

# An Elusive Shape within the Fisted Hands of Egyptian Statues

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## THE PROBLEM

NO FEATURE OF EGYPTIAN SCULPTURE has so often perplexed its present-day admirers as the peglike objects that are held in the fisted hands of male statues. This curious detail first appears in the right hand of the limestone statue of *Hm-iwnw* in Hildesheim, dating to the reign of Cheops (Figure 1),<sup>1</sup> but it is absent in that of the slightly earlier statue of *Rc-htp* in Cairo (CG 3). Beginning, then, in the second reign of the Fourth Dynasty, its use extends throughout the Old Kingdom and down through the entire course of ancient Egyptian history, until, at length, it is carried over into the series of archaic Greek kouroi.<sup>2</sup>

There is fairly general agreement on one point: these objects are particularly characteristic of statuary in stone, a material that does not lend itself to attenuated projections such as the staff and baton that are often held by men as represented in relief and—as separate attachments—in standing statues made of more resilient material, notably wood. Such elements could, of course, have been represented in stone by showing them

FIGURE 1  
Right hand of the statue of *Hm-iwnw* (photo: courtesy Roemer-Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim)



1. Roemer-Pelizaeus Museum 1962. For this detail I am indebted to Dr. Arne Eggebrecht. See also Junker, *Giza*, I, pp. 153–157, pls. 18–22.

2. See Gisela M. A. Richter, *Kouroi* (New York, 1942) p. 5, and the reference to Anthes at end of note 4, below.

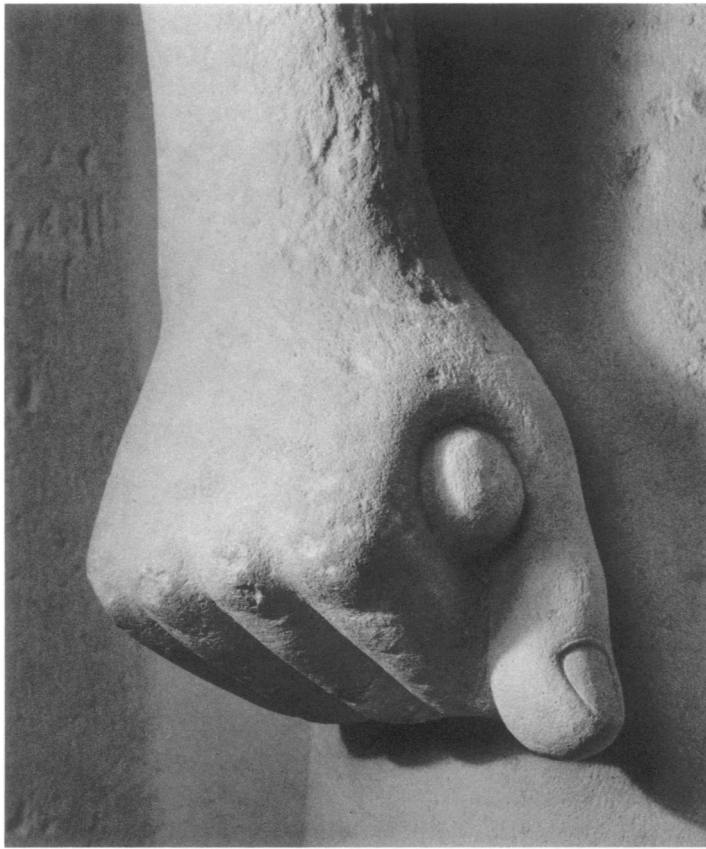


FIGURE 2

Right hand of the statue of *B3-b3.f*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 64.66.2

FIGURE 3

*B3-b3.f* from rear

close to the body, as was done in the case of the Third Dynasty statues of *Zp* in the Louvre.<sup>3</sup> But this solution imposed a stiffness of attitude that was subsequently avoided by sculptors of any competence. The Egyptian statues of the Old Kingdom and later are usually relaxed, assuming an attitude that might, with greatest ease and comfort, be maintained for eternity. The resultant disengagement of the limbs meant, in turn, that the connective areas currently described as “negative space” (or more appropriately by the German “Zwischenraum”) were used to a greater extent and



3. André Vigneau, *Encyclopédie photographique de l'art, I: Musée du Louvre*, (Éditions “Tel,” Paris [1935]), pl. 6.

with increased resourcefulness. It was in the Fourth Dynasty that the characteristic reinforcement now termed a “back-pillar” was supplied, in contrast to the aforementioned statues of *Zḥr*, which lack it.

Consequently the peglike objects have frequently been regarded simply as another manifestation of “negative space.”<sup>4</sup> As a rule, however, they form rounded projections at both ends (Figures 2, 3),<sup>5</sup> whereas the areas of negative space are characteristically cut back to a lower level than the elements they reinforce. The back-pillar cannot be cited as a comparable exception because, although it is sometimes painted black (i.e., the color applied to negative space) along with the upper surface of the base in standing statues,<sup>6</sup> it may also, in the case of seated limestone statues, be painted red in imitation of wood or granite, along with the rectangular block on which the figure is seated.<sup>7</sup> More significantly, in the case of a number of standing statues the back-pillar is painted red<sup>8</sup> or yellow<sup>9</sup> (the latter

more clearly in imitation of wood) in contrast to the black surface of the base. This adjunct was accordingly regarded as a concrete, supportive element, fully justifying its modern designation.<sup>10</sup>

Of the alternative explanations for the elusive shape, the most persuasive is one that Spiegelberg proposed in 1906,<sup>11</sup> and which has been reiterated in recent years. Comparing standing statues of stone and wood, Spiegelberg concludes that the peglike objects in the hands of the former are a truncated version of the staff and baton that are held by the latter. In recent publications they are sometimes described as “emblematic staves,” a term initiated by Bernard V. Bothmer.<sup>12</sup>

If the functional reason for the usage is beyond question, and if it also seems highly likely that a specific object is represented, it is nonetheless impossible to agree with Spiegelberg’s explanation, for it incurs an objection that has not—to my knowledge—been raised against it previously,<sup>13</sup> but is nonetheless conclusive.

4. Borchardt, *Statuen und Statuetten* p. 6 (no. 5): “Hohlräume der Fäuste”; p. 8 (no. 7): “Hohlungen in den Händen.” F. W. von Bissing, *Denkmäler ägyptischer Sculptur*, text (Munich, 1914) no. 4: “Hohlraum der Faust.” H. Schäfer in Schäfer and Andrae, *Die Kunst des alten Orients* (Berlin, 1925) p. 44. George Steindorff, *Catalogue of the Egyptian Sculpture in the Walters Art Gallery* (Baltimore, 1946) p. 6. Elisabeth Staehelin, *Untersuchungen zur ägyptischen Tracht im Alten Reich* (MÄS 8, 1966) p. 161. See also Rudolph Anthes, “Affinity and Difference between Egyptian and Greek Sculpture and Thought,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 107 (1963) p. 64: “Since this bit of stone was meaningless otherwise, we must assume that it was left for either technical or aesthetic reason, or both.”

5. A typical Fifth Dynasty example from Giza. Other examples are occasionally rounded in front only (CG 18, 24, 47, 52) or show no projection (CG 70, 126, 132, 178, 180, 192, 211, 235). Such cases are very much in the minority, however.

6. About 18 examples noted by Borchardt: CG 5, 6, 47, 54, 55 (seated), 77, 81, 88, 90 (?), 97, 98, 100 (seated), 111, 129, 132, 133, 158, 212.

7. About five examples noted by Borchardt: CG 22, 44, 91, 94 (?), 101.

8. Five examples noted by Borchardt: CG 20, 125, 278, 284, 372. In two other cases this element is blue gray, imitating darker stone (CG 143, 205).

9. Six examples noted by Borchardt: CG 23, 50, 51, 96, 99, 151.

10. In some cases it is replaced by a wall-like backing (CG 18, 19, 20, 29, 47, 52, 89, 90). This, like the narrower back-pillar, does not always extend above shoulder level, and for that reason Bernard V. Bothmer is inclined to doubt that back-pillars were simply intended as structural support (Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, *Egyptian Sculpture of the Late Period* [New York, 1960] p. xxxiv). In at least one New Kingdom statuette, representing Amenophis III, the back-pillar is carved to represent the hieroglyph meaning “stability” and “permanence” (𓏏): MMA








30.8.74; W. C. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt*, II (Cambridge, Mass., 1959) p. 237, fig. 142.

11. W. Spiegelberg, “Der ‘Steinkern’ in der Hand von Statuen,” *Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l’archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes* 28 (1906) pp. 174–176. His view is accepted by Anwar Shoukry, *Die Privatgrabstatue im Alten Reich* (ASAE Suppl. No. 15 [Cairo, 1951]) p. 129.

12. “A Wooden Statue of Dynasty VI,” *BMFA* 46 (1948) p. 34; more extensively discussed in “Notes on the Mycerinus Triad,” *BMFA* 48 (1950) p. 15; there is no mention of Spiegelberg in either case, and the idea is put forward as a new one. So also Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, *Egyptian Sculpture of the Late Period*, p. 10. J. Vandier, *Manuel d’archéologie égyptienne*, III (Paris, 1958) p. 19, refers to Bothmer’s view and partially agrees: the object in question is described as “un bâton, très court, mais probablement moins court que sur les statues égyptiennes.” The same view is followed more explicitly by E. L. B. Terrace in Terrace and Fischer, *Treasures of Egyptian Art from the Cairo Museum* (London, 1970) p. 48.

13. The only detailed argument that has been presented against it is that of Staehelin, *Untersuchungen zur ägyptischen Tracht*, p. 161; she adduces the allegedly dark color of the objects and the fact that women sometimes hold them. Although, in my opinion, the example shown in her fig. 3 is not of ancient manufacture, valid examples are to be found in a Hildesheim statue (G. Roeder, *Die Denkmäler des Pelizaeus-Museums zu Hildesheim* [Berlin, 1921] fig. 10) and CG 135 (cf. B. Hornemann, *Types of Ancient Egyptian Statuary*, IV [Munksgaard, 1966] no. 1056), as well as in one of the Mycerinus triads (Cairo J. 46499: G. A. Reisner, *Mycerinus* [Cambridge, Mass., 1931] pl. 45). In some other cases it appears in the hands of prisoners (esp. Cairo J. 51729, although this feature is not apparent in G. Jéquier’s *Le Monument funéraire de Pepi II*, III [Cairo, 1940] pl. 47 [right]), or a child (Leiden D.125: P. Boeser, A. and J. Holwerda, *Beschreibung der ägyptischen Sammlung I: Denkmäler des Alten Reiches*, Atlas [The Hague, 1908] pl. 24). And the object is also

In all of the extraordinarily abundant evidence for ancient Egyptian iconography there is not a single comparable example of symbolic abstraction. One of the most salient aspects of pharaonic art, in fact, is its adherence to concrete and naturalistic detail. This point is most strikingly attested by the fact that hieroglyphic pictographs continued to be employed for monumental inscriptions, despite the virtually simultaneous development of hieratic, which tended to become more abbreviated and cursive. As the individual hieroglyphs demonstrate, the Egyptian artist was willing to isolate parts, to combine them as seen from different points of view, and to alter their scale and proportions. But the result is consistently clear and recognizable, and the departures from retinal reality were generally designed for precisely that reason—to produce greater clarity and comprehension.

The hieroglyphic representation of one of the alleged “emblematic staves” is a case in point. The sign  alters the proportions of width and length in order to differentiate the two ends as distinctly as possible—one knobbed (i.e., larger and bulbous, with a beveled edge), the other flat and narrower. It is hardly possible that this truncated form would not appear in the hands of statues if it had actually been intended, particularly if one takes account of the very close interrelationship of Egyptian art and hieroglyphic writing. The so-called emblematic staves not only fail to make the distinction between the two ends of the alleged staff, but also fail to distinguish the staff from its supposed counterpart, the scepter, the end of which is shaped quite differently; in hieroglyphs these are given equal length, but are contrasted as follows:   (Figure 4).<sup>14</sup> Furthermore the peglike objects sometimes appear in the hands of kings, and in this case one would have to suppose the elimination of a further distinction between a staff and mace ( ) or between the crook and flail ( ) .

Although Spiegelberg does not overlook the important consideration of color, his observations on this score are meager and rather suspect. That shortcoming is understandable, for descriptions of polychromy on

statues are sadly deficient even in recent publications, such as Junker's *Giza*, and it is by no means easy to identify traces of pigment under ordinary lighting conditions in museum installations. For this reason, my own observations are also limited, but, taken together with the observations made by Ludwig Borchardt in his *Statuen und Statuetten*, the evidence seems sufficient to indicate a range of possibilities that evidently excludes the staff and baton from further consideration.

Borchardt's observations are clearly affected by the fact that he considered the peglike object to represent the “hollow of the fist” and therefore merely “negative space.” Unless he observed definite traces of color on the rounded ends, this detail evidently received no attention, and, conversely, it is impossible to say to what extent he observed traces of pigment on these areas when he states that in general the negative space of a certain statue is black. In some instances—such as CG 20—the surface of the limestone seems to have been left unpainted in contrast to the surrounding dark reddish paint on the hand itself, but Borchardt's sole description of a similar distinction is that of CG 145, which specifies “freie Räume, mit Ausnahme der Höhlungen der Fäuste.” In addition to these two cases, Borchardt records that thirteen statues have peglike

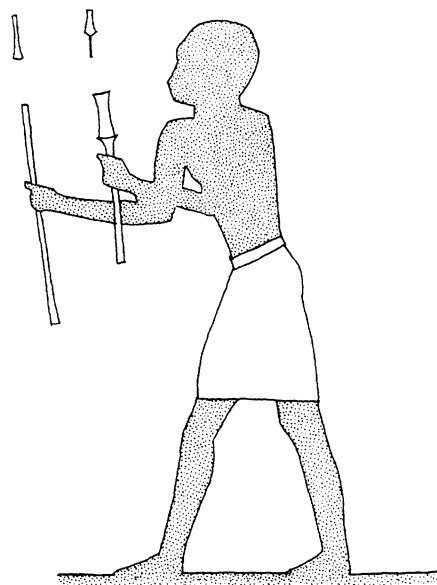


FIGURE 4  
Offering bearer holding staff and scepter. After Newberry

occasionally found in the hands of naked boys and youths: MFA 06.1881 (*HESPOK*, pl. 24 [d]); CG 143, Cairo J. 57019; Junker, *Giza*, VII, pl. 10.

14. From an early Middle Kingdom procession of offering bearers: P. E. Newberry, *Beni Hasan*, II (London, 1893) pl. 7.

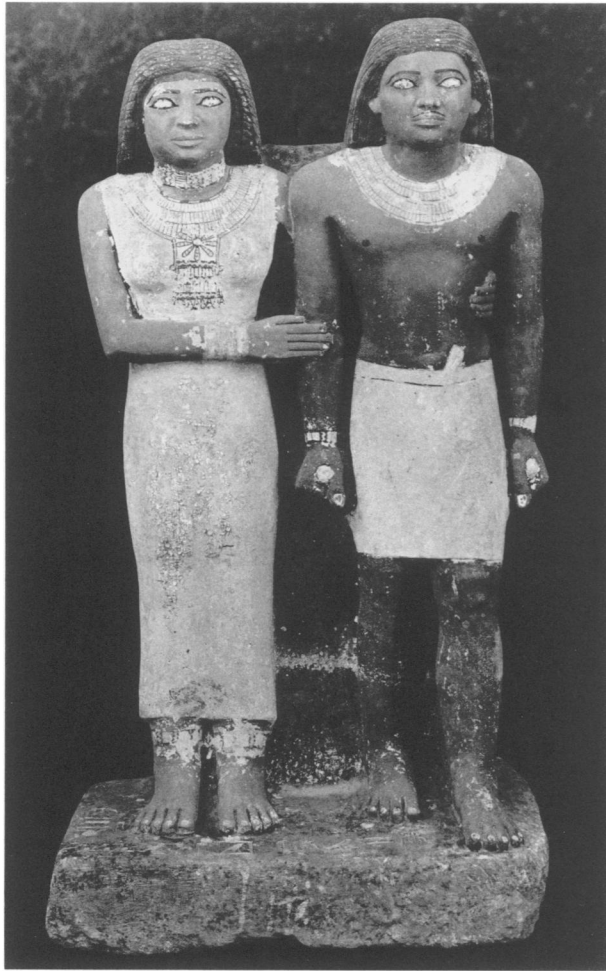


FIGURE 5  
Statue of *Msi* and *Snw*. Cairo J. 38670. Excavation-record photograph, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (photo: courtesy Museum of Fine Arts)

objects that are white, while the negative space is black (CG 80, 88, 98, 101, 129, 133, 151, 185, 191, 192), unspecified (CG 60, 370), or white (CG 219).

From my own observation I have noted that the peglike objects are similarly white (or, in the case of limestone statues, unpainted) in many instances: Brooklyn 53.222; MFA 06.1876, 06.1885,<sup>15</sup> 12.1484 (probably),<sup>16</sup> 21.2598,<sup>17</sup> 31.777,<sup>18</sup> 47.1455;<sup>19</sup> Univ. Mus. E 13515,<sup>20</sup> 14301;<sup>21</sup> Cairo J. 38670 (Figure 5),<sup>22</sup> 66618,<sup>23</sup> 66619,<sup>24</sup> 87804.<sup>25</sup> A few more examples may be found in publications: Univ. Calif. 6-19775,<sup>26</sup> statues in the tombs of *'Irw-kj-Pth*<sup>27</sup> and *Mrr-w(.i)-kj(.i)*<sup>28</sup> at Saqqara (with white negative space in both cases),<sup>29</sup>

Hildesheim 418,<sup>30</sup> and the statue illustrated in J. E. Quibell and A. G. K. Hayter, *Teti Pyramid, North Side* (Cairo, 1927) pl. 29, where the objects in question are much lighter in contrast to the red hands and the yellow goffering of the kilt.<sup>31</sup>

In a few other cases the peglike objects are the same hue as the dark red or reddish brown hand that holds them, but, in contrast to the foregoing cases, these are more probably to be explained as negligence on the part of the painter: MFA 21.2596, 21.25999; Univ. Mus. E 2551 (?); Cairo J. 66620, CG 27, 28. In the last case the color is described as yellow brown, again matching the skin, but I have not personally observed any that are black.<sup>32</sup> I know of no certain cases where the objects are yellow.

15. For MFA 06.1876 and 06.1885, *HESPOK*, p. 69; the latter illustrated in pl. 24 (c).

16. For MFA 12.1484, *HESPOK*, pl. 21 (d).

17. For MFA 21.2598, *HESPOK*, p. 74.

18. For MFA 31.777, *HESPOK*, p. 76.

19. Not pale yellow as described by Bothmer, *BMFA* 46 (1948) p. 34.

20. See Alan Rowe in Clarence Fisher, *The Minor Cemetery at Giza* (Philadelphia, 1924) pp. 135–136, pl. 42.

21. Unpublished: standing limestone statue of a man named Khenu, purchased in 1925 and said to come from Saqqara.

22. See *HESPOK*, p. 69 pl. 24 (b). The photograph is published with the permission of Dr. Wm. K. Simpson.

23. Hassan, *Giza*, I, pl. 70.

24. Hassan, *Giza*, I, pl. 73.

25. Hassan, *Giza*, V, pl. 53 (A).

26. H. F. Lutz, *Egyptian Statues and Statuettes in the Museum of Anthropology of the University of California* (Leipzig, 1930) p. 23 (referring to pl. 34 a).

27. B. de Rachewiltz, *The Rock Tomb of Irw-Kj-Pth* (Leiden, 1960) frontispiece and p. 9. More clearly seen in Cyril Aldred, *Egypt to the End of the Old Kingdom* (London, 1965) fig. 100.

28. Mereruka, II, pl. 148.

29. The use of white “negative space” evidently tends to occur in the case of statues that, like these two examples, are located within niches; so too BM 1165, which also has white objects in the hands: E. A. W. Budge, *British Museum: A Guide to the Egyptian Galleries (Sculpture)* (London, 1909) p. 21, and T. G. H. James, *Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae* I, 2nd ed. (London, 1961) pl. 4. In this case, however, the base of the niche is painted red.

30. Hans Kayser, *Die ägyptischen Altertümer* (Hildesheim, 1973) color plate 2, p. 47.

31. Other examples of this kind might also be cited; Abdel-Moneim Abu-Bakr, *Excavations at Giza 1949–1950* (Cairo, 1953) pl. 50; Junker, *Giza*, VI, pl. 17; in neither case is the color described in detail.

32. W. Wolf so describes CG 19 (*Die Kunst Aegyptens* [Stuttgart, 1957] p. 158) but this does not coincide with my own observations or those of Borchardt, who says the color is red, matching the surrounding color of the skin.

If the objects in question represented staves, one would certainly expect their color to be yellow in most cases, although red might also be considered a secondary possibility. And the large proportion of white examples (those listed above add up to at least thirty-two) would be totally unexplained. This proportion evidently greatly exceeds the relatively rare incidence of white as the color of negative space; Borchardt notes five or six cases of white negative space,<sup>33</sup> as compared with ninety-nine that show the normal use of black.

It may be added that Heinrich Schäfer seems to be the only scholar who has previously characterized the color of the “elusive shape” as white,<sup>34</sup> but Perrot and Chipiez and their German translator, Richard Pietschmann, were evidently of the same opinion, for they identified the object in question as a roll of papyrus<sup>35</sup> and as a loop of cloth.<sup>36</sup> These explanations, although they have long since been discarded,<sup>37</sup> deserve closer consideration.

## THE PROPOSED SOLUTION

The form of the “elusive shape” is displayed most clearly in a few seated statues that turn the fistled hand so that both rounded ends are outlined upon the lap. Examples like Figure 6 confirm the concrete reality of

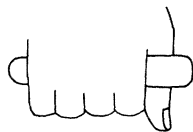


FIGURE 6

Right hand of statue of *Pth-špšš*. CG 164. After Borchardt

this object;<sup>38</sup> if it seems improbable that the rounded protuberances would represent negative space in free-standing sculpture, it is altogether inconceivable that negative space would assume such a form in relief, against a flat surface. The predominantly rounded ends also exclude the possibility that the object ordinarily represents a roll of papyrus, although that possibility is suggested by some two-dimensional representations of standing statues,<sup>39</sup> as well as by a seated statue that exceptionally shows this object as a white cylindrical shape with flat ends.<sup>40</sup> It must, of course, be admitted that the convention, once it had become established,

could occasionally have been reinterpreted in more than one sense.

But the only object in the repertory of Old Kingdom iconography that corresponds to the more usual form of the “elusive shape,” both in contour and color, is a bolt of cloth, as represented by the hieroglyph  $\equiv$ . This sign is explained as a “garment” in Gardiner’s Sign List,<sup>41</sup> but is actually a folded length of linen, and it is accordingly rounded at both ends as compared with the hieroglyph  $\parallel$ , which shows a cloth that is only partly folded.<sup>42</sup> Both modes of representing cloth appear in Old Kingdom scenes that depict linen being delivered by the weavers and their supervisors (Figure 7).<sup>43</sup>

A handkerchief in the form of  $\parallel$  is often seen in the hands of two-dimensional representations of the tomb owner, and it is apt to replace  $\equiv$  in the right hand of seated statues, where the free ends of the cloth can be readily displayed in relief upon the surface of the kilt, as noted earlier.<sup>44</sup> In the case of standing statues, the

33. CG 18, 27, 31 (?), 37, 49, as well as 219, mentioned earlier. Even more rarely the color is red or red brown (CG 8, 44) or gray blue (CG 649).

34. H. Schäfer, *Von ägyptischer Kunst*, 4th ed. (Wiesbaden, 1963) p. 52.

35. G. Perrot and C. Chipiez, *Histoire de l’art dans l’antiquité*, I (Paris, 1882) p. 655.

36. Perrot and Chipiez, trans. Pietschmann, *Geschichte der Kunst im Alterthum: Aegypten* (Leipzig, 1884) p. 855 (Anhang zu S. 595). This view is cited and rejected by Bissing, *Denkmäler ägyptischer Sculptur*, text, no. 4.

37. The interpretation as a roll of papyrus has again been suggested fairly recently, however, by Henri Wild in “Statue de Hor-néfer au Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lausanne,” *Bulletin de l’Institut français d’Archéologie orientale* 54 (1954) p. 174.

38. Borchardt says CG 164 and 177 are the same. The same is also true of CG 649 and Hassan, *Giza*, I, pl. 70 (Cairo J. 66618); II, pls. 19, 21 (2, 3).

39. Most clearly in Junker, *Giza*, XI, fig. 99, p. 248. Cf. *Mere-ruka*, I, pls. 29, 30, 39 (the latter perhaps an incomplete representation of  $\equiv$  as in the figure shown above it), and LD II, pl. 64 bis (b), where the object appears to be rounded at either end.

40. MFA 06.1885, cited among the white examples presented earlier (note 15, above).

41. Adapted from N 18; this follows S 26 in the Sign List (A. H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3rd ed. [London, 1957] p. 507).

42. Sign List S 29.

43. From LD II, pl. 103 (a); also reproduced by Junker, *Giza*, V, fig. 10, p. 49. Another example is in A. M. Blackman and M. R. Apted, *The Rock Tombs of Meir*, V (London, 1953) pl. 15.

44. CG 9, 10, 14, 15, 17 (all Chephren), 26, 30, 41, 46, 49, 55, 63, 67, 69, 84, 123; Hassan, *Giza*, II, pls. 1, 2 (3, 4); Junker, *Giza*, VI, pl. 7; Cairo J. 48076; Louvre A 43.



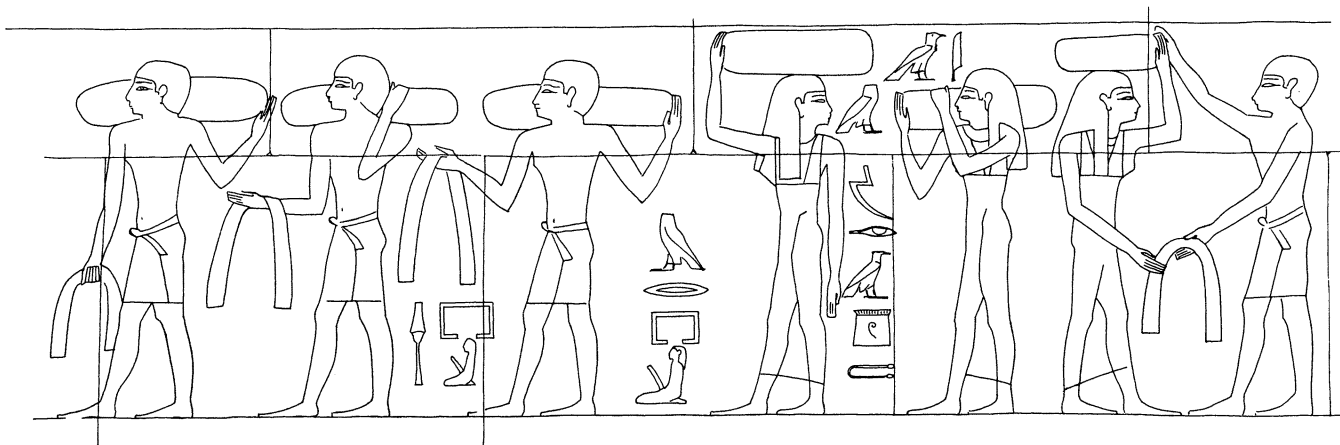


FIGURE 7  
Relief from tomb of *Pth-htp*, Saqqara. After Lepsius

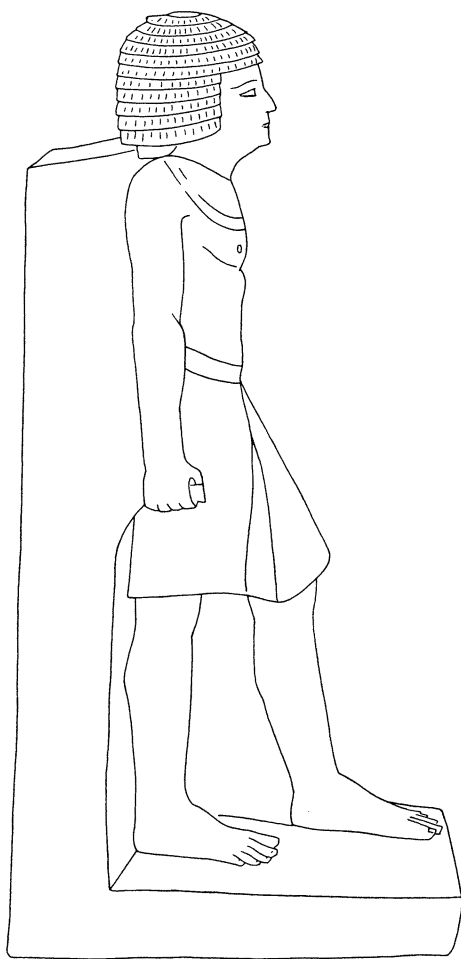


FIGURE 8  
Statue of *R'-wr*. Cairo J. 66622. After Hornemann

pendant ends of this style of handkerchief are generally avoided unless the statue is made of a material such as wood, which permits projections to be introduced with less danger of breakage. But in at least two standing statues of stone the same form is suggested by making a curved connection with the back-pillar (Figure 8).<sup>45</sup> Another stone statue, in the Metropolitan Museum, more surprisingly makes the same connection by extending the object in the hand straight backward, and this evidently represents  $\equiv$  rather than  $\parallel$  (Figure 9).<sup>46</sup>

Both representations of cloth, as seen in the hands of statues, are "hieroglyphic" in that they reduce a flat object to a thin strip—Figure 10, a, b instead of c, d. The thin strip then assumes a tubular form when transferred to three dimensions. In view of their hieroglyphic aspect, they may well display that disregard of scale that is particularly characteristic of hieroglyphs, although it also pertains to Egyptian art in general, which is itself an extension of the hieroglyphic system. While relatively small handkerchiefs were doubtless used on some occasions, representations such as Figure 11<sup>47</sup> show that a much larger cloth was carried,

45. B. Hornemann, *Types of Ancient Egyptian Statuary*, I (Munksgaard, n.d.) no. 125. Also Cairo J. 66616, Hornemann, V (Munksgaard, 1966) no. 1361. Front views of both appear in Hassan, *Gtza*, I, pls. 21 (Cairo J. 66622) and 22 (Cairo J. 66616).

46. Another view is shown by H. Fischer, "Redundant Determinatives in the Old Kingdom," *MMJ* 8 (1973) p. 14, and by Nora Scott in "Memy-Sabu and His Wife," *BMMA* (1948-49) p. 96.

47. From Selim Hassan, "Excavations at Saqqara 1937-1938," *ASAE* 38 (1938) p. 520, pl. 96. See also Vigneau, *Encyclopédie photographique de l'art*, I, pl. 27. The tomb owner is also shown with such a cloth over the shoulder: LD II, pls. 9, 12 (same in Hassan, *Gtza*, IV, fig. 77, p. 135), 19, 106; Junker, *Gtza*, II, fig. 22, p. 156; also Stachelin, *Untersuchungen zur ägyptischen Tracht*, p. 194 and notes

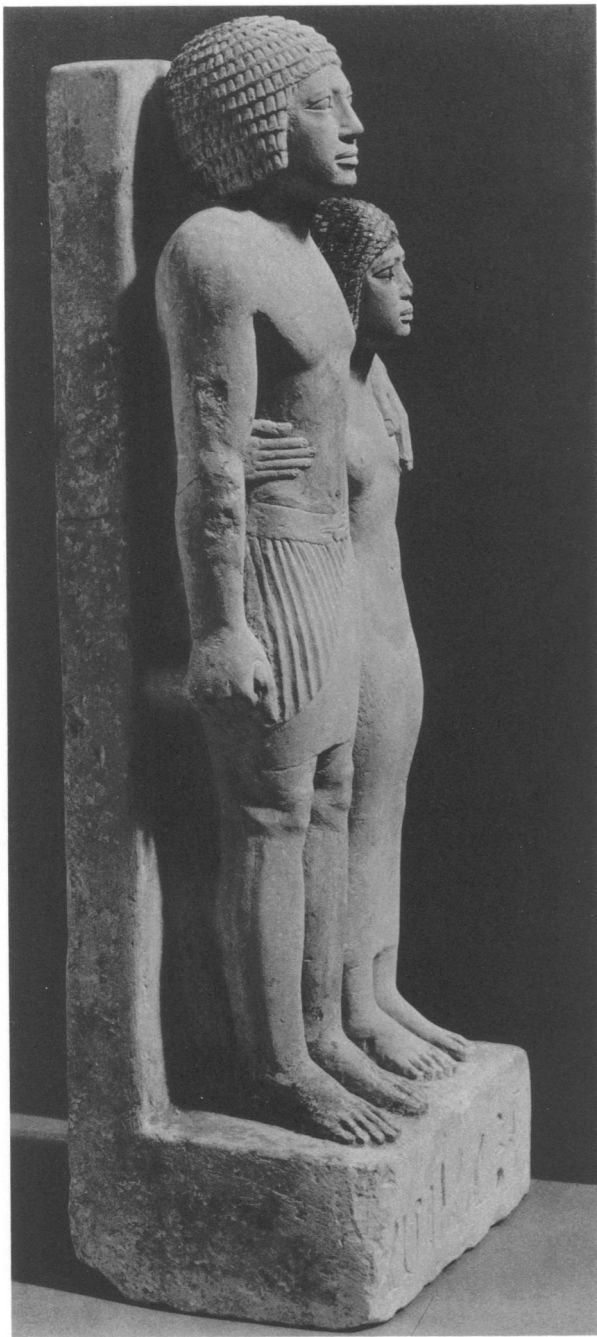



FIGURE 9

Statue of *Mmi/Šbw* and his wife. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 48.111

slung over the shoulder. A relief from one of Mariette's mastabas at Saqqara, illustrated here for the first time (Figures 12–14),<sup>48</sup> shows a cloth of this size that has been folded up and placed under one arm. The lower edge of the folded cloth is broken at the rear, and partly restored with plaster; but a portion of the original surface of the stone is visible only a short distance below the break, and from this it is evident that the cloth did not originally show a pair of pendant ends, curving downward. It is apparently the exact counterpart, on a larger scale, of the object that is under discussion.<sup>49</sup>

The date of this relief is probably no earlier than the mid-Fifth Dynasty, but there is every reason to believe that the hieroglyph , representing a bolt of cloth, was familiar to sculptors in the early Fourth Dynasty, when it made its first appearance in the hands of statues. The earliest evidence derives from offering lists, where it figures among the various determinatives

6, 7. This use of the cloth reappears in Ramesside tombs (N. de G. Davies, *Two Ramesside Tombs at Thebes* [New York, 1927] pl. 37; N. de G. Davies, *Tomb of Nefer-hotep at Thebes, I* [New York, 1933] pl. 27), which also show a folded cloth used as a head covering (*Nefer-hotep, I*, pls. 16, 47; N. de G. Davies, *Seven Private Tombs at Kurnah* [London, 1948] pl. 30).

48. Published with the kind permission of the owner, Dr. Endre Ungar of Mexico City. From Mariette's B4: see A. Mariette, *Les Mastabas de l'Ancien Empire* (Paris, 1889) pp. 95–96, where the titles may be seen more completely. The left jamb measures 40 × 124.2 cms., the right 37.5 × 126.5. The location of tomb B4 is discussed by W. S. Smith in G. A. Reisner, *Development of the Egyptian Tomb* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936) p. 398. For the unusual pair of tabs that project below the kilt of the right-hand figure, see Staehelin, *Untersuchungen zur ägyptischen Tracht*, p. 15 and note 3. For the belt on the leopard skin of the left-hand figure, see the same work, p. 45, note 7; also James, *Hieroglyphic Texts*, I, 2nd ed., pls. 3 (3), 12 (2).

49. One might be tempted to regard this as the scribal kit called a *hryt-r*, literally "that which is under the arm (or hand)"; but such kits are generally less elongated, and made of wood (W. F. M. Petrie, *Medum* [London, 1892] pl. 13; M. A. Murray, *Saqqara Mastabas, I* [London, 1905] pl. 2); furthermore, they were evidently too large to be placed under the arm, as shown by representations of a man carrying one on his shoulder, S. Curto, *Gli Scavi Italiani a El-Ghiza* (Rome, 1963) fig. 7, pl. 7; LD II, pl. 105 (2); *ASAE* 16 (1916) p. 259.

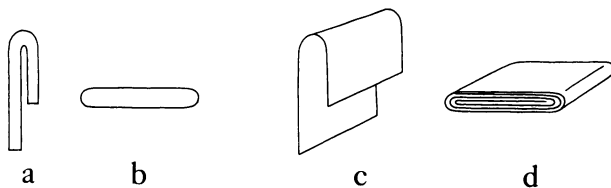
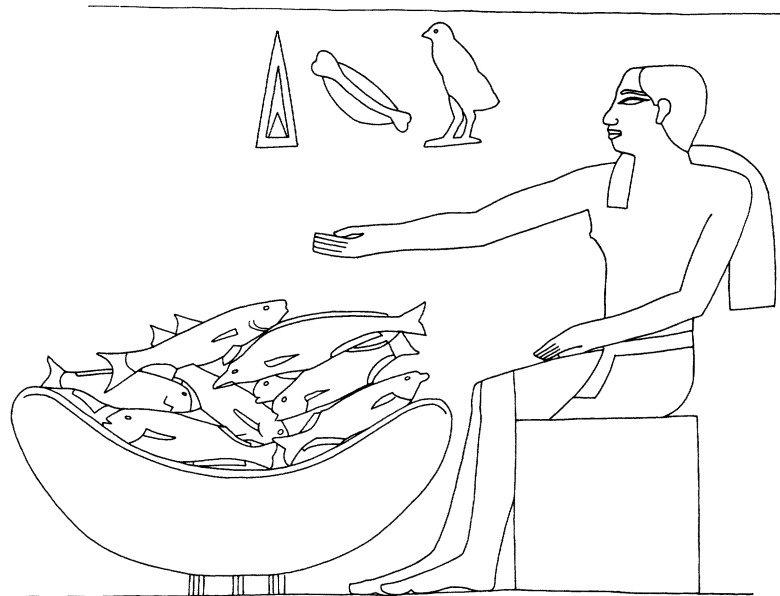


FIGURE 10

Hieroglyphs representing folded cloth, with perspective interpretation



FIGURE 11  
Relief from Unis pyramid causeway. After Hassan



of  $\overline{\text{𓆎}} \overline{\text{𓆏}}$  (Figure 15).<sup>50</sup> Some of the variants show an elongated rectangular form, probably representing a chest or pile of cloths, as is seen more clearly from later Old Kingdom representations of bolts of linen (Figure 16).<sup>51</sup> A few early examples show a tie at the center, and in some cases the determinative is reduced to the tie alone:  $\overline{\text{𓆎}}$ . Some sort of binding, at the ends or at the center, is also applied to the form  $\overline{\text{𓆏}}$ , as again illustrated by detailed representations.<sup>52</sup> This form is applied not only to *szf* but also to several other terms for cloth in the Abu Sir papyri, dating to the end of the Fifth Dynasty.<sup>53</sup> It is particularly well known in  $\overline{\text{𓆏}} \overline{\text{𓆎}} \overline{\text{𓆏}} \overline{\text{𓆎}}$ , *dsiw*, a word that is first attested in the Sixth Dynasty and is generally taken to mean “kilt” but primarily means “bolt of cloth.”<sup>54</sup> From the Eleventh Dynasty onward *dsiw* is written ideographically as  $\overline{\text{𓆏}} \overline{\text{𓆎}}$ . The hieroglyph in question also appears

50. Fig. 15 a: Zaky Y. Saad, *Ceiling Stelae in Second Dynasty Tombs* (ASAE Suppl. No. 21 [Cairo, 1957]) no. 19, pl. 23. Fig. 15 b: *Ceiling Stelae*, no. 25, pl. 30. This earliest attested example of  $\overline{\text{𓆏}}$  occurs relatively late in the series of Helwan stelae, and most probably belongs to Dyn. III; see Drioton’s comments in the same work, pp. xv, xvi, and P. Kaplony, *Die Inschriften der ägyptischen Frühzeit* (*Ägyptologische Abhandlungen*, 8 [Wiesbaden, 1963]) pp. 331, 343–354. Figs. 15 c, d: CG 1385, 1386 (both dating to end of Dyn. III). Fig. 15 e: G. A. Reisner, *A History of the Giza Necropolis*, I (Cambridge, Mass., 1942) pl. 39 (a) (Dyn. IV, temp. Cheops). Fig. 15 f: same work, pl. 31 (c) (Dyn. IV, temp. Chephren). Fig. 15 g: Berlin 1107G, *Ägyptische Inschriften aus den Königlichen Museen zu*

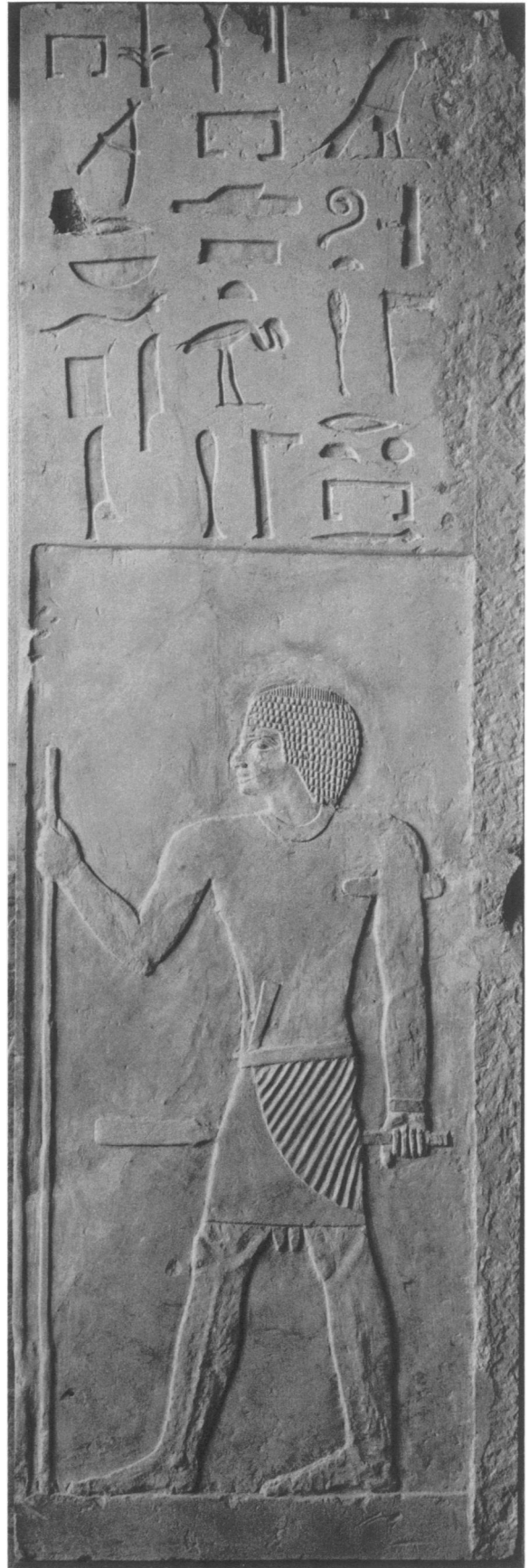
Berlin, I (Leipzig, 1913) p. 99 (early Dyn. V; see Junker, *Giza*, II, pp. 121–131). Fig. 15 h: A.-M. Abu-Bakr, *Excavations at Giza, 1949–1950*, fig. 10, facing p. 14 and pl. 10 (B) (Dyn. V ?). Fig. 15 i: P. Posener-Krieger and J. de Cenival, *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum*, V: *The Abu Sir Papyri* (London, 1968) pl. 47, and similarly pls. 41, 49, 50, 51, 92, 93 (end of Dyn. V). Fig. 15 j: A. M. Blackman, *Rock Tombs of Meir*, IV (London, 1924) pl. 20, p. 48 (Dyn. VI). Another hieratic writing of *szf* with the determinative  $\overline{\text{𓆏}}$  is to be found in A. M. Moussa and H. Altenmüller, *The Tomb of Nefer and Ka-hay* (Mainz am Rhein, 1971) fig. 11, p. 44 (late Dyn. V). The same determinative occurs in the related word  $\overline{\text{𓆏}} \overline{\text{𓆎}} \overline{\text{𓆏}}$ , Pyr. 265c, at the end of Dyn. V: K. Sethe, *Die Altaegyptischen Pyramidentexte*, I (Leipzig, 1908) p. 144. Sethe (*Dramatische Texte zu altaegyptischen Mysterienspielen* [Leipzig, 1928] p. 216), discussing this word, rightly concludes that the determinative  $\overline{\text{𓆏}}$  is a “Zeugballen,” a bolt of cloth. W. S. Smith (“The Old Kingdom Linen List,” *ÄZ* 71 [1935] p. 149) may also be right in concluding that *szf* represents a narrow width of cloth, but, less happily, he believes that this narrowness is represented by the determinative.

51. Fig. 16a is from Blackman, *The Rock Tombs of Meir*, IV, pl. 19. Other examples: G. Jéquier, *Tombeaux de particuliers contemporains de Pépi II* (Cairo, 1929) fig. 17, p. 19; fig. 18, p. 20; fig. 50, p. 46, etc.

52. Fig. 16b is from C. Firth and B. Gunn, *Teti Pyramid Cemeteries*, II (Cairo, 1926) pl. 6 (B, D). Fig. 16c is from T. G. H. James and M. R. Apted, *The Mastaba of Khentika Called Ikhekhi* (London, 1953) pl. 38.

53. Posener-Krieger and Cenival, *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum*, V: *nfr(w)*, pls. 14, 47, 50, 51, 92, 93; *hmk*, pls. 41, 47, 49; *pik*, pl. 47; *nwt* and *mnw*, pl. 51; *stj*, pl. 49; *szpt*, pl. 15.

54. Elisabeth Staehelin has independently come to the same conclusion in “Bindung und Entbindung,” *ÄZ* 96 (1970) pp. 125–133, and her careful survey of the evidence leaves little more to be said; a few more references will be presented elsewhere, in an article of mine in the *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 13.



FIGURES 12, 13 (LEFT)  
 Reliefs from tomb of *'Ipi*, Saqqara (photo: courtesy Dr. Endre Ungar)

FIGURE 14  
 Detail of relief, Figure 13

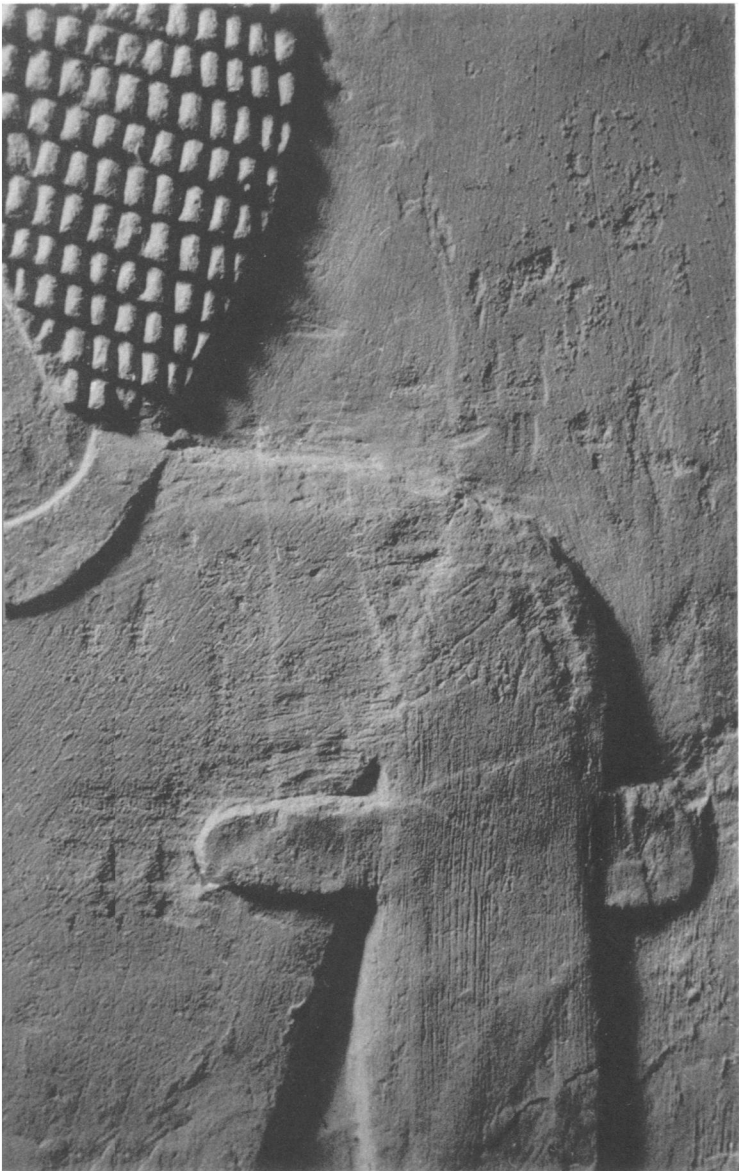


FIGURE 16 (RIGHT)  
 Bolts of cloth as represented among offerings in Old Kingdom burial chambers

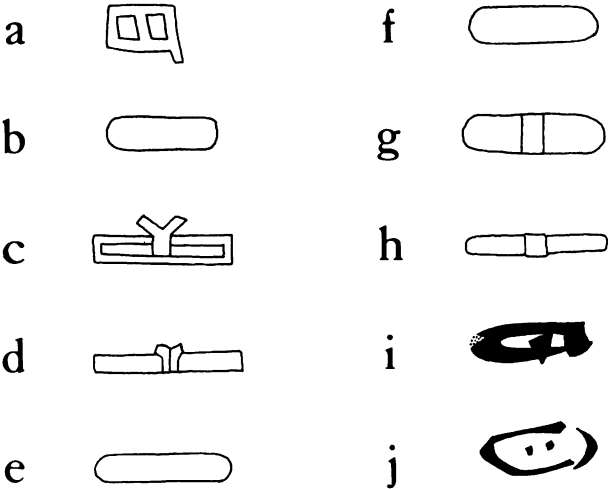
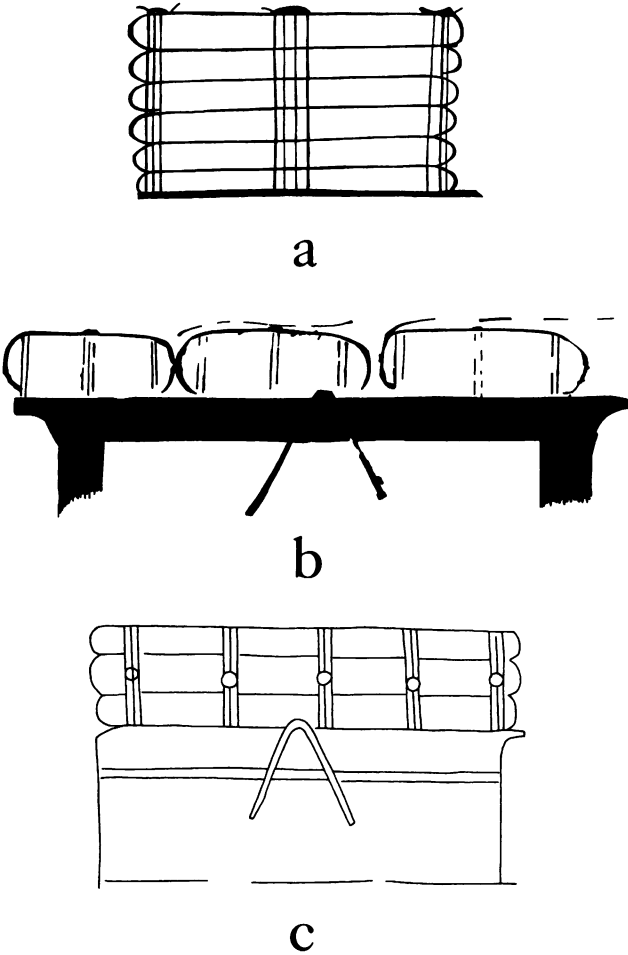


FIGURE 15  
 Variants of the hieroglyph representing a bolt of cloth





hand of a nonroyal individual in an Old Kingdom relief<sup>62</sup> and a Twelfth Dynasty statue;<sup>63</sup> in the latter case it is white, and is held in the left hand, while the right hand holds a white folded cloth. The same combination of objects is, more appropriately, held by royal statues of the Twelfth Dynasty.<sup>64</sup> Royal statues of the Eighteenth Dynasty show a more cylindrical con-

tainer, the ends slightly concave, held in both hands,<sup>65</sup> while those of the Nineteenth Dynasty revert to something closer to the original form.<sup>66</sup> Cylindrical objects with flat ends occasionally appear in the hands of nonroyal statues of the later dynasties,<sup>67</sup> and these may perhaps represent rolls of papyrus rather than the cases in which such documents were placed.

62. H. Wild, *Le Tombeau de Ti*, Pt. III (Cairo, 1966) pl. 171; see also Staehelin, *Untersuchungen zur ägyptischen Tracht*, p. 162, but note that her second example, a relief on the base of CG 376, shows a son holding a papyrus roll.

63. W. M. F. Petrie, *Gizeh and Rifeh* (London, 1907) pl. 10 E, and M. A. Murray, *The Tomb of Two Brothers* (Manchester, 1910) p. 16, pl. 21 (7).

64. Cairo J. 38286, J. 38287, Sesostri I (the former in C. Aldred, *Middle Kingdom Art in Ancient Egypt* [London, 1950] fig. 27); CG 42011, Sesostri III. In the last case, the container is more or less cylindrical; so too CG 42026 (despite Lacau's description), representing Sesostri IV, and CG 386, representing Sobekemsef I, both of Dyn. XIII.

65. CG 42053, 42054, both Tuthmosis III, and 42077, representing Amenophis II; the last is best illustrated in Terrace and Fischer, *Treasures of Egyptian Art from the Cairo Museum*, pp. 110–111.

66. The object is held horizontally on the lap of the seated statue of Ramesses II in Turin (R. Anthes, *Ägyptische Plastik in Meisterwerken* [Stuttgart, 1954] pls. 4–5). The colossal statue of Ramesses II in Cairo Station Square (L. Habachi, *Features of the Deification of Ramesses II* [Glückstadt, 1969] pl. 14) holds this object in the right hand, while the object in the left hand may represent a piece of cloth, as shown in the accompanying sketch (Figure 18a). Possibly, however, the pendant end represents a flap to close the case, and the same detail is perhaps to be recognized in the right

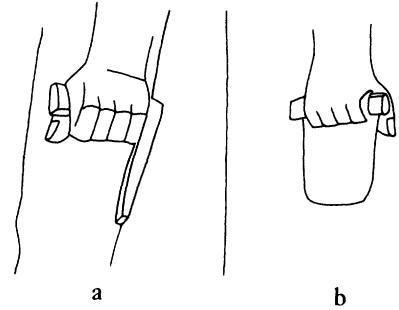


FIGURE 18  
Details of statues, Ramesses II (a), Seti II (b)

hand of Louvre A 24, a statue of Seti II (Figure 18b), although Spiegelberg (*ÄZ* 53 [1917] p. 104) interprets this as the document that the case ordinarily concealed. This statue is illustrated in Charles Boreux, *Musée National du Louvre, Département des Antiquités Égyptiennes, Guide-Catalogue Sommaire* (Paris, 1932), pl. 2.

67. Cairo J. 37150 (H. Kees, *ÄZ* 84 [1959] pp. 54–67, pl. 2, dating to Dyn. XXV; better illustrated in J. Yoyotte, *Treasures of the Pharaohs* [Geneva, 1968] p. 190); CG 42243, dating to Dyn. XXVI.

## SOURCES ABBREVIATED

- ASAE—*Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte*  
 ÄZ—*Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*  
 BM—British Museum  
 BMFA—*Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* (Boston)  
 BMMA—*Bulletin of The Metropolitan Museum of Art*  
 Borchardt, *Statuen und Statuetten*. See CG + number  
 Cairo J. + number—Monuments in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, unpublished unless otherwise noted  
 CG + number—Monuments in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, numbers referring to *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire*:  
 CG 1–1294: Ludwig Borchardt, *Statuen und Statuetten von Königen und Privatleuten im Museum von Kairo* I–IV (Berlin, 1911–34);  
 CG 1295–1808: Ludwig Borchardt, *Denkmäler des Alten Reiches*, I–II (Berlin, 1937–64);  
 CG 42001–42250: Georges Legrain, *Statues et statuettes de rois et de particuliers*, I–III (Cairo, 1906–14)  
 Hassan, *Giza*—Selim Hassan, *Excavations at Giza*, I–X (Oxford–Cairo, 1932–60)

- HESPOK—W. S. Smith, *A History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom* (London, 1946)  
 Junker, *Giza*—H. Junker, *Giza (Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Philosophisch-historische Klasse. Denkschriften)*, I–XII (Vienna, 1929–55)  
 LD—C. R. Lepsius, ed., *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien*, I–XII (Berlin, 1849–59)  
 MÄS—*Münchener Ägyptologische Studien, Münchener Universitäts-Schriften, Philosophische Fakultät* (Berlin)  
 Mereruka—University of Chicago, *Oriental Institute Publications* 31, 39, *The Mastaba of Mereruka*, I–II (Chicago, 1938)  
 MFA—Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  
 MIFAO—*Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut français d'Archéologie orientale* (Cairo)  
 MMA—The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
 Univ. Mus.—University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia  
 Wb.—A. Erman and H. Grapow, eds., *Wörterbuch der Ägyptischen Sprache*, I–V (Leipzig, 1926–31)