

AP: Please come in a
have a seat in one
of the groups.

- * Each groups has been assigned
a document from ancient
egypt.

- * Our goal is to find out
what life was like in
Egypt during the time of
the Pharaohs

- * Some of you have documents
about common people others
the Pharaohs - we will use
these to get a complete
picture of life during this
time

Your job

- * use your arrange guide to
deconstruct the document

- * Prepare a brief statement
for the class telling us what
you learned about daily life

- * a copy of both is due @ the end of class

THE NEGATIVE CONFESSION

(1) To be said on reaching the Hall of the Two Truths¹⁵ so as to purge N of any sins committed and to see the face of every god:

Hail to you, Great God, Lord of the
Two Truths!

I have come to you, my Lord,

I was brought to see your beauty.

I know you, I know the names of the forty-
two gods,

Who are with you in the Hall of the
Two Truths.

Who live by warding off evildoers,

Who drink of their blood,

On that day of judging characters
before Wennofer.¹⁶

Lo, your name is "He-of-Two-Daughters,"

(And) "He-of-Ma'at's-Two-Eyes."

Lo, I come before you,

Bringing Ma'at to you,

Having repelled evil for you.

I have not done crimes against people,

I have not mistreated cattle,

I have not sinned in the Place of Truth.¹⁷

I have not known what should not
be known,¹⁸

I have not done any harm.

I did not begin a day by exacting more than
my due,

My name did not reach the bark of the
mighty ruler.¹⁹

I have not blasphemed a god,

I have not robbed the poor.

I have not done what the god abhors,

I have not maligned a servant to his master.

I have not caused pain,

I have not caused tears.

I have not killed,

I have not ordered to kill,

I have not made anyone suffer.

I have not damaged the offerings in
the temples,

I have not depleted the loaves of the gods,

I have not stolen the cakes of the dead.²⁰

I have not copulated nor defiled myself.

I have not increased nor reduced
the measure, . . .

I have not cheated in the fields.

I have not added to the weight of
the balance,

I have not falsified the plummet of
the scales.

I have not taken milk from the mouth
of children,

I have not deprived cattle of their pasture.

I have not snared birds in the reeds of
the gods,

I have not caught fish in their ponds.

I have not held back water in its season;

I have not dammed a flowing stream,

I have not quenched a needed fire.

I have not neglected the days of
meat offerings,

I have not detained cattle belonging to
the god,

I have not stopped a god in his procession.

I am pure, I am pure,

I am pure, I am pure! . . .

No evil shall befall me in this land,

In this Hall of the Two Truths;

For I know the names of the gods in it,

The followers of the great God!

¹⁵Ma'at takes a dual form here in Isis, goddess of right, and Nephthys, goddess of truth. Isis was the sister and wife of Osiris. It was she who brought the dead and dismembered Osiris back to life, thereby assuring his status as god of resurrection and king of the Underworld. Nephthys, also Osiris's sister, had assisted in his resurrection.

¹⁶One of Osiris's names.

¹⁷He has not sinned in any holy place.

¹⁸Secrets of the gods.

¹⁹As he sails across the sky in his bark, Re has not heard of any misdeeds by the deceased.

²⁰Food to accompany the dead on their journey.

A new body of funerary inscriptions now appeared, which scholars today refer to as the *Coffin Texts*. The texts, usually inscribed within the wooden coffins of people who could afford elaborate funerals, were ritual resurrection spells. Some were modeled upon the earlier *Pyramid Texts*, but most were quite new and displayed an obsession with the dangers of Earth and the terrors of death that was lacking in the pyramid inscriptions. Despite the essential life-affirming nature of their culture, Egyptians were not immune to the miseries and fears, especially fear of disaster and death, that beset all humans.

Our second selection is a much-used coffin spell that takes the form of a two-part speech. In the first part the sun-god *Re* speaks, reminding humanity of his four good deeds at the time of creation. In the second part the deceased speaks, laying his claim on eternal life.

A COFFIN TEXT

Words spoken by Him-whose-names-are-hidden, the All-Lord, as he speaks before those who silence the storm, in the sailing of the court:²

Hail in peace! I repeat to you the good deeds which my own heart did for me from within the serpent-coil,³ in order to silence strife. I did four good deeds within the portal of lightland:

I made the four winds, that every man might breathe in his time. This is one of the deeds.

I made the great inundation,⁴ that the humble might benefit by it like the great. This is one of the deeds.

I made every man like his fellow; and I did not command that they do wrong. It is their hearts that disobey what I have said. This is one of the deeds.

I made that their hearts are not disposed to forget the West,⁵ in order that sacred offerings be made to the gods of the nomes.⁶ This is one of the deeds.

I have created the gods from my sweat, and the people from the tears of my eye.

The Dead Speaks

I⁷ shall shine and be seen every day as a dignitary of the All-Lord, having given satisfaction to the Weary-hearted.⁸

I shall sail rightly in my bark,⁹ I am lord of eternity in the crossing of the sky.

I am not afraid in my limbs, for Hu and Hike¹⁰ overthrow for me that evil being.

I shall see lightland, I shall dwell in it. I shall judge the poor and the wealthy.

I shall do the same for the evil-doers; for mine is life, I am its lord, and the scepter will not be taken from me.

I have spent a million years with the Weary-hearted, the son of Geb, dwelling with him in one place; while hills became towns and towns hills, for dwelling destroys dwelling.

I am lord of the flame who lives on truth; lord of eternity, maker of joy, against whom that worm shall not rebel.

I am he who is in his shrine, master of action who destroys the storm; who drives off the serpents of many names when he goes from his shrine.

Lord of the winds who announces the north-wind, rich in names in the mouth of the Ennead.¹¹

Lord of lightland, maker of light, who lights the sky with his beauty.

I am he in his name! Make way for me, that I may see Nun¹² and Amun!¹³ For I am that equipped spirit who passes by the guards.¹⁴ They do not speak for fear of Him-whose-name-is-hidden, who is in my body. I know him, I do not ignore him! I am equipped and effective in opening his portal!

As for any person who knows this spell, he will be like Ré in the eastern sky, like Osiris in the netherworld. He will go down to the circle of fire, without the flame touching him ever!

²The deities who accompany Re as he sails daily across the sky (note 9).

³The serpent-dragon Apophis, a mythic symbol of the lurking dangers in the world.

⁴The annual flooding of the Nile.

⁵The Land of the Resurrected Dead.

⁶The forty-two religious and administrative districts into which Egypt was divided. Note that the dead person is being judged by forty-two deities.

⁷The dead person now becomes the speaker, assuming the identity of Re.

⁸One of Osiris's titles. One must first satisfy Osiris before joining Re.

⁹Re sails across the sky in a bark, or boat.

¹⁰Personifications of effective speech and magic, they are probably a reference to this magical spell, which has been uttered at entombment and carved in the coffin.

¹¹The company of Egypt's nine chief deities.

¹²The watery void outside the temporal and spatial boundaries of creation from which the creator emerged, Nun was personified as the god of the Abyss.

¹³A primeval god who existed as a force before creation, he became the chief god of Thebes. He rose to preeminence in Egypt when the princes of Thebes reunited Egypt after the Second Intermediate Period (see source 4, note 1).

¹⁴The guards to the Land of the West.

5 ADVICE FOR EGYPTIAN STUDENTS

Ancient Egyptians had the highest regard for education. Their word for school, for example, meant "house of life." Knowledge of reading, writing, and math was considered an utmost necessity for boys of all social classes. Students learned such skills through the constant copying of classical texts and moral guidelines. The excerpt below from Wings of the Falcon: Life and Thought of Ancient Egypt, translated by Joseph Kaster, includes a number of the latter, written in the form of instructions from father to son, advising the son to diligently follow the life of a scribe. As you read the excerpt, note the problems of ancient Egyptian education that affect our educational system today.

I

I place you at school along with the children of the notables, to educate you and to have you trained for [the scribe's] calling.

Behold, I relate to you how it fares with the scribe when he is told: "Wake up and at your place! The books lie already before your comrades! Place your hand on your clothes and look to your sandals!"

When you get your daily task, be not idle and read diligently from the book. When you reckon in silence, let no word be heard.

Write with your hand and read with your mouth. Ask counsel of them who are clever. Be not slack, and spend not a day in idleness, or woe betide your limbs! Enter into the methods of your teacher and hear his instruction. Behold I am with you every day!

II

O scribe, be not idle, be not idle, or you will be soundly chastised! Set not your heart on pleasures, or you will be ruined. Write with your hand; read with your mouth, and ask counsel of them that have more knowledge than you.

... Persevere every day; thus shall you obtain mastery over the knowledge of writing. Spend no day in idleness or you will be beaten. The ear of the boy is on his back, and he hearkens when he is beaten!

... Persevere in asking counsel, neglect it not; and in writing, sicken not of it.

Set your heart upon hearing my words; you will find them profitable.

III

Be not a foolish man, that has no instruction.

By night you are taught, and by day you are instructed, but you do not listen to instruction, and you do after your own devices!

... Lions are taught, horses are broken in, but you—the like of you is not known in the whole land! Know that, if you please!

IV

My heart is sick of giving you further teaching! I may give you a hundred blows, and yet you cast them all off! You are as a beaten ass unto me, that is stubborn. You are as a jabbering [slave] unto me, that is brought with the tribute! ...

I am told that you forsake writing, that you give yourself up to pleasures. You go from street to street, where it smells of beer, to destruction. Beer . . . will send your soul to perdition. . . .

You are encountered climbing a wall and breaking in; men run away from before you, for you inflict wounds upon them.

Would that you knew that wine is an abomination, that you would take an oath in respect to wine, that you would not set your heart on the bottle, and would forget [drink]! . . .

VII

I am told that you forsake writing, that you have gone and run away. You forsake writing as fast as your feet can manage it, like a pair of horses. . . .

You are like a skipper's mate who does not look out for adverse winds, and searches not for the wave. If the outer rope is let go, it pulls him by the neck. . . .

X

Ah, what mean you by saying: "It is thought that the soldier is better off than the scribe?"

Come, let me tell you how the soldier fares, the often-belabored, when he is brought while yet young, to be shut up in the barracks. He receives a burning blow on his body, a ruinous blow on his eye, a blow on his eyebrow that lays him out, and his pate is cleft with a wound. . . . He is battered and bruised with flogging.

Come, let me tell you how he goes to Syria, and how he marches over the mountains. His bread and water are borne upon his shoulder like the load of an ass; they make his neck as bent as that of an ass, and the joints of his back are bowed. His drink is stinking water. He falls out only to keep watch. When he reaches the enemy, he is like a trapped bird, and he has no strength in his limbs. . . .

O scribe, turn you away from the thought that the soldier is better off than the scribe! . . .

XIII

Be a scribe who is freed forth from forced labor, and protected from all work. He is released from hoeing with the hoe, and he need not carry a basket.

It separates you from plying with the oar, and it is free from vexation. You have not many masters, nor a host of superiors.

No sooner has a man come forth from his mother's womb, than he is stretched out before his superiors. The boy becomes a soldier's henchman, the stripling a recruit, the grown man is made into a husbandman, and the townsman into a groom. The lame [one] is made into a doorkeeper, and the nearsighted into one who feeds cattle; the fowler goes among the marshes, and the fisherman stands in the wet. . . .

When the baker stands and bakes and lays bread on the fire, his head is inside the oven, and his son holds fast his feet. Comes it to pass that he slips from his son's hand, he falls into the blaze!

But the scribe, he directs every work that is in the land!

READING REVIEW

1. What could students expect if they did not study diligently?
2. How does the father persuade the son that the calling of scribe is the best one to follow?
3. What problems mentioned in the excerpt are four in the

4 ▼ A SCRIBAL EXERCISE BOOK

We would be greatly mistaken if we viewed the ancient Egyptians as so preoccupied with death and the afterlife that they had little concern with the affairs of this world. The literature and art of Egypt provide many glimpses into everyday life, and one of the best in this regard is a large body of exercise pieces for student scribes that compare the scribe's profession to other ways of making a living. Needless to say, scribes believed that all crafts were inferior to their own, and given their privileged status, they were probably correct. Despite its blatant prejudice in favor of the scribe's way of life, this description of the wretchedness of nonscribal activities gives a good overview of the types of employment in which Egyptians were engaged. Examples of this genre go back at least to the Middle Kingdom; our selection dates from the twelfth century B.C.E. in the age of the late New Kingdom.

The idle scribe is worthless

The royal scribe and chief overseer of the cattle of Amun-Rè,¹ King of Gods, Nebmare-nakht, speaks to the scribe Wenemdiamun, as follows. You are busy coming and going, and don't think of writing. You resist listening to me; you neglect my teachings.

You are worse than the goose of the shore, that is busy with mischief. It spends the summer destroying the dates, the winter destroying the seed-grain. It spends the balance of

the year in pursuit of the cultivators. It does not let seed be cast to the ground without snatching it in its fall. One cannot catch it by snaring. One does not offer it in the temple. The evil, sharpeyed bird that does no work!

You are worse than the desert antelope that lives by running. It spends no day in plowing. Never at all does it tread on the threshing-floor. It lives on the oxen's labor, without entering among them. But though I spend the day telling you "Write," it seems like a plague to you.

Writing is very pleasant!

(source 3, note 13), with Re, the chief deity of the Old and Middle kingdoms.

¹The composite chief deity of the New Kingdom, Amun-Re was a result of the joining of Amun, chief god of Thebes

ing you "Write," it seems like a plague to you. Writing is very pleasant!

All occupations are bad except that of the scribe

See for yourself with your own eye. The occupations lie before you.

The washerman's day is going up, going down. All his limbs are weak, [from] whitening his neighbors' clothes every day, from washing their linen.

The maker of pots is smeared with soil, like one whose relations have died. His hands, his feet are full of clay; he is like one who lives in the bog.

The cobbler mingles with vats.² His odor is penetrating. His hands are red with madder,³ like one who is smeared with blood. . . .

The watchman⁴ prepares garlands and polishes vase-stands. He spends a night of toil just as one on whom the sun shines.

The merchant travels downstream and upstream. They are as busy as can be, carrying goods from one town to another. They supply him who has wants. But the tax collectors carry off the gold, that most precious of metals.

The ships' crews from every house [of commerce], they receive their loads. They depart from Egypt for Syria, and each man's god is with him. [But] not one of them says: "We shall see Egypt again!"

The carpenter who is in the shipyard carries the timber and stacks it. If he gives today the output of yesterday, woe to his limbs! The shipwright stands behind him to tell him evil things.

His outworker who is in the fields, his is the toughest of all the jobs. He spends the day loaded with his tools, tied to his tool-box. When he returns home at night, he is loaded with the tool-box and the timbers, his drinking mug, and his whetstones.

The scribe, he alone, records the output of all of them. Take note of it!

The misfortunes of the peasant

Let me also expound to you the situation of the peasant, that other tough occupation. [Comes] the inundation and soaks him — — —,⁵ he attends to his equipment. By day he cuts his farming tools; by night he twists rope. Even his midday hour he spends on farm labor. He equips himself to go to the field as if he were a warrior. The dried field lies before him; he goes out to get his team. When he has been after the herdsman for many days, he gets his team and comes back with it. He makes for it a place in the field. Comes dawn, he goes to make a start and does not find it in its place. He spends three days searching for it; he finds it in the bog. He finds no hides on them; the jackals have chewed them. He comes out, his garments in his hand, to beg for himself a team.

When he reaches his field he finds [it] broken up. He spends time cultivating, and the snake is after him. It finishes off the seed as it is cast to the ground. He does not see a green blade. He does three plowings with borrowed grain. His wife has gone down to the merchants and found nothing for barter. Now the scribe lands on the shore. He surveys the harvest. Attendants are behind him with staffs, Nubians⁶ with clubs. One says [to him]: "Give grain." "There is none." He is beaten savagely. He is bound, thrown in the well, submerged head down. His wife is bound in his presence. His children are in fetters. His neighbors abandon them and flee. When it's over, there's no grain.

If you have any sense, be a scribe. If you have learned about the peasant, you will not be able to be one. Take note of it!

Be a scribe

The scribe of the army and commander⁷ of the cattle of the house of Amun, Nebmare-nakht, speaks to the scribe Wenemdiamun, as follows. Be a scribe! Your body will be sleek; your hand

²For tanning leather.

³A red plant dye.

⁴The watchman-custodian of a temple, who prepares for the next day's rituals.

⁵There is a gap in the document here.

⁶Mercenaries from the land south of Egypt (source 9).

⁷A joke whereby the scribe Nebmare-nakht, who holds the post of overseer of the cattle of the god Amun-Re, now takes the military title of *commander*.

will be soft. You will not flicker like a flame, like one whose body is feeble. For there is not the bone of a man in you. You are tall and thin. If you lifted a load to carry it, you would stagger, your legs would tremble. You are lacking in strength; you are weak in all your limbs; you are poor in body.

Set your sight on being a scribe; a fine profession that suits you. You call for one; a thousand answer you. You stride freely on the road. You will not be like a hired ox. You are in front of others.

I spend the day instructing you. You do not listen! Your heart is like an [empty] room. My teachings are not in it. Take their [meaning] to yourself!

The marsh thicket is before you each day, as a nestling is after its mother. You follow the path of pleasure; you make friends with revellers. You have made your home in the brewery, as one who thirsts for beer. You sit in the parlor with an idler. You hold the writings in contempt. You visit the whore. Do not do these things! What are they for? They are of no use. Take note of it!

The scribe does not suffer like the soldier

Furthermore. Look, I instruct you to make you sound; to make you hold the palette freely. To make you become one whom the king trusts; to make you gain entrance to treasury and granary. To make you receive the ship-load at the gate of the granary. To make you issue the offerings on feast days. You are dressed in fine clothes; you own horses. Your boat is on the river; you are supplied with attendants. You stride about inspecting. A mansion is built in your town. You have a powerful office, given you by the king. Male and female slaves are about you. Those who are in the fields grasp your hand, on plots that you have made. Look, I make you into a staff of life! Put the writings in your heart, and you will be protected from all kinds of toil. You will become a worthy⁷ official.

Do you not recall the [fate of] the unskilled man? His name is not known. He is ever bur-

dened [like an ass carrying] in front of the scribe who knows what he is about.

Come, [let me tell] you the woes of the soldier, and how many are his superiors: the general, the troop-commander, the officer who leads, the standard-bearer, the lieutenant, the scribe, the commander of fifty, and the garrison-captain. They go in and out in the halls of the palace, saying: "Get laborers!" He is awakened at any hour. One is after him as [after] a donkey. He toils until the Aten⁸ sets in his darkness of night. He is hungry, his belly hurts; he is dead while yet alive. When he receives the grain-ration, having been released from duty, it is not good for grinding.

He is called up for Syria. He may not rest. There are no clothes, no sandals. The weapons of war are assembled at the fortress of Sile. His march is uphill through mountains. He drinks water every third day; it is smelly and tastes of salt. His body is ravaged by illness. The enemy comes, surrounds him with missiles, and life recedes from him. He is told: "Quick, forward, valiant soldier! Win for yourself a good name!" He does not know what he is about. His body is weak, his legs fail him. When victory is won, the captives are handed over to his majesty, to be taken to Egypt. The foreign woman faints on the march; she hangs herself [on] the soldier's neck. His knapsack drops, another grabs it while he is burdened with the woman. His wife and children are in their village; he dies and does not reach it. If he comes out alive, he is worn out from marching. Be he at large, be he detained, the soldier suffers. If he leaps and joins the deserters, all his people are imprisoned. He dies on the edge of the desert, and there is none to perpetuate his name. He suffers in death as in life. A big sack is brought for him; he does not know his resting place.

Be a scribe, and be spared from soldiering! You call and one says: "Here I am." You are safe from torments. Every man seeks to raise himself up. Take note of it!

⁸The divine sun disk.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NILE RIVER AND THE PHARAOH

Two of the most important sources of life for the ancient Egyptians were the Nile River and the pharaoh. Egyptians perceived that the Nile River made possible the abundant food that was a major source of their well-being. This Hymn to the Nile, probably from the nineteenth and twentieth dynasties in the New Kingdom, expresses the gratitude Egyptians felt for the Nile.

Hymn to the Nile

Hail to you, O Nile, that issues from the earth and comes to keep Egypt alive! . . .

He that waters the meadows which Re created, in order to keep every kid alive.

He that makes to drink the desert and the place distant from water: that is his dew coming down from heaven.

The lord of fishes, he who makes the marsh-birds to go upstream. . . .

He who makes barley and brings emmer into being, that he may make the temples festive.

If he is sluggish, then nostrils are stopped up, and everybody is poor. . . .

When he rises, then the land is in jubilation, then every belly is in joy, every backbone takes on laughter, and every tooth is exposed.

The bringer of good, rich in provisions, creator of all good, lord of majesty, sweet of fragrance.

He who makes every beloved tree to grow, without lack of them.

The Egyptian king, or pharaoh, was viewed as a god and the absolute ruler of Egypt. His significance and the gratitude of the Egyptian people for his existence are evident in this hymn from the reign of Sesotris III (c. 1880–1840 B.C.E.).

Hymn to the Pharaoh

He has come unto us that he may carry away Upper Egypt; the double diadem [crown of Upper and Lower Egypt] has rested on his head.

He has come unto us and has united the Two Lands; he has mingled the reed with the bee [symbols of Lower and Upper Egypt].

He has come unto us and has brought the Black Land under his sway; he has apportioned to himself the Red Land.

He has come unto us and has taken the Two Lands under his protection; he has given peace to the Two Riverbanks.

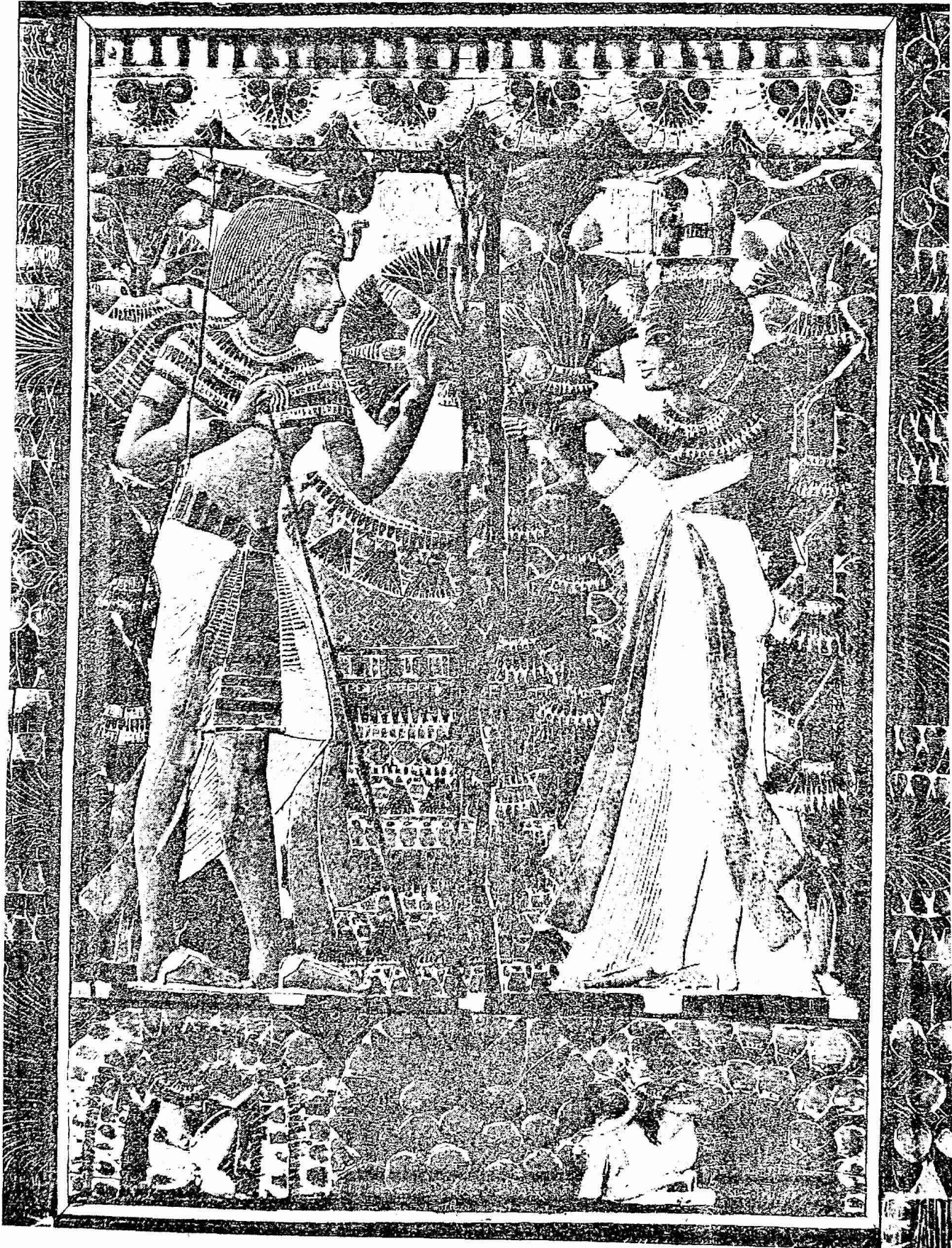
He has come unto us and has made Egypt to live; he has banished its suffering.

He has come unto us and has made the people to live; he has caused the throat of the subjects to breathe.

He has come unto us and has done battle for his boundaries; he has delivered them that were robbed.

Source 1: Griffith Institute/Ashmolean Institute, Oxford.

1. Tut-ankh-amon and his wife Ankhesenam, from Tut-ankh-amon's Tomb, ca. 1350 B.C.E.



Source 2: Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

2. Nebamun Hunting Birds, with his Wife and Servant, from his Tomb at Thebes, ca. 1400 B.C.E.

