and wonderful powers ascribed to it. Indeed, men knew that they had gotten to the bottom of its mystery. Perhaps really it is a spirit: the initial revelation that the tuftum is not what it appeared to be now leads men to wonder if it is in fact something else entirely. A chain of doubt and significance is thus set off and nourished by a diet of secrecy, exclusion, terror, and wonder.

In short, the revelation that would seem to rob the tuftum of its mystery in fact enhances it. It becomes more mysterious. The revelation that it is not a spirit in a straightforward sense now implies that it may be a spirit in a more complicated way. When Lek men say the tuftum is a spirit, then, they mean that spirit, mask, and men's activity stand in a complex relation of doubt and knowledge, obvious deception and potential significance.

If it is a spirit, however, it is clearly not a spirit in the way women think it is, for we have seen that they are rigidly excluded from this realm. What do women make of this? They know they are not the ones who are excluded. Most, I suspect, recognize that the tuftum is not a spirit in the straightforward sense demanded by public propriety. They know men gather in the tuin, and thus it is likely that they recognize that men have something to do with the ritual figures. What they do not know is how men make them, and the connection between masks and men signifies. And this is a source of wonder and jealousy for women.

Exclusion of women and conscious trickery on the part of men is actually fundamental to the tuftum. If women were not interested in the tuftum, and if men did not have to work so hard to disguise their connection to it, much of the significance of the tuftum would be lost. Its rich meanings from this game of exclusion and partial disclosure. Thus, in the Duke of York Island, men say that women possess a kind of magic that enables a man to lose his mask on the grill (Erving 1974), forcing him to drop it while walking through the village. Men must consequently perform a counter-image and tightly grasp the mask when they produce tuftum. This exclusion of women is not the sign of male superiority it appears to be. If their exclusion from knowledge of the tuftum is more complete than men's, then themselves have only a partial or incomplete idea of its significance. Initiates can never know if they have been shown the true nature of the tuftum.

Even a tuftum owner must worry that someone else may elsewhere actually know more than he. The tuftum system is thus driven by necessarily incomplete knowledge, which allows the Lek—men as well as women who live and work in the tuftum area—to maintain their magical superiority.

The Earliest Pharaohs
and The University Museum
Old and New Excavations: 1900-1987

DAVID O'CONNOR

A discussion of the relics of these earliest pharaohs is especially appropriate in the Museum's Centennial Year, for the material is not only of great intrinsic interest, it also carries us back to the days when the Museum's energetic founders were developing major collections from several famous cultures and simultaneously linking the Museum with leading archaeologists of that time. It further brings us up to the present day, for last summer's joint sponsored expedition of The University Museum and Yale University to Abydos in southern Egypt initiated a new field project, exploring some of the important questions that remain to be answered about the monuments of Egypt's earliest historic kings.

A chronology of Pre- and Early Dynastic Egypt

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<tr>
<th>Dynasty</th>
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<td>Nagada I</td>
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<td>Archaic Period</td>
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<td>Dynasty I</td>
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<td>Dynasty II</td>
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<td>Old Kingdom</td>
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<td>Dynasty IV</td>
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<td>Dynasty VI</td>
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The Royal Tombs of Abydos

Abydos is an enormous site. Cemetery fields, temple ruins, and buried settlements sprawl over some 8 square kilometers of low-lying desert adjoining the river plain (Figs. 1-2). Far to the rear of the site, almost at the foot of the steep cliffs that form a curving bay around the site, is a comparatively inconspicuous area of ruins, locally long known as Unn el Qa'ab -"the mother of little potters"—because of the vast amounts of broken pottery covering them. While the site had been repeatedly disturbed in the past, the first 'excavation' of these ruins was by Amelineau, an archaeological speculator, in 1890. Having "scandalously misused" the excavation (Drower 1985:251), Amelineau planned to sell off the material allotted him. In order to protect the market value of his finds, he smashed duplicated material on the site.

Other scholars realized that what Amelineau had discovered were the royal tombs of the earliest dynasties of Egypt (he thought they antedated the First Dynasty), and the site was rescued by Petrie’s follow-up excavations in 1900 and 1901. Additional historical and architectural details still remain to be recovered, as a new German initiative (since 1977) at re-excavating Umm el-Qa’ab has shown. Nevertheless, it is still Petrie’s work that provides our fullest picture of the royal tombs and the
Expedition

View of northern Abydos from the riverplate; foreground, the north cemetery; on the left, the shallow valley leading up to Umm el Qa‘ab. The Pennsylvania Yale Expedition house is in the center left and further on, left of the house, is the site of the Early Dynastic Royal Tombs.

A brilliant 'court-culture' that produced them. The inscriptions he and Amélineau recovered showed that every king of the First Dynasty had a tomb at Umm el Qa‘ab; as did two rulers of the late Second Dynasty, Peribsen and Khasekhjemwy.

Architecture of the First and Second Dynasty Tombs

Throughout the First Dynasty the basic royal tomb type was a large, open pit, lined and subdivided by mud-brick walls and roofed with sturdy timbers (Fig. 3). An access stairway was introduced early in the dynasty. The earliest tomb of interest here (B17 and B18 on Fig. 4) has now been identified as belonging to Narmer by the German scholars Kaiser and Dreyer (1989). Narmer is often considered the first ruler to unify Egypt, based on the scenes shown on his ceremonial slate palette from Hierakonpolis (Fig. 5). Narmer's (T)'s tomb was small at about 50 square meters, but that of the next pharaoh, Aha, was much larger at 304 square meters and consisted of 3 separate brick-lined pits (B10, 15, and 19 on Fig. 4; Kaiser and Dreyer 1982). The remaining tombs are of similar scale but of ever increasing complexity. At the end of the dynasty, pharaoh Qaa'is tomb of ca. 354 square meters was subdivided into 13 chambers. The evolution of the Second Dynasty royal tombs cannot be traced, as most of its earlier rulers were apparently buried at Saqqara in as yet largely unreca-

nound above the burial chamber. Later superstructures are usually assumed to have been low (2-meter?), solid, square masses, consisting of brick-walled enclosures filled with rubble, but recent work indicates that the superstructures may have been even lower and more modest (Kaiser 1988: 247ff.; Kaiser and Dreyer 1982: 216-217, 250). Certainly, the Abydos tombs did not have the large, elaborately niched 'palace-façade' superstructures of contemporary tombs at Saqqara (Fig. 18). The latter continue to be identified by some scholars as the 'real' royal tombs, and in this view the monuments at Abydos were cenotaphs or dummy tombs. But certain unique attributes of the Abydos tombs (for example, the royal funerary stele, not found at Saqqara) show they are indeed the only royal tombs in the First and late Second Dynasties (Kemp 1966, 1967).

Petrie found that the underlying tomb chamber of Abydos had been repeatedly disturbed. Their wooden roofs and inner linings or chambers had been burnt in early times, and plundering (including Amélineau's) had been frequent. Some tombs had been partially refurnished in the 2nd and 1st millennia B.C. for religious reasons. Thus, in excavating pharaoh Den's tomb, Petrie found it had once contained "a great number of tablets of ivory and ebony"—tablets or labels bearing some of Egypt's earliest annalistic records (see below). Fragments of 18 had been overlooked by Amélineau's workers and were found in his spoil heaps, and an intact example had been stolen while Amélineau's excavations were in progress (Petrie 1900:11). Den's tomb, the resins and ointments (presumably stored in many stone vessels) had melted and run out during the fiery destruction of the tomb chamber. The oil vessels themselves were entirely absent, perhaps removed during a restoration of the tomb by pharaoh Amnis, who ruled almost 2000 years after Den's death! (Petrie 1901:10).

Despite these misadventures, a rich variety of artifacts, intact or fragmentary, survived to provide glimpses into Early Dynastic culture, and many are now in The University Museum. Examples of Egypt's earliest written documents include stelae of royal women and courtiers from subsidiary tombs around the royal graves. The advanced state of technology is shown by stone vases that are often beautifully carved; containers and implements in copper; and dozens of fragments of exquisitely carved ivory objects, as well as inlays for well-shaped wooden furniture. Typical of the artistic quality is a cosmetic dish in ivory, in the form of a charmingly rendered duck. Not from a royal but rather from an elite tomb at Abydos (M1), it was found "close to our house," says Petrie, "and ... by accident" (1900:28).

Flinders Petrie and The University Museum

Petrie and his organizational backer in England were extremely generous in allotting materials from the royal tombs of Abydos to The University Museum, and the artistic quality or historical interest of much is outstanding, as we shall see below. The other important collections of Early Dynastic
The ceremonial slate palette of pharaoh Narmer, from Hierakopolis. The scenes are believed by some to refer to the first national unification of Egypt under a single pharaoh.
Expedition

Ex prowess, often processed from the berries or resin of trees, formed a large proportion of the materials deposited in the royal tombs, as shown by labels, inscriptions on jars, and other evidence. It has even been suggested that oils—valuable, durable, and easily trans- portable—might have been one of the few items upon which a national tax was levied in Early Dynastic times (Kaplow 1963, 1:36). During the succeeding Old Kingdom, a wide variety of items came to be taxed.

Petrie himself found startling evi- dence for thelavish use of aromatic oils in the entrance ramp leading down into the tomb of pharaoh Semerkhet at Abydos. The ramp had been (partially?) filled “to three feet deep with sand saturated with ointment” (oil is the more likely medium). “Hundreds of weights of it must have been poured here, and the scent was so strong in cutting away this that it could be smelt over the whole tomb” (Petrie 1900). Exceptionally well preserved ex- amples deserve comment. The first (Fig. 11), measuring 9.4 by 7.0 centimeters, is amongst the largest known: most were 5 by 5 centimeters or less. Made of ebony, a rare wood imported from the Sudan, the label has an inscribed text picked out with red paint. It was found in two pieces: one lay in the tomb of Aha and bears his name; the second came from the adjacent tomb of Namer. The label’s purpose was to identify the contents of a container, so, like other examples, it is pierced in the upper right corner to facilitate at- tachment.

What is really important, however, is the description of the material contained in them. In the lowermost line this is identified as a certain amount of oil of a type called ‘fragrance of the god Horus’. This was obtained as a tax levied upon northern Egypt in a specific year of the reign of Aha. The year itself, as well as the custom until the Second Dynasty, was identified by specific events that occurred in it, listed in the three registers above. Interpretations of these difficult early texts vary, but in this case the text apparently de- scribes the making of a cult object and a royal visit to a temple (top register); other religious activities (second register); and finally the return of a sea-going expedition from Lebanon with a load of the highly desired, conferous meru

9 Closeup of Namer’s name on a stone jar (UM no. E3510). The name is enclosed in a ‘palace-talatat’ frame and surmounted by the dynamic falcon god Horus.

10 Funerary stela of pharaoh Qaa from his tomb at Umm el-Qa’ab (UM no. E6876; H. 1.43 m.).

11 Oil label of pharaoh Aha (UM no. E39396; 9.4 x 7.0 cm). (Photo: G. Daher)
wood. Similar abbreviated narratives occur on other labels. A long inscription on the 'Palermo Stone' contains a list of every regnal year from (probably) the time of Narmer to that of Nianirer (?), who ruled nearly 700 years later. Each year is described in the same fashion as on the labels, showing that the latter reflect a kind of annalistic recording of history going back almost as far as the invention of Egyptian writing itself (Bedford 1986:86-90, 130-136).

The other label is smaller; it is also later in date, exemplifying the layout and content typical on such items by the end of the First Dynasty. Made of ivory, it dates to pharaoh Qaa. Although it was found near the offering place on the east of his tomb (Petrie 1900:23), it may originally have been thrown up from the plundered tomb itself. By this time, the annalistic section of the inscribed text was reduced in content, and is framed by a year hieroglyph (curving at the top) on the right, and a vertical divider on the left. A "Following of Horus," a royal event of uncertain nature, is referred to. In the center of the label is found Qaa's name and perhaps that of a close relative (Kaplony 1963, 5.1699, no. 1615; a disputed interpretation). On the far left are the titles of an official, a 'worker of the god Min of the town of Ipy [modern Akhmim in southern Egypt], and medjeh-official of the medjeh-officials of the king of southern Egypt' (adaptation of Kaplony 1963, 1.290-301; the exact translation of medjeh remains uncertain). Below, the official's name and the type of oil involved would have been provided on a new missing segment. Officials responsible for collecting oil are often named on such labels; they were concerned also with collecting wood for ship building, a natural combination since many of the oils came from trees (Kaplony 1963, 1.300-301). It is references like these that have enabled scholars to start reconstructing the earliest known system of pharaonic government.

The royal court itself is documented on, amongst other items, small stone stelae from the subsidiary tombs surrounding the royal ones (Fig. 12). Petrie sent many such to The University Museum, and they include a well-carved example naming "the dwarf Nefer" (Fig. 13), who with a like-named dual function. She is associated with punitive judgment, and appears—again in cat-like form—on another First Dynasty bowl, actually walking up a structure which has been identified as a combination of the devices used by torturers and hangmen. Her other function is epitomized on the bowl discussed here, for the "house of life" in its inscription refers to the royal eating and food storage areas in the palace that Mafdet was believed to protect against harmful creatures such as snakes, and probably supernatural evils as well. In fact, it has been suggested that Mafdet was embodied in the cats who patrolled these areas, and if so, perhaps this bowl was theirs, their milk or water bowl! The real explanation is probably more prosaic: a bowl dedicated to the cult of Mafdet perhaps?

Another link between Mafdet and Abydos is worth quoting. In 1938 the eminent Egyptologist Alan Gardiner discussed the nature of Mafdet in the obser pages of the Journal of Egyptian Archaeology. In conclusion, he tried to decide whether Mafdet was a mongoose (a famous snake-killer) or a feline, which is what she tends to look like in depictions of her. He decided on the latter, in part because of two ladies who were then living in a dig-house at Abydos while they recorded the temple of Seti I at that site. "Miss Broome and Miss Calverly tell me," he wrote, "that their cat at Abydos killed seven horned vipers [a deadly snake] by first pouncing upon them with her claws and then biting them!" (Gardiner 1938:89-90). Mafdet revives!

The 'Fortresses' of Abydos and the Pennsylvania-Yale Excavations

The early excavations of Petrie, Amelineau, and others did not answer all the questions that we can ask about Early Dynastic royal funerary complexes. In particular, these excavations did not provide enough data for us to trace the continuous evolution of the royal tomb type from the comparatively modest tombs of the First Dynasty pharaohs (Fig. 7) to the much larger, entirely stone-built Step Pyramid complex of pharaoh Djoser in the Third Dynasty (Fig. 15). From the latter, the true pyramid complex (pyramid, funerary temple, causeway, and valley temple) of the Old Kingdom and later clearly evolved, although that story is not yet fully

12 Subsidiary burials of courtiers surrounding the First Dynasty grave rectangles at Abydos. (After Petrie 1925:pl. 13)

13 Stela of Nefer, a member of the court from Abydos. His title, "dwarf," is represented by an abnormally short armed and legged man (UM no. E9196; H. 35 cm, W. 21.5 cm). (Photo: G. Darrow)
documented either.

Emery, excavator of the elite Early Dynastic tombs at Saqqara mentioned above, argued that these were the origin of the Step Pyramid complex. His argument rested on his discovery that within the rectangular superstructure—with niched ‘palace-façade’—of these tombs was a brick-skinned mound built over the burial chamber; in one case, the mound even took the form of a high, stepped cube (Fig. 16). Over time, he hinted, the mound grew greater and rose above the level of the superstructure, which itself became hollow and extended outward to become an enclosure wall (Emery 1901:142-146). This view is still favored by distinguished experts such as Stadelmann (1985:33-34). As noted above, however, there are good reasons for arguing that only the Abydos tombs are royal. Given this last premise, the so-called Fortresses of Abydos assume considerable importance, both for our understanding of the Abydos tombs and, potentially, for the evolution of the pyramid complex in general. The ‘Fortresses’ and related entities nearby lie on the low desert about 1.7 kilometers north of Umm el Qa’ab (the royal tomb site), between the latter and the flood plain, which is almost a kilometer further to the northeast. One of the two ‘Fortresses’ was discovered by early excavators to consist of a brick-walled rectangle that had been severely denuded. The other, immediately on its south- east, is not only larger—it’s double enclosure walls define an area of about 1 hectare or just under 26 acres—but much better preserved. The massive brick walls of this structure, today called the Shemet el Zebib, still rise as high as 10 to 11 meters, about 30 feet (Figs. 17-18).

Since 1904 this structure has been dated to pharaoh Khasekhemwy of the late Second Dynasty, and is therefore about 4700 years old. It is probably the oldest standing example of large-scale, monumental brick architecture in the world, in the sense that most of it has always remained free of encroaching desert debris. The denuded enclosure dates to the time of Khasekhemwy’s predecessor, Pepy I.

The Shemet had been explored with little result in the 19th century, and in 1924, both it and Petrie’s monument were better but still comparatively superficially excavated by assistants of Petrie. In 1921-1922 Petrie himself worked in a contiguous area, attracted by the discovery of First Dynasty tombs there. He located the traces of two smaller brick enclosures, one with surrounding subsidiary graves, and both dated to the First Dynasty. To the northwest of these enclosures he found two sets of subsidiary graves, each set laid out to form a hollow rectangle, respectively of 1 hectare and about .75 hectare in area. These grave rectangles dated to pharaohs Djer and Den. No enclosure walls were found within the rectangles, but Petrie’s excavation strategy may well have missed the demarcated remains (Petrie 1925:1-3; Kemp 1966).

It was long been clear that none of the enclosures are fortresses, but otherwise debate continues about their functions. Generally, however, it is accepted that both they and the grave rectangles are funerary in nature and connected to the royal tombs of Umm el Qa’ab. The size and comparably unique characteristics of the enclosures (which are not found at Saqqara, the other supposedly royal tomb site) help to emphasize the royal status of the tombs. One especially intriguing suggestion is that the grave rectangles of Djer and Den may have had within them wooden rather than brick enclosure walls, and that every enclosure including the brick ones originally contained a complex of buildings in wood, matting, and mud plaster. In plan, the hypothesized complexes built of organic materials may have anticipated to varying degrees the complicated pattern of temples, shrines, and courts found around the Step Pyramid of Djoser (Kaiser 1960). The Shemet el Zebib, after all, antedates the Step Pyramid only by some 40 or 50 years, and the traces of such ephemeral structures may well have been missed by the early excavators, particularly as each entity was severed by later tombs and later graves as well as denudation.

It is the enclosures that bring our story to bear: the Pescatore, by the Yale Expedition to Abydos, directed by myself and William Kelly Simpson of Yale University, has now initiated a project for the re-examination and re-study of these important yet in many ways still enigmatic monuments. In February and March 1986 I directed a short but intense feasibility study of the Shemet, the Petrie enclosure, and the Djer grave rectangle, and the results clearly justify the continuation of the project on an expanded scale. The results of this first season will be described in more detail elsewhere, but some of the most important are summarized here.

First, the Shemet wall itself was resurveyed, and detailed plans and elevations were produced; these will be improved upon in the next season. Second, the interior of the Shemet was carefully mapped in order to locate the principal areas of earlier disturbance by the 19th and early 20th century excavations (Fig. 18). We now know that large areas remain comparatively undisturbed, and even the heavily pitted areas may yet preserve important information on the interstices between the pits. Third, excavations were undertaken. A substantially built brick building in the east corner had
The desert surface upon which the enclosure walls were built could still be traced.

A small excavation within the southeast side of the Djer grave rectangle (an area certainly not tested by Petrie, who made a map of his sondages in this rectangle; Petrie 1905 [E.5, PL.1B] encountered another intriguing feature: the duned bazed floor of a brick wall, located just north of where an enclosure wall would be expected! If this wall had been excavated in 1904, but the results were very summarily described. Nevertheless, the excavators had suggested that both the building and the Shuset a wall of sand that had been built by pharaoh Khasekhemwy (two mud sealings bearing his name were cited as evidence), and that significant activity continued through the Third and Fourth Dynasties, and as late as Dynasty VI (Ayrton et al. 1904:3). In fact, a later (also poorly recorded) excavation yielded additional sealings of Khasekhemwy and Djoser (Kaplon 1963, 1:165-166). The Second Dynasty date therefore seemed secure, even though the context of the sealings remained unclear. Our re-excavation of the front third of the building provided new information on both the date of construction and later use of the Shuset. But in situ debris in front of the building, Khasekhemwy sealings were recovered, and for the first time were stratigraphically linked to the earliest phase of the Shuset's history. Large quantities of pottery sherds were recovered, which dated only to the late Second and early Third Dynasties; activity in this area dating to the Fourth through Sixth Dynasties therefore remains unattested.

Excavations in the north corner were even more intriguing. Here a floor surface that apparently dates to the time of the Second Dynasty was located, and it may be possible to trace this surface through those parts of the enclosure that were not previously excavated. This early surface will undoubtedly be cut by pits filled with large deposits of sand; buried (often in jars) throughout the Shuset during the earlier 1st millennium B.C. Part of one such deposit was excavated last season, and others were encountered earlier excavators. Nevertheless, much of the Second Dynasty surface, and hopefully traces of the structures that once stood on it, may well survive.

Test excavations within the Peribsen enclosure revealed a situation very similar to that in the Shuset. Here, too, in situ material, including sealings, survived in association with an eastern building (also excavated earlier, see Ayrton et al. 1904:3), and...