NEKHEN NEWS

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THE EGYPTIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

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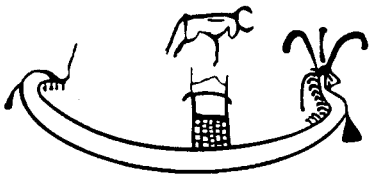


Included in this issue:

FON TO HAVE A NEW NAME

The Friends of Nekhen is taking on a new name — **The Egyptian Studies Association**. The unprecedented growth in the scope of our work, including the addition of the new Physical Anthropology Research Program, has prompted adoption of a name that will indicate our broadened interests. In fact, the Egyptain Studies Association has been the parent academic organization of The Friends of Nekhen within the Earth Sciences and Resources Institute since 1983 and was responsible for the publication of our first monograph, *The Predynastic of Hierakonpolis*. Despite the change, **NEKHEN NEWS** will be retained as the name for our newsletter. We look forward to bringing you more information about the exciting finds and projects undertaken by our newly expanded organization, and we hope you will share the news with your fellow Egypt enthusiasts and urge them to beome fellow members of the Egyptian Studies Association.

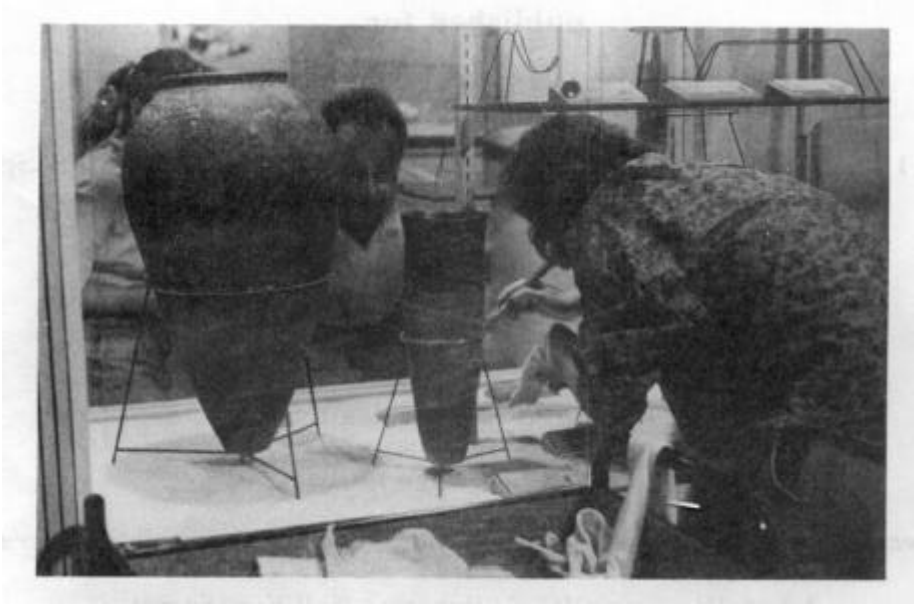
"THE FIRST EGYPTIANS" EXHIBITION

McKissick Museum, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC: April 8 - June 19, 1988

NEKHEN NEWS UPDATES

During January of this year, Carter Lupton, Assistant Curator of Anthropology at the Milwaukee Public Museum and Staff Archæologist with the Hierakonpolis Expedition, led a two week tour of Egypt that included everything from pyramids to paintings and from the present to the Predynastic. One highlight of the trip was a visit to the site of Hierakonpolis where ESA members on the tour were able to observe archæological excavations in progress and to speak with the Hierakonpolis Expedition staff about their work.

The 1987-88 field season at Hierakonpolis has just been completed. Mr. James O. Mills, named Acting Director in March, closed shop at the end of that month and headed back to Columbia as final preparations got underway for the grand opening of **"The First Egyptians."** It was another year full of hard work, exciting new finds, and special visitors. In this issue, Dr. Michael Hoffman reports on the construction of the new Expedition Center's compound wall, and staff ceramic analyst Renée Friedman describes the discovery of an exciting new rock painting — the first of its kind at Hierakonpolis or anywhere north of the first cataract!



Exhibition Coordinator Elizabeth Stanton mounts a black-topped redware jar for "The First Egyptians" show, while Designer Tom Kinnard looks on in background.

McKissick Museum staff members hang the title panel for Module II of "The First Egyptians" exhibition.

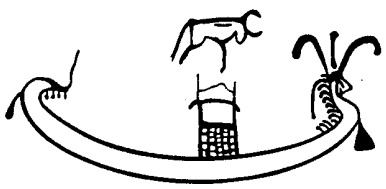
The University of South Carolina's McKissick Museum is putting the finishing touches on **"The First Egyptians"** exhibition. The show will open here in Columbia on April 8. Curator Karin Willoughby and Exhibition Coordinator Elizabeth Stanton have been very busy hanging text panels and mounting artifacts that have arrived from around the world. The Egyptian Studies Association is looking forward to seeing all of its members at the opening festivities!

Early last Spetember, seven members of the Hierakonpolis Expedition staff convened for a Ceramics Conference in Colonial Beach, Virginia. This seminar was the second in a series of report preparation conferences funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Members arrived from as far away as California, England, and Egypt for a week of intense discussion and in debate.

Participants in Ceramics Conference

Dr. Michael A. Hoffman (ESRI, ESA)
Jay O. Mills (ESA)
Barbara Adams (Petrie Museum, London)
Renée Friedman (University of California–Berkeley)
Jeremy Geller (Washington University)
Michael Berger (University of Chicago)
Prof. Ralph Allen (University of Virginia)

By the week's end, the group had succeeded producing a definitive sherd-based ceramic typology for Predynastic material. This new typology departs from Petrie's classic system, which was based on sequencing sites by using whole pots, because it relies on the broken sherds so much more commonly found in many archæological contexts. The new typology will allow researchers to untangle the web of interrelations, in both time and space, among such important Predynastic sites as Hierakonpolis, Nagada, and others. Back in Columbia, Earth Sciences and Resources computer specialist John Baldwin has been busy preparing a computer program for the new typology. We are excited about this new system and are looking forward to having it published in our **Comprehensive Monograph Series**.



A NEW DISCOVERY: HK-64 REVEALS A WELL-KEPT SECRET

by Renée Friedman

Lowie Museum of Anthropology
University of California at Berkeley

December 10, 1987: We were all getting pretty discouraged. We had been sure that site number HK-64, with its unique sandstone outcroppings, heaps of stone debris, and hieroglyphic inscriptions, would reveal the secrets of Egypt's ancient stone quarries and the workmen who cut and laid the sandstone blocks for some of Nekhen's most important temples. But instead, we had spent the last ten days digging through an almost concrete-like accumulation of sandstone chips, and thus far the artifacts we had found were a jumble of types and times, all out of context, and some unexpected and rather puzzling. Particularly curious were several fragments of incised stone lying on the surface and mixed in with the debris. No doubt they had once been part of the rock face, but from where, and why had they been removed?

I was beginning to fear that modern trenching around the face of the outcrop, either by early archæologists or by native sebbakh (fertilizer) hunters, had destroyed the fragile rock face and all around it, reversing the stratigraphy and scattering artifacts over the surface. While this may be partly true, it was on this discouraging day, sealed beneath 1.25 meters (almost 4 feet) of debris, that a dark grey stain of organic earth emerged. It was a midden — a layer of trash suggesting ancient occupation — and it contained a fireplace. I quickly assigned the best workmen to the delicate task of excavating this new area.

Then, with hopes of finding the origin of the incised stone fragments recovered from the debris, I moved the majority of the workforce onto the rock slope itself. This was still encased in the same hard accumulation of sandstone chips. With a groan of dismay, the men set to work with trowel and paint brush. I knew their progress would be slow, so I concentrated my attention on the collection of soil and Carbon 14 samples from the newly excavated hearth.

While engrossed in this task, I suddenly noticed that something was different. It took a moment before I realized that the difference was silence. Gone was the constant murmur of Arabic punctuated by an occasional burst of laughter — the sound of men entertaining themselves while engaged in their tedious task. Clearly, something else was attracting their attention.

I bolted up and over the low hill and looked down upon a freshly uncovered rock slope full of incised petroglyphs. But what caught my eye were the lines of black paint against the honey-colored sandstone. I took up a soft brush and tested the durability of the paint, then brushed away more rubble and more lines appeared. My heart was pounding as I called over assistant director Jay Mills, who was busy surveying the area. Hesitantly

I asked, "Is this what I think it is?" Jay took a good look at it, and then a good look at me, and we broke into excited laughter.

With renewed gusto, the men set to work removing the concrete-like overburden as though it were soft sand. This hard layer now seemed like a blessing because we knew that it had acted as a protective, airtight and watertight seal for all those years. Soon the entire painting was exposed, revealing a sickle-shaped boat with an upturned prow and large steering oar. On deck was a square cabin, to the right of which five men stood holing the long, rowing oars. I ran for my camera while the men fetched the umbrella. Who knew how long the precious image would last once exposed to sunlight.

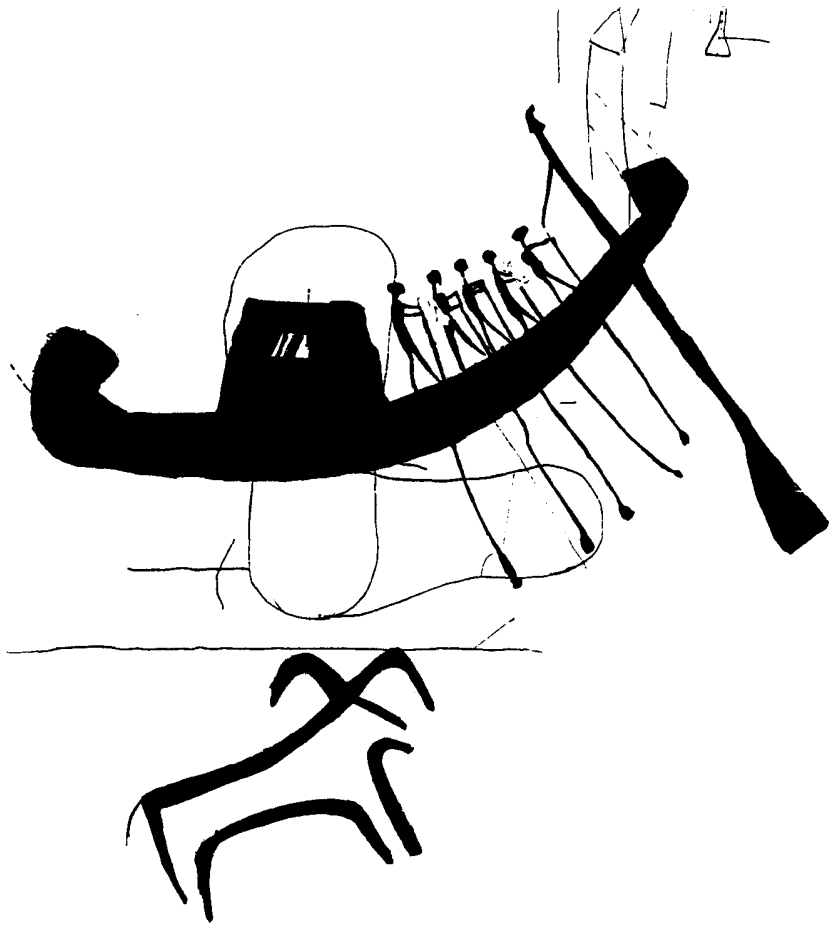
Even more tantalizing was another streak of the black paint peeking out from the debris just below the boat. But there was no time to clear it now. It was quitting time and, worse, it was Thursday — the last day of the work week. It's Murphy's Law of Archæology that the most exciting things are found on the last day at the last minute. We had time only to exchange a few more "mabruks" (congratulations) before carefully covering the painting with cloth and sand.

December 11: Saturday usually came too quickly, but on this day it seemed painfully far away. We would have to wait until then to clear more of the surface.

December 12: Early this morning a simple but elegantly painted bull emerged from the rubble.

Boats and bulls, together or singly, are among the most common motifs of petroglyphic art. The design is familiar as the logo of the Egyptian Studies Association (Friends of Nekhen), which was taken from a boulder carving in the Hierakonpolis concession. It is the use of paint that makes the HK-64 discovery unique. Rock painting is the predominant art form in the Libyan desert and southern Africa, but examples had been found only sporadically in Nubia and, prior to this discovery, never north of the first cataract.

At Sayala in Nubia, an Austrian expedition discovered a cave decorated with scenes of cattle, men, ostrichs, and a boat executed in red and brown paint. Apparently of ceremonial significance, the cave had



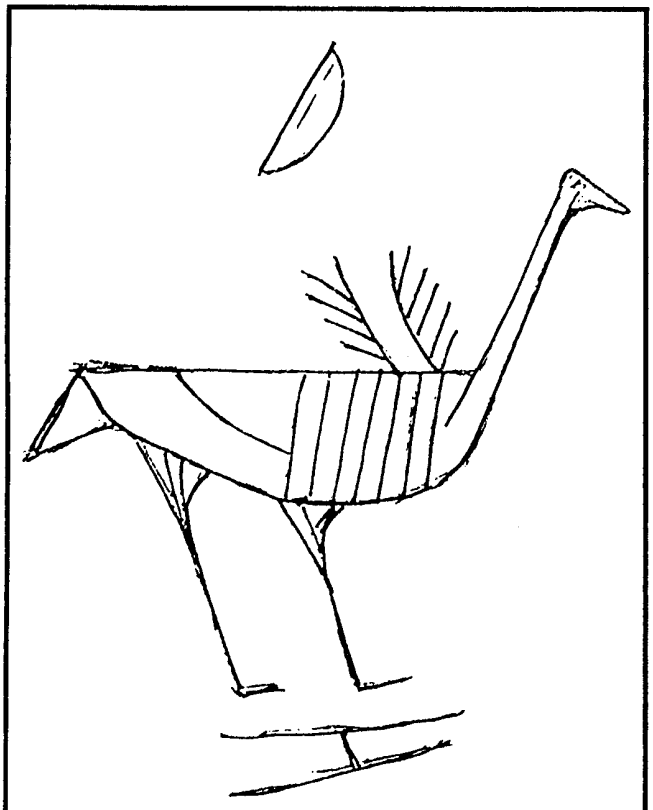
Newly discovered boat and bull rock painting from the site HK-64.

been used and painted over a long period of time. From excavation of the midden at HK-64, which eventually yielded three hearths, significant quantities of chipped quartz, numerous bird feathers and bones (possibly ostrich), and distinctive Nubian pottery types, we can assume a connection with this Nubian artistic and religious tradition.

Only further study and excavation can tell us the specific periods to which our site dates, but it is likely to be the Nubian C group time period, which corresponds roughly with Egypt's later Old Kingdom and Middle Kingdom. Perhaps we have the remains of the Nubian mercenary border guards encamped at this strategic location to take advantage of the commanding view in all directions. Yet, the repeated use and extraordinary number of petroglyphs at this small and remote site suggests that this was a place of symbolic importance well back into Predynastic times.

HK-64 has still not given up all of its secrets, and it will take many years of excavation and research before it does. With only a fraction (5×5 m, or 15×15 ft) of the surface cleared, we can only imagine what else awaits us beneath that protective, cement-like casing.

Renée Friedman excavated HK-64 with funds provided by the American Research Center in Egypt and the University of California at Berkeley and support from the Hierakonpolis Expedition.



Incised petroglyph of ostrich and hunting bow from site HK-64.

BEADS, BORERS, AND BIFACES: THE STONE TECHNOLOGY OF A TEMPLE

by Diane L. Holmes

Institute of Archæology, University College London

The oval courtyard outside the temple was quiet. The sun slowly climbed until it was finally high enough to cast its rays onto the smooth, mud flooring, breaking up the long shadows created by a row of small workshops attached to the courtyard fence. Voices could be heard, the muffled chatter and laughter of craftsmen opening their shops. Another day had begun and soon the air was filled with the sounds of master potters producing some of the region's finest ceramics, of flintknappers putting the finishing touches on exotic stone knives, and of jewellers carefully boring holes through the centers of deep red carnelian beads.

In the 1985-86 field season, the Hierakonpolis Expedition unearthed floors, walls, and other structures of what is thought to be a temple complex dating to the later part of the Predynastic (the Gerzean phase). The site is unimaginatively referred to as HK-29A. However, it has produced a wealth of unusual objects supporting its interpretation as a temple with associated craftsmen's workshops. These objects include an abundance of pottery jars of types normally only rarely found, beads of stone, fragments of exquisitely made stone vases, and vast quantities of chipped stone artifacts. It is the latter material which is my particular interest and which has helped convince me that HK-29A is a very unusual site.

A "chipped stone artifact" or "lithic artifact" is any object, large or small, that results from "flintknapping." Flintknapping is actually a generic term for the working of any stone, not just flint, by flaking with some kind of hammer. Some types of stone are better suited for flaking than others. The ideal stone has a fine-grained, homogeneous (often glassy) structure, which allows flakes to be removed from a block, or "core," in a regular, predictable fashion.

In Egypt, the most abundant raw material suitable for flaking is flint, which can be found in the limestone bordering much of the Nile Valley. However, this limestone does not crop out quite as far south as Hierakonpolis and, although weathered flint nodules do occur occasionally in the region, most of the flint used by the ancient inhabitants of Hierakonpolis must have come from at least a few miles away. At HK-29A, the flintknappers not only used non-local flint, but also took care to obtain flint of a particularly good quality. It seems that at this temple site we are concerned not with the activities of some local farmer or laborer making a few simple tools for his or her everyday tasks, but rather with the highly skilled abilities of artisans who were producing very specialized items.

It is perhaps paradoxical that the main tool made at the temple workshops hasn't actually been found at the site, except for a very few fragments. Instead, our evi-

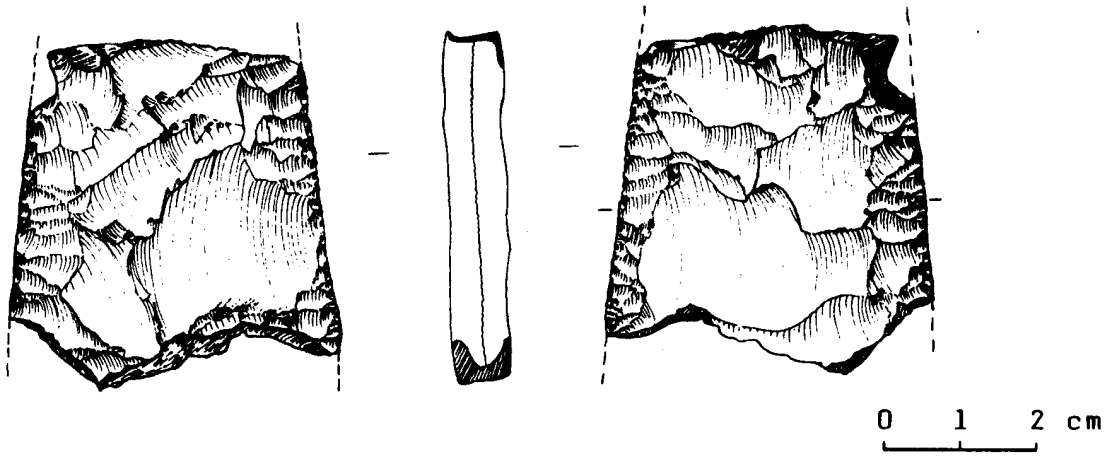


Fig. 1. Broken biface fragment from site HK-29A. Drawing by D. L. Holmes.

dence for the production of this tool comes from an overwhelming abundance of debris from its manufacture. Judging more by the debris than the small fragments, we can tell that these lithic artisans were making fine "bifacial" tools, which were probably knives. The term "bifacial" means that the tool was made by removing flakes from both sides of the flint. A fragment of such a tool from HK-29A is shown in Fig. 1; note the large, broad, flat flake scars. In shaping this sort of tool, one produces a large number of broad, thin waste flakes. These flakes, along with small chips, are the most numerous lithic artifacts recovered from the temple site. The tiny chips are often incidentally detached when the larger flakes are being removed. These chips also result from tidying up the edges of the tools at various stages in their manufacture. Indeed, chips are always generated when flint is flaked.

Although manufacturing bifacial tools was apparently the main flintknapping activity at HK-29A, other types of stoneworking were also practised. Most notable among these are the production of very small drills, and the detachment of "bladelets" from blocks of heat-treated flint.

Hundreds of small flint drills, or "microdrills" (Fig. 2), were produced and used at the site. Almost all of these tiny borers were made of a particular kind of gray flint, which is a little coarser than the beige-colored material used for making the bifacial knives. These microdrills were made by taking a small, elongate flake — called a "bladelet" — that had already been detached from a block of flint, and then chipping it into a small borer or drill less than an inch long. We have evidence from our excavations of the workshop sites that some artisans were specialists in the production of various types of bladelets, some of which were used to make the microdrills while others were destined for different tools and tasks.

The microdrills were almost certainly mounted into some sort of shaft, perhaps for use as bow drill. Judging by the quantities of small carnelian flakes and chips, and the presence of partially worked beads at the temple site, it is likely that at least one function of these drills

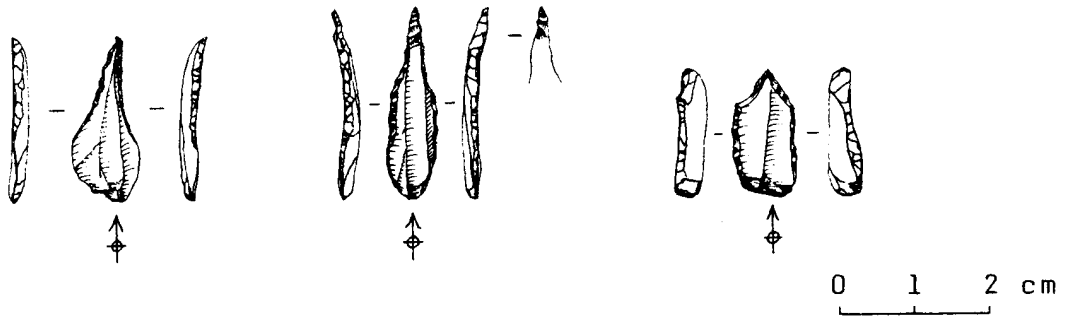


Fig. 2. Flint microdrills from site KH-29A. Drawing by D. L. Holmes.

was boring the perforations in beads. A cache of similar bead-making equipment was found by the British excavators Quibell and Green, in the 1890's, in a wall cavity of the temple enclosure at ancient Nekhen. This cache is dated to the Old Kingdom and consists of over 400 microdrills, bladelets, and bladelet production debris, as well as many broken pebbles of carnelian and several partially made beads and chips of carnelian, amethyst, rock-crystal, garnet, and other stones.

The technologies described above are not unknown at other Predynastic sites in the Hierakonpolis region, but nowhere are they as dominating or as systematic as they are at HK-29A. They represent the intensive, standardized work of artisans who had their workshops attached to the temple complex. Who was hiring these craftsmen is unclear. We have a lot of production waste but very few finished products, so it does not appear that their output was destined for temple offerings. Considering the kinds of bifacial tools that these lithic artisans must have been producing, and their paucity in the the Hierakonpolis area in general, much of what was manufactured may well have been traded to other population centers in Predynastic Egypt. Indeed, the control of production of such important trade items no doubt contributed to the rise of Hierakonpolis and the centralization of power that eventually led to the world's first nation-state.

Cartoon by Jano Bell Fairservis.

Dr. Hoffman scatters bonbons in the compound wall trench — candy for a "sweet building."

SHADOWS OF THE PAST — THE COMPOUND WALL COMPLETED

by Michael Allen Hoffman

Director, Hierakonpolis Expedition

In November of 1987, there was only flat, gravel-covered desert. By February of 1988, a great stone wall 100 meters long, 70 meters wide, and 2 meters high had arisen. And with this compound wall, the long dreamed of Expedition Center is now more than a glimmer in an archæologist's eye — it is becoming a solid reality.

Construction of our "great wall" began with a ceremony that harkened back to ancient times. First, a shallow foundation trench was dug. Then I was informed that, as "mudir" or leader, it was my duty to bring "bonbons" to lay in the trench (hard candy for "a sweet building"). On the appointed day, our staff gathered at the construction site along with the builders and their helpers. As I ran down the trench scattering bonbons, the workmen cheered and jumped in, eagerly scooping up these offerings and gobbling them down. I got the distinct feeling I was re-enacting a ceremony depicted on countless pharaonic reliefs.

As the wall rose course upon course, I learned of more ancient customs associated with building in Upper Egypt. A small garden was planted with onions and then carefully watered. They told us this was done to ensure that we would have a prosperous garden around our house once it was finished. One custom we did not perform was the sacrifice of a sheep, upon completion of the wall, and the distribution of its meat to the workmen and staff. No one seemed disappointed over this, however, since it is expected that we will sacrifice a bull and have a huge feast once the house itself is completed.

Such customs can be seen as survivals of ancient practices, but they persist for a reason — they provide an occasion to distribute rare and often costly foods to even the poorest residents of an area. They also reinforce the bonds between social classes. When we reflect on the imposing pyramids, temples, tombs, and palaces of ancient Egypt, therefore, it would be wise to view them not only as monuments to kings and gods, but as testament to social solidarity — a bond between rulers and ruled — and an opportunity to pass the wealth around.

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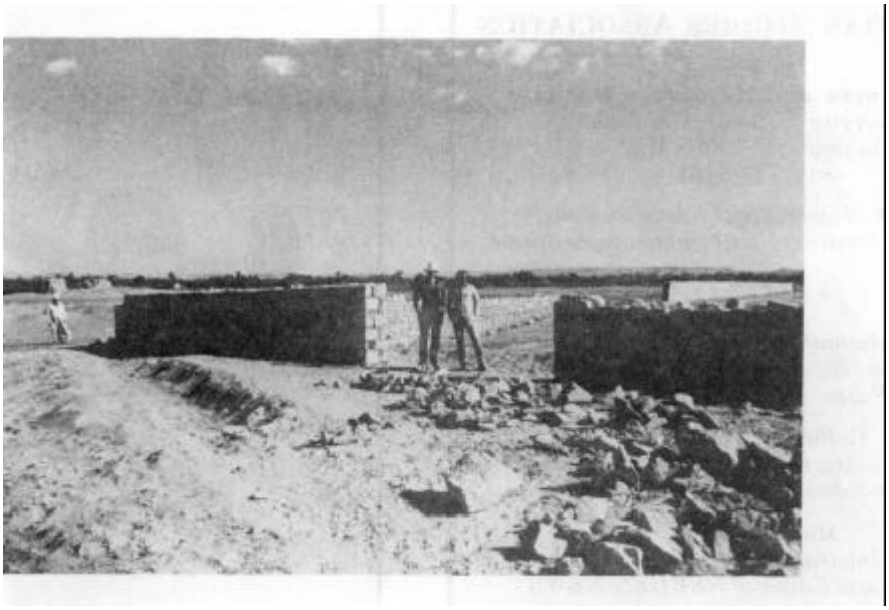

Acting Director Jay Mills and E.A.O. Inspector Nour el Din Abdel Aziz stand in the gateway of the compound wall during construction.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

THE EGYPTIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

I would like to help the Hierakonpolis Expedition by joining **The Egyptian Studies Association**. In return for my tax deductible contribution, I understand that I will receive a membership certificate and card, badge, and **NEKHEN NEWS**, and that I will be entitled to travel discounts with expedition tours and reduced rates on expedition publications and Egyptian archæological slide sets.

Please enroll me as a member of **The Egyptian Studies Association** in the category checked below:

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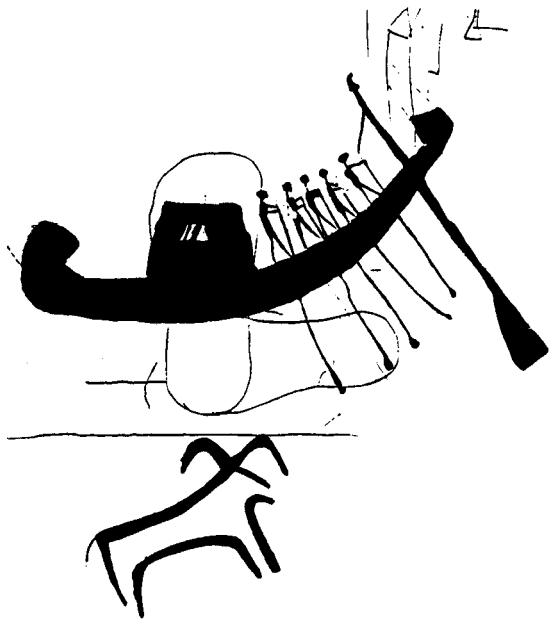

INSIDE: Exciting new rock art discovered at Hierakonpolis.

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