

# KMT

A Modern Journal of Ancient Egypt

VOL.7, NO.2  
Summer 1996  
US\$ 8.00  
Can. \$11.50

EGYPTIAN  
SPLENDORS  
DAZZLE IN FLORIDA

THE MYSTERIOUS  
2ND DYNASTY

TOMBS OF JUDGES  
FOUND AT ABUSIR

19TH CENTURY  
TOMB-DWELLING  
IN THEBES

MARCH 1912  
IN THE LIFE OF  
GEORGE A. REISNER

KMT EXCLUSIVE:  
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EXQUISITE  
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# March 1912

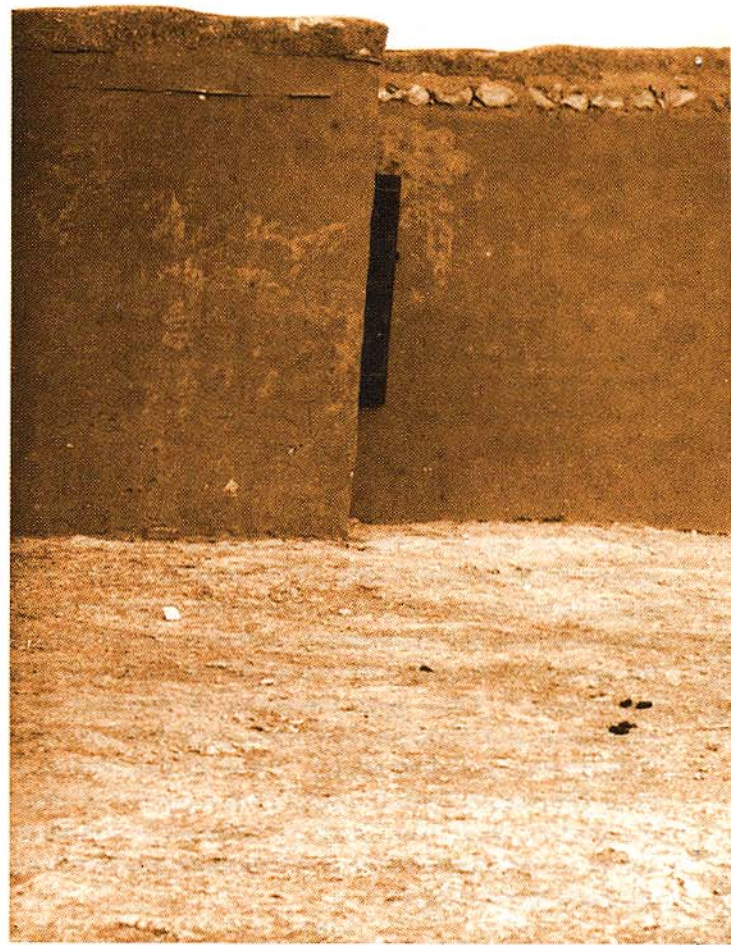
A MONTH  
IN THE LIFE  
OF AMERICAN  
EGYPTOLOGIST

## George A. Reisner

by Peter Der Manuelian

**W**HAT WAS IT LIKE TO COMMAND a small army of workmen, recovering new scientific data and artistic masterpieces in the shadow of the Giza Pyramids, the most famous archaeological site in the world? Not excitement enough? How about also being curator at one of the most important art museums in the United States and professor of Egyptology at prestigious Harvard University, to boot? How did it feel?

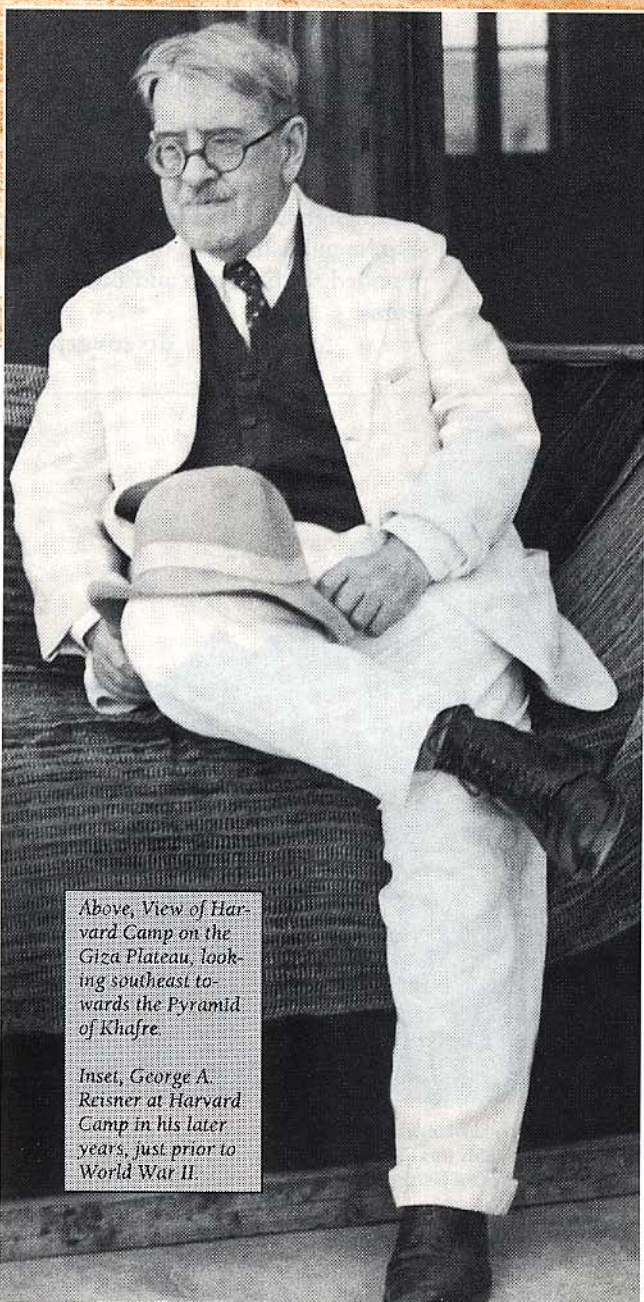
Well, if you were George Andrew Reisner (1867-1942) living at “Harvard Camp,” just southwest of the Great Pyramid on the Giza



Photos courtesy the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Plateau, it was just another day at the “office.” How many times between 1900 and 1942 did the early morning sun cast the shadow of the Pyramid of Khafre (called Chephren by Reisner) like a finger pointed at the archaeologist’s bedroom in the desert complex of little houses, signaling the start of another day of discoveries at Giza?

Far from the bustle of a growing Boston — with its brand-new neoclassical Museum of Fine Arts building on Huntington Avenue, replacing (in 1909) the Ruskinian-gothic structure on Copley Square — Reisner worked away at the pyramids, unraveling the history of the Old Kingdom and the development of one of the

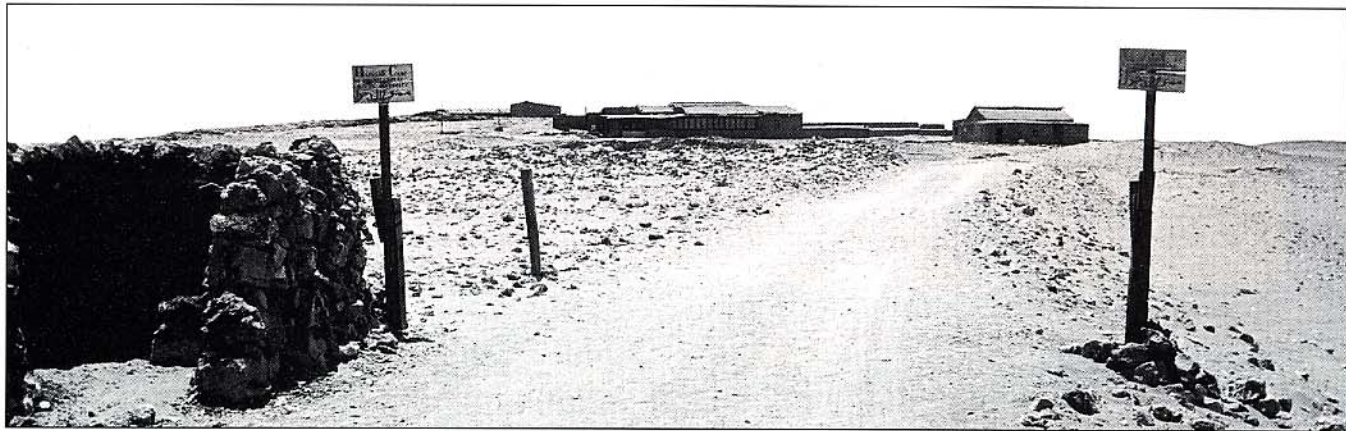


*Above, View of Harvard Camp on the Giza Plateau, looking southeast towards the Pyramid of Khafre.*

*Inset, George A. Reisner at Harvard Camp in his later years, just prior to World War II.*

most elaborate royal and private burial-complexes ever conceived. What would it have been like to follow around for a month this founding father of modern scientific archaeology? What were his challenges, his discoveries and, most important, his reactions to the events swirling around him?

Unfortunately, Reisner is no longer with us, so he personally cannot be asked about those glory days at Giza. His biography has yet to be written and Dows Dunham — curator emeritus of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts' Egyptian Department and the



*Harvard Camp, the Giza Plateau headquarters of the Harvard University/ Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Expedition between 1900 and 1942, as seen from its approach road, looking west.*

last man who worked closely with Reisner in the field — passed on in 1982. But there is a massive amount of written material from Reisner's own hand, both published and unpublished, scholarly and popular, personal and professional. One of those items is the excavation diary kept by the Museum Expedition. By choosing an average month of Reisner's field season recorded therein, it is possible to see how the great archaeologist's days were spent. Reisner was forty-five years old in 1912. The Museum Expedition had been humming along at Giza and in Middle Egypt, with a few interruptions for work in Nubia and Samaria, since 1905. It seemed that relocating his excavation sponsorship from the American West Coast to the East Coast had been a successful move after all. Financial difficulties had forced Phoebe Apperson Hearst (1842-1919) in 1905 to cut her funding of Reisner's excavations in Egypt for the University of California, Berkeley, and so he had jumped coasts to become the director of the Harvard University-Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Expedition.

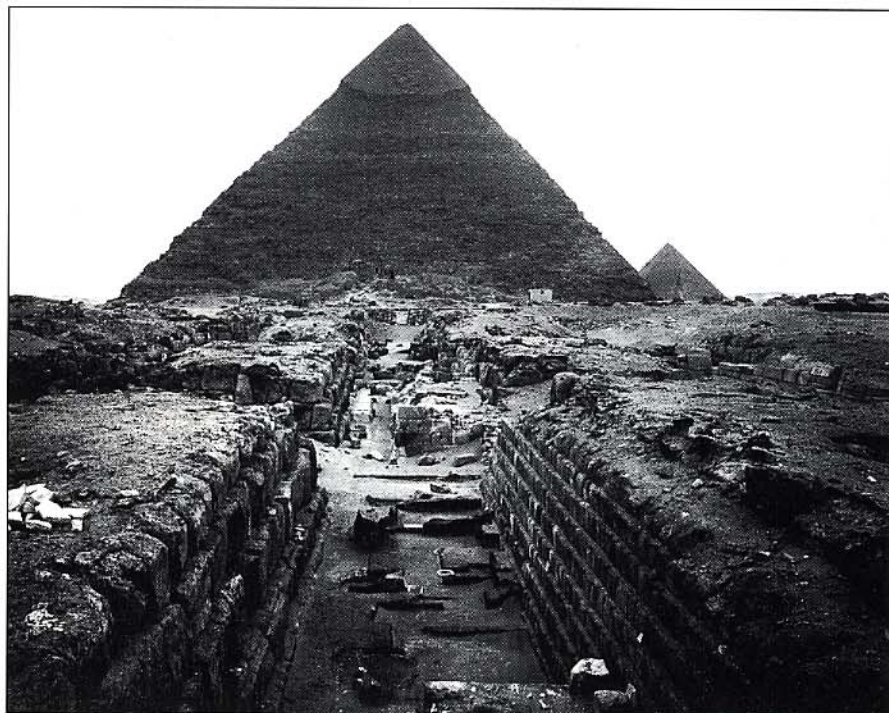
By the end of the first decade of the century, Reisner was in the middle of what was to become one of the most successful archaeological careers in the entire history of Egyptology. He was pioneering scientifically documented archaeological methods, far beyond the initial efforts by English archaeologist Flinders Petrie in that regard (see below for Reisner's opinion of Petrie's work). Twenty-three different sites along the Nile would eventually receive his attention. By

1912 he was building one of the world's finest Egyptian and Nubian collections, to be shared by the museums of Cairo, Khartoum and Boston. And Reisner had become a prolific publisher; in fact, the only thing more impressive than his immense bibliography is the number of unpublished manuscripts he left behind in the archives of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.<sup>1</sup>

Reisner was in complete control, both in Boston and at Giza. His

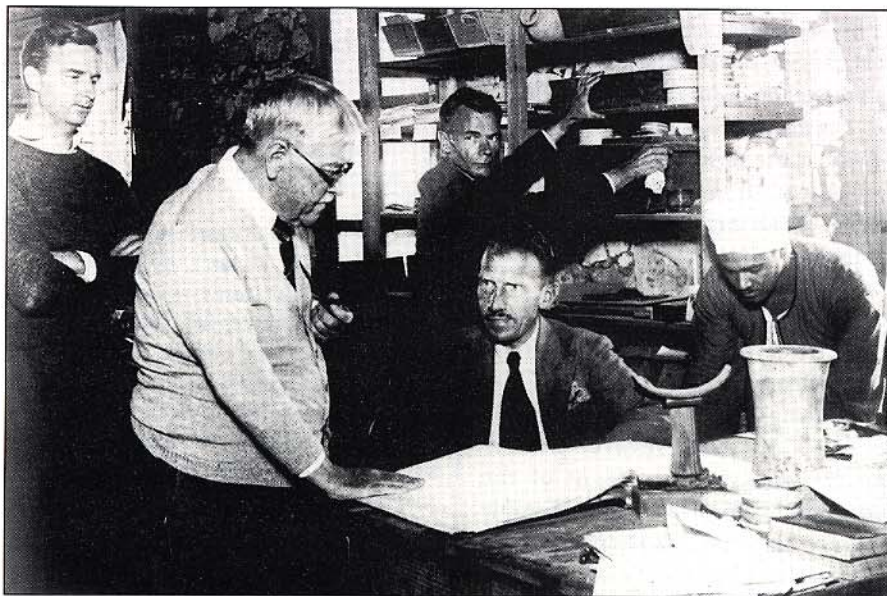
predecessor at Boston, Albert M. Lythgoe (1868-1934), had moved on in 1906 to head the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Egyptian Department in New York. Lythgoe had clashed with the Museum trustees in Boston over the scientific versus art-historical focus of the Egyptian Department, a conflict Reisner was able to avoid successfully during his long affiliation with the Museum. During Reisner's curatorship, the trustees in Boston were delighted to see both the scholarship he published and the treasures he provided to the Cairo and Boston museums.

Spectacular discoveries in



*View in 1919 of the Great Western Cemetery, looking south to the Pyramid of Khafre (Chephren) with the Pyramid of Menkaure in the distance. This was the scene of much of Reisner's work at the Giza necropolis for the joint-expedition of Harvard University and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.*

George Reisner (2nd from l.) confers at Harvard Camp in January, 1929, with members of his staff at that time: (from l.) Hansmartin Handrick, Francis Allen, Nicholas Melnikoff and Mohammed Said Ahmed.



1907-1910 at the pyramid and valley temples of Menkaure included some of the finest masterpieces of Old Kingdom royal sculpture ever found. These had been officially and legally divided between the Cairo and Boston museums, according to the excavation concession and contract granted the Museum Expedition by the Egyptian Antiquities Service, which at that time was under the control of French Egyptologist Gaston Maspero (1846-1916). In addition, financed by the Egyptian government, the Museum Expedition worked in 1907-1909 on the Nubian Archaeological Survey and, in 1909-1910, supported by Jacob Schiff, at Samaria (as the Harvard Palestinian Expedition).<sup>2</sup> The Museum trustees did not seem to mind Reisner's almost constant absence from his curatorial post in Boston, in favor of his constant presence at Harvard Camp.

Following a trip to Upper Egypt, Reisner returned to Giza at the end of January 1912. Excavations at Naga ed Deir (Girga) in Middle Egypt (1900-1905) were coming to a close. Work at the Giza Necropolis focused primarily on cemetery G2100, east of the great anonymous mastaba G2000. Reisner's assistant, Clarence Fisher, was in charge and from January 17 though February 20

had been making the excavation diary entries.<sup>3</sup> A new tomb belonging to one Akhmeretnisut (G 2184; late-Fifth/early-Sixth Dynasty) had just come to light, complete with beautifully colored paintings, a seated limestone statue, unique relief scenes, a limestone and calcite offering slab, and even multiple construction phases and alterations.<sup>4</sup>

At this point Reisner took over the diary entries and the very interesting month of March 1912 began. He oversaw the daily progress of the excavations, the numbering of count-

less tombs and burial shafts, registering of objects, photographic documentation, juggling of accounts, paying the large numbers of Egyptian workmen, allocating Decauville railway cars and tracks for the most efficient routes of debris removal, and collaborating with his German colleague Hermann Junker (1877-1962), who had begun his own nearby Giza excavations on January 27.<sup>5</sup>

But, in addition to this, the month of March provided Reisner with some "headaches," stories of theft, physical attacks against his staff in Middle Egypt, fear of losing out to Petrie on his dream of digging at the early-Old Kingdom site of Dahshur and, finally, the suspicions of British commander Lord Kitchener (1850-1916) that the recent assignment of the famous pair-statue of King Menkaure (Mycerinus) and his queen, Khamerernebtly II, to Boston was somehow not quite above board. Even the opera "Aida" was performed at the base of the Great Pyramid!

The following excerpts and commentaries are reproduced from the unpublished excavation diary kept by Reisner during the 1912 season. The diaries themselves, typed in the field, were illustrated only by occasional sketch-plans of tombs and descriptions of hieroglyphic inscriptions. I have omitted the more



View of the living room of Harvard Camp, as it appeared in 1934.

mundane analyses of shafts and mastaba tomb-walls, in favor of rounding out the picture of an excavator's life at Harvard Camp early in this century.

Reisner's comments are always lively, and sometimes might even seem a bit surly, for he certainly had his own opinions about who should and should not have been running the archaeological show in Egypt at the time. But while Reisner may have the reputation today as a workaholic who begrudged his staff their one day off each week,<sup>6</sup> his diary accounts often reveal a man of great compassion and devotion to everything around him. His comment (quoted below) that the Pyramids production of "Aida" would have been more effective under bare moonlight hardly benefits a "cold methodologist." Reisner even wrote plays and short stories set in ancient Egypt.

His scrupulous morals are evident in his writings about the illicit antiquities-trade and proper acquisition-policy, unscientific excavations that did more harm than good, and his satisfaction at the arrest and punishment of antiquities thieves.

Some of Reisner's most touching words came in letters after the celebration of his seventieth birthday at Harvard Camp on November 5, 1937, when he received a surprise party, a "repeater" watch and many congratulatory telegrams from the States.<sup>7</sup>

**A**s for Giza in 1912, the almost daily discoveries, the scores of visitors (some of them foreign royalty), the changing political and economic climate in Egypt, and the relationship with the MFA trustees back in Boston, must have made this a very exciting — not to say challenging — time to be working at Giza. As can be seen from the excerpts below, Reisner made the most of it.

*Sunday, March 3, 1912 (diary p. 52)*  
*Work as before. In the afternoon started numbering mastabas with Rowe<sup>8</sup> and gave him the work of recording the burial pits.*

*The opera "Aida" was performed on a stage erected on the north of*

*the Cheops pyramid — one performance at 5 p.m. and one at about 9:30. A well-sung performance got up by the association to promote traveling in Egypt, failed, I think, of obtaining any effect beyond that of an ordinary stage exhibition. The audience seemed to me to be unaware of the surroundings and of the sky overhead. It should have been performed without any light other than the moonlight.*

It is interesting to note how similar attempts to increase tourism with performances of "Aida" in historic settings have taken place quite recently. In 1986 several performances were given in front of the Ramesside pylon of the Luxor Temple and, just last year, Hatshepsut's Theban west bank mortuary temple was the setting of the opera.<sup>9</sup> In 1912, as later, hopes were not quite fulfilled in terms of attendance numbers and popular acclaim.

*Monday, March 4, 1912 (p. 52)*  
*Day of rest. Mrs. Reisner and I lunched with Artin Pasha and Madame Artin. Artin Pasha: "I do not understand how Maspero could allow the slate pair to leave Egypt."*

This is the first hint in Reisner's diary that something was afoot with the recent division between Boston and the Cairo museums. The "slate pair" is, of course, the famous statue of Menkaure and (probably) Queen Kamerernebty (MFA 11.1738), carved of — depending on the geologist consulted — greywacke, schist, basalt or slate.<sup>10</sup> Along with the diorite statue of King Khafre (whom Reisner called Chephren) in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, it is perhaps the greatest piece of sculpture from ancient Egypt, certainly from the Old Kingdom. For Reisner's earlier diary description of the discovery of this pair-statue on January 18, 1910, see the sidebar at right.

Reisner was correct in suspecting something was up concerning the recent Cairo/Boston division of the Menkaure finds. He realized it was time to set the record straight:

## The Discovery of the "Mycerinus" Pair-Statue in the Valley Temple, January 1910

From George Reisner's Diary for January 18, 1910 (p. 9):

*Work begun on mud debris in northwest forecourt (or outer court). By evening a number of rooms cleared — many broken pots, a small alabaster jar, a number of flint chips, — all old empire. Also the hand of an alabaster statuette.*

*Two parties of visitors. In the evening, just before work stopped a small boy from the gang at the thieves' hole in strip 1 appeared suddenly at my side and*



*Thieves' hole in the Menkaure Valley Temple, as it appeared on January 19, 1910.*

*said "come." In the lower part of this hole the female head of a statue (3/4 life size) of bluish slate had just come into view in the sand. It was too late to clear it. But immediately afterwards a block of dirt fell away and showed a male head on the right, — a pair statue of king and queen. A photograph was taken in failing light and an armed guard of 20 men put on for the night...*

*Photographs of heads made this morning — all right.*

*Visitors to the excavations to see the statue in position were as follows (invited by private messages): Mrs. and Mrs. and Miss Iddings (American Diplomatic Agency), Dr. and Mrs. Wakeling, Hölischer and Schulze (the German party), Mr. and Mrs. Philpot, Mr. and Mrs. Urquhart, Mrs. Cassel.*

*Cleared the full diameter of the hole down to the feet of the statue. All perfect — except a scarcely noticeable chip from the end of the king's beard. Beautiful work. The basis is not inscribed. I am not yet quite certain that the king is Mycerinus.*

Thursday, January 20, 1910 (pp. 10-12):

*This morning came Sir Ernest Cassel and later Mrs. Beale to see the statue....*

*After lunch began to get statue out of hole. Sent all the younger hands to sand lifting and all the strong ones for the heavy job. The statue had to be lifted about 2 meters onto the big foundation stone behind it. This was done by tilting*



*The upper portions of of the in situ "Mycerinus" pair-statue emerging from the sand in the thieves' hole, January 19, 1910.*

*from side to side and shoving stones under. With great difficulty owing to the softness of the bottom (the water-level reached the foot of the statue as it stood), we got the tops of the heads level with the top of the foundation stone. We slipped a heavy platform (2x1 meter and two boards thick) vertically between the back of the statue and the stone. Five 4 meter beams were laid from this foundation stone across the western hole to the next foundation stone. Then we passed a big rope under that statue to eight men on the western foundation stone. Then ten men lifted from below and we half heaved*

*The Boston pair-statue of "Mycerinus" and his queen, probably Khamerernebtj II (MFA 11.1738).*

**“Mycerinus” Pair-Statue** — cont. from previous page

levering on the platform until the whole was horizontal. An iron roller was inserted and the whole was dragged on top of the stone and ends of the beams. Here by main strength we shifted the statue up to the other end of the platform. Slipping iron rollers between the platform and the beams we worked the whole along to the western stone. Here we were obliged to turn at right angles and work at a sharp angle up another set of beams resting on the inside wall of the corridor. A third relay brought us at a less angle on top of the outside mud brick wall, — five or six meters above the original level on which the statue rested. By the same methods (using beams and rollers and a rope) we worked along the top of the temple wall to a point north of the corridor across our trench onto the sand. Here the statue was carefully wrapped in cloth, four beams inserted crosswise under the platform, and the statue and platform were securely bound to the two middle beams. It was now closing time. The small boys were sent off to prepare the evening meal; but a few were retained to carry dropped garments. Then forty men lined up on the four meter beams and lifted the whole construction onto their shoulders. Then chanting a work song they marched with an occasional pause to

straighten a beam or readjust a shoulder pad, straight up the hill to the house half a mile away.

The pair stands at this moment in the court yard. The male figure has the royal headdress, without the uraeus and the royal apron. The face is not that of either Mykerinos or Chephren — lovely work, it is a finer face than either in expression. It is too bad the name was never carved on it.

Friday, January 21, 1910 (p. 12)

A closer examination of the male head shows that is undoubtedly Mykerinos. It is the front view which differs. The face is thinner, less sensual, than the alabaster portraits. It is possible that we have here a portrait of a younger, fresher Mykerinos. But it may be the difference lies in the workman. The group was finished in detail, but only the face of the king has been polished. The face of the king (including ears and neck but not the headdress) was also the only part which had been colored — a yellowish red. The face of the Queen has a strong resemblance to the facial type used in the heads of Hathor in the slate groups. It is very satisfactory to get this addition [to] the group of family portraits.



Above, The “Mycerinus” pair-statue fully exposed on January 19, 1910.

Saturday, March 16, 1912 (diary p. 62)  
...Received a note from Mr. Greg, a secretary at the British Agency asking me to an interview with Lord Kitchener regarding the circumstances by which the slate pair went to the Museum of Fine Arts. Mr. Gregg visited the excavations last Friday the 8th with Judge and Mrs. Alston (née Chew) and Miss Chew and Mr. Sam Chew ('93). I took the occasion to explain to him the circumstances and said that in view of the talk in Egypt, I would like to explain the matter to Lord Kitchener.

Throughout all of this cloak-and-dagger mystery concerning the Menkaure pair-statue, Reisner had, of course, to continue with the day-to-day onslaught of data from the excavations, as well as the barrage of visitors to the site. Unlike the oases, or the remote Egyptian temples of Nubia, Giza was a comparatively short ride out from Cairo, and thus no VIP colleague would come to Egypt without a stop at Harvard Camp:

Sunday, March 17, 1912 ( p. 63)  
...Howard Carter, Lord Carnarvon, Dr. Johnson and P. Newberry visited excavations. There have been a great number of visitors but I have not set down their names....

As if things were not heating up already in Cairo, a new challenge suddenly appeared to the south. Reisner's work at Naga ed Deir was coming to an end, and he had been searching for a new site to excavate. Mesheikh, just south of Naga ed Deir and north of Abydos, was a likely candidate; Reisner had sent some of his staff to make preparations, when the following incident occurred:

Wednesday, March 10, 1912 (p. 65).  
Letter from guard at Girga (Naga ed Deir) says that Ali Mahmud has been assaulted while preventing a khawaga,<sup>11</sup> an effendi and a crowd of natives from digging at Mesheikh. Determined to begin work there at once. Telegraphed mamûr Merkez Girga a complaint.



**A**t long last it was time to clarify the “Mycerinus” affair. The British were still in control of Egypt at that time, and Lord Kitchener was the man to be dealt with.

Thursday, March 21, 1912 (pp. 65-70) Went by appointment to an interview with Lord Kitchener at 10:15. Someone was with him and I had to wait about two or three minutes when Maspero came out of the private office. I was taken in by Storrs and introduced. Kitchener was very friendly and informal. He said he wanted to hear about the division by which the Boston Museum obtained the wonderful slate pair. I told about the origins of the expedition, its scientific method of work, the granting of the concession at the pyramids, the steady work which finally resulted in the finds at the Valley Temple and then I recounted the division. In 1907 there was only the fragments of the great alabaster statue and the division went over. In 1909, we found the seven other important pieces and divided it as follows:

**BOSTON MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS**

- 1 broken great statue of alabaster
- 2 slate triads
- 1 alabaster head

**CAIRO MUSEUM**

- 1 more complete life-size alabaster statue
- 2 slate triads
- 1 alabaster head

In 1910 we found only one great piece — the slate pair, which thus belongs half to us and half to the Egyptian government. I came to Maspero with photographs. He recognized that it was the only statue worthy of a place alongside the Chephren statue. He proposed to leave the division until some later campaign, but I objected as I was about to return home (in the following

winter) and wanted to make a good showing. He said that a money settlement was out of the question and asked what I proposed. I said “Let the [Cairo] Museum take the statue and give us a statue out of the Museum in return for our half of the share.” Maspero agreed to this in principle and asked me to suggest some statue. I first suggested one of the twelve Lisht statues of Sesostris II [sic].<sup>12</sup> Maspero said that was im-



Horatio Herbert, Lord Kitchener (1850-1916)

possible as the Louvre had once wanted one of those and had been refused. I then suggested one of the New Empire royal statues found at Karnak. Maspero replied: “No, that is not possible.” but I forget now what his reason was for the refusal. I then said: “I have suggested two exchanges, both of which you refuse. Have you anything to suggest yourself?” He said after a moment: “Would you accept your own al-

abaster statue — the life size one of Mycerinus?” I replied: “Certainly.” He said “I shall have to consult another person and will let you know the decision if you will come back in a day or two.” That was between April 25 and May 9. A few days later I returned to the Museum when Maspero informed me that he had consulted the other person referred to and that it was not possible to give us the alabaster statue but he would propose that we take the pair statue and return to the Museum one of the two slate triads.

I said I would accept that but must have the authority of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. I went right over to the Eastern Telegraph Office and sent the following cable: “Museum proposes we take slate pair and return one slate triad advise acceptance ———.” The

next day I received full authority by cable and drew up the division contract which was signed by Maspero and myself.

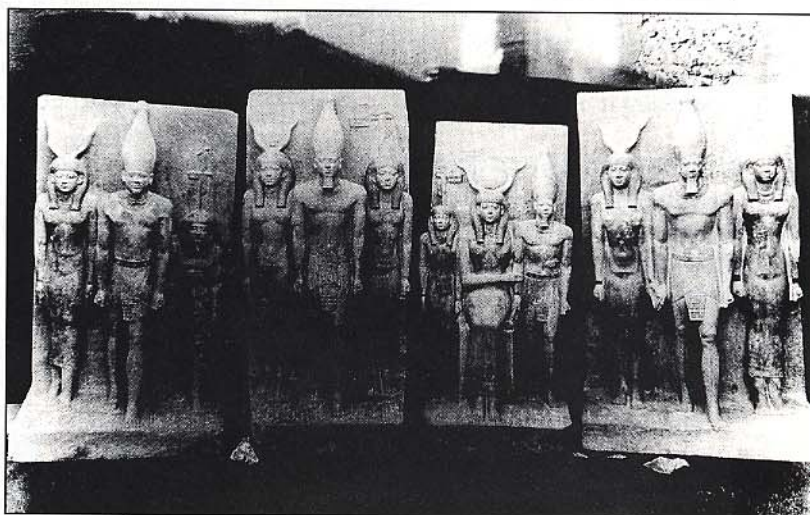
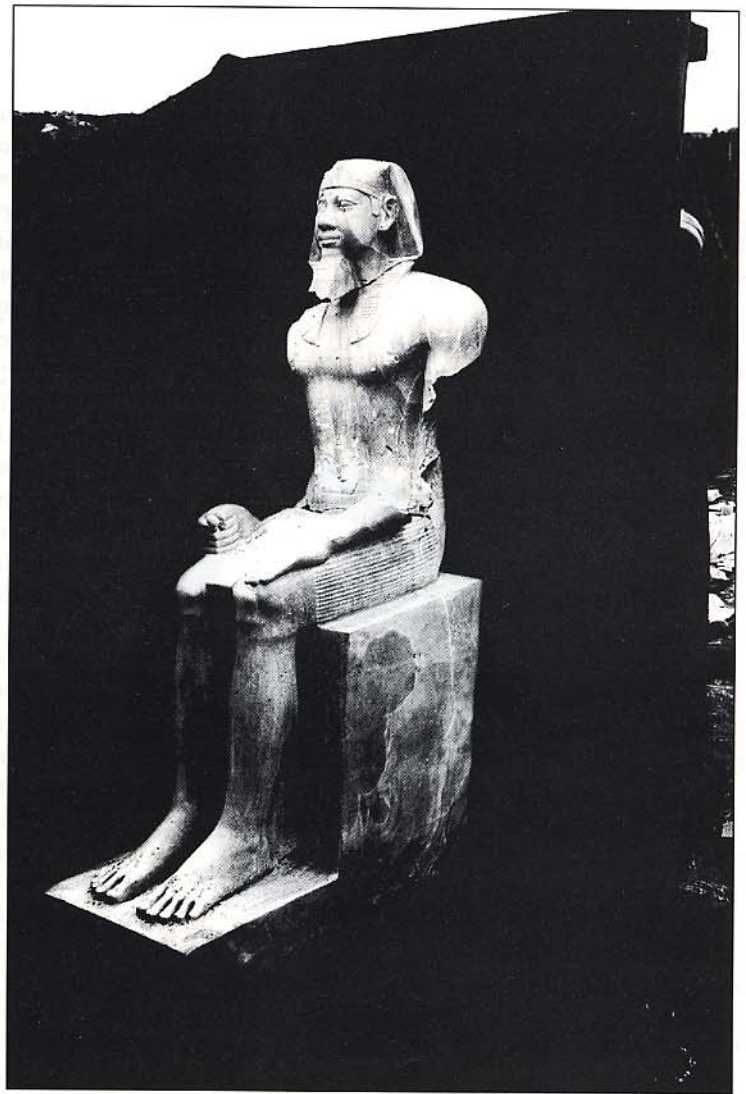
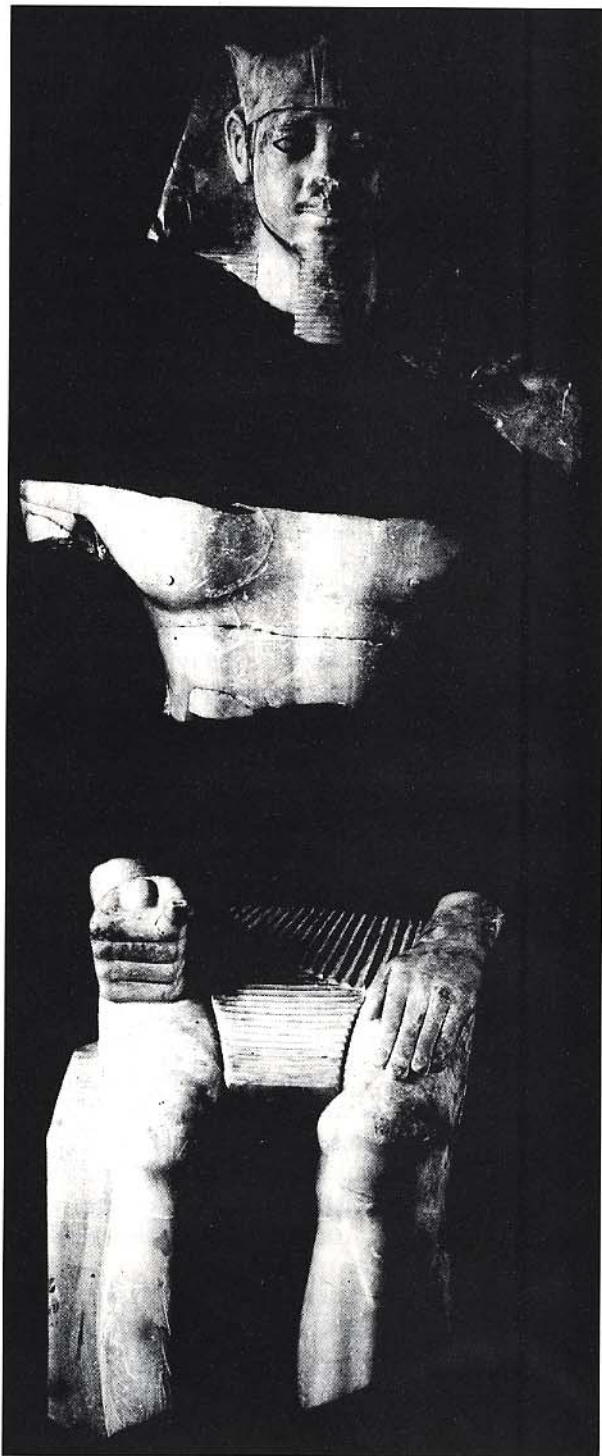
Lord Kitchener said that the matter had not been correctly represented to him. It seems that Maspero had said nothing about the proposal to give us a statue out of the Cairo Museum (see below). Kitchener said that the matter could not now be reopened, but it was a remarkable affair which he could not understand. I said that I was prepared to make a written statement of the negotiations as a guarantee of the correctness of my account. He said that he would like such a statement for the Agency archives but not to be used except the case be brought up again. I said there is a campaign being carried on against Maspero by interested persons but that it would be a mistake to listen to the criticism. The service had been inefficient ever since I had been in Egypt — fourteen years — but what Frenchman was there to put in Maspero's place who was not much more incompetent than Maspero? Any change could only be for the worse. “That is exactly what I say,” says Kitchener. Finally: “You have one of the two greatest statues at any rate and I think you ought to have a replica made and presented to the Cairo Museum.” I replied that I would so inform the President and Trustees and I had no doubt they would be happy to do this.

He then asked me to look at his antiquities and we spent a quarter of an hour in the drawing room leisurely going over twelve or fifteen pieces he has while half a dozen native notables were kept waiting for their interviews. At parting, he said: “I hope very much we may have a copy of the slate pair. You have my permission to communicate this expression to your Museum as a personal request on my part.”

I then drove to the Museum and saw Maspero.

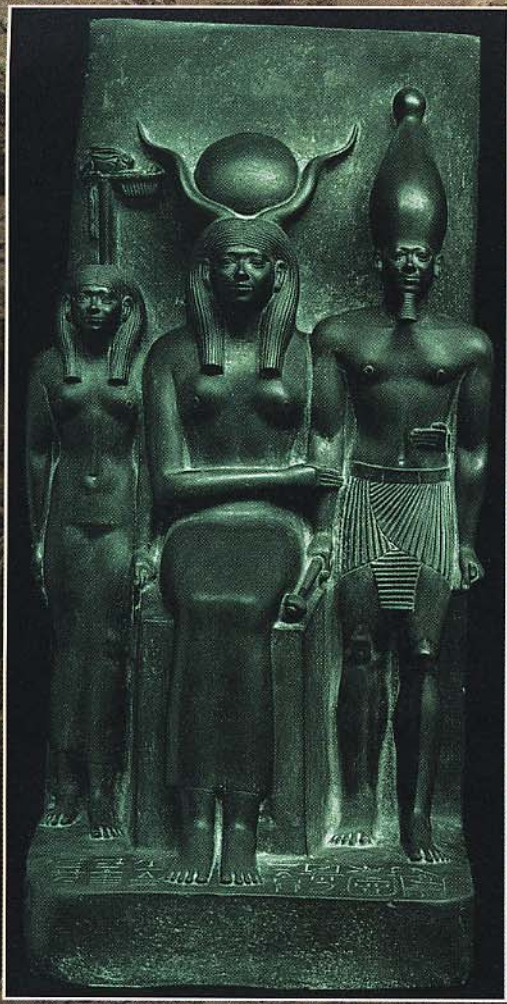


Gaston Maspero (1846-1916)



Several of Reisner's finds from his excavation of the temples of Menkaure: Upper left, Three fragments of a colossal calcite statue of the king, which went to Boston (MFA 09.204); Upper right, Another calcite seated statue of Menkaure, which went to Cairo, as it was being photographed at Harvard Camp; Left, Calcite head of the king, also allotted to Cairo; and, above, A unique photograph of the four intact slate triads of Menkaure and various deities. Opposite is Reisner's photograph of the same triads in situ, as they were discovered on July 10, 1908. Inset: The Boston triad of Menkaure with a seated Hathor and goddess of the Hare Nome (MFA 09.200).

All photos courtesy the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



He told me inter alia that he had said to Sir Eldon Gorst and to Lord Kitchener — both of whom had protested to him — that the law provides for a valuation in such cases. It was impossible to value a statue of this sort but if the Museum had set a nominal value of £4000 and we had accepted it would the Ministry of Finance have given the money for the purchase. (Of course, this is ridiculous. We would never have accepted such a valuation. The money compromise was mentioned only to be dismissed at once as out of the question).

Maspero said that the Italian concession belongs to me.<sup>13</sup>

I returned to the Pyramids on 12 o'clock omnibus.

In the afternoon there came a swarm of visitors, Mrs. Poynter and Mrs. Pontefidin (wife of the Russian Consul General in Constantinople; she has lived long in Persia and offered us letters to the Russian officials and others in Persia) and others. Mr. Trelawny and party, Daninos Pasha, Professor and Mrs. Griffith, Miss Hall and Miss Roland (who are going out to join Seager in Crete) and Sir Rider Haggard and family.

After this remarkable narrative, Reisner's next entry was back to business as usual, and began:

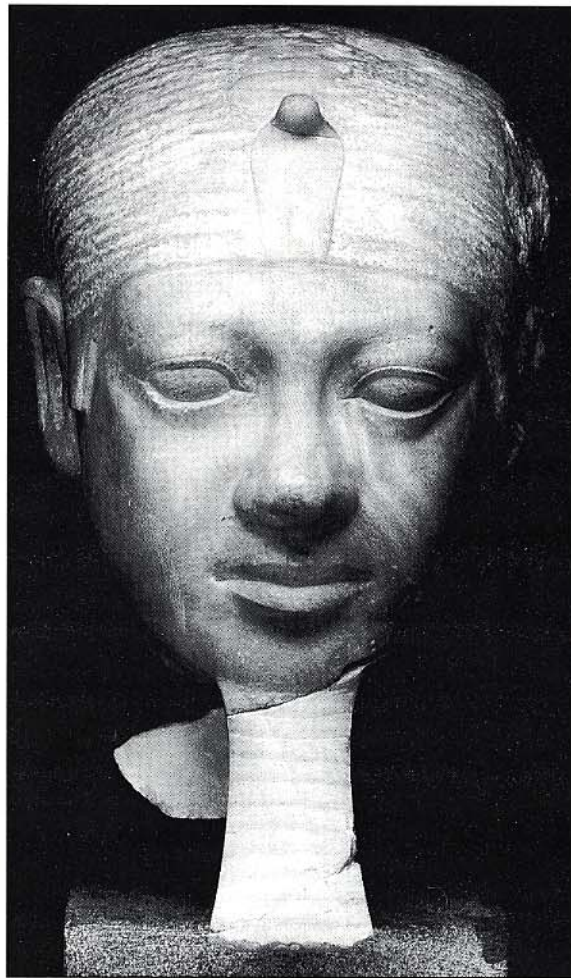
Friday, March 22, 1912 (p. 70)  
G2190 pit B is clear and resembles pit A in form but is cut in better rock and more regularly....

Meanwhile, how were the living conditions out in the desert in March of 1912?

Saturday, March 23, 1912 (p. 72)  
For the first time since we have camped here mosquitoes have appeared in numbers at the Pyramids in March. Usually they come in September and die off in December or January.

Intrigue was all around the

antiquities business, and Reisner could score one victory for justice in what has been, sadly, a losing battle to protect Egypt's monuments in the world's largest open-air museum.



Another calcite head of Menkaure found by George Reisner during his 1908 excavations of the Valley Temple of the king on the Giza Plateau. This piece, originally thought to represent Menkaure's successor, Shepseskaf, was awarded to Reisner and is today in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA 09.203).

Monday, March 25, 1912 (pp. 73-74)  
Day of rest.

The following sentences have been imposed on the Faïd family for their theft of Petrie's tomb which they sold to General Maxwell:

Ibrahim Faïd — 5 years  
Hamza Faïd — 5 years  
The chief of guards at Saqqarah — 5 years  
Abd-el-Mawgūd Faïd — 3 years  
Abd-el-Hady Faïd — 3 years  
Son of Ibrahim Faïd — 2 years  
These people have been favorites of

Maspero for over twenty-five years. Repeated protests that they were plundering the tombs which they were set to guard fell on deaf ears. It is a great satisfaction to me to see that my judgment of these men was correct and to know that a severe lesson has been given to the Kafr-el-Haram thieves.

After this conviction, it seems to me that General Maxwell's connection with the affair needs investigation. Has he received stolen goods? Did he investigate the theft?

Thursday, March 28, 1912 (p. 76).

...Received telegram from Girga from guards asking immediate help in guarding Mesheikh. Will send Said and sixteen men tomorrow to begin work. Rowe will follow in a few days. If the preliminary work shows interesting results, I will go there with full force.

I hear that Petrie has applied for Dahshur. This is bad news. I shall be obliged to apply prematurely and we will all be refused.

At this point attention was refocused on Giza itself. Back in 1903 the site had been divided among three foreign missions, with the sanction of the Egyptian Antiquities Service. The Pyramids were assigned to the Italians (Khufu), the Germans (Khafre) and the Americans (Menkaure). The Great Western Cemetery, to the west of Khufu's pyramid, however, had been difficult to apportion, so three strips were put into Mrs. Reisner's hat on the Mena House Hotel veranda, and lots were drawn.<sup>14</sup> At first Reisner "won" the northern strip, the Germans — under George Steindorff (1861-1951) of Leipzig — the central one, and the Italians — under Ernesto Schiaparelli (1856-1928) of Turin — the southern strip.

The arrangement did not remain thus, however. After working in

only a few mastaba-tombs, the Italians (by 1905) had given up their concession and Reisner was prepared to take it over. Furthermore, the German concession, supported largely by Hildesheim sponsor Wilhelm Pelizaeus (1850-1930), likewise came in flux. Steindorff worked at the western edge of his central strip, but was then induced to head south to Aniba in Nubia, whereupon Hermann Junker (representing the University of Vienna) stepped in.

Reisner himself was thus the most stable presence at excavations in the Giza Necropolis. He had the Pyramid of Menkaure, with its pyramid

for his railway carts to remove sand and debris.

These arrangements were still being settled in 1912. At issue was the final assignment of Schiaparelli's southern portion of the Great Western Cemetery to Reisner, and disagreements between Steindorff and Junker as to the central strip. Reisner's diary entries for the end of March 1912 illustrate the course of events. The American approached Maspero on the matter; but it was his dream of excavating

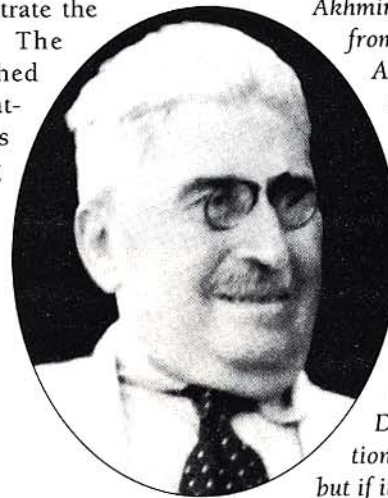
um at 2:30. Told him of the Junker agreement (see page 76. The chief object of my visit was to sound the way in regard to Dahshur). Told him we had about finished with Girga and wanted a new site for extensive excavation. He suggested some Delta site but said that Tanis belonged half to Junker and half to the French institute. I spoke of Meir but there are, he said, political difficulties.

He suggested es-Samalûna north of Akhmim or the whole district from Gebel Haridi to

Akhmim. I then said: "I suppose Dahshur is out of the question." He said: "As long as Petrie lives." He criticized Petrie's work which was simply plundering "like a dealer." I said "I understand that he has applied again for Dahshur." "His application has not been received; but if it is presented it will be

refused." We then talked a long time about various questions — Nubian Archaeological Survey, the appointment of a new inspector, the fitness of Firth, Mace and Winlock for such a post (he would not consider Firth, was more in favor of Mace. I advised Winlock), Mr. Morgan's purchase of Coptic manuscripts, Chassinat's retirement, the fitness of Lacau to succeed Maspero in four years hence, etc. Maspero wishes Lacau to succeed him. Finally, I said: "Now Prof. Maspero, I want you to promise me that when the Dahshur site is opened up that you will give me a chance to apply for it or a portion of it. It represents just the period we need both for our historical material and for our Museum."

"Certainly I will do all I can for you." I took out an application for Dahshur which I had in my pocket. I said: "Hearing that Petrie was about to apply and fearing the committee might weary of continually refusing him, I have prepared this application." He read it and seemed to be considering. I said: "I will leave this with you to be presented to the committee or not at your discretion." He marked it present "conditionelle-



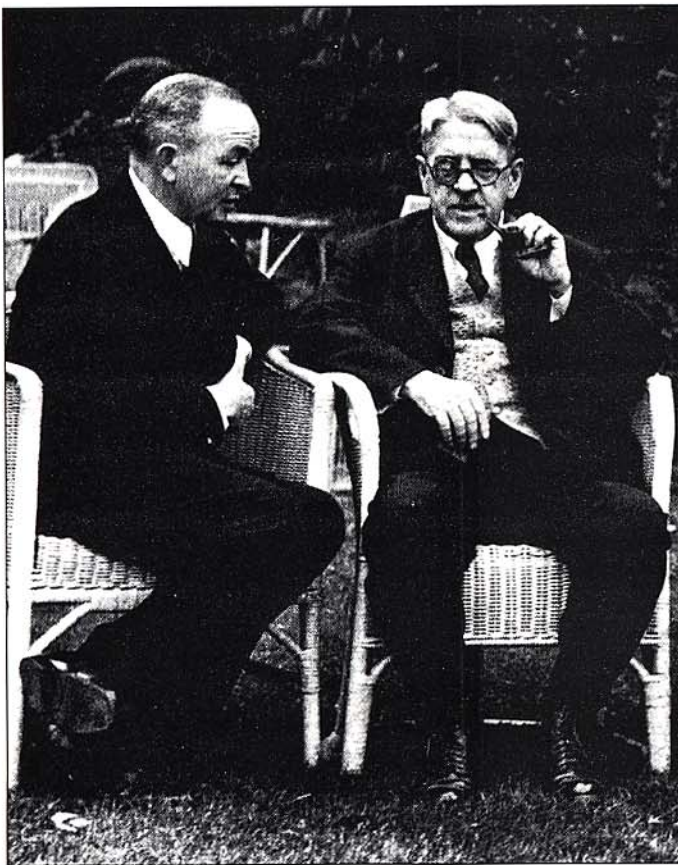
Georg Steindorff (1861-1951)

at Dahshur, and of beating Petrie to the punch, that was perhaps most on Reisner's mind. As the entry for March 31 shows, he went to the meeting with Maspero well prepared:

Sunday, March 31, 1912 (pp. 77-79)

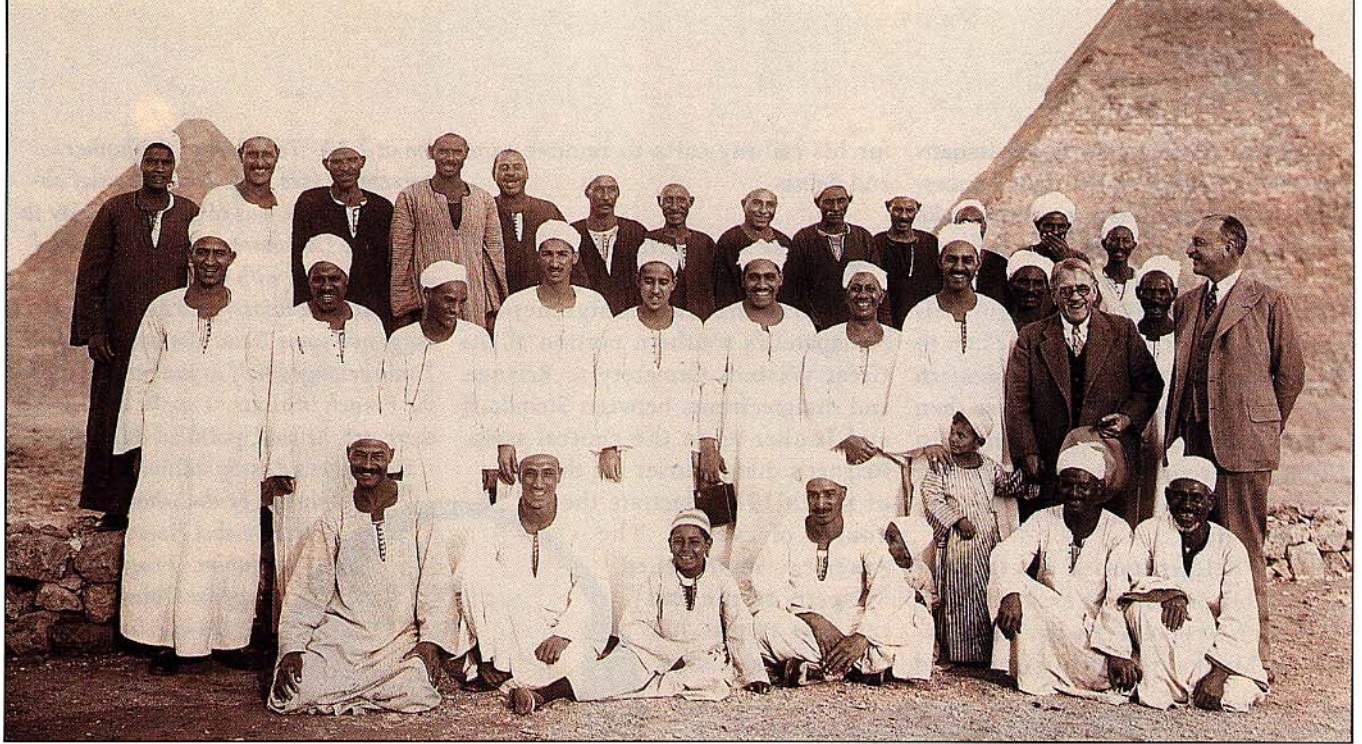
...Received note from Junker regarding Schiaparelli's concession. Saw him at the works about 11. Agreed that I shall take the concession and give him a small corner and allow him passage across our concession.

He authorized me to state this to Maspero and agreed to sign necessary papers. Called on Maspero at the Muse-



George Andrew Reisner (r.) chats in Cairo ca. 1935 with a long-time colleague, German Egyptologist Hermann Junker (1877-1962).

and valley temples, the entire royal cemetery on the east side of the Pyramid of Khufu (formerly the Italian concession), and at first one-third and later (again, inheriting the Italian concession) two-thirds of the cemetery west of Khufu. It was Reisner to whom Junker came for help with personnel, photographers and even routes



"Team photo" with an ebullient Reisner, taken at Harvard Camp, Feb. 26, 1938. G. H. Edgell, director of Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, is at far right.

ment" and said: "If Petrie's application arrives and receives a favorable reception, I will present it. In any case it will put you on record as an applicant for the site." This seems the best I can do at present. The Committee meets on Wednesday. Finished the chapel of 2220.<sup>15</sup> Work otherwise as yesterday.

Back at Harvard Camp, Dahshur was not the issue, but Giza certainly was.

Monday, April 1, 1912 (pp. 79-80)  
Balancing the accounts for March.

Steindorff called. He is greatly excited about the Giza concession, says he had no intention of resigning it definitely to Junker and means to apply again for it. He has had a successful year at Aniba (Nubia) but does not intend to come out again. Told me about the dissolution of the German papyrus cartell. Berlin contributed 2/5 of the whole sum and had only one lot (one chance) in the loterie. Some important papyrus went to Halle and Berlin suddenly broke away from the cartell and sent out Karl Schmidt to buy for them separately. Steindorff found that Schmidt was handling with Nahman about certain papyri and he bought them on the spot for the cartel "just to show the Berliners what competition meant."

In the afternoon came Mr. and Mrs. Whitehouse with a letter from Mr. Lane.<sup>16</sup> Showed them the excavations and brought them up to the camp for tea. Found Mr. Pelizaeus and Junker in the veranda. (Pelizeaus gave more than half the money for the work of both Steindorff and Junker.) They were both very upset at Steindorff's claim on the concession and showed me letters of Steindorff's in which he used words *abgeben* and *abgebe* [sic]<sup>17</sup> and other expressions which show that he really intended to give the concession to Junker. He is notorious for his forgetfulness. After discussion they decided to write Steindorff a letter quoting his own expressions and ask him to try to recall the facts to his own memory. If necessary they will insist on the claim they have established. I promised to go on with securing the Schiaparelli concession. If Junker retains Steindorff's concession, I will give him the corner agreed on (see above, p. 77). If he loses Steindorff's concession I will give him half the Schiaparelli concession.

So ended one of the more turbulent months in Reisner's forty-year tenure at the Giza Plateau, one that he truly enjoyed. He did in-

deed obtain the Schiaparelli concession, the southern strip of the Great Western Cemetery. Junker did keep the Steindorff concession with no further protest from Steindorff. Reisner even allowed Junker to build a debris ramp to the north out over tombs numbered in the 2170s, that Reisner had previously excavated (this ramp still exists today).

In fact, the two men collaborated most professionally; there is only one incident, in October/November 1912, when an Egyptian workman for Junker named Sadiq once complained to Pelizaeus that Reisner was excavating beyond his boundary and into the German concession. Apparently, Reisner's discovery of a fragment of relief of the vizier Hemiunu — director of the Great Pyramid construction and owner of Mastaba G4000 in Junker's concession — had caused all the fuss. A flurry of letters was set in motion, but Reisner was able to straighten out the misunderstanding with several epistles in German sent to Pelizaeus in Hildesheim and Junker in Vienna. (Interestingly enough, the "crook" named Ibrahim Faïd, mentioned as being sentenced six months earlier to five years in prison in the case of the "theft of Petrie's tomb," was sent by the Pelizaeus Museum to investigate the matter. Perhaps Faïd was able to

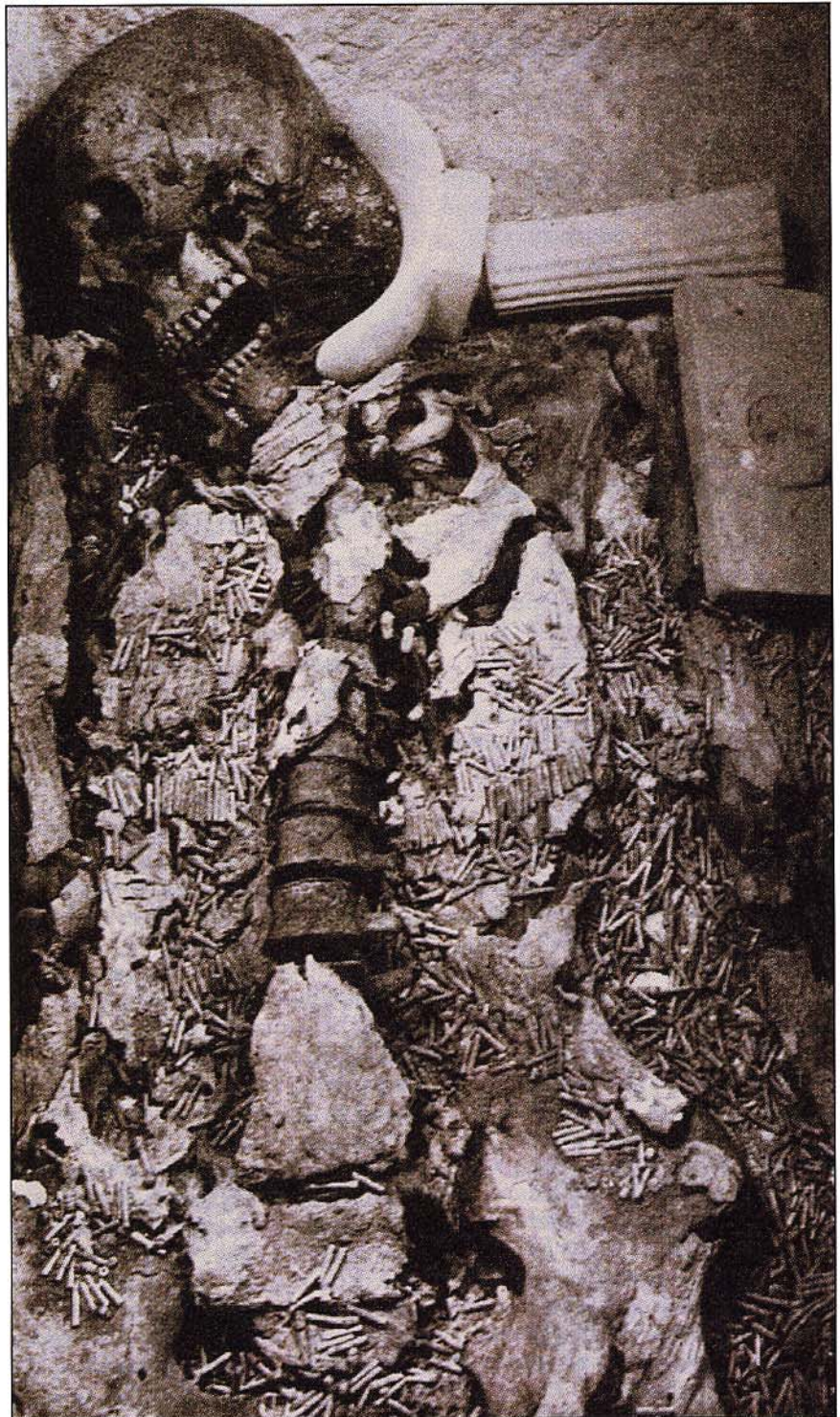
## G7440Z and Boston's Bead-Net Dress

For almost eighty years, the basement of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, has been the repository for a significant amount of the material excavated at Giza by George A. Reisner and his various teams. The royal masterpieces which were allotted to Boston by the Egyptian Antiquities Service were put on permanent display in the Museum galleries soon after their arrival in the U.S. However, objects that required repair, restoration and/or extensive research were allowed to languish in the institution's basement storerooms, awaiting the funds and labor needed to accomplish the task.

Among these objects was a prospective treasure comprised of several thousand faience beads divided among thirty small, round boxes of varied sizes, none larger than five inches in diameter. That treasure turned out to be the only complete ancient Egyptian bead-net dress found to date<sup>1</sup>; the burial of its owner had remained undisturbed until discovered by Reisner's team in 1927.

As a research associate for a prospective MFA exhibit on the burial practices and funerary beliefs of the ancient Egyptians,<sup>2</sup> I was assigned the task of solving the mystery of the tiny round boxes and their bead-contents. Some 7,000 of the latter, of varied color, size and shape, suggested that I was dealing with an object of major proportion; but what form would these beads assume when restored to their original configuration?

Without Reisner's archaeological methodology and his highly controlled recording techniques, this would have been an almost impossible task. He kept daily diaries and detailed object-registers, and had photographs taken of every stage of a clearance, so that future scholars would be able to reconstruct his work step-by-step. Researching and restoring the bead-net dress is a perfect example of how Reisner's forethought has paid off. I located copious diary



*The 1927 Harvard/MFA photograph of the in situ skeletal remains of an unidentified female found in pit-tomb Z of Mastaba G7440. The arrangement of the beads, as found by the Reisner team, would later prove invaluable in their restoration as a bead-net dress some six decades later.*

entries and extraordinarily explicit field-notes made during the clearance of Giza mastaba-tomb G7440. These handwritten observations, sketches and speculations were made on-site, while the objects found with the burial

were being removed. In addition, photographs of the body *in situ* revealed much more than might have been expected.

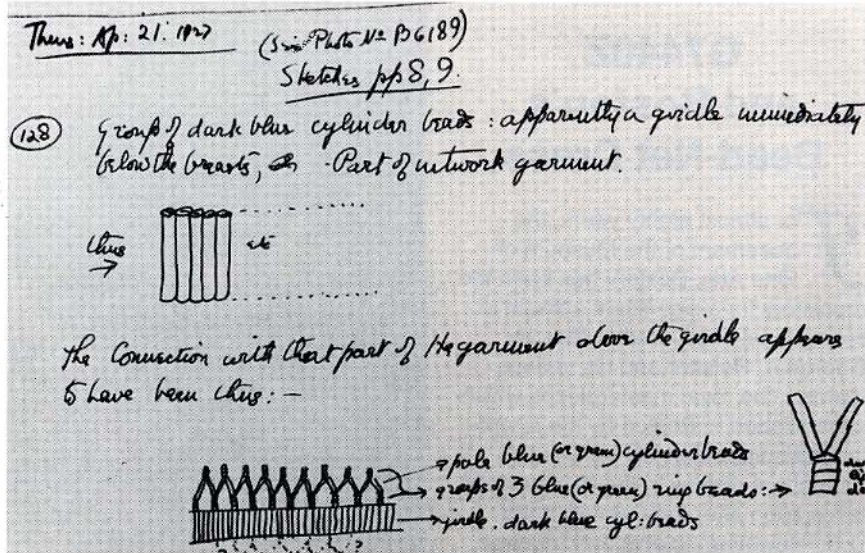
The particular diary in question was written by Noel Wheeler, a

## Boston's Bead-Net Dress — cont. from previous page

member of the Harvard-MFA excavation team who was apparently the individual chiefly responsible for the clearance of G7440. On March 19, 1927, he reported that he had uncovered a pit, which he labeled Z, cut in the bedrock next to the casing of the mastaba inscribed for one Minkhaf. The shaft and chamber below had remained undisturbed since the burial within of an unidentified woman. Wheeler wrote in his diary a week later that, upon reaching the burial chamber, he had opened the lid of an uninscribed limestone sarcophagus and in it had found "beadwork in confusion over the full length of the body." The final diary-entry related to G7440-Z was made more than two months later, on May 26th, when the clearance and recording were completed and the contents had been packed for shipment to Boston.

Thus, it was almost sixty years later that I found myself sitting in the basement storeroom of the Museum of Fine Arts counting and sorting the beads in those little round boxes, trying to make sense of them and to determine their original context. Examples of large bead-net burial shrouds were known to me; in fact, the MFA has two, one covering a Late Period mummy, and another from Nubia.<sup>3</sup> But these, as well as all the other examples of the type, are of post-Twenty-first Dynasty date. Mastaba G7440 and pit-tomb Z are Fourth Dynasty, so net-patterned dresses depicted in Old Kingdom statuary, reliefs and painted tomb-walls<sup>4</sup> seemed more relevant to the matter at hand — and these certainly proved helpful in determining many details of the final reconstruction.<sup>5</sup>

However, it was the written records, field-sketches and excavation photographs that provided the definitive information needed for the final reassembly of the loose beads into a bead-net dress. For example, the field-notes included a simple line-drawing of the body *in situ*, with groups of beads about it carefully



Section of Noel Wheeler's April 21, 1927, field-notes on beads found with human remains in G7440Z.

numbered. These numbers matched those written on each box of beads, thus denoting exactly where on and about the body they had been found. The field-notes with drawings (as reproduced here) revealed the incredible care with which the Reisner-trained Wheeler had recorded his observations and conclusions regarding the original arrangement of the beads at the very moment he was removing them — one at a time, presumably — from the sarcophagus.

The G7440Z excavation photographs were greatly enlarged for study. It was easy to observe that, by examining them alongside the field-notes, there is a close correspondence between what they show and Wheeler's drawings made on site. One can see the rows of vertically arranged cylinder beads on the body *in situ* and then compare the drawing and notation referring to them as "the girdle below the breasts." And in a blowup of the left-hand side of the body, the beads still retain their original lozenge-shaped configuration and are clear and readable.

Because only a few fragments of linen wrappings remained attached to the G7440Z bones, the final catalyst for the overall design of the reassembled beads came from the mummy wrappings of another Fourth Dynasty woman excavated earlier by Reisner.<sup>6</sup> This individual was wrapped, each limb individually, to simulate

a living person, and covering her was the front half of a narrow V-necked sheath. Our final bead-net reconstruction produced, therefore, not a shroud-like mummy covering, but rather a dress that simulated a garment actually worn in life.

I believe the MFA bead-net dress to be an important contribution to the field of Egyptian textile research and restoration. Thanks to the documentation provided by Reisner's thorough records, the Boston garment has become the prototype for future bead-net dress restoration, where other information is unavailable.

**Millicent Jick**

### Notes

1. A picture of the MFA garment was included in Rosalind Janssen, "An Ancient Egyptian Erotic Fashion: Fishnet Dresses," *KMT* 6:4, 45.
2. "Mummies & Magic, The Funerary Arts of Ancient Egypt," fall 1988.
3. The British Museum: BM 6697, BM 6669, BM 6692, BM 20745. Also MFA 95.1407, and more.
4. Louvre, A102; Leiden, L 125; Cairo, 6, 22, 55; Giza, G2185, Meresankh III, and more.
5. For example, several of these dresses exhibited hemlines decorated with hanging pendants, which helped determine the use of forty-two flower-beads included in the total bead-cache.
6. G2220; see footnote 15 in P. Der Manuelian's article this number of *KMT*.



stay his sentence after all!)

This positive collaboration continues today between the institutions that have “inherited” the material legacy of the Giza excavations: the Egyptian Museum, Cairo; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim; and the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. In fact, the overzealous Sadiq need not have worried: the relief with the wonderful face of Hemiuunu (MFA 27.296) is currently on long-term loan from Boston to Hildesheim, where it makes a wonderful comparison to the same man’s famous, over-life-sized corpulent statue.<sup>18</sup>

Reisner was less successful on the Dahshur front. He never obtained that concession (there is no further mention of committee meetings or decisions in Reisner’s diary), but in 1916 moved southward again to Nubia, where his successes rivaled those he had enjoyed at Giza. But he would rest easy today knowing that Dahshur — which never was in Petrie’s hands — is now being responsibly excavated and published by the German Archaeological Institute, under the direction of Dr. Rainer Stadelmann; and by the Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition, directed by Dr. Dieter Arnold.

Harvard Camp remained in operation into the early 1940s, with Reisner dying there in 1942. Completely blind by the end of his life, he had to dictate his manuscripts to secretaries, and the archives at the Museum of Fine Arts are peppered with little pottery drawings and tomb plans drawn with thick white paint on black paper, so that Reisner could view them in his troubled condition. One of the last sets of Reisner photographs in the MFA archives shows him at Giza on his return from America on July 24, 1939. The Camp was decorated with streamers and pennants, and it was clear to all present that the site of Giza was not the same in his absence. That fact remains true to this day.

#### Notes

1. I am grateful to Dr. Rita Freed, curator of the Department of Ancient Egyptian, Nubian and Near Eastern Art of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, for permission to quote from the Museum Expedition records.
2. G.A. Reisner, *Harvard Excavations at Samaria* (Cambridge, 1924).
3. Fischer left the Museum of Fine Arts to join the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania in September 1914.
4. This tomb is located just behind (south of) the present-day Giza Antiquities Inspectorate. Decorated portions of its chapel were eventually granted to Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts and may be seen today in the Museum’s Egyptian gallery, under the accession number 12.1481-82, 13.4352; cf. its recent publication by A.M. Roth in S. D’Auria, P. Lacovara and C. Roehrig, eds., *Mummies & Magic: The Funerary Arts of Ancient Egypt* (Boston, 1988), cat. 14.
5. See Hermann Junker, “Vorläufiger Bericht über die Grabungen bei den Pyramiden von Gizeh vom 22. Januar bis 7. April 1912,” *Anzeiger der philosophisch-historischen Klasse der kais. Akademie der Wissenschaften vom 10. Juli, Jahrgang 1912, Nr. XVIII* (Vienna, 1912), 4-6.
6. See Dows Dunham’s account in *Recollected of an Egyptologist* (Boston, 1972), 12; quoted in the author’s “Boston at Giza. The Museum of Fine Art’s Race Against Time in the Shadow of the Pyramids, 1902-1920,” *KMT* 1:4 (winter 1990-1991), 13.
7. The reis’s (Egyptian foreman’s) diary reported: “Happy day in our life, the seventieth birthday of our mudir [“director”]: A great ceremony was held at 9 a.m. and a repeater golden watch was handed to the Doctor by Mohammed Said Ahmed on behalf of the friends and boys in the Boston Museum and friends and boys at the Harvard Camp (including all the members of the staff, the house boys and all the guards at the Harvard Camp on that day). Address in Arabic by Mohammed Said, message from those who presented the repeater watch sent from Boston and read by Mahmud Said Ahmed and a poem composed and read by Mahmud Said Ahmed. Many snapshots were taken, many telegrams and letters were received.” Reis’s diary, November 5, 1937, 552.
8. Louis Earl Rowe, appointed in 1908 assistant in charge of the Egyptian Department, left the Museum Expedition in July 1913, to direct the Rhode Island School of Design.

9. See Salima Ikram’s report on the most recent performance in “Nile Currents,” *KMT* 6:1 (spring 1995), 7.
10. The statue has appeared in countless publications on Egyptian art; its primary publication was in Reisner’s *Mycerinus: The Temples of the Third Pyramid at Giza* (Boston, 1931), pls. 54-60; see also his “The Harvard University-Museum of Fine Arts Egyptian Expedition,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 50 (April, 1911), 18-20.
11. The Arabic term for foreigner.
12. Reisner means Senwosret (Sesostris) I.
13. See below for the situation regarding the Italian concession in the Western Cemetery, which was eventually handed over to Reisner and the Museum Expedition.
14. See *KMT* 1:4, 12, and Reisner, *BMFA* 50, 15; idem, Reisner’s *A History of the Giza Necropolis* 1 (Cambridge, MA, 1942), 23-25.
15. This anonymous mastaba in the Western Cemetery is the third largest in the entire necropolis, after the tombs of the anonymous owner of G2000 and Prince Ankhhaf (G7510). While the chapel decoration was unfinished, one of the earliest mummified bodies was discovered in burial-shaft B within a gigantic cedar coffin; cf. Roth in D’Auria et al., *Mummies & Magic*, cat. 6, 76-77.
16. Gardiner Martin Lane, Museum of Fine Arts trustee and later president, was one of the benefactors of the Egyptian Department’s excavations in Egypt.
17. The German verb “to give up.”
18. For color images of both the relief and the statue, see Arne Eggebrecht et al., *Das alte Reich* (Hildesheim and Mainz, 1986), 36-39.
19. This pocket watch contained a pressure-activated striking mechanism that indicated the time in hours, quarters and minutes. In another letter (the nearly blind) Reisner notes that, for the first time in his life, he awoke at night and was able to hear what time it was.

**About the Author** Dr. Peter Der Manuelian is an assistant curator in the Department of Ancient Egyptian, Nubian and Near Eastern Art of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. He is the author of two scholarly books, and three ancient Egypt-themed publications for children. Along with William Kelly Simpson, he is co-editor of the *Giza Mastabas* series, and is currently preparing the excavation report on nucleus cemetery G2100 for publication.