



FRAGMENT OF A RELIEF

Egypt
Old Kingdom, VI Dynasty, 2345-2181 BC
Limestone
Height 26 cm Width 53 cm

Relief from the wall of a tomb depicting a procession of three offering bearers walking from right to left, carrying various live birds. The men are bare-chested, wearing only short kilts knotted at the waist and large *ouserkh* collars.

Above the scene, the hieroglyphic inscription reads: "... His companions and the *Ka*-priests for his eternity, for the captain of the crew of the boat, mery....". The inscription between the first two figures identifies Ankhhaf as "The chief of the *Ka*-priests".

From the Old Kingdom onwards, funeral needs led to the development of economic structures dedicated to providing goods for the deceased. Initially, this responsibility fell to the eldest son. However, over time, professional priests, *Hmw-ka*, or "Servants of the *Ka*", took over, overseeing rituals performed by the *Wab*-priests.

These priests managed daily cult practices and facilitated the transport of funerary items, such as furniture, cages, etc. For heavier or more prestigious cargoes, trained and physically fit men were preferred. As seen in this relief, the *apr wiA*, or "boat team" played a key role in such tasks. A notable example of their work appears in a scene from the causeway of Pharaoh Sahure's pyramid, which depicts the transport of his pyramidion.

PROVENANCE

Former private collection Paris, France prior to 1994

LITERATURE

L. Klebs: *Die Reliefs und Malereien des Alten Reiches*, Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, C. Winter, Heidelberg 1915
R. Hözl: *Reliefs und Inschriftensteine des Alten Reichs*, Philipp von Zabern Mains 1999
K. Lehmann: *Der Serdab in den Privatgräbern des Alten Reiches*, Heidelberg 2000