



The publication of *Decorated Pottery and the Art of Naqada III* (Münchner Ägyptologische Studien, vol. 45) marked a phase in the development of **BRUCE WILLIAMS'** research into the emergence of Egypt's unique historical personality before the First Dynasty. This year, that research changed direction somewhat, from pursuing the pharaonic ruler's central place in images to exploring the relationship with the gods. Important schools of thought have held that the basic structure and character of the Egyptian universe appeared relatively late, as theological speculations created by highly trained priests. Evidence of elaborate early cults of Egyptian type was often dated to later ages, corroborating this opinion. Three colossal statues of the god Min from Coptos stand at the heart of the problem, for their ithyphallic pose clearly implies the existence of Egypt's central myth of creation. Although many scholars had dated them to the Archaic Period, evidence was not clear, and some had

sought to place them as late as the Eleventh Dynasty. During a visit to Cairo last year, Williams examined the Min colossus in the Egyptian Museum for graffiti that might settle the issue and two of early date were found, one of which was the catfish sign used by Narmer in his name. When carved decoration on the sides of these statues was reviewed, two damaged signs on the Cairo statue could definitely be restored as Narmer. As a result, artistic evidence derived from the decoration dated large amounts of temple furniture to the period before the First Dynasty. The statues' dimensions were used to reconstruct the appearance of some early temples, and Egypt's central myth and organizing principle, the creation, with the role of the ruler in it, could be dated to the earliest times. The results were summarised in a paper given at the American Research Center in Egypt annual meeting in Chicago in April and they have been presented in detail in an article submitted to the *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*. Other themes have been partially explored, the problem of social relations and the economic development of the Upper Egyptian landscape to name just two. But rewarding as the pursuit of individual themes might be, the goal is a more complete and coherent understanding of Egypt's emergence.