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New Acquisitions of the Egyptian Department

A Family of Builders of the Sixth Dynasty, about 2600 B. C.

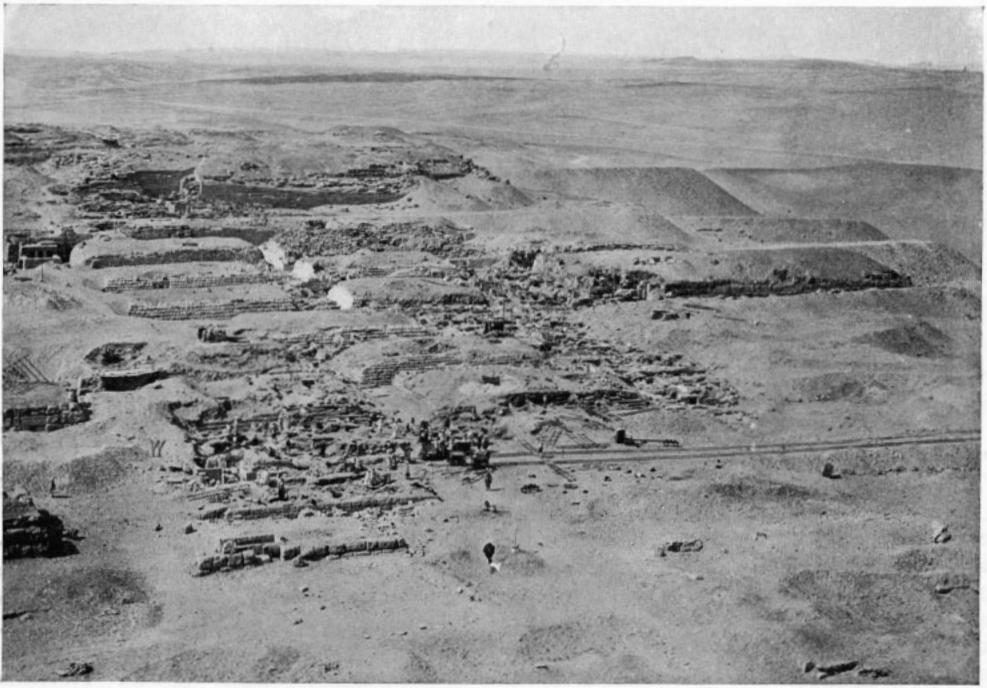
THE objects sent this year to the Museum of Fine Arts by the Egyptian Expedition are from the Predynastic Period, the Old Empire, and the Middle Empire. The predynastic objects were found in cemeteries at Naga-el-Hai and Mesaeed; those of the Old Empire, in the Pyramid field of Giza; those of the Middle Empire, at Sheikh-Farrag near Girga, and at Kerma in the Sudan. The Middle Empire material forms a most necessary addition to the Museum collections and contains some very fine things, but the best of the real works of art come as usual from the Pyramids,—the wooden statue of the son of Mehy, the reliefs and paintings of Nekhebuw, and the statuette of Khuw-en-ra. There are other things,—a necklace, copper vessels, models of copper tables with little model dishes, models of tools and implements and a wooden coffin, all from the tomb of Im-thepy, heavy copper tools from the tomb of Nekhebuw (?), two little wooden figures of prisoners, limestone offering cases for geese, ducks, bread, cakes and legs of mutton, a statuette of Nekhebuw, stelae of the funerary priests of Mehy and much else of value. But quite aside from the importance of the objects from Giza, a special interest attaches to them from the fact that almost all of them are from the tombs of one family,—three generations of architects and builders who lived during the reigns of Isesy, Tety II., Unas, Pepy I. and Pepy II. (from about 2675 B. C. to about 2600 B. C.).

At the northeastern corner of the pyramid of Cheops—the First Pyramid,—there was a double mound rising above the surrounding debris. An examination of the old map of Lepsius showed that this was the site of Lepsius Nos. 26 and 27, the tombs of Senedem-ib-Mehy and Senedem-ib-Yenty. Lepsius excavated these two tombs in 1842–3, made plans, and copied the reliefs and inscriptions (see Lepsius Denkmäler I., 23, II., 73 to 78; Ergänzung I., 51 to 58). During the spring of 1850, the Rev. Mr. Leeder re-excavated

these two tombs and Mariette made a plan and copied some of the inscriptions (Mariette; *Mastabas*, pp. 494–515). In addition I remembered hearing, about 1901, that natives of Kafr-el-Haram had also made illicit excavations at the place and removed some stones. When about the middle of November, our excavation of the Cheops Cemetery had extended eastward to this point, it seemed almost a waste of money to clear again tombs which had already been twice cleared by Europeans and once by illicit excavators, especially as the two tombs seemed to be the end of the cemetery towards the east. Nevertheless, the usual principle of excavating a site completely was faithfully carried out and yielded the most important results of the year's work (Figs. 1 and 2).

The aspect of the double mound as given by Lepsius and Mariette was entirely altered. The two tombs of Yenty and Mehy are only part of a great complex of tombs of one family built around a large offering court. The whole was built over older mastabas; and the plans, especially that of the Yenty tomb, were incorrect and entirely insufficient. In the Roman period an inclined road paved with stone slabs had been laid up the mound to the top of the Yenty tomb, and the pillared hall had been used as a communal or family burial place. But before that time the tombs on the south and east had been destroyed and their separate stones were found scattered in confusion in the debris under the Roman pavement (Fig. 3).

Among these scattered stones were the reliefs and inscriptions (see Figs. 4 and 5), the obelisk (Fig. 6) and the statuettes (Fig. 7) from the tomb of a man called *Nekhebuw*, whose "beautiful name" was *Ptah-mery-ankh-Mery-Ra*, which means "Ptah-desires-that-Meryra-should-live." Meryra is one of the names of Pepy I. The finest of the reliefs is a wall showing Nekhebuw on a papyrus raft spearing fish in a swamp. Behind him stands his son, Im-thepy. Around the corner from this relief is a long inscription giving Nekhebuw's account of his life as a builder of royal monuments and an excavator of canals. Another noteworthy piece from the same tomb is a wall with four (or more) registers, each bearing a row of painted figures of Nekhebuw.



1. Cheops Cemetery seen from the First Pyramid, looking West, on October 22, 1912



2. Cheops Cemetery seen from the First Pyramid, looking West, on November 17, 1912



3. *The Court of the Senezem-ib Complex, showing the Roman inclined way and the Nekhebuw reliefs underneath, looking West, December 4, 1912*



4. *Relief from the Court*



5. *Relief from Court: figure of Nekhebuw*



6. *Obelisk of Nekhebuw*



7. *Heads of Nekhebuw*



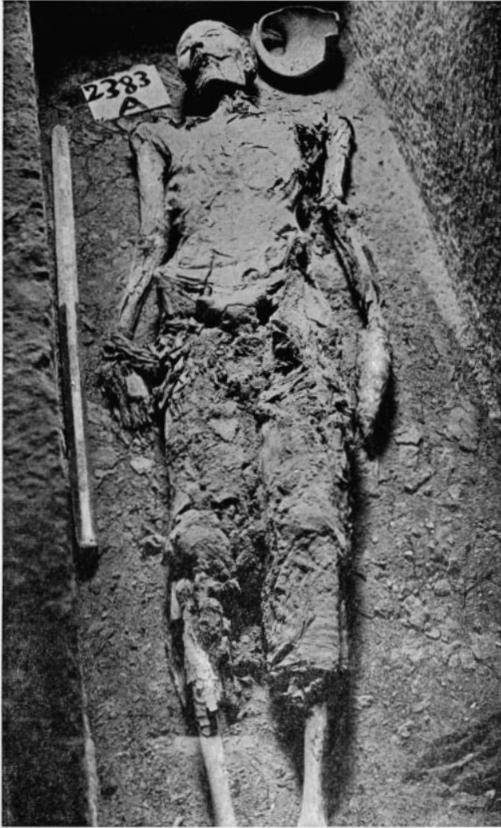
8. *The Mastaba Complex of the Senezem-ib Family*

These figures are colored drawings without relief. The color of the skin on the figures alternates both horizontally and vertically, — one red figure, one yellow figure, red, black, red and so on, — intended no doubt to produce an ornamental effect. There are also reliefs of offering scenes, of ships on the Nile, of wine making, of gazelles, goats and other animals.

When all was clear, there was a nearly rectangular court with an entrance on the east (see Fig. 8). In the middle was the stone basin usual in sacrificial courts. Directly opposite the entrance was the door of the tomb of Senezem-ib (=Yenty), the great man and the founder of the family. On the right, in the middle of the northern side of the court, was the door into the tomb of *Senezem-ib* (=Mehy), the son of Yenty and the builder of both tombs. In the angle between the two were the offering rooms of Khnum-enty. Built against the southern face of the tomb of Mehy, west of the door was a very small offering room with a stela of Ikuw. On the east of the door of Mehy was

the entrance to a series of large offering rooms of which only the lower courses remained. Beside the door was a small obelisk, unscrubed. Across the court on the southern side was another series of offering rooms, but we recovered nothing more than the ground plan shown by the marks on the pavement. So far as I could judge the ruined southern mastaba was that of Nekhebuw. On the eastern side of the court there were four small offering rooms built later, two on each side of the entrance.

Thus there were eight separate offering places which ought to have been represented by at least eight burial places. But only three burial places were found and one of these was manifestly only a subsidiary burial of wife or minor child. It was obvious from past experience in tombs of this date that there might be sloping passages in the rock entering outside from the eastern or northern side of the complex, and giving entrance to burial chambers in the rock under the complex; and as in the ordinary course of the work



9. Mummy of Yenty, favorite architect of Isesy, in his granite sarcophagus

we proceeded to clear around the sides east and north, we came on just such a series of sloping passages.

It may be noted, by the way, that the change from a vertical pit to an inclined shaft which occurs in large tombs of the late Fifth and Sixth Dynasties had a sound mechanical basis. The inclined shaft was first used as a matter of necessity in the royal pyramids, and was there a modification of the old Third Dynasty stairway passage. No doubt the advantages of the sloping passage were learned in the pyramid construction. In the first place, it permits the enormous stone coffin used in the period to be slid down into place with little labor compared to that involved in its being lowered down a vertical shaft, although the Egyptians have shown that they were quite capable of the more difficult operation. In the second place, as the coffin slid down end first, a sloping passage of much smaller cross section was required to admit any given coffin. The older vertical shafts are usually more than seven feet square, while the later ones are more than three-by-seven in section. The sloping passages, however, are only four to five feet square in section. With an equal length, only a little more than half the stone had to be taken out in cutting a sloping passage. In

other words the sloping passage was easier to use and cheaper to make.

To return to our Senezem-ib complex: along the eastern side of the complex on a lower level, in fact on rock, was a mud brick wall running north and south. On both sides of this wall we found the openings of sloping passages in the solid rock, leading down to burial chambers under the complex of tombs. All of these seemed to be plundered. The first one opened contained a great granite sarcophagus inscribed with the name of Yenty (Fig. 10). The lid had been shoved off by thieves and there lay a pathetic blackened figure, the mummy of Yenty himself (Fig. 9). In other shafts we found cases of limestone for holding offerings such as legs of mutton, geese, ducks, bread and cakes. Copper tools and models of tools and vessels were also found, and one beautiful diorite cup, no doubt a royal present, inscribed with the name of Tety, the first king of the Sixth Dynasty.

Finally, working southwards, opposite the supposed tomb of Nekhebuw we came on a sloping shaft of the same sort, but closed with a great rectangular block of limestone. It was manifestly an unviolated tomb (Fig. 11). When, after some days, the record being finished, we proceeded to open the shaft, we found the blocking stone was so nearly the size of the shaft that efforts to slip iron hooks and ropes behind the block failed. It was felt to be tight against a second block beyond it. The stone had to be broken up. Behind it were found four more. Some were pulled out and some broken, — until a way had been cleared through twenty-five feet of solid stone in a passage three feet square. Twenty of our best men were on the



10. The name Senezem-ib (=Yenty), in the corner (inside) of the granite sarcophagus



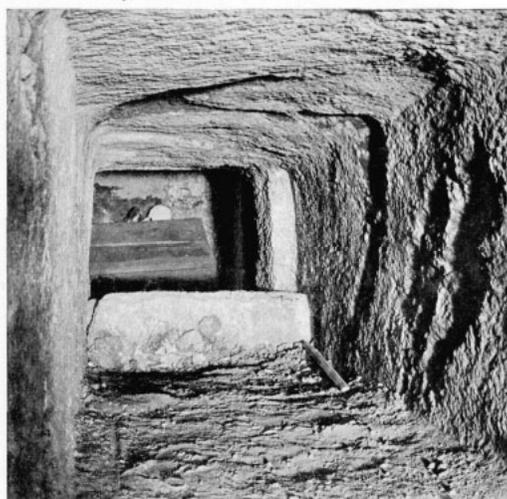
11. *The Blocked Passage leading to the unviolated Im-thepy Tomb, looking West*

job three full days before we got a sight of the chamber behind. The first thing that grew visible in the dim light from the shaft as I crouched in the doorway, was the inscribed wooden sarcophagus, and behind it a row of large jars with big plaster or mud stoppers (Fig. 12). Then we saw in front of the coffin a decayed wooden box, or rather the contents thereof, tumbled out in confusion (Fig. 13) — jars and vessels of copper, model tables and dishes of copper (almost like a doll's house), model tools (Figs. 15 and 16) and implements, and among them some crystal and slate objects like those belonging to our Cheops set. Beside the contents of the box was a stack of red polished pottery bowls, and next the wall there were laid out legs of beef, ribs of beef, geese, duck and other offerings. Of course only the bones remained. What with the photography, the sketch plans, the registry and numbering of each object, it took Mr. West, my assistant, and myself from the morning of Dec. 30 to the late evening of January 2nd, — four full days, to record and clear the tomb. Three days we had our meals in or beside the tomb and worked until late at night. At night the shaft was closed with beams, boards and canvas and guarded by twenty men, who were given unlimited cigarettes and coffee to keep them awake. The heavy guard was necessary as we were working in full view of the loafers of Kafr-el-Haram, who hang about the plateau, people who have been notorious for generations as thieves of antiquities.

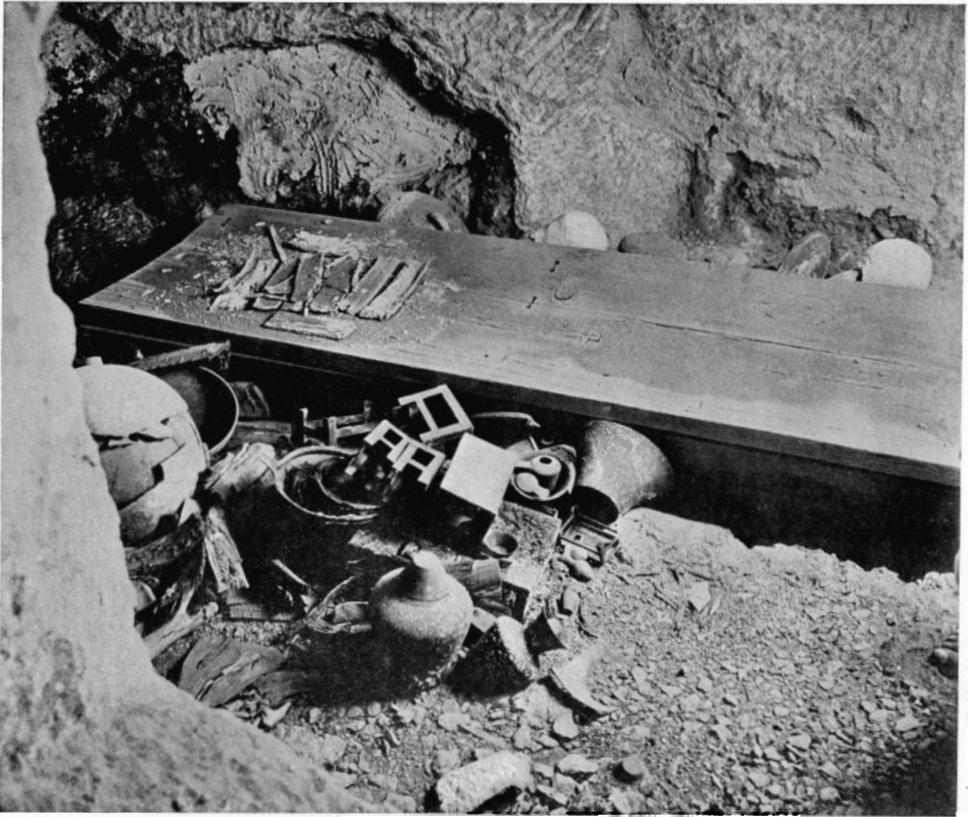
The inscriptions on the wooden coffin proved that the grave was that of Im-thepy, who is shown

in our swamp scene as the son of Nekhebuw. In the coffin lay the badly mummified body of Im-thepy, with an alabaster head-rest, two alabaster jars, and a copper mirror at the head, with a wooden stick and some cakes of mud by the left side, and with a beautiful necklace of gold and faience beads on the breast (Fig. 14).

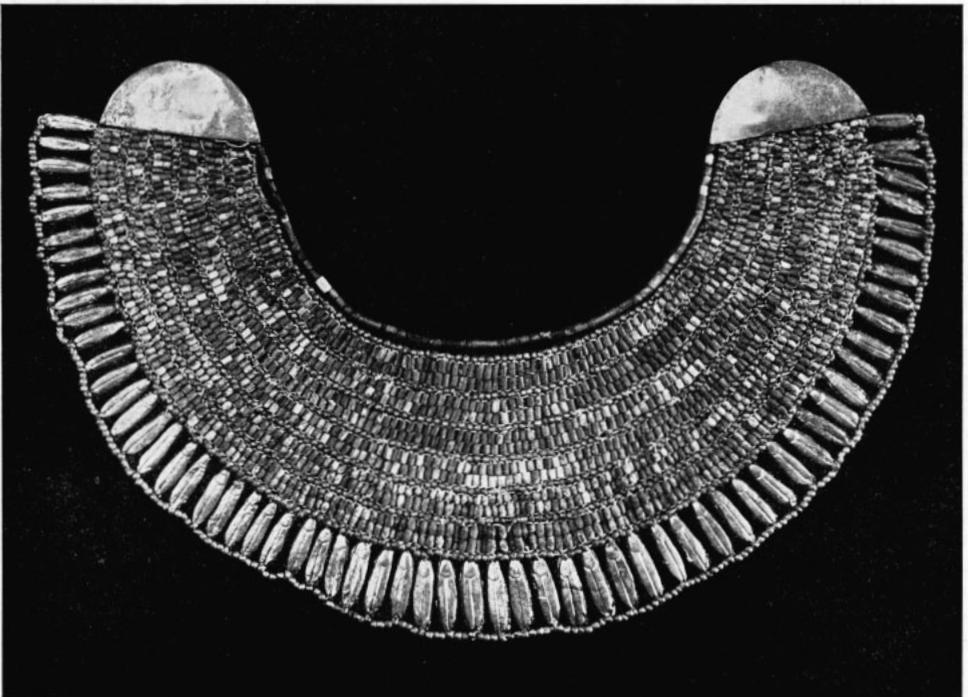
Finally clearing the northern end of the Mehy mastaba and the ruined northeastern mastaba (Fig. 17), we came on a mass of loose stones under the floor of the northernmost room of the ruined mastaba.



12. *The Im-thepy Tomb, looking down the inclined passage into the chamber*



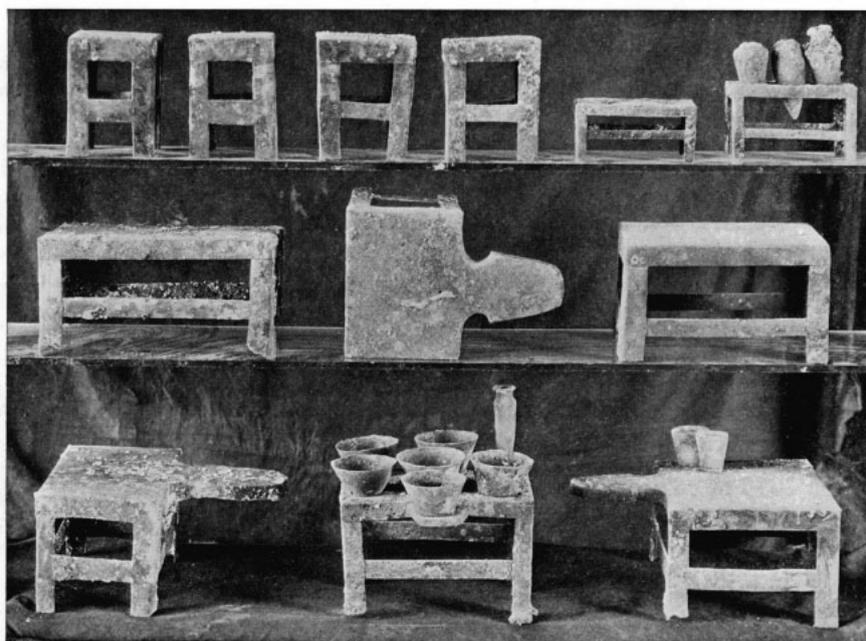
13. *The interior of the Im-thepy Tomb, seen from the doorway*



14. *Gold and Faience Necklace of Im-thepy, scale $\frac{1}{3}$*



15. *Copper Vessels of Im-thepy*



16. *Model Tables of Copper of Im-thepy*



17. *The ruined Northeastern Mastaba, where the wooden statue was found*

Wedged in among them were two wooden statuettes, the larger of which was, fortunately, well preserved (Fig. 18). On removing them we found the stones were in the mouth of a sloping passage leading down to a chamber under the tomb of Mehy. But the room was completely plundered. The only things of interest were five little wooden figures of prisoners kneeling with their arms tied behind their backs. Apparently the wooden statuettes found above were portraits of the owner of the ruined northeastern tomb whose name we do not know. Perhaps he was a son of Mehy (Fig. 19).

Yenty, who was called Senezem-ib, was apparently the great man and founder of the fortunes of the family, — a builder of palaces and a digger of artificial lakes in the time of Isepy, of the Fifth Dynasty (about 2675 to 2650 B. C.).

The fourth known personage for whom a large tomb was built in this complex was Nekhebuw, whose "beautiful name" was Ptah-mery-ankh-Meryra, the father of Im-thepy of the tomb with copper objects. He certainly belongs to the Senezem-ib family and may be a son of Khnum-enty. In addition to the statuettes and reliefs, a number of inscribed stones were found in the debris of the court. When all of these had been photographed to the same scale, I had the pictures of each stone

trimmed to the inscribed surface and set about piecing the puzzle together. There were some odd fragments of other inscriptions, but the bulk of the stones fitted together to form two tall, narrow walls inscribed with accounts of the life of Nekhebuw. One of these was just around the corner from the swamp scene of Nekhebuw and



18. *Wooden Statues in the stones above the entrance to the Mehy Burial Chamber*



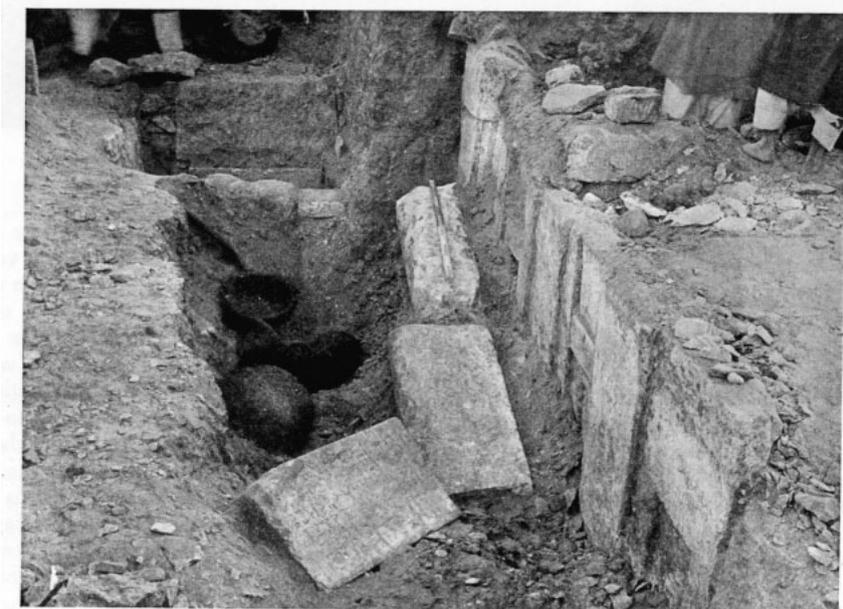
19. *Wooden Statue of the Son of Mehy*

is assigned to the Museum of Fine Arts. The translation is as follows: "The Sole Friend, the Royal Carpenter *Ptah-mery-ankh-Meryra*;" he says: "I was the servant (?) of my lord *Meryra* (Pepy I.). His Majesty sent me to direct the works ———; and I did it to the satisfaction of His Majesty in the North and the South. Then His Majesty sent me to direct the building of ——— in the Delta, an addition (?) to the palace (whose name is) 'Filled-with-the-town-of-Gardens' in Kha-Bity which is before the Southern Horus in the pyramid Mennofer-Pepy. It was completed. Now there were houses ——— there, which were built of wood (?) dressed (?) in the North land. They were completed and His Majesty praised me for it more than the addi-

tion (?) to the palace. His Majesty gave me 'Gold of Life,' beer, bread, cakes, very much indeed, so that His Majesty desired the officials of Court to bear it (the present) out until they came to the Gate, because greatly did he value me more than any other royal carpenter whom His Majesty had sent with me to the addition to the palace. Then His Majesty sent me to the Lake of Kha-Bity, which he dug, and I dug channels (?) so that one might go to the Court (i.e. in boats) when they were under water. His Majesty praised me for it so much that His Majesty gave me 'Gold of Life,' beer, bread, cakes. Great was the praise His Majesty gave me for the mission which His Majesty had sent me upon it. After all the deeds and all the works, which His



20. *The Street of Little Mastabas, West of the Senezem-ib Complex, looking South*



21. *The Tomb of the Funerary Priests of the Senezem-ib Family, looking South*

Majesty sent me upon them, His Majesty sent me to ——— to dig the Lake (?) of Hathor in Kos (Capital of the 14th Upper Egyptian nome). I did it. I dug it so that His Majesty praised me for it. When I went to Court, His Majesty praised me for it very greatly and gave me 'Gold of Life, beer, bread, cakes'.

The other inscription, now in the Cairo Museum, is longer, too long to give anything here but the beginning and the end: "His Majesty sent me to direct the work of his monuments in Heliopolis (On) and I did it to the satisfaction of His Majesty. I was six years there directing the work, and His Majesty praised me every year. I went to court on account of it." He then relates his promotion step by step to be "Sole Friend and Royal Carpenter in the Two Houses", mentions the building of his tomb, and gives injunctions to posterity regarding its care, ending with the words: "Oh, ye Living on earth; who pass by this tomb, if you desire the praise of the King and reverence before the Great God, then say: 'Thousands of beer, bread, cakes for Nekhebuw, the revered one; Do not destroy anything in this tomb. I am a glorified soul, precious and provided for. If any man destroys anything in this tomb, he shall be judged by the Great God. I have spoken good and repeated good. Never have I spoken evil against any man'".

Curiously enough Nekhebuw, whose other name was Ptah-mery-ankh-Meryra, has left in the quarry of Wady Maghara in the Sinaitic Peninsula, a record of one of the missions on which Pepy I. (Meryra) sent him. The record is dated in the 18th year of that king on the 27th day of the eleventh month, saying: "royal expedition carried out by the superintendent of all the kings' works, the sole friend, the royal builder belonging to the two houses, Ptah-mery-ankh-Meryra. His son, the priest Ptah-mery-ankh-Meryra (= our Im-thepy). Accompanied by the royal treasurers Yehy and Yekhuw, together with the artisans Khuw-en-Ptah, Khuw-en-Hor, Ka'ar, Nofry, Thethy, and the royal acquaintances and master builders, Amuthensu, Thethy and Yenekhy".

It is curious that a man of the prominence of Yenty — a favorite of Isesy — was not buried near the pyramid of his lord. Of course, the Cheops cemetery had a great reputation as a holy place, the abode of glorified souls; yet that would hardly be a sufficient reason for Yenty's choice unless he had been bound to the cemetery by family associations. His ancestors were probably connected with the official class who enjoyed the income of the old endowments of the Fourth Dynasty. Like all their class, they must have been buried in the cemetery and dependent on the old endowments for their funerary offerings.

No tomb of any ancestors of the family, could, however, be definitely identified. In the first street west of the Senezem-ib mastaba, where one might expect the tombs of his ancestors, there was

a row of small mastabas (Nos. G. 2361-2364) built against the large mastaba (No. G. 2360) of Sekhem-ka (Fig. 20). Their owners, so far as the names were preserved, were: the Overseer of all the King's Works *Ruud*, the treasurer Ma'a, the scribe of the Royal Presence and of the corporation of funerary priests, Senedem-ib=Yenty, together with his wife, the priestess of Hathor and Neith, Ka-meryt-es. These tombs are so small and insignificant that it is hardly possible to take the titles inscribed at their face value. Nor does it seem likely that G. 2364, the tomb of the Senedem-ib=Yenty, is the temporary tomb of the great Senedem-ib=Yenty, for Mehy relates that Yenty was buried temporarily near the pyramid of Isesy. This street was kept open apparently to the time when the cemetery fell into disuse and the type of the sculpture seems to indicate that these are later graves. Senedem-ib=Yenty II. may be a grandson of Yenty I., as one of the sons of Mehy bears the name of Senezem-ib.

The tomb of the funerary priests of the Senezem-ib family is probably the small tomb at the northeast corner of the complex on a much lower level (Fig. 21). This tomb contained a number of inscribed stones (Fig. 22) which give the following family tree:

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      Iry — (wife) Ka-s-itf-es
      son      daughter
Mehy Senezem-ib Sheshety Khumn-enty Khuwyt
      son      daughter
Nofery      Hat-kauw
daughter    son      son      daughter
Nebt Identy Nofer-Khenet Khu-en-Sekhet
  
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Of these persons, Iry, Kasitfes, Mehy, and Nofry were certainly buried in the tomb. Iry, whose "beautiful name" was Iry-en-lakht, was overseer of the funerary service of a certain Mehy, no doubt the Senezem-ib=Mehy buried above. Thus we have three generations of the family buried in the cemetery, counting from Yenty, and three generations of funerary priests. Yenty lived in the reign of Isesy, Mehy and Khum-enty in that of Unas and Tety II., Nekhebuw in that of Pepy I., and Im-thepy as late as that of Pepy II. Thus for the first two generations we have a period of about fifty years. At the same rate, the death of Im-thepy, which we know from the seal on one of the jars occurred in the time of Pepy II., must have occurred about 2600 B. C., the twenty-fifth year of Pepy II. If the funerary priesthood of Iry began about this time, if the same rate be allowed for the three generations of the priestly family, then the death of Nofry, the grandson of Iry, must have happened soon after the end of the Sixth Dynasty. He must have been nearly the last person buried in the great Cheops Cemetery before it was covered with sand. Later other men dug through the sand and buried in the offering chambers and corridors of the older tombs — even as late as the Roman Period. But the old priestly cemetery came to an end apparently about the time that Pepy II. died.

G. A. R.

22. *Inscriptions of the Funerary Priests*