





THE DAILY LIFE OF THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS

BY NORA SCOTT

Curator Emeritus of Egyptian Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Egyptians were one of the most attractive peoples of antiquity, both in character and in manner of life. It was their industry that, in prehistoric times, had reclaimed their fertile land from the swamps that edged the Nile. Endless industry kept the fields green, and in return they produced food and flax in abundance. The surrounding deserts provided stone and metal. The Egyptians were proud of their country, and the foreign conquests of their more warlike rulers did not really interest them. They were happy to stay at home with their families, passing their leisure hours in their well-appointed houses and shady gardens and enjoying an occasional day's hunting in the desert or fishing or fowling on the river.

The recent construction of Lake Nasser has ended the annual flooding by the Nile, but otherwise life in the villages along the river's banks has changed remarkably little since the days of the earliest pharaohs. The long, secluded valley dominated by the river and the desert has in turn dominated all who have lived in it.

Things have always been done in the traditional way in the farms and villages of Egypt, so we can often interpret ancient pictures by means of present-day customs. The Egyptian's distrust of novelty, however, stems from the fact that he long ago discovered how to satisfy his needs in the best and cheapest way with the materials he had at hand. Changes and developments did of course occur during the long span of dynastic history, but as they add comparatively little to an understanding of Egyptian life, we have for the most part disregarded them here.

The objects illustrated, from the Museum's collections, are typical of the possessions of the well-to-do.

Egyptian religion called for a belief in a world somewhere in "The West" to which the good Egyptian would go after death. This new land would be just like Egypt in every way with rich and poor, laborers, farmers, and officials; but to reach it all had to pass through terrible trials and be able to give correct answers to the dreadful demons who would question them on the way. Finally, the deceased Egyptian would appear before Osiris, God of the Dead and of Resurrection, and watch while his heart was being weighed against the feather that represented truth. If he survived this Last Judgment, if his heart was not heavy with the thought of evil deeds he had committed on earth, he was "Justified," "True of Voice," and could join "The Westerners."

Egyptian religious ideas developed slowly during the three thousand years of ancient Egypt's recorded history, but they remained fundamentally the same. The earliest Egyptians had been awed by the forces of nature and natural phenomena – the sun, moon, and wind; the Nile with

Cover: Detail of Figure 35

Opposite: Relations and friends of the chief sculptor of Amenhotep III, Nebamun, and his wife at a banquet. Men and women are being served separately, the women in the harim quarter, where the pretty little maidservants can go around naked. About 1400 B.C.

Chronology

Prehistoric Period:
before 3100 B.C.

Early Dynastic Period
(I-II Dynasties):
3100-2686 B.C.

Old Kingdom
(III-IV Dynasties):
2686-2181 B.C.

1st Intermediate Period

Middle Kingdom
(XI-XIII Dynasties):
2133-1633 B.C.

2nd Intermediate Period,
including Hyksos Period

New Kingdom
(XVII-XX Dynasties):
1650-1085 B.C.

Late Dynastic Period
(XXI-XXX Dynasties):
1085-343 B.C.

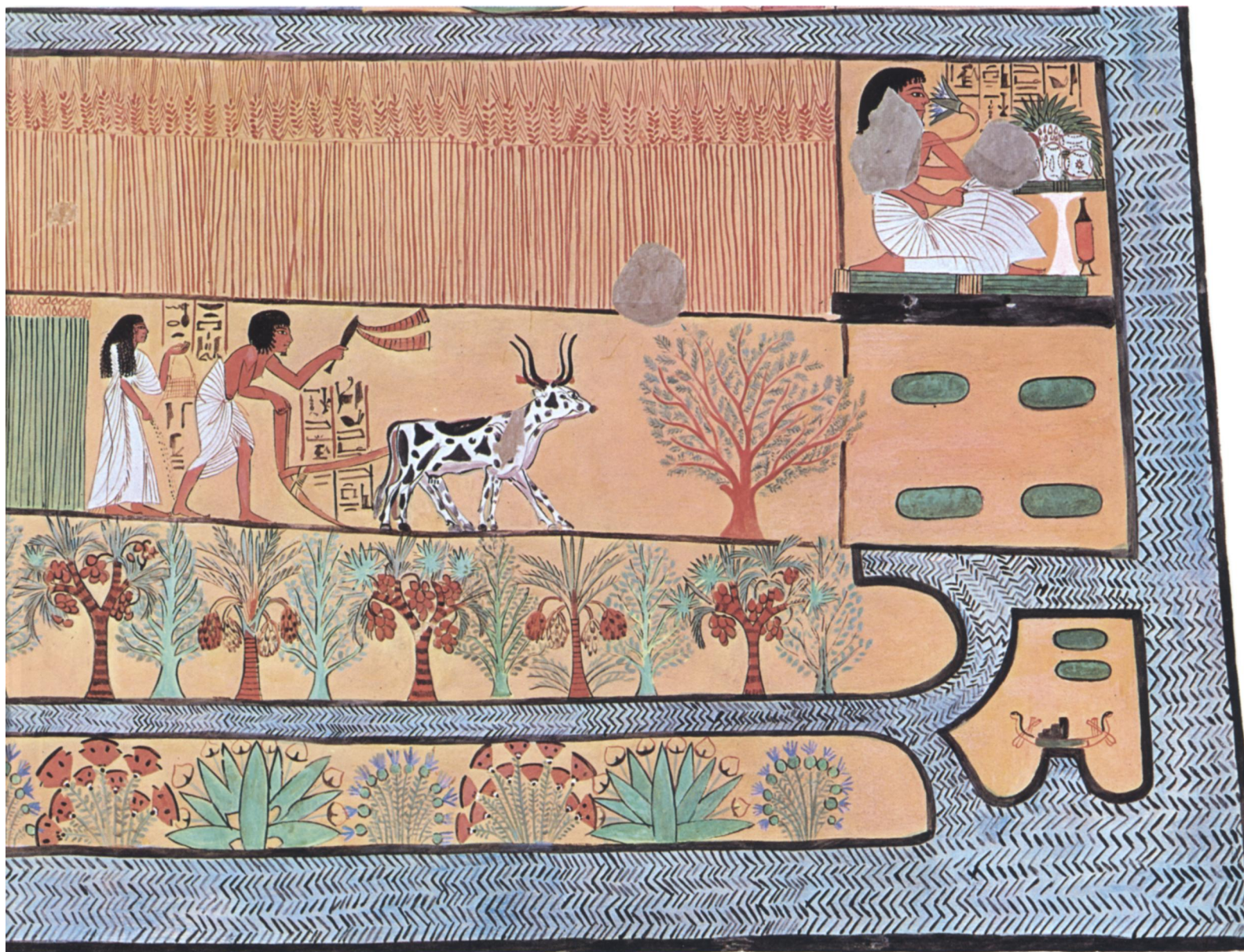
Ptolemaic Period:
332-30 B.C.

Roman Period,
beginning of Coptic
(Christian) culture:
30 B.C. – A.D. 395



1. Figure of a hippopotamus placed in a tomb to placate any real monster that might do injury to the owner. About 1900 B.C. Height 4½ inches

2. The fields of the blest. Sennudjem, an official of the royal cemetery at Thebes, has chosen a picture for a wall of his tomb more characteristic of illustrations on funerary papyri. Sennudjem and his wife are shown actually plowing, reaping, and harvesting flax themselves in the next world instead of watching their servants at work in the fields, as they had done in this. The whole painting is surrounded by the wavy lines of the waters of the underworld. About 1200 B.C.



its annual inundation that revived the parched, dead earth; the birds of prey who flew up and disappeared into the sun; the swift, fierce, and destructive animals of the desert and the swamps. The Egyptian did not actually worship these animals but believed that when a god appeared on earth he took the form of his appropriate creature: in representations the god is shown with that animal's head and a human body.

Because of the belief in an after-life filled with material things, every Egyptian, according to his means, stored away in his tomb possessions he had used on earth and objects he had

had made especially for his use in the next world, as well as provisions for his long journey to the West. Sometimes this equipment was very poor, sometimes it was lavish and expensive, for the rich Egyptian hoped that he would have every comfort in the hereafter.

Most important, of course, was the preservation of the body itself, the mummy, the home of the soul when it revisited our world. But just in case the objects and even the mummy were destroyed, the walls of tombs were decorated with pictures of the owner in his everyday life that, by some magic process, were to be perpetuated as still-living activities. The Metropolitan Museum has

a unique series of copies of these paintings, by members of its Egyptian Expedition; many are illustrated here.

It was because of the Egyptians' hope for the enjoyment of their belongings in the next world that they stored them in safe, dry, and hidden tombs. It was because the tomb owner enjoyed the present so much that he hoped he was leaving this world for one that would be, not better, but just the same. And it is because of the paintings on the walls of tombs that we know so much about the life the Egyptians actually lived on earth.



THE FAMILY

The Egyptian family was a closely knit unit in ancient times, as it is today. It was customary to picture a man's wife and children on his stela (gravestone), and often his parents and grandparents are mentioned if they are not actually represented. The mother is shown more frequently than the father, as descent was traced through the female line.

As a rule a man had only one wife, who went about freely, although she lived with her children in a separate, women's quarter of the house. The sage Ptah-hotpe advised, "Love your wife. Feed her and clothe her and make her happy as long as you are alive. . . . Keep her from getting the mastery."

No actual marriage contracts have been preserved, but in the later periods at least financial settlements were drawn up at the time of the wedding, and even in the Old Kingdom a man and his wife were equal in the eyes of the law.

The Egyptians were fond and proud of their children. Each child was named at birth, frequently after a god or the king. Often names refer to qualities; some recall flowers, trees, or animals;

some express the parents' joy over their child. (We still use two Egyptian proper names: *Susan*, "a lily," and *Phineas*, "the southerner"; *Moses*, "born of . . .," as in *Ramesses*, "born of Re," is probably Egyptian.) Little Egyptians had toys much like our own to play with and pets to keep them company. Children were often allowed to accompany their parents to grown-up parties; we see them quietly seated at family dinners, running around at public ceremonies, and "helping" their fathers with their equipment on fishing or fowling expeditions.

When it was possible, boys were sent to the classes of some local scribe to learn how to read and write—necessary accomplishments for an official career; and, as we see from the exercises they were given to copy, they were also taught good manners, respect for their parents, honesty, humility, and self-control. As they grew older boys often prepared to inherit their fathers' offices; just as often a clever boy who was the son of poor parents was able to rise to a high position, for there was no prejudice in ancient Egypt against the self-made man.



3. A schoolboy's "slate"—a stucco-covered board that could be wiped clean and used again. The young scholar has been given a story with a moral to copy: it is about a man called Ipy who was "praised by his father, praised by his mother." He has had trouble with his spelling. About 2000 B.C. Height 28¾ inches

4. The granary official Nykure with his family. Nykure's wife kneels beside him on one side and their small daughter stands at the other, each clutching one of his legs; as is proper, they are shown at a smaller scale than the head of the house.

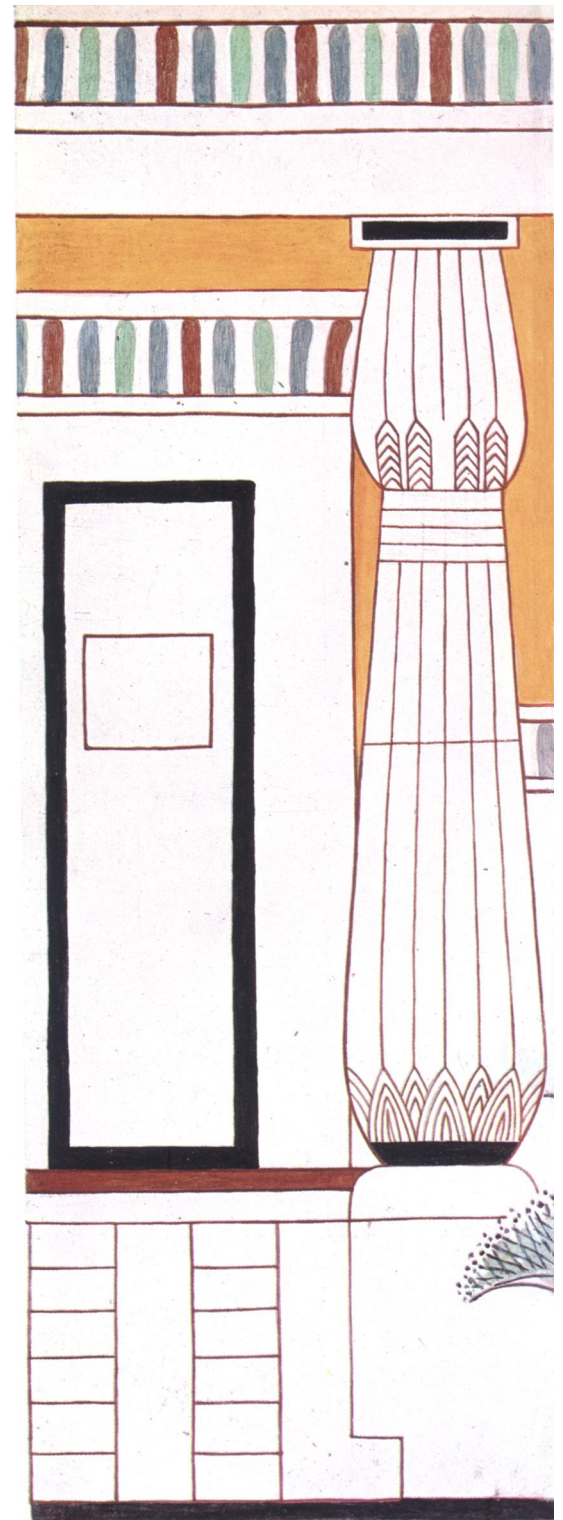
The little girl is young enough to run about naked, and her hair is cut and combed into the "lock of youth." Her mother wears the straight, tight shift of the Old Kingdom and a short, full wig with her own hair showing at the forehead. They all have bare feet. About 2350 B.C. Height 22½ inches





5. A family outing. Menena, an official of the king's agricultural estates, is enjoying a day's sport among the papyrus plants of the marshes that the artist has rolled back so that we can see him. Menena is shown twice: on the right he is spearing fish and, on the

left, holding two decoy herons high above the rushes as he hurls throwsticks at ducks and other birds. A water rat and a pet cat are climbing among the nests. Menena's face and the faces of two of the girls have been cut out by some enemy. About 1415 B.C.



THE HOUSE

Egyptian houses were of two types, the town house and the country house. The town house, occupying a small plot but several stories high, was to be found not only in cities but even villages, where a comparatively large number of dwellings might be crowded together on the only piece of ground available for building.

The development of both houses and towns was determined by the climate

and geography of Egypt. Towns had to be near the river – the highway and the source of water – and yet not encroach upon the narrow strip of fertile land that edged it. The scarcity of rain allowed the use of unfired mud brick as the almost universal material for buildings other than temples (which were intended to last forever). As a result, most of the ancient houses have long ago crumbled away. We can guess that in the great

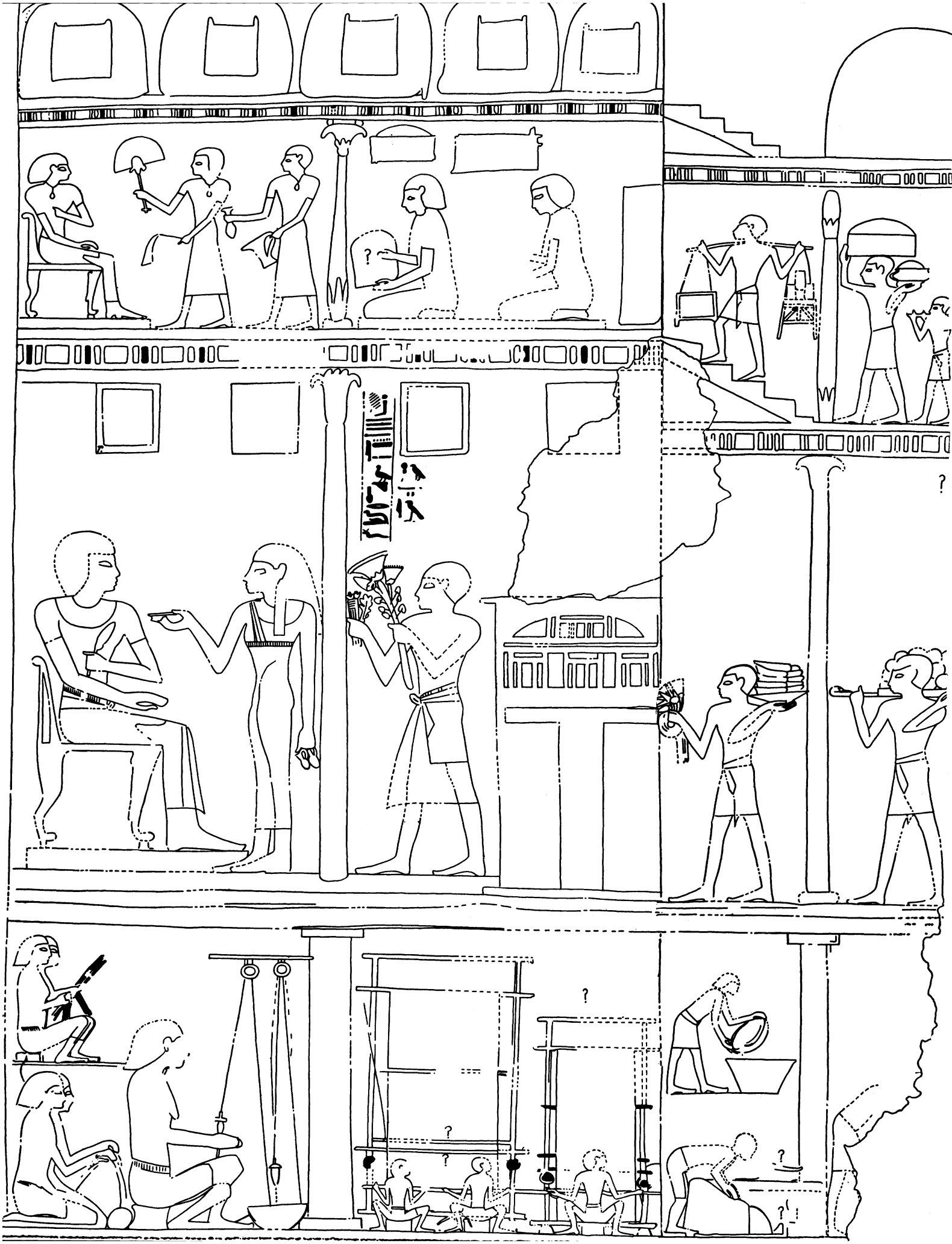
cities the fashionable districts were close to the palace and conveniently near the important temples. It is likely that the houses were built in pairs back to back. Often they must have opened directly onto the street; sometimes there was room in front or at the sides for two or three shrubs.

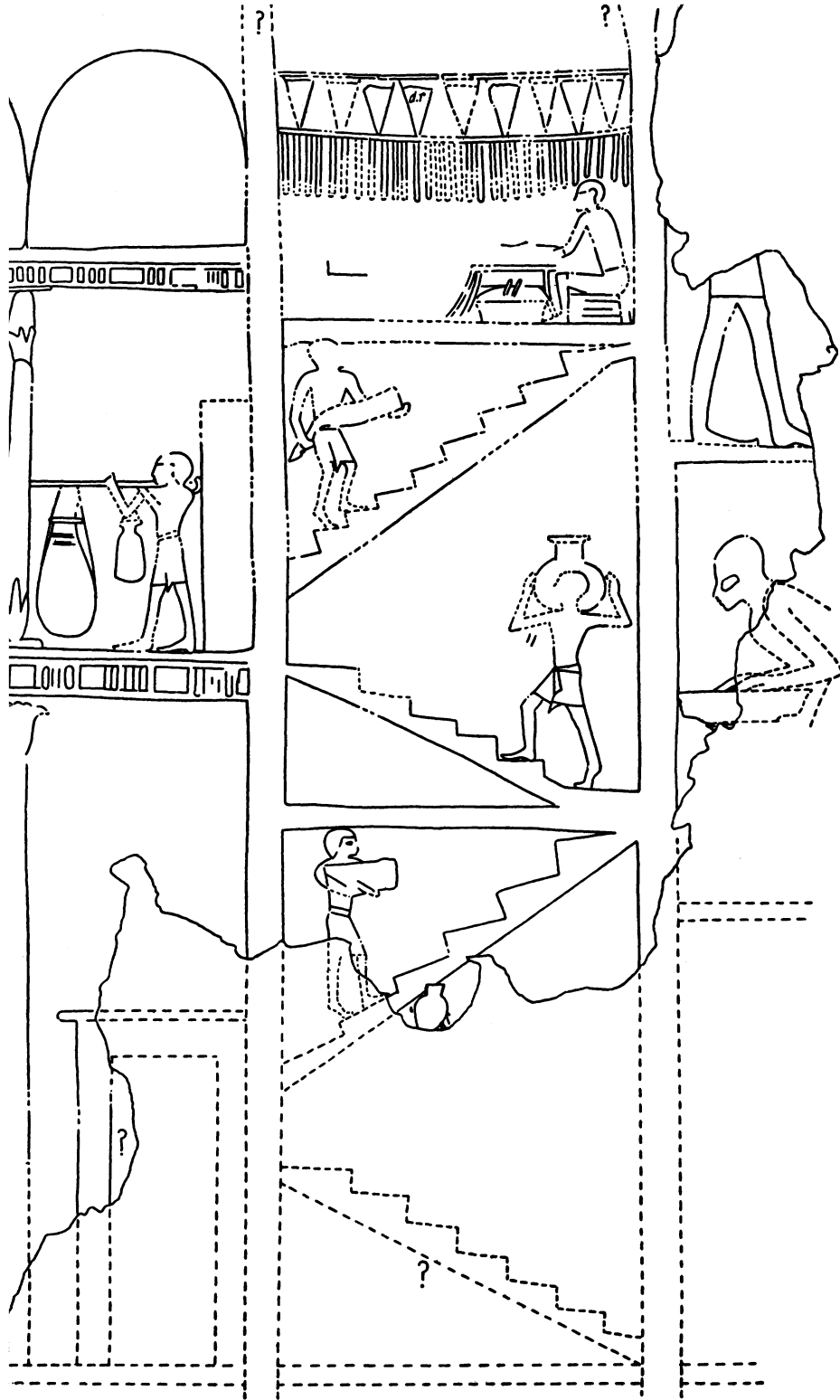
It is difficult to reconstruct these town houses. They are very rarely shown in paintings, and when they are we cannot



6, 7. The porches of two country homes.
 Left: An ancient model; the pool in
 front, edged with sycamore fig trees, is
 lined with copper to hold water. About
 2050 B.C.

Above: A painting; the pool is full
 of lotus blossoms and is edged with
 papyrus, cornflowers, pollard willow,
 and pomegranate. Behind are sycamore
 and persea trees. A gardener, a favorite
 of his master's dog, is drawing water
 with a shaduf. The artist has tried to
 draw his shoulders in profile. About
 1250 B.C.





8. *Tehutynefer's town house, seen in section. The owner is shown twice, receiving food and drink, while members of his household are busy with their various tasks. About 1440 B.C.*

be sure that we are interpreting the ancient conventions correctly. The only picture (Figure 8) that gives us any real information about the interior shows the imposing Theban home of the Treasurer Tehutynefer. It consists of three stories and an open roof, connected by two staircases. The living rooms of the owner and his family seem to be upstairs and at the back of the house. The servants' quarters were on the dusty, noisy street. Here we see Tehutynefer's private supply of linen being spun and woven, and his bread and beer being prepared. Servants carry further kitchen supplies up the steep back stairs to the roof, where cooking heat and odors would be carried off by the wind. The family's grain bins were also housed on the roof. The windows, as was always the case, are placed high in the walls and were probably covered with latticework to keep out the heat and glare of the sun; the fanlight over the door shows such latticework.

A widespread, one-storied dwelling with open courts, surrounded by gardens, was, however, the Egyptian ideal, and wealthy officials liked to live in such bungalows when spending their leisure time on their country estates. A typical country house had its main living room in the center, higher than the surrounding rooms and ventilated by clerestory windows; often there were additional ventilators in the roof to catch the north wind. The sleeping quarters were behind the living room, and in front of it was a loggia, an open porch overlooking the garden.

We must remember, nevertheless, that the country as we know it did not exist in grassless Egypt, and that such gardens were a luxury of the rich. No trees were allowed on the valuable arable land. They grew along ditches at the sides of roads and at the edge of the desert, but as near the cultivation as possible because they had to be watered constantly (Figures 6, 7). Therefore they were all of varieties that would repay the trouble it had cost to grow them, and were chosen for their value as timber, for their fruit, and for their shade.



9. Storage containers. A basket and chest for linen, jars for oil and wine, and the basket in which the bread, fruit cake, and saucers of dates and raisins were found. The clay sealing of the oil

jar is stamped with the name of Queen Hatshepsut; the note on the shoulder says that it was inspected by a man called Setuwina in 1490 B.C. It is 25 inches high. About 1500-1300 B.C.

The Egyptian lady was faced with the same duties and problems as any modern housewife — keeping her house clean and her linen laundered, marketing, preparing food and drink, and managing her servants.

Large establishments had special storerooms in which rows of labeled jars,



HOUSEKEEPING

each with the owner's seal, were arranged. The housewife had no way of locking her containers, but the seal at least told her when the contents had been tampered with.

Linen, each piece carefully marked with the owner's name, was kept in baskets or wooden chests. In the hot, dusty climate of Egypt a plentiful supply was necessary. Herodotus tells us that Egyptian linen was "constantly fresh washed and they pay particular attention to this." It was laundered in the river or a canal.

Cooking vessels were of many sizes and shapes, usually of pottery, sometimes of metal; they were placed directly on the fire or in clay ovens. The fuel employed for cooking was wood or charcoal, and sometimes dried manure as in the modern Near East. If the fire was allowed to go out it had to be rekindled with a bow drill. Lamps were most frequently saucers holding a wick and oil.

Many native Egyptians earned their living by working for their wealthier neighbors; but one result of foreign conquests was the employment of slave labor. A papyrus of the reign of Ramesses II describes the purchase of a Syrian slave girl for thirteen ounces of silver, evidently the standard of values at that time. This was paid, not in bullion, but in its equivalent of six copper or bronze pots and some linen. A papyrus of 120 years later gives us what was apparently the top price for a bull—410 ounces of copper, paid in copper, linen, grain, a necklace, and a cow. Piles of linen and extra pots must have been kept on hand to use as a medium of exchange. This system was the cause of very complicated bookkeeping and of frequent lawsuits among the villagers.

10. Activities on an estate. The police captain Nebamun, sitting in front of his house with his wife and daughter, is being congratulated by a delegation of his men as he watches workers picking and treading grapes and storing the wine, while others brand cattle. The house, shaded by a palm tree, has ventilators on the roof placed so as to catch a breeze from any direction. The building above is a temple to which produce of the estate is being presented. About 1415 B.C.





The staple foods were meat, poultry, and fish, bread and cakes of different sorts, animal and vegetable fats, and fruits and vegetables, cooked, dried, and fresh. Honey and dates were used for sweetening. Beer and wine were the common beverages. Beer and bread were usually prepared at the same time, as the same dough was used for both.

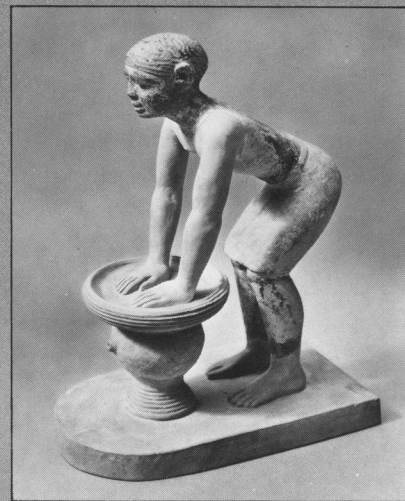
Wine was made at the vineyard.

Large estates were practically self-supporting, but the small householder had to go to market for supplies. Payment was made in kind as the Egyptians did not use minted money. One painting shows a woman who has set up a refreshment stand on the shore and is trading with sailors from a boat. Her price for two cakes seems to be a sack of grain.

11. Kitchen utensils. At the left are a wickerwork tray on a stand, a whisk, a strainer, a bowl used as a lamp, and a brazier. In the center is a bronze cooking pot and a jar in which is a bronze sucker with a strainer at its lower end; its rounded bottom is steadied by a ring stand.

The brewer's vat at the right has a spout placed so the clear liquid could be poured off without disturbing either the impurities that rose to the top or the dregs at the bottom. In front of it are three parts of a fire drill. The bow, which is missing, was used to rotate the charred, pointed stick, which was set in one of the holes in the other piece of wood. The friction caused sparks that ignited tinder placed below. 2400 B.C. - A.D. 600. Height of vat 12 inches

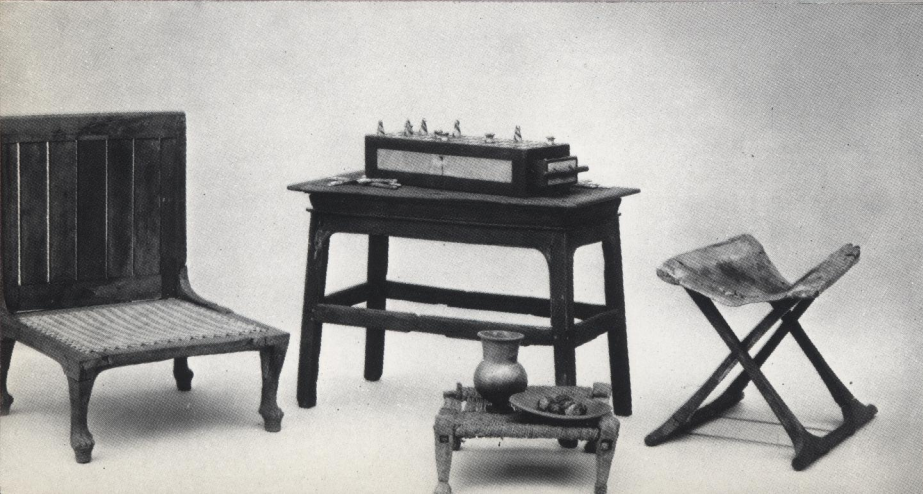




12. A brewer. He is working the mash through a strainer like that at the bottom left into a vat like the one below. Brewers' vats are always represented supported by a coil of rope, as here. About 2400 B.C.



13. Furniture of the governor of Thebes and vizier, Ramose. Servants bring stands, a chair, four chests for clothing, a made-up bed, two pairs of sandals, a scribe's equipment, a walking stick, a fan, and a light stool. About 1480 B.C.



14. Living-room furniture. On the table is a gameboard for senet (see Figure 36). A goblet and bowl of fruit are on the low stool. 2000-1400 B.C. Height of table 18 inches



FURNITURE

The climate of Egypt did not encourage the Egyptians to clutter their rooms with furniture, but beds, chairs, and stools were to be found in well-equipped homes. Wickerwork stands were more usual than wooden tables, and chests and baskets took the place of cupboards and drawers. Mats of woven rushes covered the floors.

Very little native wood could be used



15. An ebony chair inlaid with ivory. Enough ancient cord was left to restore the original seat exactly. 1560-1100 B.C.

for carpentry; this consisted chiefly of acacia and sycamore fig, which provided only short planks. However, large timbers of coniferous woods were being imported from Syria by the beginning of the V Dynasty.

Metal tools, which became available at the end of the prehistoric period, made fine cabinetwork possible. Among the construction used by the Egyptians were the mortise and tenon joint, the miter joint, dovetailing, and veneer. One example of plywood is known.

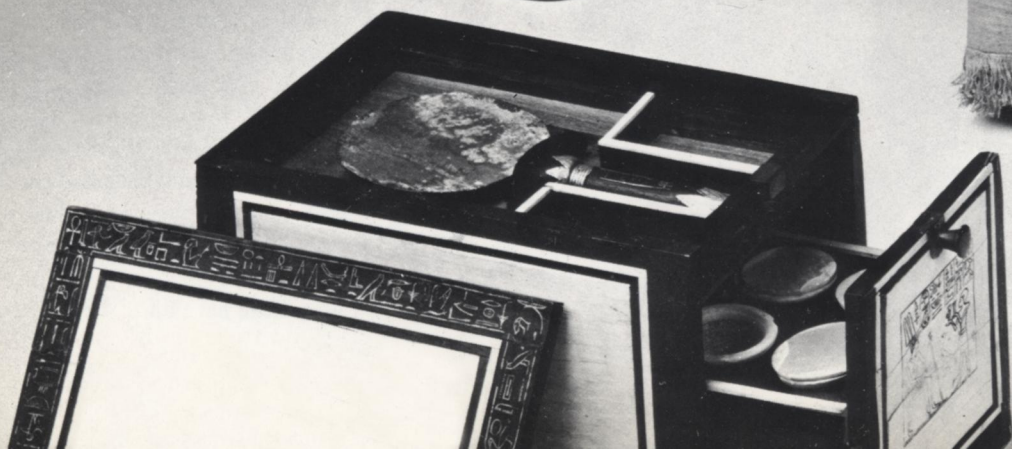
The Egyptians liked to sleep in a sloping position, and until the XVIII Dynasty most beds were higher at the head than the foot: a footboard prevented

the sleeper from slipping down too far. "Springs" were usually of interlaced cord, which has a certain amount of give. Folded sheets took the place of mattresses. The Egyptians were proud of their beds, which they considered a mark of refinement. A traveler of about 1950 B.C. speaks of his pleasure at sleeping on a bed again after many years in foreign lands.

Nevertheless, beds were comparatively rare and a headrest, a prop of about the same height as the shoulder, was the greatest necessity for a good night's sleep. Egyptians who possessed beds used a headrest as



16. Bedroom furniture. A bed with cord springs, a mattress of three folded sheets (one over sixty feet long), and a wooden headrest. The ebony and ivory chest with silver mountings has partitions for a mirror and cosmetic jars (also shown in Figure 31). Length of bed 63 inches



well; sometimes soft cushions stuffed with feathers were put behind the back, but these have rarely been preserved.

Fashions in chairs changed from time to time, the height of legs, back, and arms varying with the period. The examples shown in Figures 14 and 18 were made at a time when legs of chairs were so short that the users had to sit in a contracted position; this seemed natural to a people who were fond of crouching on the ground. A chair of a height we should think more comfortable is represented at the left. Stools, too, were made in different heights and were both rigid and folding.

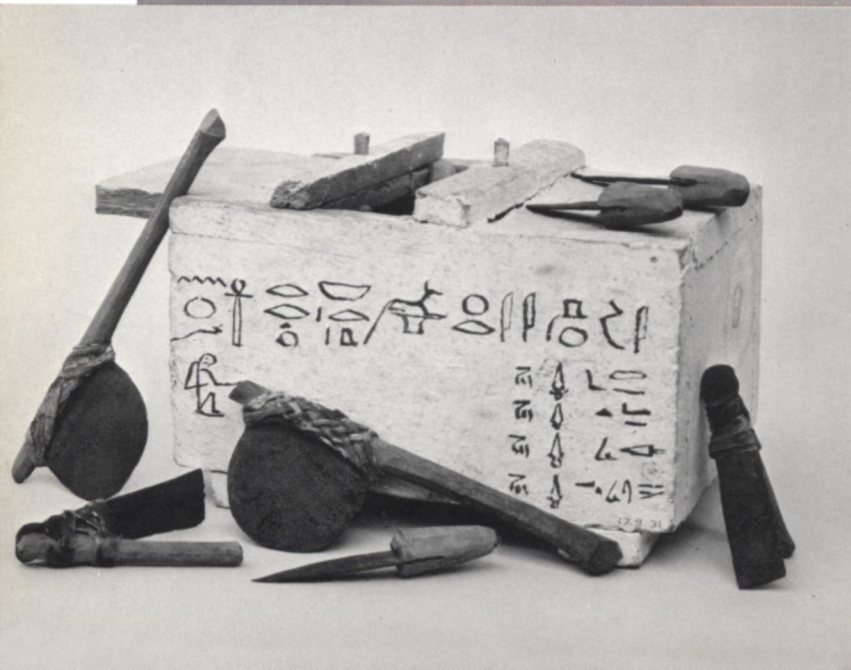


17. A folding stool. Its legs end in carved ducks' heads. The leather seat is missing





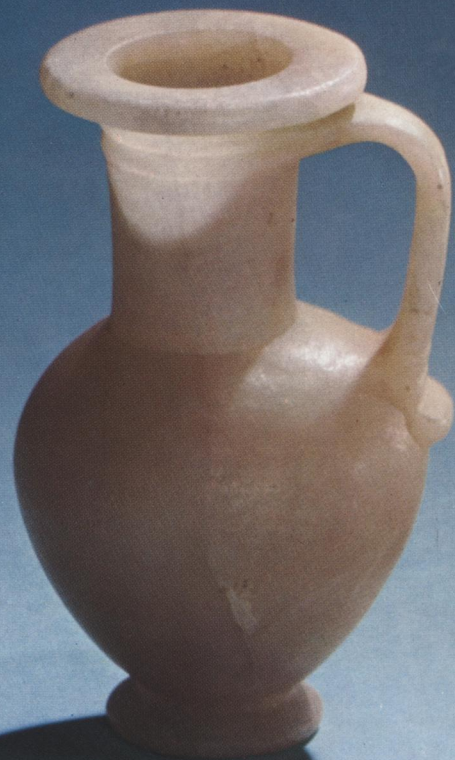
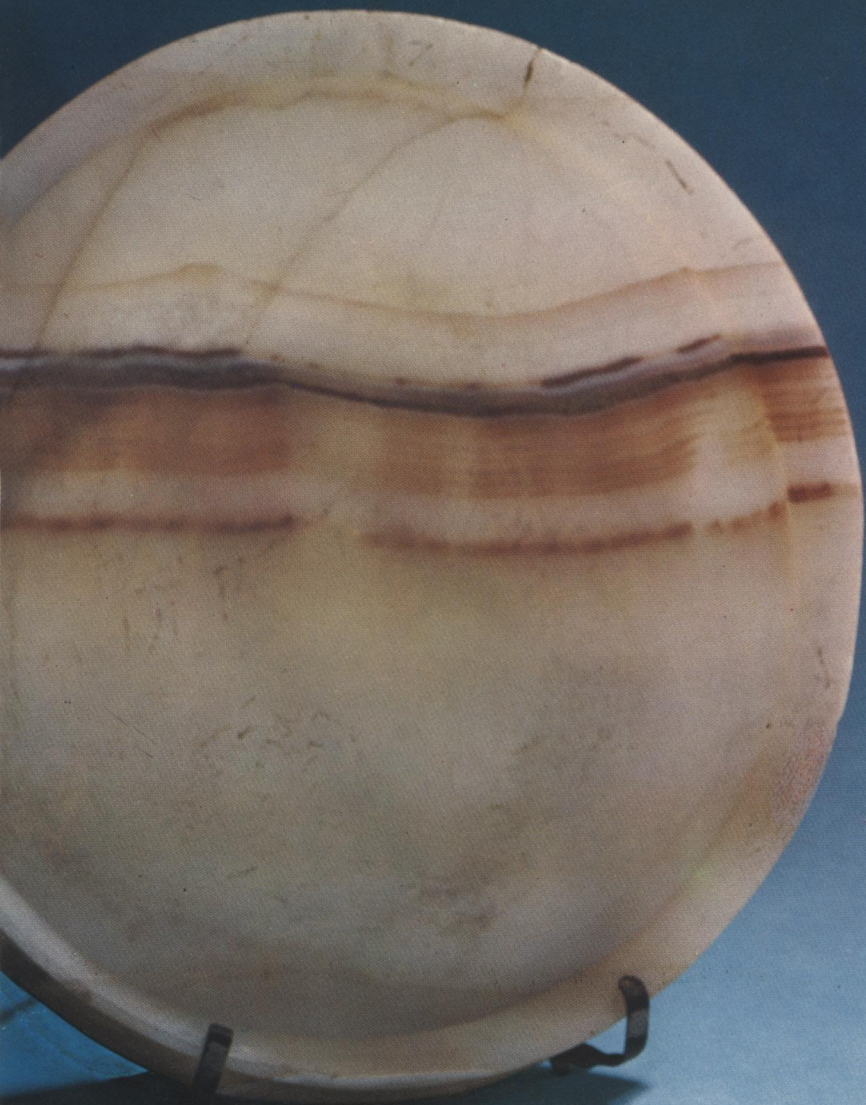
18. A boxwood and ebony chair. The god Bes and symbols of protection are carved on its back. The seat of linen cord is original. About 1490 B.C. Height 21 inches



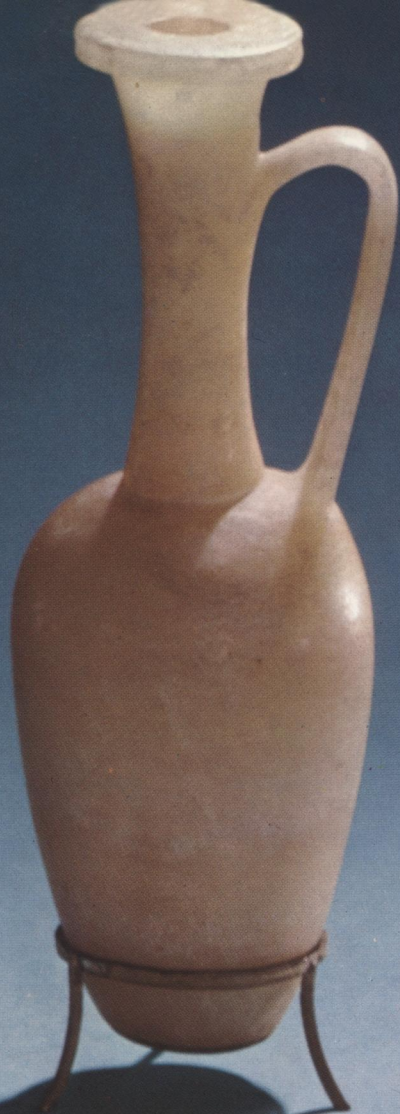
19. A chest of model carpenter's tools. They are listed in the inscription at the right; the owner's name, Ankhef, is at the left. About 1800 B.C. Height 5 inches

20. An alabaster headrest made for the burial chamber. About 2340 B.C. Height 7¾ inches



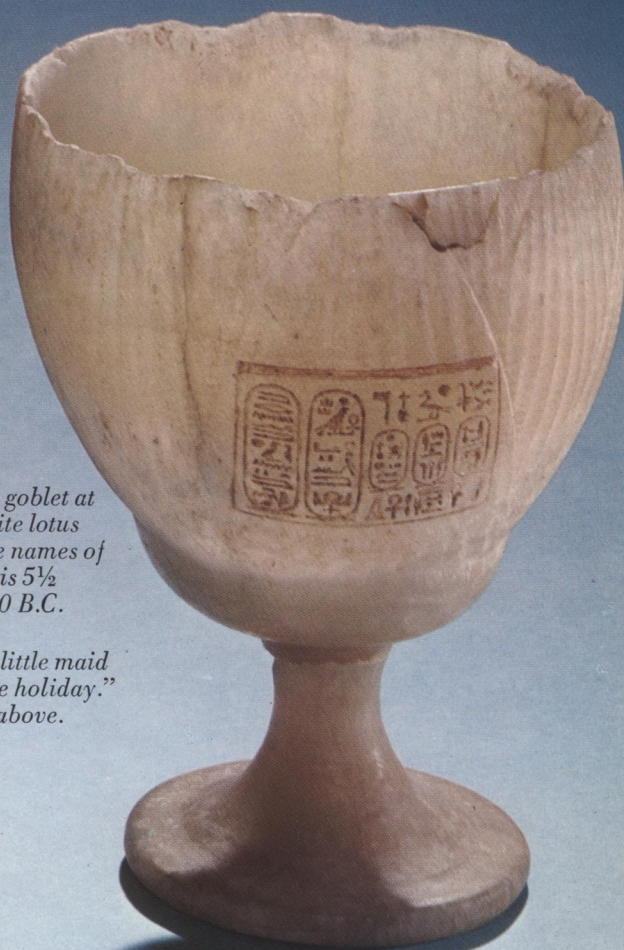


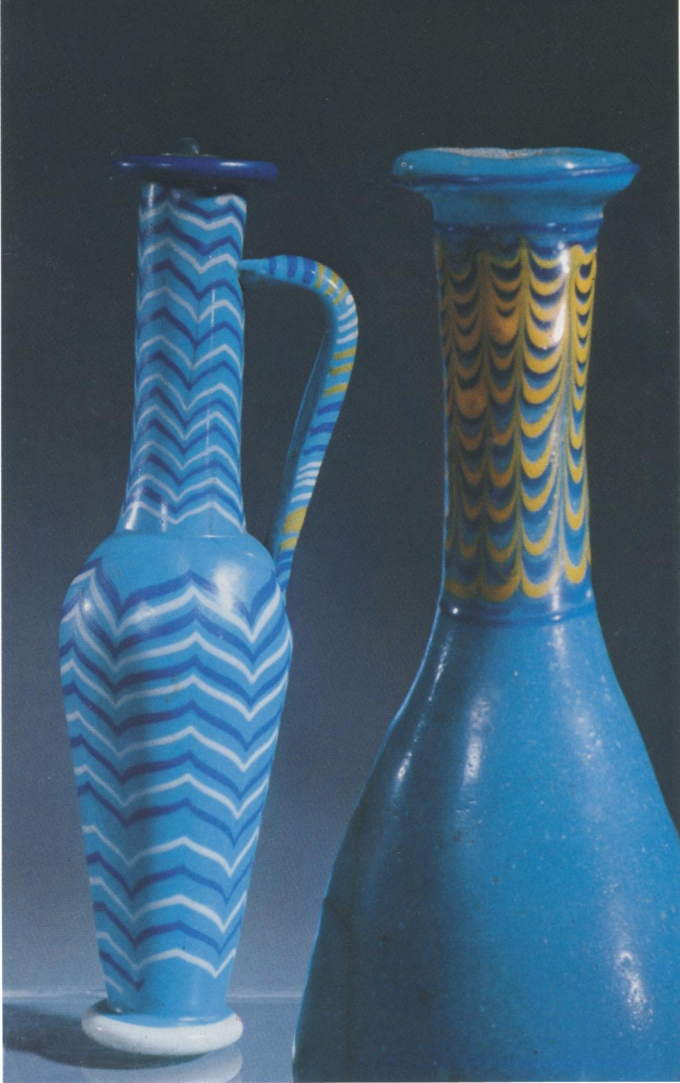
TABLEWARE



21. Alabaster tableware. The goblet at the right, in the form of a white lotus blossom, is inscribed with the names of Akhenaten and his queen; it is 5½ inches high. About 1450-1370 B.C.

22. A lady being served. The little maid advises, "For your soul. Make holiday." She holds a jug like the one above. About 1450 B.C.





23, 24. Tableware. The Museum's collection of glass and glazed ware is unsurpassed. It includes not only examples of great beauty but, because of the Egyptian Expedition's excavation of actual glass factories, numerous objects that illustrate the manufacture of such pieces — lumps of the material itself, crucibles, slag, rejects, and glass rods of many colors such as had been incorporated into the vessels shown in Figure 23 for decoration.

The two blue bottles are glass, as is the yellow bottle in the shape of a pomegranate. The footed dish and the bowl are faience. Height of bottle in background $7\frac{3}{4}$ inches, diameter of bowl 11 inches. About 1560-1090 B.C.



As the Egyptians had only primitive ways of lighting their homes they started the day early and went to bed soon after sunset. Dinner was probably in the middle of the day, and a light supper taken shortly before retiring.

The guests at an Egyptian meal did not sit down around one table. Important personages were given individual stands with their own supplies of food and drink. The less important laid their dishes on the floor beside them.

No cutlery was used at meals. The vessels in which food and drink were served were of a wide variety, but the different shapes had definite uses. For instance, the little maid in Figure 22 carries two jugs of the sort that held the strong essences added to food and drink as it was being served. The lady she is helping holds a dinner plate, and the footed dish shown below is of the type

used to hold the cones of scented ointment worn on the head on festive occasions.

Pottery vessels were the most usual; they were often of elegant shapes and sometimes were decorated with painted designs. Copper and bronze dishes were abundant since they were also used as a form of currency. Bright blue and green faience, glass of countless hues, and dazzling alabaster contrasted with gold and silver at the banquets of the wealthy. At meal-times servants took around pitchers and basins to wash the hands of the guests and "Turkish" towels to dry them.

Quantities of flowers were always to be found in Egyptian homes. Bowls and vases had special contrivances to keep the heavy blossoms of the lotus in place. Guests were presented with formal bou-

quets, and garlands were placed around their shoulders; sometimes these were made of brightly colored faience instead of real flowers (Figure 26). As he looked at the magnificence around him many a poor relation must have thought of the advice of Ptah-hotpe: "If you are a guest of one who is greater than you, take what he gives when it is set before you. Look at what is before you and do not stare at him. . . . Do not speak to him until he calls; speak when he addresses you."





25. Tableware of ladies of the court. Thutmose III had three minor wives to whom he gave almost identical equipment. Here are a gold bowl and cup, a silver goblet, and a goblet of glass imitating turquoise; no earlier glass vessel is known anywhere in the world.

The canister is of silver. The inscription states that it was "a present from the king to the king's wife, Martha." About 1460 B.C.



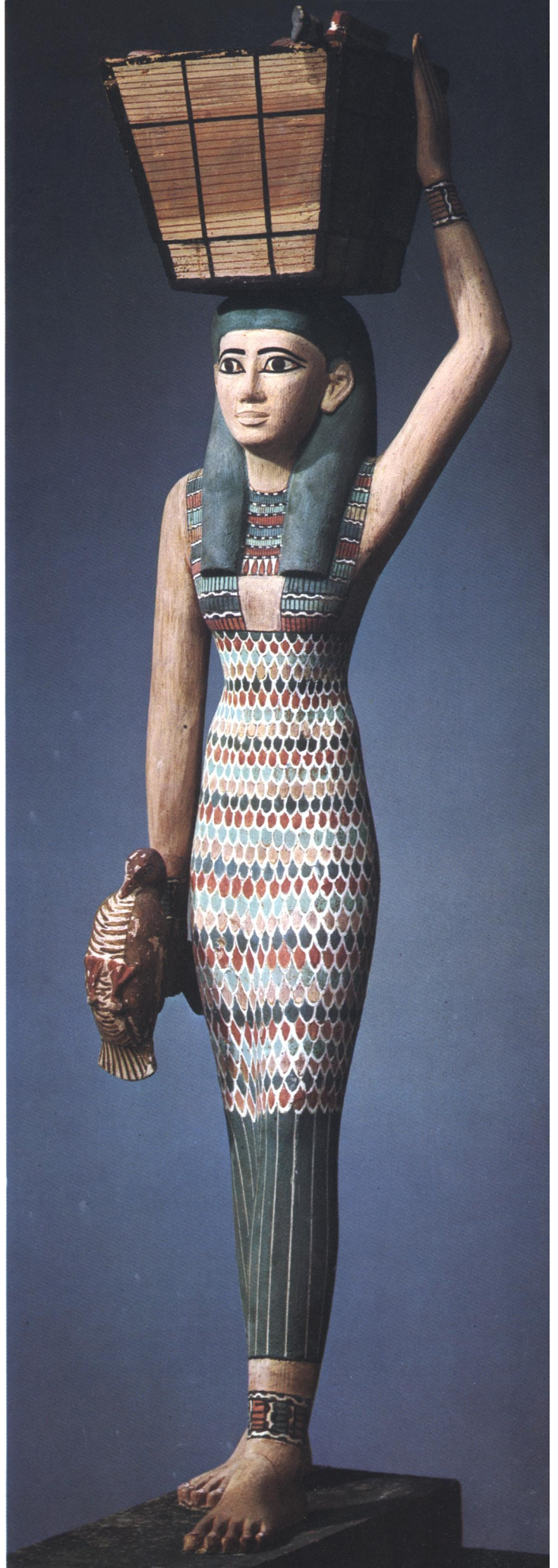


DRESS



26. A collar of polychrome faience. It represents rows of lotus petals, ripe and unripe dates, and cornflowers. About 1350 B.C. Diameter 12½ inches

27. A girl carrying cuts of meat in a box and a duck, produce of an estate of the king's chancellor, Meketre. About 2050 B.C. Height 44 inches





Before the Egyptians were ready to appear for the day, a great deal of care had been spent on their persons. The better houses had shallow baths in which the owner stood while water was poured over him; soda was the cleansing agent. To counteract the drying effect of the soda, and of the sun and dust, perfumed oils were rubbed into the skin. The eyelids were painted with kohl, which is antiseptic as well as decorative. Women colored their lips and cheeks with rouge, and stained their palms with henna. These cosmetics were kept in jars and boxes that were among the most highly prized products of the Egyptian craftsman.

Men were usually clean-shaven; both men and women used bronze razors and tweezers, which came in sets with hair curlers and gritstone hones. Wigs were often worn by both men and women, but some ladies preferred to pad out their own hair with false braids that were kept in baskets with sweet-smelling woods. Kerchiefs protected these elaborate coiffures from the dust. Combs and hairpins were used in dressing the hair. While her maid was arranging her locks the Egyptian lady admired herself in a mirror of polished bronze—or, if she was unusually lucky, of silver.

There were no dressing tables, and toilet articles were put away in special chests. The proper place for these was

under the bed, but often a lady is shown with one beside her chair, ready for a last-minute touching-up.

Since very few made-up garments have been preserved and because the evidence of the ancient paintings and sculptures is not reliable, our knowledge of Egyptian costume is incomplete. Artists drew the clothes of their subjects as they made the most attractive pictures, not as they really looked. Moreover, certain costumes were represented long after they had ceased to be fashionable for everyday use (just as our statesmen used to be shown in Roman togas); therefore we cannot be certain when styles changed. But as a rule we can say that new fashions originated in court circles and were gradually adopted by lesser officials and then by artisans, so that eventually the aristocracy felt it necessary to adopt other styles. The general tendency was toward greater and greater elaboration.

All the actual garments we know are linen. Egyptians wore woolen cloaks when necessary for warmth, but wool was never placed in the tomb.

The typical masculine garment was a skirt, or kilt, consisting of a straight piece of cloth twisted around the body and tied at the waist. The length, fullness, and methods of adjusting varied from time to time. Shirts, although not depicted until the Middle Kingdom, were worn at all periods, but the upper part

28. The wig of the Princess Nany. The locks, set with beeswax, are woven into linen string to form a caul, or cap, much like a modern wig. The wreath of persea leaves and lotus petals was found with the wig. (It is displayed on a cast of a head of Queen Nefretity.) About 1000 B.C.

29. A dish for cosmetics. It represents a swimming girl being towed through the water by her pet gazelle, whose body is hollow, forming a bowl. Alabaster and slate, about 1400 B.C. Length 9 inches





30. A mirror. The disk is of silver, the handle, representing the head of the goddess Hathor, sheathed in gold. About 1460 B.C. Height 13 inches



31. Fitted cosmetic chest of a court official, the butler Kemuny; it is of cedar overlaid with ebony and ivory. The lid and drawer were secured by a silver bolt and staples, and silver knobs. About 1795 B.C. Height 8 inches

32 (right). Cosmetic equipment of the Princess Sit Hathor Yunet. A mirror, hones and razors, and jars for eyepaint, rouge, and ointments, with a chest to hold them. About 1890 B.C. Height of chest 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. (The mirror is a reproduction of the original in Cairo)





33. An official of the New Kingdom and his wife. The man wears only a linen kilt, wrapped around him and tied in front. The lady's dress is one long piece of material, wrapped and tied and arranged, like her husband's, in soft folds or pleats. Both have full wigs and bare feet. 1300-1200 B.C. Height 6 inches

of the body was often left bare. In the New Kingdom both shirts and kilts became long and full.

Women of the Old Kingdom wore straight, tight slips held up by bands over the shoulders. Some dresses were colored, but white was more usual; occasionally a white dress had a patterned border. Often the suspenders were of beadwork to match the *parure* of collar, bracelets, and anklets that completed the costume.

In the Middle Kingdom women were still depicted in slips just like those they had worn a thousand years earlier, except that patterned materials are frequently shown (Figure 27). It is likely, nevertheless, that the more voluminous robes usually associated with the New Kingdom were already in vogue. But it was not until nearly 1400 B.C. that artists first showed the elaborately draped garments of diaphanous linen that continued to be the fashion thereafter. White clothing for both men and women was now the rule; this was often set off by colored sashes and brilliant jewelry. Footwear was limited to sandals of woven rushes or of leather; both men and women, even the rich, often preferred to go barefoot.

34. Clothing. A shawl, a head kerchief, a shirt, and two pairs of sandals, one a baby's. The kerchief (to protect the hair from dust and sand) is semicircular and ties at the back. The shirt, a child's, has ties at the neck and is fringed at the bottom. 1500-330 B.C.

35 (overleaf). The sculptor Ipy and his family. All wear the flowing costumes of the later New Kingdom, the women sari-like robes wrapped tightly the first time around, then tied in loose folds. Both men have voluminous kilts, Ipy's covered with a long, draped shawl, the son's with the leopard skin of his priestly office; both wear sandals.

Notice the ladies' jewelry, the garlands and bouquets of flowers, the ebony and gold chairs and wooden footstools, the wickerwork table, and, particularly, the cat with the silver carring and its less dignified kitten. About 1200 B.C.







RECREATION



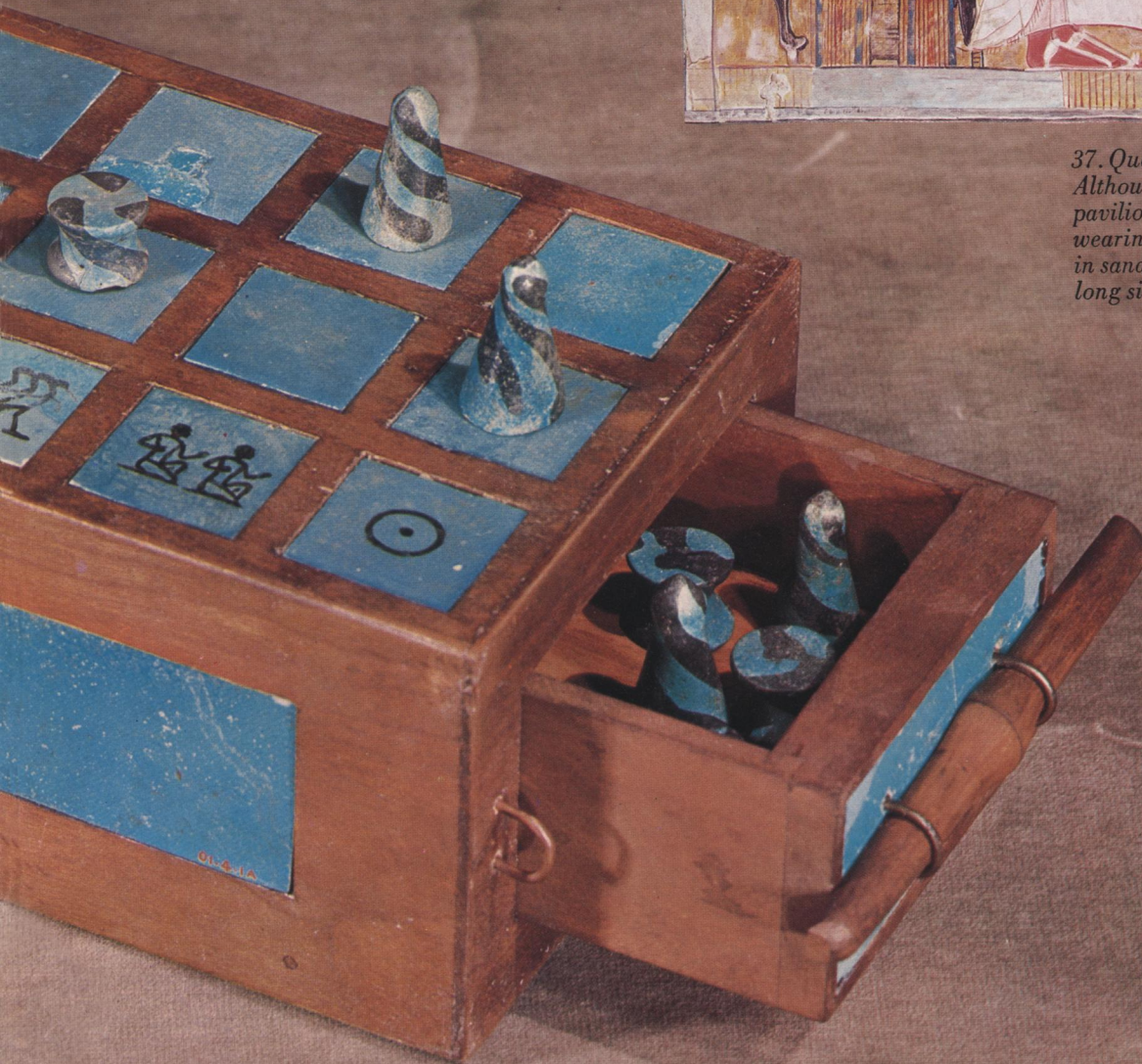
36. A board and pieces for the game of senet. The first five squares are inscribed with their names. Presumably the fourth square ("Water") was unlucky but the fifth is called "Very Good." Throwsticks (in the foreground, used like dice) and gamemen were kept in the drawer. Wood (restored) and blue faience. Throwsticks, ivory tinted rosy pink. About 1450 B.C. Length 15¾ inches



There were many attractive ways in which the busy Egyptian official could pass his spare time at home. Sometimes professional magicians, wrestlers, or storytellers were brought in to amuse him. Sometimes he laughed at the antics of a dwarf, the Egyptian equivalent of the medieval jester. More often he sat down to some quiet game such as *senet* with one of his family. This game, a form of which is still played throughout the Near East, required a combination of luck and skill. Each player had a set of men that he moved up and down the squares of the board according to the cast of knucklebones or throwsticks, used much like dice (Figure 36). Most of these boards were marked on the other



37. Queen Nefretiry playing *senet*. Although she is sitting in a light garden pavilion, the wife of Ramesses II is wearing her full regalia, and her feet are in sandals. In reality, players sat at the long sides of the board. About 1250 B.C.





38 (above). A little girl's treasures, buried with her. They include amulets for protection, a cheap faience ring, a string of shells, a single earring, odd beads, and the basket in which she kept them. About 1900-1800 B.C. Height of basket 2½ inches

39 (right). Hounds and jackals, a popular game, here played on an ivory board with a drawer to hold the gamepieces and knucklebones. It was found in the same tomb as Kemun's cosmetic chest (Figure 31). About 1795 B.C. Height of board 2½ inches

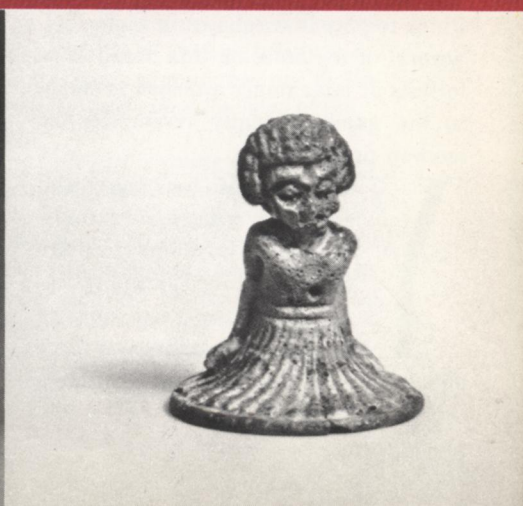
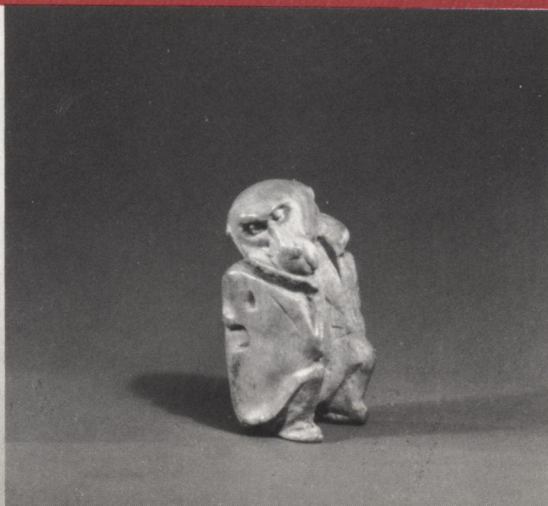
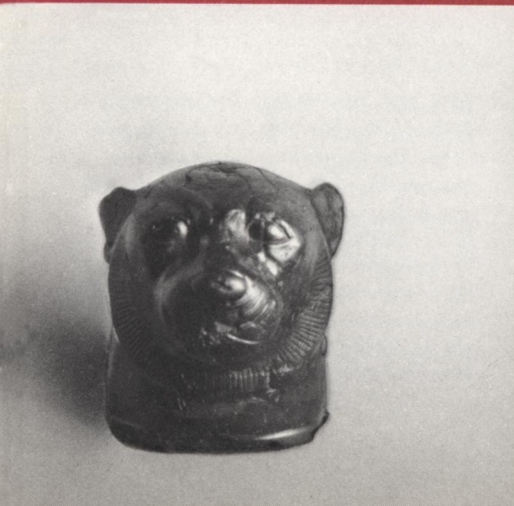
40 (below). An ivory saluki that opens its mouth to bark when the rod is pressed. The saluki is the royal hound of the modern Near East. About 1350 B.C. Length 7⅞ inches

41, 43 (below, right). "Dice" in the shape of monkeys. Each is a piece of ivory, first carved to resemble a real knucklebone and then recarved into its present form. Six-sided dice were not in general use until Roman times. About 900-700 B.C. Height 1⅜ inches

42. A red jasper gamepiece in the form of a lion's head. It is inscribed with Queen Hatshepsut's personal and throne names. About 1500 B.C. Height ⅞ inch

44. A gamepiece of molded faience, in the shape of a bound Nubian captive. About 1100-900 B.C. Height 1¼ inches







side for the game of “robbers.” “Hounds and jackals” and knucklebones with which to play it are shown in Figure 39. Several of the holes on this board have forfeits or advantages attached to them, so the game evidently resembled the modern parchesi.

Young people, too, were well supplied with amusements. Groups of boys and girls are often pictured playing together at the running and jumping games Egyptians still enjoy, and they had toys any mod-

ern child would understand and enjoy.

The inscription on a little ivory paint-box tells us that it was given by Akhenaten to “his own dear daughter, Princess Meketaten”; like the ivory hound in Figure 40, it was the product of a royal workshop. The hound is a mechanical toy: it opens its mouth when the rod that extends from the lower jaw is pressed. But probably these expensive ivory playthings were no more precious to their owners than the little basket of “treasures” a small girl would cherish today (Figure 38).

45. Outdoor recreations. Rich officials enjoyed hunting from a chariot in the desert, fishing or fowling from a light skiff (Figure 5), and, as above, pulling the ropes of a clapnet full of birds for the fowl yards of their estates.

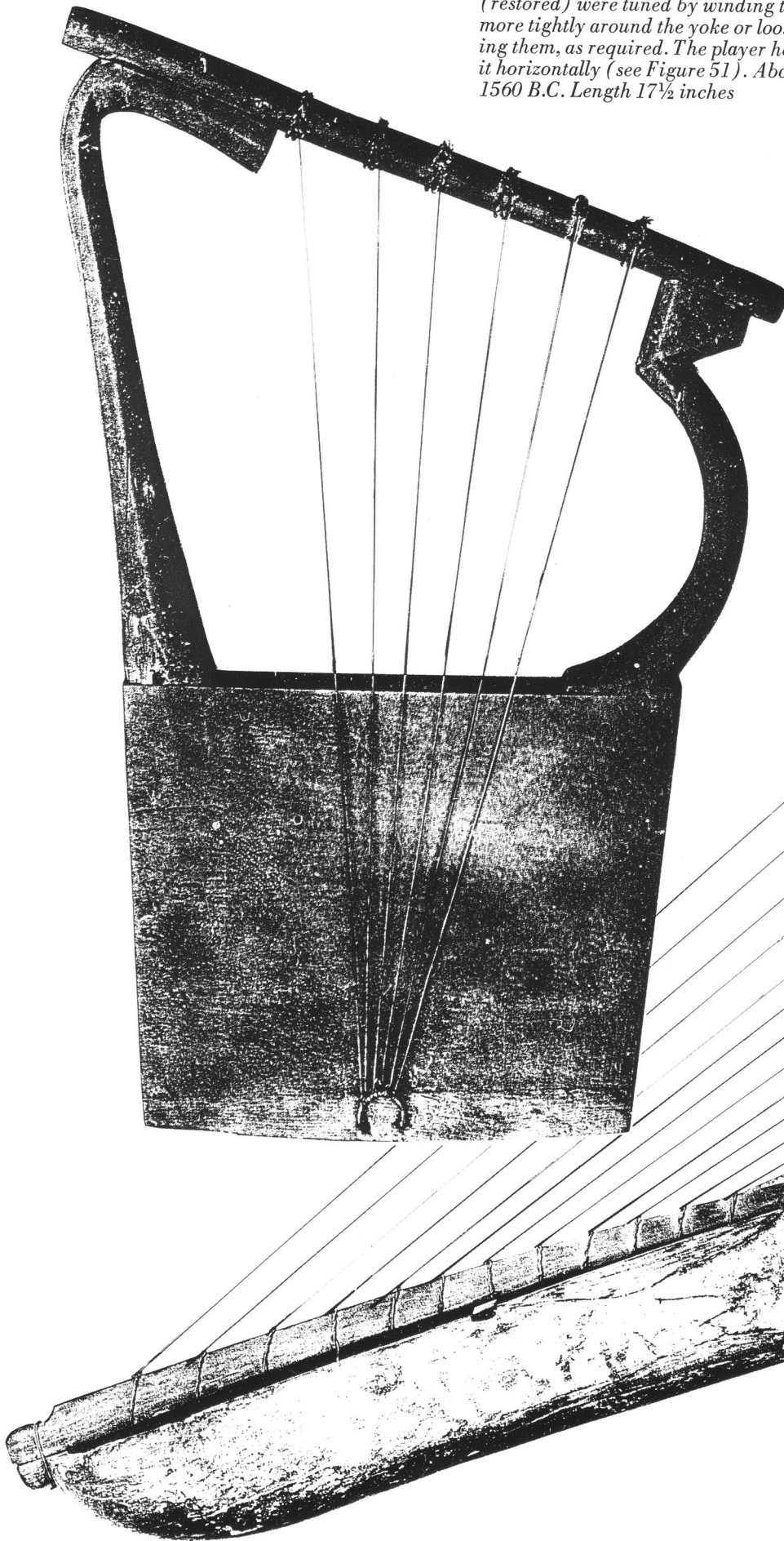
Here Prince Khnumhotpe is seated in comfort in a reed blind. It has peep-holes through which he has seen an assistant give the signal to close the trap. A mimosa tree grows at the edge of the water, and perched in its branches are a hoopoe, two kinds of shrike, and a redstart. About 1900 B.C.

46. Chancellor Meketre on the river. Like Khnumhotpe he sits comfortably in the shade, while members of his household, including a girl, spear fish and bring in birds for his supper, for this is an overnight expedition. The roof of the cabin is covered with matting that can be rolled up or down depending on sun and wind. Notice the rawhide shield on the cabin, ready in case of trouble from the shore. About 2050 B.C.



47. An oblique lyre. The strings (restored) were tuned by winding them more tightly around the yoke or loosening them, as required. The player held it horizontally (see Figure 51). About 1560 B.C. Length 17½ inches

48, 49. Two harps. The harp was the characteristic Egyptian musical instrument, derived originally from the hunter's bow. The earliest harps had broad, shallow soundboxes and, though not large, were played with the soundbox resting on the ground (right). Later harps had deeper, narrower soundboxes and more bend to the bow, allowing a greater number of strings. The example at the left is a shoulder harp. The pegs were not for tuning but to hold the strings in place (the harp was tuned in the same way as the lyre). About 1900 and 1200 B.C. Lengths 33, 32 inches 50 (below, right). Fragment of a leather hanging. This little painting shows a girl in a grape arbor playing one of the new large "standing" harps that rest on their own support on the ground. A standing harp of another sort is illustrated in Figure 51. About 1500 B.C. Width 7 inches



MUSIC AND DANCING

Music has always played an important part in the lives of the Egyptians. In ancient times large estates had their own companies of musicians and dancers, who made the owners' leisure hours more pleasant by their accomplishments. The less wealthy could hire independent troupes for special occasions.

We can only guess how this music sounded as there was no system of notation, the melodies being handed down from generation to generation just as they are in the villages today. In the Old Kingdom music must have been of a quiet nature, judging by the instruments used to produce it and the sedate way in which the musicians, most of them men, are pictured: they sit on the ground facing each other in pairs, each instrumentalist accompanying a different singer.

During the XVIII Dynasty, when Syria came under the influence of Egypt, the Egyptians were brought into contact with an exciting sort of music and the instruments with which it was played.



Orchestras of girls now appear frequently; many of them must have been brought back from Asia as captives. They were highly skilled and among their accomplishments was the ability to sing and dance as they played. Egyptian musicians must almost always have been professional, considering the amount of training involved, and the fact that music was not regarded as an entirely reputable occupation.

Dancing, like music, was the affair of professionals. It was not an expression of the emotion of the dancer but a means of inducing emotion in the onlooker. For this reason the feats of acrobatic skill of which Egyptian dancers were capable were almost always restricted to religious ceremonies, in which they were used in combination with the complicated ritual. A dance of graceful movement, like that of the central girls in Figure 51, was considered more appropriate for private parties.

Sometimes a musician's song is inscribed above his picture on the wall of a tomb; devout Egyptians believed that this secured its existence in the next world. Contradictorily, the most popular – "The Song of the Harper" – expresses a philosophy far removed from the doctrine that was the reason for its preservation:

Spend the day merrily!

Follow your desire as long as you live!

*Put myrrh upon your head and clothe
yourself with fine linen!*

*Put garlands on the body of your
beloved!*

*Set music before your face until
the day of mooring!*

*Spend the day merrily and weary
not thereof,*

For none can take his goods with him;

None that has departed can come again.

51. Music and dancing in the New Kingdom. Girls playing the harp, lute, oboes, and lyre; a small apprentice is in the center. About 1415 B.C.



The objects illustrated in this picture book are in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and were acquired through the donors and funds listed here. Gifts: Michel Abemayor; the Earl of Carnarvon; Theodore M. Davis; Egypt Exploration Society; Edward S. Harkness; J. Pierpont Morgan; Lila Acheson Wallace. Purchases: Ludlow Bull Fund; Fletcher Fund; The Guide Foundation, Inc., Gift; Edward S. Harkness Gift; Patricia R. Lassalle Gift; V. Everit Macy Gift; Rogers Fund; Henry Walters Gift.



