

SAQQARA MASTABAS

PART I

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

1. Our work during the winter of 1903-4 lay at Saqqara; for, owing to two lady artists having volunteered to join the party, Prof. Petrie obtained for us permission to clear and copy some of the many sculptured tombs which were excavated by Mariette about the middle of the 19th century. Mariette's notes on these tombs were published after his death by M. Maspero under the title of *Les Mastabas de l'Ancien Empire*, and are the only record of these early monuments. The notes consist of ground-plans of the tombs, and rapid hand copies of the inscriptions, with here and there a sketch of some specially interesting piece of sculpture. Since the publication in 1898 of the tomb of Ptahhetep by the Egyptian Research Account, followed by Mr. Davis' work for the Egypt Exploration Fund, it has been felt that facsimile copies of the smaller and less known mastabas were very desirable, and with two artists to help in the copying it was a good opportunity to start the work. We opened and copied nine tombs at Saqqara, and copied one in the Cairo Museum.

Our party consisted of Miss Hansard, Miss Jessie Mothersole, and myself; and the division of labour was that the two artists copied the figures, animals, and tables of offerings, while I was responsible for all the hieroglyphs and the plans. It is owing to the steady work and skill of these two ladies that the Egyptian Research Account is able to publish facsimile copies of ten tombs; three of these are not recorded by Mariette, whose records of the rest are, as I said before, only hand copies of the inscriptions. The tombs recorded by Mariette which we opened are A 2, C 6 and 7, C 8, D 1, D 62, D 63, and E 2.

My thanks are due to Prof. Petrie for much kindness and help, to Mrs. Petrie for kindly copying some inscriptions lying in the yard at Mariette's

House, and to Prof. Kurt Sèthe for his valuable translations, to be issued later; also to Miss Phœbe Slater for help in finishing some of the drawings, and to Mr. R. A. Yule for his assistance in drawing the plans. It is due entirely to Mrs. Petrie's suggestion that I made a list of the colours of the hieroglyphs in these early tombs. For this suggestion I am sincerely grateful to her. Mr. Weigall has given a large amount of time and attention to assisting our work in many ways; and the thanks of our party are specially due to him on behalf of the Research Account.

2. The cemetery of Saqqara dates back almost to the limit of the historic period, but the bulk of sculptured tombs belongs to the Vth Dynasty. Through the middle of the cemetery is a slight ridge running east and west, sloping steeply to the north, more gently to the south. To the north lie all the IVth Dynasty tombs which we copied, though the most northern one of all is of the VIth Dynasty, dated by the cartouches of Unas and Teta.

The valley to the south of the ridge is broad and flat and constantly used by tourists as a road from Mariette's House to the tombs of Mera and Kagemni; to the south of the valley is the high ground on which the Step-pyramid stands. It is on the northern slope of the ridge and on the south side of the valley that, with one exception, our Vth Dynasty tombs were found. User-neter is due north of the Step-pyramid, close to the enclosure wall; Ptahhetep II and Ateta adjoin the great mastaba of Ptahhetep and Akhethetep published by the Egyptian Research Account and the Egypt Exploration Fund; the tombs of Ptahhetep I, Ptahshepses I and II, Ka-em-hest, and the Sheikh el Beled are on the northern slope; but Sekhem-ka's tomb lies north-west of Ptahhetep II and Ateta in ground which looks little if at all disturbed.

The excavations were conducted nominally by Reïs Khalifa, working for the Museum authorities, and I was therefore obliged to employ a native *reïs*,