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BRIEF COMMUNICATIONS

An enigmatic object explained

DURING the clearance of the area at the south base of the Second Gîza Pyramid by Abdel Hafez Abd el-'Al in 1960, a sealed passage was discovered near the remains of the small satellite pyramid, GII-a.¹ The passage opens in the bedrock 4 m west of the satellite pyramid and is aligned to the east-west axis of the small pyramid. The passage has a square cross-section of 80 cm and slopes for 6.70 m at an angle of 35-7°. It was found to be plugged with three blocks of limestone.

A small niche opens at the end of the passage on its south side. This measures 1.19 m long, about 62 cm deep, and from 49 to 62 cm high. The niche contained a wooden box sealed with string. The box contained three layers of wood pieces which were reconstructed to make up a frame of four rods supporting a cavetto cornice (see figs. 1 and 5). The dimensions of the assembled object are roughly 186 cm high and 74 × 63 cm at the base. The frame had been systematically dismantled. Several of the pieces had been deliberately broken 'by planing with an axe or chisel, and then by breaking at the point of planing; secondly, by sawing'.² The restored piece can be seen today in Hall 42 of the Egyptian Museum.

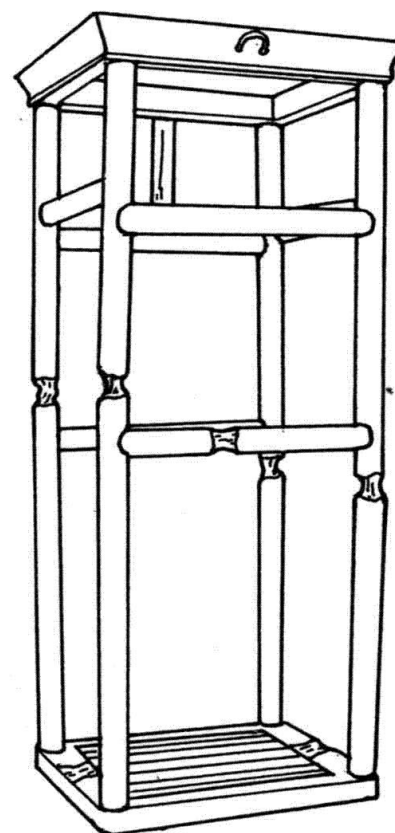


FIG. 1

The purpose of this object remained a mystery to the excavator, but the circumstances of its burial provide a clue to its possible function. The similarity of its interment with that of the Cheops boat³ might suggest that this object had an analogous purpose. As with the Cheops and Dahshur boats,⁴ objects associated with ancient Egyptian funeral ceremonies, but not part of the burial-chamber assembly, were often deposited outside the tomb proper.⁵ These so-called 'embalmers' caches⁶ could contain not only the material used in mummification⁷ and the 'funerary feast',⁸ but also objects used in transporting goods to the tomb. These range from sling nets⁹ to sledges¹⁰ and, of course, the boats mentioned above.¹¹

¹ Abdel Hafez Abd el-'Al and Ahmad Youssef, 'An Enigmatic Wooden Object Discovered Beside the Southern Side of the Giza Second Pyramid', *ASAE* 62 (1977), 103-20, pls. i-xv; see *ASAE* 63 (1979), pls. i, ii a, ii b at the back of the volume.

² Abdel el-'Al and Youssef, op. cit. 117.

³ Abdel Moneim Abubakr and Ahmed Youssef Moustafa, 'The Funerary Boat of Khufu', *Beiträge zur Ägyptischen Bauforschung und Altertumskunde* 12 (1971), 1-18; M. Z. Nour, M. S. Osman, Z. Iskander, and A. Y. Moustafa, *The Cheops Boats, Part I* (Cairo, 1960).

⁴ J. de Morgan, *Fouilles a Dachour, mars-juin 1894* (Vienna, 1895), 81 ff.; George A. Reisner, *Models of Ships and Boats* (Cairo, 1913), 83-100.

⁵ See H. E. Winlock, *Excavations at Deir el-Bahri: 1911-1913* (New York, 1942), 55-6, 98-9.

⁶ Id., *Materials Used at the Embalming of King Tut-'Ankh-Amen* (New York, 1941).

⁷ Ibid. 9-13.

⁸ Ibid. 13-18.

⁹ Winlock, *Excavations*, pl. 18 a.

¹⁰ Cf. a sledge deposited in a pit within the pyramid enclosure of Sesostris I at Lisht (Metropolitan Museum of Art 24 January 1984).

¹¹ D. Arnold, 'Rituale und Pyramidentempel', *MDAIK* 33 (1977), 4 n. 16.

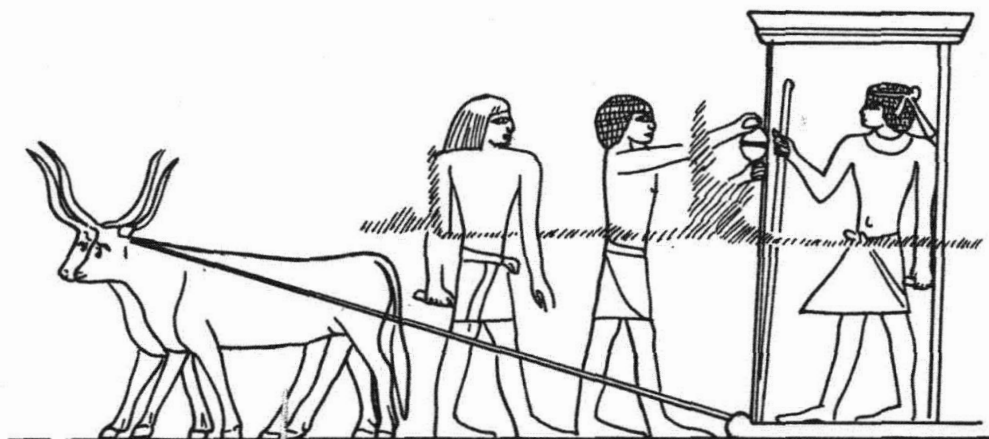


FIG. 2

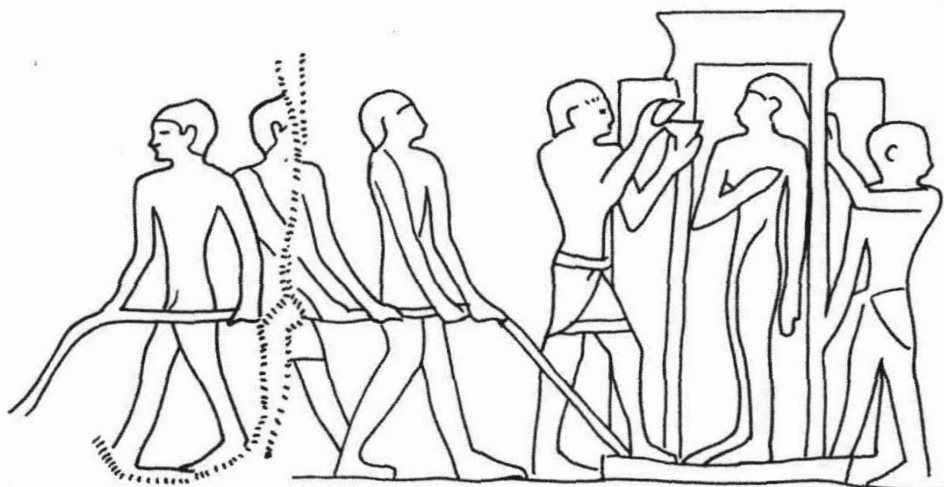


FIG. 3

Scenes on the walls of Old Kingdom and later tombs often show objects being transported to the tomb (fig. 2).¹ The scenes which concern us here are those which show the transport of statuary to the tomb. In these representations the statues are often shown being drawn on sledges and encased in a tall, rectangular box (cf. the tombs of Ti at Saqqâra², and Meresankh III at Gîza,³ fig. 3). In some cases these boxes are obviously representations of shrines⁴ such as those actually found at Lisht,⁵ Dahshur,⁶ and in the tomb of Tutankhamûn.⁷ The Tutankhamûn shrines have both flat and arched tops. These also

¹ See L. Klebs, *Die Reliefs des Alten Reiches* (Heidelberg, 1915), 39-43.

² G. Steindorf, *Grab des Ti* (Leipzig, 1913), pls. 62, 70.

³ Dows Dunham and William Kelly Simpson, *The Mastaba of Queen Mersyankh III* (Boston, 1974), 12, pls. iii b, v a, fig. 5.

⁴ See Steindorf, *op. cit.*, pl. 62.

⁵ S. B. Johnson, 'Two Wooden Statues from Lisht: Do They Represent Sesostri I?' *JARCE* 17 (1980), 11-20.

⁶ De Morgan *op. cit.* 69.

⁷ Howard Carter, *The Tomb of Tutankhamen*, III (London, 1933), 51, pls. 3, 11.

appear to be the types represented in the Old Kingdom reliefs.¹ However, with statuary which was meant to be exposed, placed in the traditional serdab, or otherwise singled out for inclusion in the mortuary complex, a shipping crate may have been required in some cases. The wooden frame found by the Chephren satellite pyramid would appear to have served as such a transport container. Its association with the funerary statue might account for the cavetto cornice, giving the general form of the *sh ntr*,² and its burial in sacred ground. This purpose would explain several of the peculiar features of the object. The copper staples on either of the longer sides of the cornice (see figs. 1 and 5) could have been used to pass ropes through to stabilize the case as it was being towed upon a sledge.³ This situation has been reconstructed in fig. 4.⁴ In actuality the rope could have been passed through the staples and around the frame in several ways to achieve its stabilization during transport. The horizontal cross-members would have helped to strengthen the frame under the pressure of the ropes. They probably also served as convenient supports to stabilize the statue within the frame. In this regard it should be noted that the uppermost cross-bars (see fig. 5, top, levels 2 and 3) leave a space, 33 × 36 cm, toward one side of the frame (the 'back' side in the *ASAE* 63, pls. iia and b elevations). The head of a standing statue would have passed through this space, and the bars defining the space would have provided enclosing supports. On this side of the frame there is also provided an extra vertical member from the underside of the cornice to the level-2 cross-bar. This could have been additional support for the upper part of the statue, had it been tied by rope.

The level 1 cross-bar (fig. 5, top), located at about half the height of the frame, runs horizontally through the centre of the above-mentioned enclosed space (down through the frame in a plan-view). Reconstructed accordingly, the frame would not allow the introduction of a standing statue. However, a seated statue could fit into the frame with the level-1 bar crossing in front of the torso.⁵ Furthermore, the lowest layers of horizontal members look to have additional slots toward the rear of this section (see fig. 5, bottom) to which the cross-piece could be moved, enabling the frame to hold a standing statue. The reinforcing horizontal members and the cross-bars must have been removed when the statue was released from the case (only the lowest layer 1 if it was a seated statue around 1.2 m in height). This might suggest that when the statue was prepared for transport the case was assembled around it. From the way in which the frame was dismantled—deliberate chopping with hatchet or chisel, and dowels broken at the joints⁶—it appears that the frame was (ritually?) broken down when it was time to emplace or inter the statue at the funerary precinct. A wooden box, sloping passage, and niche were specially prepared for the

¹ Steindorf, *op. cit.*, pls. 62, 70.

² A. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3rd edn. (London, 1957), 495, sign-list 021.

³ At the top and the bottom of each of the four vertical rods there are pairs of small holes which could be U-shaped sockets for a rope to pass through, as is often seen in Old and Middle Kingdom coffins: see Clarke and Engelbach, *Ancient Egyptian Masonry* (London, 1930), 86, fig. 80. However, these could also be sockets for dowels to join the rods to the base and cornice, set at an angle. Such dowels are found in joins on the bracelet box and bed of Hetep-heres I: see Reisner and W. S. Smith, *A History of the Giza Necropolis, II, The Tomb of Hetep-heres, the Mother of Cheops* (Cambridge, MA, 1955), figs. 33, 44.

⁴ The sledge has been modelled after one in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA 24.1.84), although not to scale.

⁵ Provided it was less than 1.3 m in height—otherwise it would hit the parallel cross-bars of level 2. The most famous Chephren statue, with the Horus hawk at the back of the *nemes*, is around 1.6 m in height. Others of his seated statues must have been closer to 1.2 m in height when complete. The socket to the left in fig. 5 does not extend through the diameter of the horizontal piece, as does the one in the centre. For the left socket to have served as an alternative emplacement for the perpendicular cross-bar, this horizontal piece would have to be turned so that the socket faced into the canopy-frame. On the opposite horizontal piece of the level-1 bracing, no matching socket is readily seen in the Cairo Museum. Therefore, some question remains on this point.

⁶ Abd el-'Al and Youssef, *op. cit.* 117.

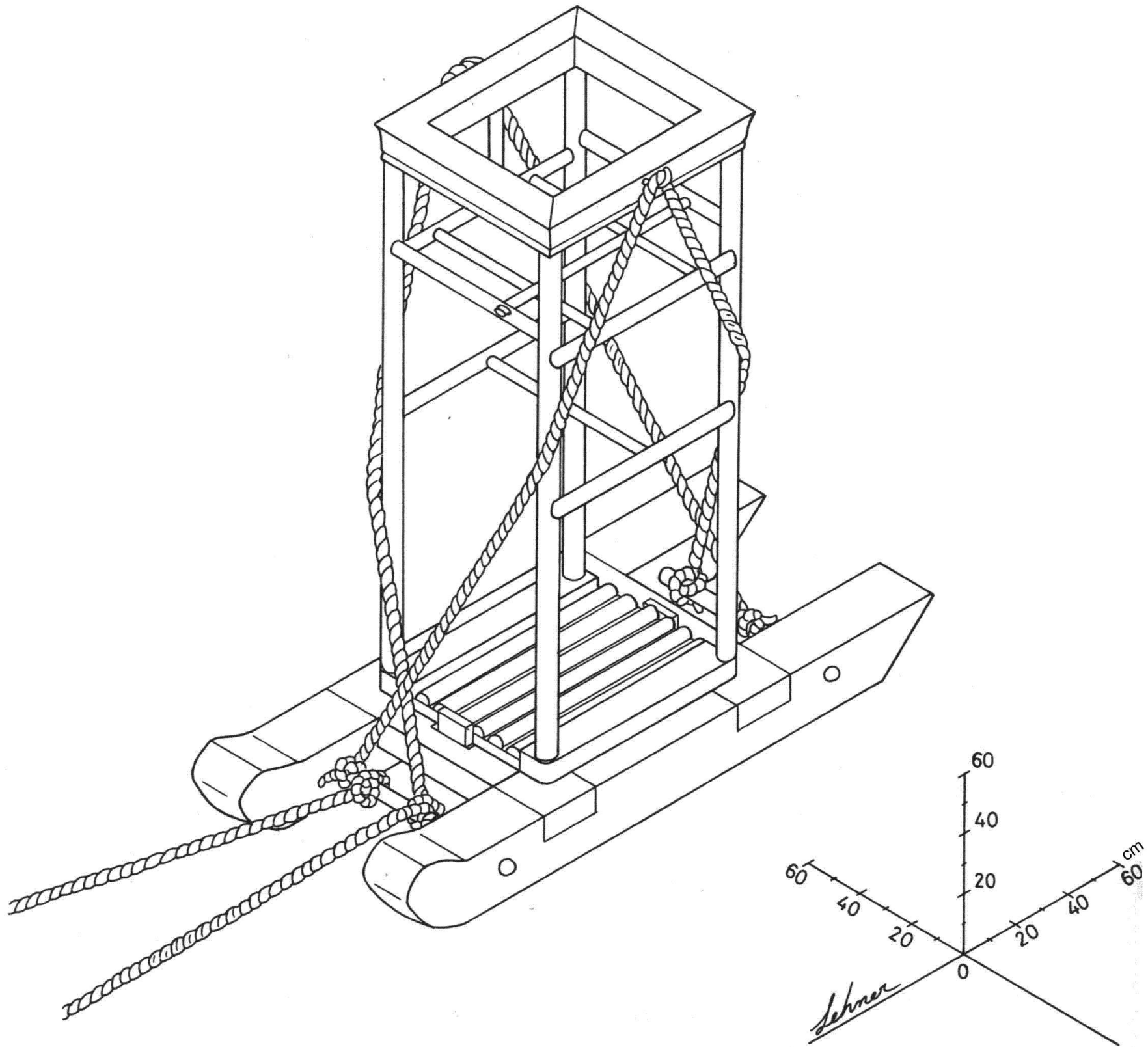


FIG. 4

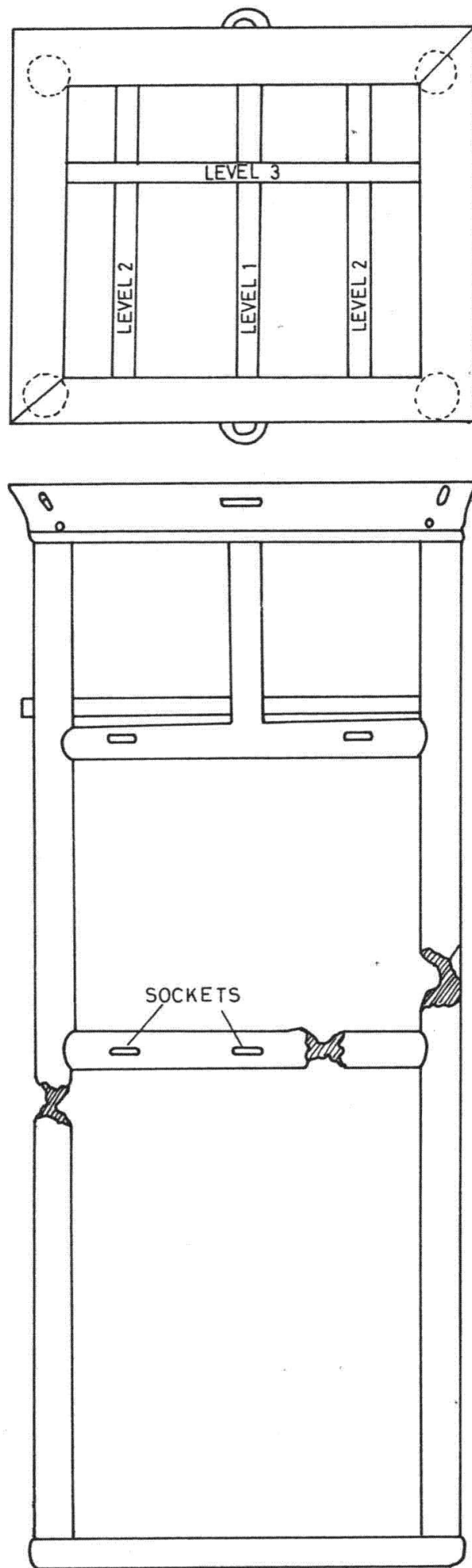


FIG. 5

interment of the broken frame. Given the proximity of the passage to the satellite pyramid of Chephren, its location on the east-west axis of that pyramid, and the fact that it slopes down toward the pyramid, this must have been considered an annex to the satellite pyramid's substructure, even though the passage opens outside the pyramid court proper.¹

Reisner² and Maragioglio and Rinaldi³ considered this a queen's pyramid, while Ricke,⁴ Lauer,⁵ and Stadelmann⁶ accept it as a 'cult pyramid' of the king. It has long been considered that the small satellite pyramids of the middle and later Old Kingdom developed out of the Southern Tomb of Zoser at his Saqqâra Step Pyramid complex, and that they carry a similar significance, although what that significance might have been is widely debated. One of the suggestions is that the South Tomb and satellite pyramids were intended for the interment of a *ka*-statue of the king.⁷ The dismantled canopy-frame found in association with the Chephren satellite pyramid may offer support for this suggestion. In this regard it might be compared to the wooden bier 'for carrying a shrine'⁸ found in the T-shaped magazine off the south side of the entrance corridor of the Zoser South Tomb.⁹ The wooden frame from the Chephren precinct, with a total height of 1.86 m, would nicely enclose a statue with a height of about 1.6 m. The T-shaped burial chamber of the Chephren satellite pyramid, with a height of 2.05 m¹⁰ could have received a statue of this dimension, provided the statue did not exceed about 1 m in width. The entrance passage of GII-a is 1.05 m square¹¹. Since the base of the canopy-frame is 63 × 74 cm, the statue it transported would probably not have exceeded these widths.

MARK LEHNER and PETER LACOVARA

A fourth Dahshur boat

THE excavation of three Twelfth Dynasty wooden Egyptian boats in 1894¹² provided scholars with the first opportunity to study actual hulls from ancient Egypt. Jean-Jacques de Morgan discovered the boats buried beside the brick pyramid of Sesostri III at Dahshur. Two of the boats are displayed in the National Museum of Cairo, and the third in Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History. De Morgan also reported finding three other boats about 100 m from the first group, but they were not excavated.

While investigating the construction of these funerary vessels, I discovered that a fourth Dahshur boat had been purchased in 1901 by Andrew Carnegie for the Carnegie Museum of

¹ V. Maragioglio and C. Rinaldi, *L'Architettura delle piramidi Menfite v, Le Piramidi di Zedefra e di Chephren* (Rapello, 1966), 90-3, 130-1.

² Reisner, *A History of the Giza Necropolis*, 1 (Cambridge, MA, 1942), 131, fig. 66.

³ Maragioglio and Rinaldi, *op. cit.* 130-1.

⁴ H. Ricke, *Bemerkungen zur Ägyptischen Baukunst des Alten Reiches*, II (Cairo, 1950), 125-6.

⁵ J. P. Lauer, 'Recherche et découverte du tombeau sud de l'Horus Sekhm-khet dans son complexe funéraire à Saqqarah', *RdÉ* 20, 98.

⁶ R. Stadelmann, 'Pyramiden, AR', *LdÄ* IV, 1234.

⁷ Ricke, *op. cit.* 56; Stadelmann, *op. cit.* 1225; Altenmüller, 'Bemerkungen zur frühen und späten Bauphase des Djoserbezirkes in Saqqâra', *MDAIK* 28 (1972), 3-5; J. Brinks, *Die Entwicklung der königlichen Grabanlagen des Alten Reiches* (Hildesheim, 1979), 79, where the statue would be a 'Sedfest-statue'.

⁸ C. M. Firth, J. E. Quibell, and J. P. Lauer, *The Step Pyramid*, 1-11 (Cairo, 1935-6), 62.

⁹ Lauer, *La Pyramide à degrés*, 1 (Cairo, 1936), 99, fig. 84. Note also that nine gilded poles of a canopy similar to that of Hetep-heres I were found in the same magazine, *ibid.*, figs. 6-7; cf. Reisner and Smith, *Hetep-heres*.

¹⁰ Reisner, *Giza Necropolis*, 1, 131, fig. 66; Maragioglio and Rinaldi, *op. cit.* 90 give a height of 2.10 m.

¹¹ Reisner, *Giza Necropolis*, 1, 132.

¹² David R. Watters, James Richardson, and Claudia Medoff of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, and Glen Cole of the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, have been instrumental in providing access to the Dahshur boats and the records concerning their acquisition and exhibition. Their efforts are greatly appreciated. J.-J. de Morgan, *Fouilles à Dâhchour: Mars-Juin 1894* (Vienna, 1895), 81-3.