

*With best wishes for a*

MERRY CHRISTMAS

*and a*

HAPPY NEW YEAR

*from the*

ORIENTAL INSTITUTE

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The Oriental Institute**

## RELIEFS AND INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE TOMB OF PĚR-HĀPS

The Oriental Institute is happy to release herewith, exclusively to its Members and Friends, the first report about a unique series of Egyptian tomb decorations that should be of great interest to all lovers of antiquities, genuine or otherwise.

The reliefs are said to come from the Tomb of Pěr-Hāps, clearly a man of scholarly interests, located somewhere in the Theban necropolis at Luxor. They belong to the Second Dynasty and are associated with the reign of a Pharaoh whose name appears in the royal cartouches of the period spelled with three letters  $\mathcal{J}^1(A)-W$ . This seems to be an abbreviation.

The scenes and inscriptions were seen and set down as early as 1933 by Mr. Leslie Greener, at that time an artist of the Institute's Epigraphic Survey. We have been reluctant to publish them because of certain difficulties encountered in the translation of the hieroglyphic texts and because the tomb itself has meanwhile been lost track of. Recently, however, Professor John A. Wilson has with great skill solved the translation problems and thereby dispelled any doubts about authenticity that our inability to rediscover the tomb might have occasioned. With the original hand-copies we present here the improved translations of Professor Wilson and such critical annotations as we thought might help the general reader.

So much has been said and written about the anticipation by the ancients of current literary forms and about their ability to foresee the future, that our Members and Friends will surely be delighted by the correspondence between the texts and pictures and motifs and situations familiar to them. It is the prospect of this delight that makes the presentation of the material appropriate to this season of good cheer and jollity. Members and Friends do not need to be reminded that their gifts, which make possible such important discoveries and contributions to learning by the Oriental Institute, are *always* greatly appreciated.

CARL H. KRAELING  
*Director*



TEN little Epigraphers, copying a line;  
An owl<sup>1</sup> put a curse on one of them—and then there were nine.

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1. The figure at the right, wielding some sort of blunt instrument, must be the agent of the curse. Lots of people are going to ask us whether the owl was of the genus *Tyto alba alba* or of some other, but we don't see that it matters. Owls had a reputation in Egypt for spoiling people's fun, like Poe's raven always croaking "Nevermore." See K. B. Wienerschitzel, *Vogelverfluchungen im antiken Mittelmeergebietsumkreis*, esp. chap. vii. Incidentally, the bird in Poe's house, sitting on the pallid "bust of Pallas [Athena]," should have been an owl rather than a raven, and probably would have been if it had not been for the meter of the poem. Things get in each other's way sometimes.



NINE real happy Artists, and a feast to celebrate;  
One couldn't sing Sweet (A)d(e)l(i)n(e)<sup>2</sup>—and then there were eight.

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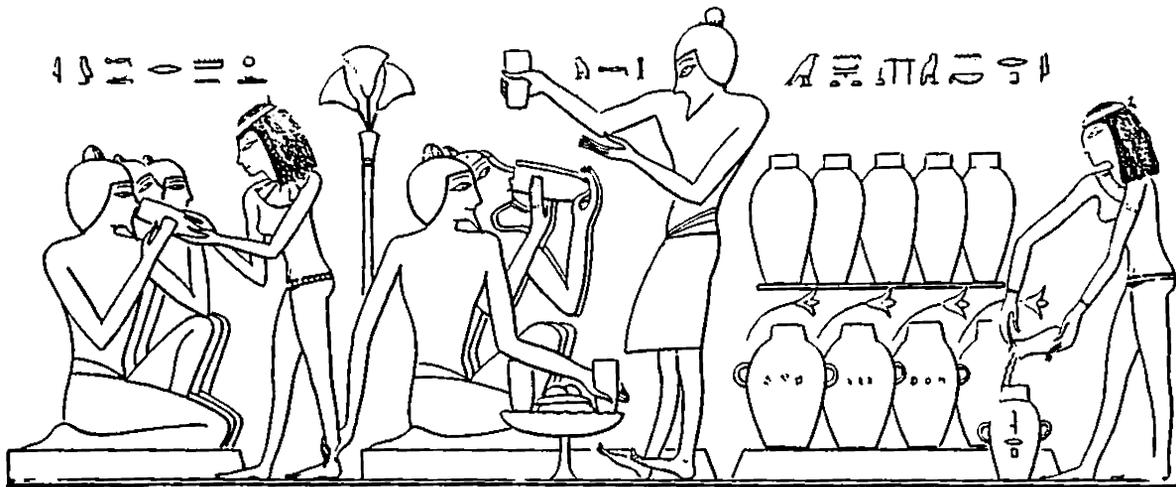
2. Don't let these parentheses get you down; no good translation from the Egyptian is complete without them. That is because the Egyptians wrote their words without the vowel letters. Whether and how they pronounced them without vowels is something of a problem. In the present instance we have to start with the root *dln*. Probably the Egyptians had no "silent e," but we felt we had to put it in at the end of the word just to keep up appearances. As for the other vowels which we have also supplied, *a-e-i* is a proper vowel sequence, and, if there was no room for the *o-u* that by our standards should follow, we can't blame the scribe. He was fresh out of consonants. The allusion is to an ancient drinking song, according to the *Papyrus Schnabelkanne*.



**EIGHT** Egyptologists on a mass flight to heaven;  
One forgot to take his Ka<sup>3</sup> along—then there were seven.

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3. Always the forgetful professor. The Ka is, of course, the soul. It is seen at the bottom of the scene in a somewhat distressed condition represented as a bird. It was not previously known that the Egyptians credited scholars with having souls. Some people still doubt it.

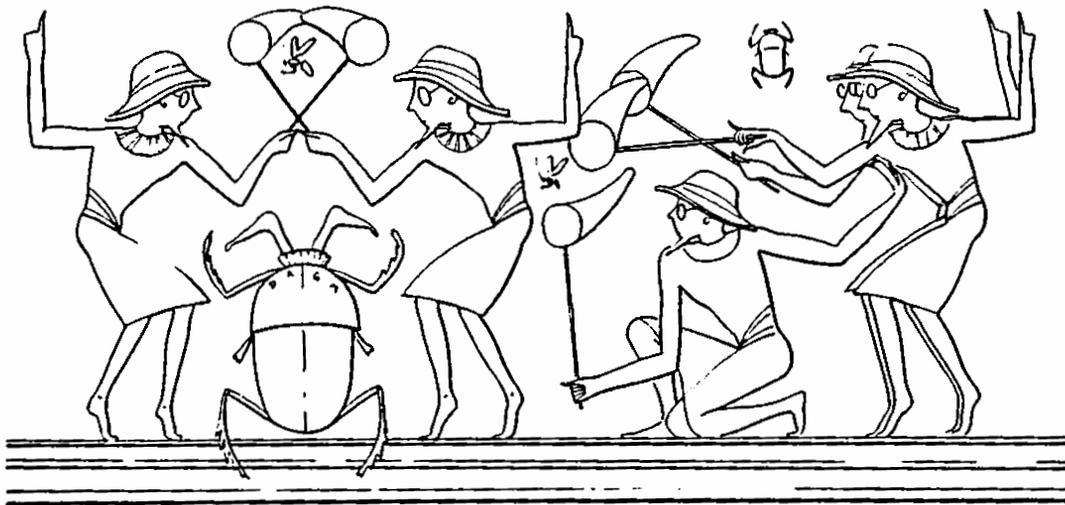


SEVEN Excavators tried if wine and water mix;<sup>4</sup>  
One said: “Make mine without”<sup>5</sup>—and then there were six.

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4. This is still attempted occasionally in Egypt (see *Shepherd's Hotel Bartenders' Guide* [12th ed.; Cairo, 1912]), but not too often.

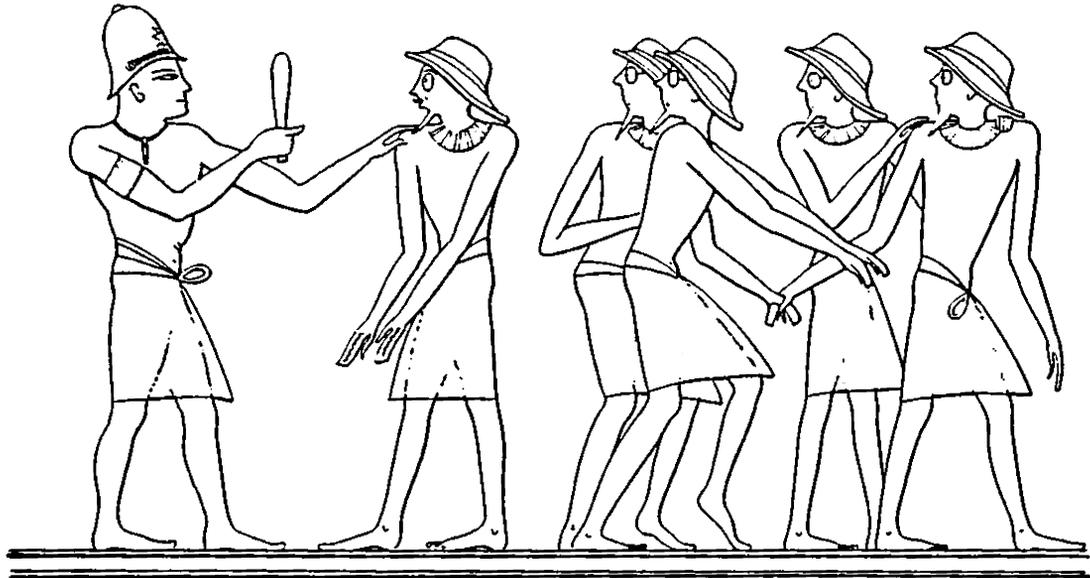
5. Apparently some word is omitted here. Probably not the word “wine,” considering the quality of Nile water, which is all the boys had.



SIX Luxor Scientists, catching bugs alive;  
A scarab beetle<sup>6</sup> ate one up—and then there were five.

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6. These beetles pop up from the ground all over the map each year after the annual inundation has subsided. Their anthropophagous proclivities are not commonly emphasized, but the reason for their hostility may be found in a certain analogy between them and the Egyptologists. The analogy is pointed up by the words of a contemporary historian: "Egypt has been called the Gift of the Nile. Once every year the river overflows its banks, depositing a layer of rich alluvial soil on the parched ground. Then it recedes and soon the whole countryside, as far as the eye can reach, is covered with Egyptologists" (Will Cuppy, *Decline and Fall of Practically Everybody*, p. 7). It is only natural that the beetles would resent any such analogy and may in this instance have gone berserk.

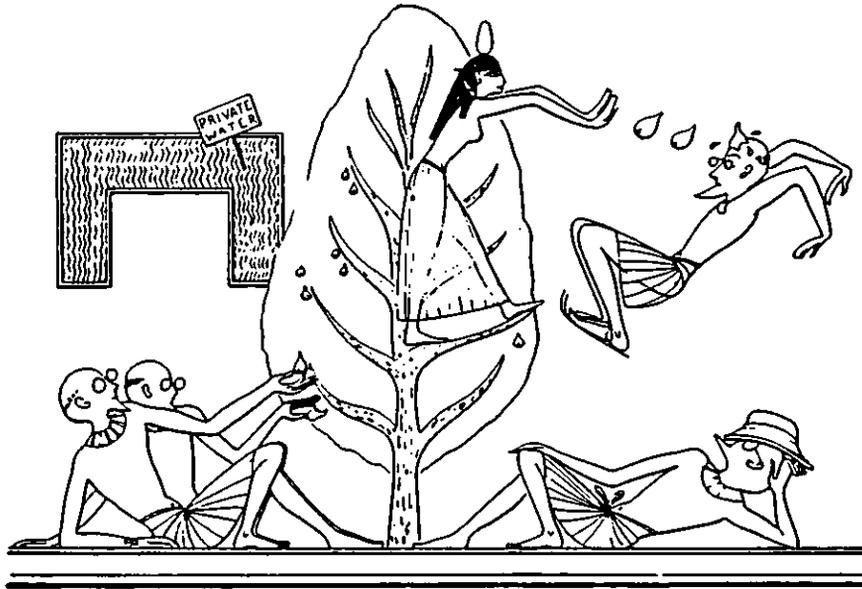


FIVE solemn Philologists met a copper<sup>7</sup> at the door;  
One talked back in hieroglyphs<sup>8</sup>—and then there were four.

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7. This is a literal translation. It is surprising to find this common metaphor for policeman or bailiff developing so early in the Theban argot. Perhaps the Egyptian policemen of old wore copper helmets (see picture). It would explain why they got hot so readily, as in this instance.

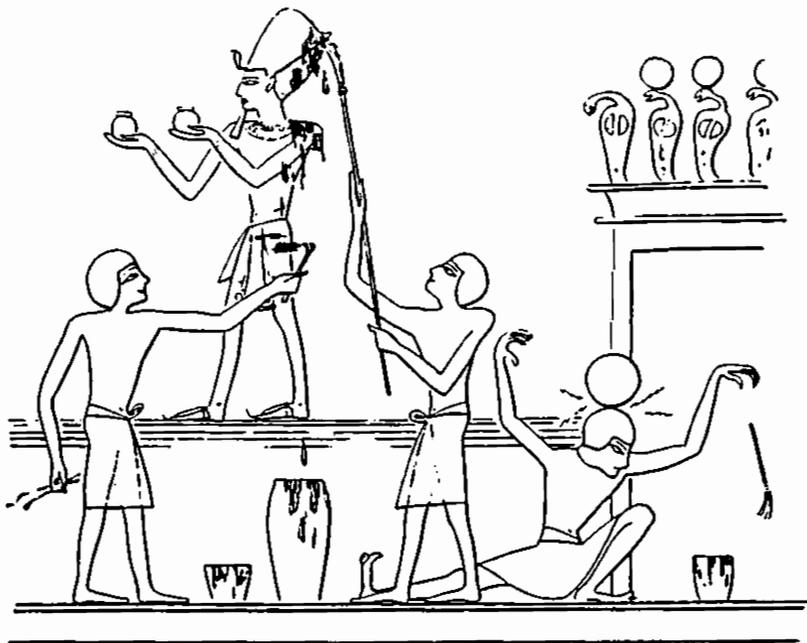
8. In view of what happened according to the text, we cannot recommend that you try this next time somebody starts to give you a ticket.



FOUR Archaeologists, reposing 'neath a tree;  
One got fresh with the goddess Nüt<sup>9</sup>—and then there were three.

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9. It is not clear what she was doing in the tree. It is clear that, if you must get fresh with somebody, it is wise to avoid goddesses and even the boss's secretary. They have too many connections. To be safe, aim lower.

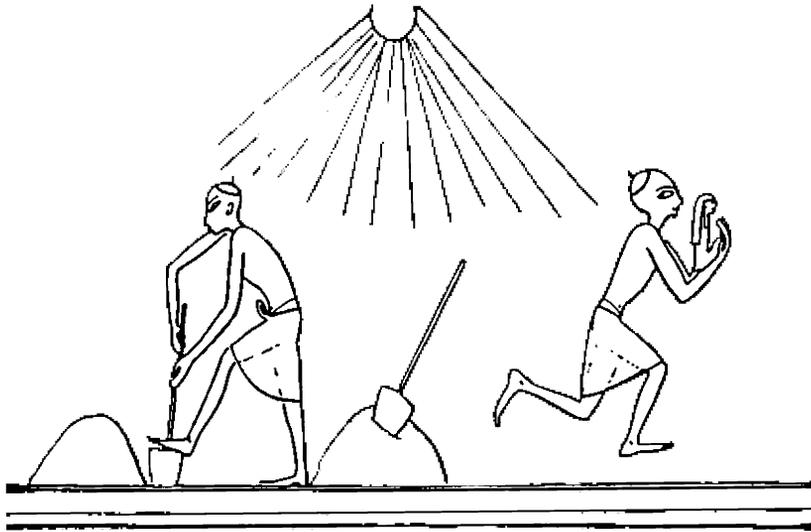


THREE sportive Draftsmen, painting Pharaoh blue;<sup>10</sup>  
A sun disk fell on one of them<sup>11</sup>—and then there were two.

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10. Apparently the ancient way of talking about “painting something red.”

11. Occupational hazard of modern draftsmen and archaeologists also. It is surprising that the snakes are able to balance sun disks on their heads as long as they do. Of course the fact that they are carved in stone helps.



TWO honest Workmen,<sup>12</sup> digging in the sun;  
One found a statuette—and then there was one.

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12. Native or non-Western workmen must be meant. Westerners are not permitted to work in this sense, though it has happened that they have run off with excavated *anticas*, which is against the law. The workmen were undoubtedly some *fellahs*.



ONE lonely Egyptologist, finding life too flat:  
Nary a soul to argue with<sup>13</sup>—so that's the end of that.

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13. Of course the current crop of Egyptologists deeply resents the implication of contumeliousness reflected in this text. If you have time to listen, they will give you quite an argument on the subject.