set on a legged stand (see fig. 64); the master, seated under a canopy on an upper level, keeps a careful watch over the activities below. In some granary models the silos are labelled with ink inscriptions identifying different varieties of corn. Less common, but nonetheless instructive, are scenes of weaving, carpentry and brick-making.

Particularly striking are the carriers of offerings, usually female, pairs of which were supplied in many tombs (see fig. 65). The commonest type is depicted walking, supporting with her left hand a provision-basket on her head and holding a bird in her right hand. They are frequently larger than the other models and are often of superior craftsmanship to that of others from the same tomb. The reason for their special significance is debatable. It may reflect their role as personifications of mortuary estates, the fundamental basis of provisioning for the dead. There is no doubt that the iconography of the figures closely resembles that of the personified estates depicted on the walls of Old Kingdom tomb chapels (see p. 98).

These models were produced in large numbers during the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom, but seem to have fallen out of fashion after the 12th Dynasty, their role being partly taken over by *shabtis* (see Chapter 4).

Model boats

The boat was of great importance in ancient Egypt, not only as the principal means of transport, but also for fishing and fowling. Boats also played a major role in religion, being conceived as the main means by which the gods travelled across the sky and through the netherworld. It is hardly surprising, then, that miniature boats form the largest single category of models found in the tombs of the Old to Middle Kingdoms. Three broad categories can be distinguished. The first comprised vessels designed for everyday transport (see fig. 66). Most of these models represent boats built of wooden planks, and the hulls are often carefully painted with details of the deck planking and structural beams emphasised in red. These boats are directed by one or two steering oars mounted at the stern. Besides the helmsman, crew members are represented rowing or setting the sail; there is usually a lookout-man at the prow, holding a lead-line or a pole to test the depth of the water. Some of the transport



66. Painted wooden model of a sailing boat. Under a canopy sits the owner with two boxes or storage-chests. At the stern sits the helmsman and in the bows stands the pilot, who tests the depth of water with a lead-line. Three of the crew are hauling on the rigging, while two others are depicted using poles (now lost), as if levering the boat off a sandbank – a regular obstacle to navigation on the Nile. Late 11th Dynasty, about 2000 BC. From the tomb of Sebekheruf at Beni Hasan (no. 723). L. 69.8 cm.

boats incorporate a cabin or canopy, beneath which sits a figure of the owner, often squatting in an enveloping cloak in the manner of later block-statues. He is sometimes attended by servants or soldiers. A smaller number of boat models represent craft used for fishing and fowling. Among the models of Meketre are two papyrus skiffs, from which fishermen are shown casting nets. Most tombs were supplied with two boat models, one with its sail set and the other propelled simply by oars. The different modes of propulsion were those appropriate to travelling north and south, respectively, and this idea is sometimes emphasised by the positioning of the two vessels within the tomb, one with its prow facing north and the other in the opposite direction.

A second class of model consisted of the type of boats used at funerals or for making pilgrimages to holy sites such as Abydos. The appearance of these craft indicates that they were ideally supposed to be made of papyrus, although in reality the full-size boats would probably have been made of wood (see fig. 67). Hence the prow and stern are raised up out of the water, and the hull is usually painted green to suggest the colour of the bundles of papyrus reeds of which it



67. Painted wooden model of a funerary boat. The hull is painted green to suggest the papyrus reeds of which such craft were traditionally made. On the deck is a canopy, beneath which lies the mummy on a bier, attended by female mourners who represent Isis and Nephthys lamenting the death of Osiris. 12th Dynasty, about 1850 BC. From Thebes. L. 66.7 cm.

was made. These boats usually have a canopy amidships under which lies a mummy on a bier. Female mourners personifying the sister goddesses Isis and Nephthys stand at the foot and head of the bier, sometimes in traditional attitudes of lamentation. It is difficult to determine whether such models represent an episode in the funeral, during which the corpse was ferried across the Nile from its habitation on the east bank to the tomb in the west, or are meant to symbolise the journey to Abydos, the holy city of Osiris.

The third category of boat model comprised representations of the solar barque in which the sun god was believed to travel. The importance of this concept was dramatically revealed in 1954 by the discovery of the full-size ship buried in a pit alongside the pyramid of Khufu (c. 2589–2566 BC) at Giza. This vessel was intended to enable the dead king to traverse the heavens with the sun god; finds from other royal burials from as early as the 1st Dynasty indicate that one or more boats were often provided for the dead king's use. Small scale models of solar barques were also included among the tomb equipment of some private individuals in the Middle Kingdom.



68–9. The graves of poorer individuals of the Middle Kingdom were often simple shafts, without any mortuary-chapel or offering table to act as a focus for the ritual provisioning of the dead. To supply this need cheaply, a pottery offering-platter or model house was often deposited at the mouth of the shaft. The main feature of these was a representation of a courtyard containing a water basin and a range of food offerings – usually an ox and a variety of loaves, cakes, fruit and vegetables. More elaborate examples, termed ‘soul houses’ by Egyptologists, incorporated a representation of a house. Offering platter, Middle Kingdom, about 2050–1650 BC. Provenance unknown. L. 30.5 cm. ‘Soul house’, 12th Dynasty, about 1985–1795 BC. Provenance unknown. 25 × 23.5 cm.



Offering platters and ‘soul houses’

For those who could not afford a cult place and the range of images described above, access to offerings could be obtained through the medium of a pottery model which combined the functions of the tomb chapel and the offering table. These date principally to the Middle Kingdom and examples have been found at many sites throughout Egypt, notably at Deir Rifa, where Flinders Petrie was able to establish through excavation that they had been placed at surface level

70. An ivory headrest. The two sides of the central support are carved in the shape of the *Tit*, or ‘girdle of Isis’, which symbolises the protection of the goddess. Said to be from the tomb of the physician Gua at Deir el-Bersha. 12th Dynasty, about 1850 BC. H. 16 cm.



above the burial shaft, and hence acted as the focus for offerings in the absence of a tomb chapel.

These models varied in the amount of detail they contained. The simpler type is a round or oval pottery plate with raised edges and a simple T-shaped runnel impressed into the clay, terminating in a small spout (see fig. 68); this served to carry away the water-offerings which were to be poured on to the plate. The rest of the space was occupied by clay models of food offerings, usually including a trussed ox, a loaf of bread or cake and a bunch of vegetables. Other models are more elaborate and usually incorporate a representation of a house, and a courtyard containing a wide range of offerings. Earlier Egyptologists supposed that the miniature structures were intended as homes for the spirit, giving rise to the modern term ‘soul houses’ (see fig. 69). Although this was probably not their true purpose, the models are highly informative for the study of ancient Egyptian domestic architecture, ranging as they do from simple domed huts to elaborate

houses with columned porticos and stairways leading to a roof terrace. The courtyards contain large quantities of offerings and usually a libation basin or pool. Some examples have holes in the base of the courtyard or along the top of the enclosure wall, suggesting that model trees may have been inserted to add to the realistic effect. Comparable Middle Kingdom houses with walled gardens and pools have been excavated near Lahun, and funerary texts repeatedly allude to the desirability of having water and shady trees for the comfort of the deceased.

Other provisions for the tomb

Since the existence beyond the grave paralleled that on earth in many ways, other necessities were provided for the dead. These often included objects of everyday use, provided so that the lifestyle to which the owner had been accustomed on earth could be continued after death. Furniture was placed in the grave as early as the 1st Dynasty. Fragments of decorated beds, chairs and stools have been found in the royal tombs of the

early dynasties at Abydos, and in other tombs of later periods. The tomb of Tutankhamun contained a range of chairs, stools and beds – even a folding camp-bed – and private tombs of the New Kingdom have yielded a large number of comparable items made for officials and humbler folk. Among the commoner items were beds and headrests (see fig. 70). Here again symbolic significance was doubtless important, since in texts death was often likened to a sleep. In some cultures – notably in Nubia – the dead were actually laid on beds

in the tomb, as though to awaken to a new life. Although this custom was not generally observed in Egypt, during the Old and Middle Kingdoms mummies were regularly placed in coffins on their left sides, with a headrest supporting the head (see p. 219). This position may have been intended to reflect the conception of death as a sleep. The headrest also possessed amuletic significance. In the New Kingdom, spell 166 of the *Book of the Dead*, often written on an amulet representing the headrest in miniature, assures the deceased peaceful sleep and that his head will not be taken away in the netherworld.

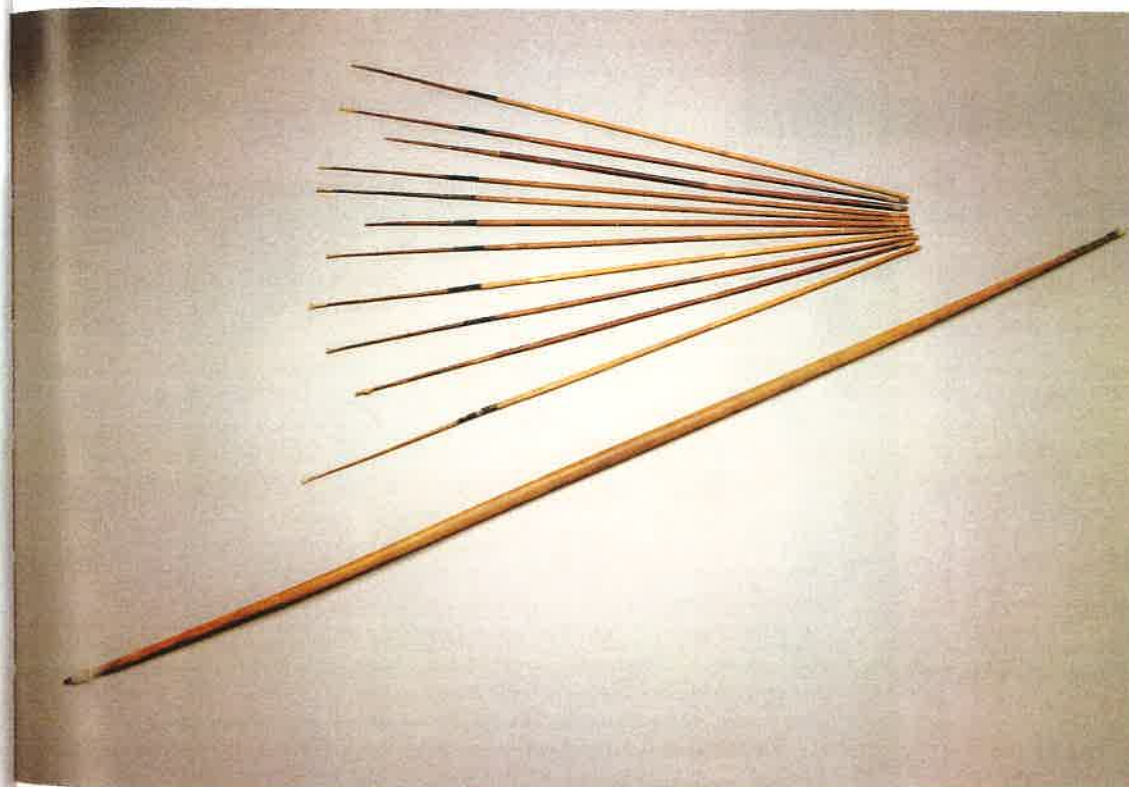
71. Pair of wooden sandals with leather thongs. The delicate construction indicates that these sandals were not worn in life, but were probably made specifically for the tomb. They would assist the deceased magically in walking in the afterlife, and symbolically enable him to tread down hostile entities. This pair was found placed on the lid of the inner coffin in the undisturbed tomb of Sebekhetepi at Beni Hasan (see fig. 73). Late 11th Dynasty, about 2000 BC. L. (left) 25.3, (right) 25 cm.



Clothing was also provided. Some tombs have yielded enormous quantities of garments, mostly of linen. The tomb of Kha at Deir el-Medina, dating to the reign of Amenhotep III (c. 1390–1352 BC), included over 100 items. Sandals were regarded as particularly important items. As pointed out in Chapter 2, these were sometimes worn by the mummy in the Old Kingdom, and in later periods pairs of sandals were regularly placed in the coffin (see fig. 71). The provision of sandals magically gave the deceased the ability to leave the tomb at will; their importance is further emphasised by the fact that they were regularly painted on the interior of coffins. They also magically enabled the deceased to tread his enemies underfoot, as the example from the burial of Pepy I (c. 2321–2287 BC) illustrates (see p. 81). In the context of a non-royal burial, this defeat of foes was a symbolic act which reaffirmed the triumph of order over chaos, and hence perpetuated *maat*. The predominantly symbolic significance of funerary sandals becomes even clearer when it is realised that many of those found in tombs are 'dummies', equal in size to functional examples but made from inflexible or fragile materials which would have made them impractical to

wear. The theme of the victory of order over chaos was taken up again in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, when many mummies were provided with sandal soles or footcases of cartonnage, the under-surfaces of which carry painted images of bound prisoners, representing the traditional enemies of Egypt.

Most tombs, even those of the very poor, contained some personal jewellery and cosmetic implements. Cosmetics were used in life to adorn, beautify and protect the body against the effects of the extreme climate of Egypt, and cosmetic materials and applicators were among the earliest everyday items to be



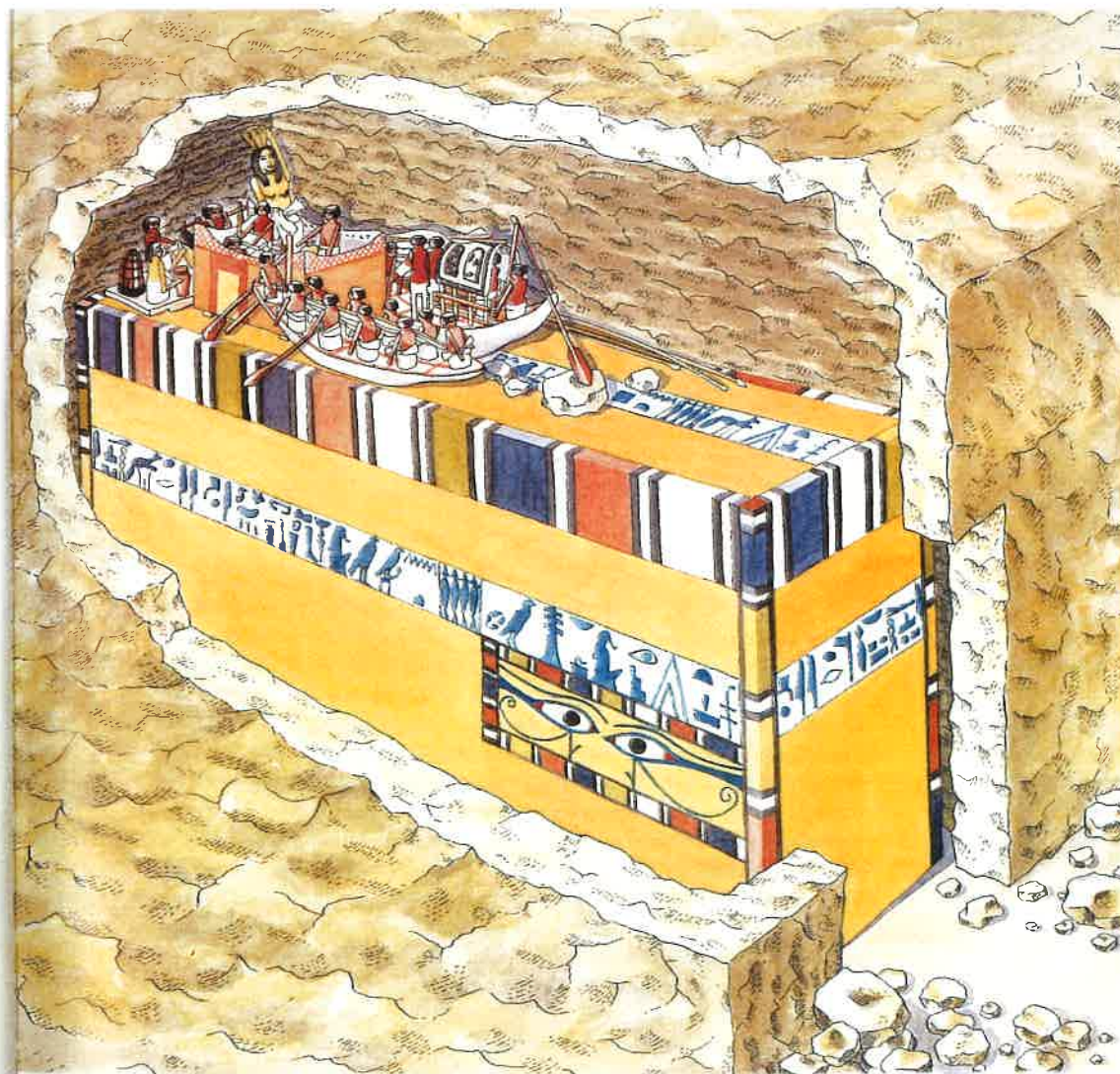
72. Acacia-wood bow and flint-tipped arrows, found on the top of the coffin of Ankhef (see figs 104, 160). Weapons were commonly placed in tombs from the Predynastic period onwards. Some items, such as axes and daggers, may have served principally as status symbols, but the provision of archery equipment was essentially practical in intent, to enable the dead to enjoy the pleasures of hunting in the afterlife. Early 12th Dynasty, about 1950 BC. From Asyut. L. of bow 160 cm.

placed in graves. Predynastic burials contain slate palettes, often in the shape of a fish, bird or other creature, for grinding the pigments used as cosmetics, and in many graves powdered malachite has been found in a separate container, or may even be still visible on the palette. Combs, hairpins, copper or bronze mirrors, stone and pottery vessels containing oils and perfumes, and other containers made of more expensive materials such as glass, are also regular finds in tombs. However, some of these items – perhaps too valuable to consign to the tomb – were at times replaced by dummies. In some tombs of the 18th and 19th Dynasties, wooden, pottery and limestone dummy vessels were included, imitating the forms and distinctive colouring of containers made of more costly materials. Many of these jars were completely solid, their surfaces intricately painted to represent the veined appearance of calcite, the mottled surface of breccia or granite, or the brightly-coloured festoon-patterns of glass.

Tombs have also yielded items of professional equipment, such as scribe's palettes, cubit rods, writing boards, tools, weapons and hunting equipment (see fig. 72). The pharaohs of the New Kingdom were even provided with chariots, and a room in the tomb was designated as the 'chariot hall'. Six dismantled chariots were found in Tutankhamun's tomb, and fragments from other tombs show that this was not an isolated instance. Chariots have also been found in a few non-royal tombs, though this is rare. The tomb of Yuya and Tjuyu, the parents-in-law of Amenhotep III (c. 1390–1352 BC), contained a small chariot, apparently made specifically for the tomb.

To complete the atmosphere of comfort and luxury in which the deceased hoped to find themselves, musical instruments and games were also supplied. Board games were placed in tombs as early as the 1st Dynasty, and many playing pieces and boards from different games have been found. The board-game *senet* ('passing') was one of the most popular leisure-time activities of the ancient Egyptians, and gaming-boards and sets of playing pieces for them have been discovered in many tombs. The object of the game appears to have been to follow a pathway of thirty squares or 'houses', eventually bearing one's playing-pieces off the board in a manner reminiscent of the game of backgammon. Naturally, the placement of *senet* sets in the grave reflected a desire to continue this enjoyable pastime in the next life, but from the New Kingdom the game acquired a religious significance as well. The journey around the board came to be equated with the passage to the afterlife; after successfully reaching the goal, the player is rewarded by the gods with food and water. According to spell 17 of the *Book of the Dead* winning a game of *senet* was synonymous with successful attainment of the afterlife in the form of 'a living *ba*'.

Some of these 'everyday' objects had clearly been used in life. Headrests show signs of wear, other objects had been broken and repaired. They were not necessarily the best or newest the deceased had owned; many goods would descend to the heirs and continue in use, perhaps only being consigned to the tomb several generations after their manufacture, when they had outlived their usefulness or were considered old-fashioned.



73. Reconstruction of the contents of the burial chamber of Sebekhetepi (tomb 723 at Beni Hasan) as found. The tomb possessed no offering chapel, and the coffin was placed in a small rock-cut chamber, reached by a shaft. Inside the coffins were Sebekhetepi's sandals (see fig. 71), a set of model tools and a funerary statuette. On the lid of the outer coffin had been placed a range of models including the servant-group, granary and sailing boat illustrated in figs 62–3 and 66. Late 11th Dynasty, about 2000 BC.

FUNERARY FIGURINES: SERVANTS FOR THE AFTERLIFE

THE CONCEPT AND FUNCTION OF *SHABTIS*

The use of magic to meet the needs of the dead and to improve the quality of their existence in the afterlife led to the creation of a wide range of images for inclusion among the furnishings of the tomb. Chief among these was the statue, in which the deceased's *ka* resided to receive offerings (see Chapters 1 and 5), while the servant statuettes of the Old and Middle Kingdoms (see Chapter 3) provided a magically-operated workforce for their master in the hereafter. In the course of the Middle Kingdom, these servant figures were superseded by a new type of human image, which was to become one of the most important categories of the tomb's furnishings. These were the funerary figurines which were known by the three alternative names *shabti*, *shawabti* and *ushebti*. These statuettes, usually mummyform in shape, were first introduced around 2100 BC, and had become a standard element of burials by the first millennium BC, at which time they were being mass-produced in their thousands.

The figures range in size from tiny specimens a few centimetres in length to large and finely crafted sculptures over 50 cm tall. They were made from a variety of materials: wood, stone, wax, metal, glass, faience, pottery, and even ivory. The importance attached to these images is clear from their survival as part of the burial assemblage for almost two thousand years, and by the fact that at the height of their popularity, kings as well as their subjects required *shabtis* for their tombs.

The significance of the figurines was complex, and changed with the passage of time. Since they took over the function of the earlier tomb models, the *shabtis* possessed the character of servants of the deceased. But whereas the models were at all times regarded as separate entities, distinct from their owner, the *shabti* was more than this, acting also as a personal substitute for its master. Placed in the tomb (or, occasionally deposited at a cult place of special sanctity; see p. 133–5), the figurine provided an additional home for the *ka*, a reserve body in which its owner could exist and receive nourishment in the afterlife. Hence the *shabti's* role was in some ways analogous to that of the mummy itself, the *ka*-statue or the

74. Painted limestone *shabti* figure of Pamerihu, a scribe, 18th Dynasty, about 1370 BC. From Saqqara. H. 30.5 cm.

