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Funerary Figure of the "Inspector and Scribe of Offerings for the Lord of the Two Lands, Nedjem." Wood with blue pigment filling inscription. Egyptian, 18th Dynasty, ca. 1400 B.C. Height 9¾ in. Gift of Horace L. Mayer. 62.1195

DURING the Old and Middle Kingdoms the Egyptians made realistic model figurines of stone and wood, representing servants in various activities of the household and the fields, to be placed in the tombs that they might work on behalf of the deceased. In some cases these early figures reached a high point in the sculptor's art. By the New Kingdom the realistic servant models were completely replaced by the *shawabti*, a name given to them by the ancient Egyptians, the etymology of which is lost (a later name was *ushabti*, meaning the "answerer"). These little figures at first represented the owner himself as an "Osiris" in the form of a mummy, signifying the victory of the Osirian religion in the cult of the dead, but later they represented servants to be called on for work in the afterlife. In many cases the figures were turned out of molds in great quantities, and tombs have been excavated in which hundreds of undistinguished shawabtis were placed near the burial. In the case of Mr. Mayer's gift to the Museum, the hand of an artist of high accomplishment is apparent. The exquisite features of the face belong to the middle of the 18th Dynasty, perhaps to the reign of Tuthmosis IV or his son and successor Amenhotep III (father of Akhenaten). The polished wood (now covered with a delicate patina) was highlighted by filling in the incised inscription with blue pigment.

The man Nedjem was evidently an official of the court who dealt with the offerings given by the king in the temples of the land. One of the most important economic enterprises in Egypt was the supplying, storage and dispersal of offerings of agricultural produce and the manufactures of the workshops, vast consignments of which were supplied to public temples and private shrines. We cannot be sure of the precise function of Nedjem's capacity as "Scribe of Offerings for the Lord of the Two Lands" (*sš wdhw n nb t3wy*), but its form strongly implies an office in the palace bureaucracy, established for the purpose of recording the comings and goings of the royal offerings.

E.L.B.T.

