



The Races of Early Egypt

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THE RACES OF EARLY EGYPT.

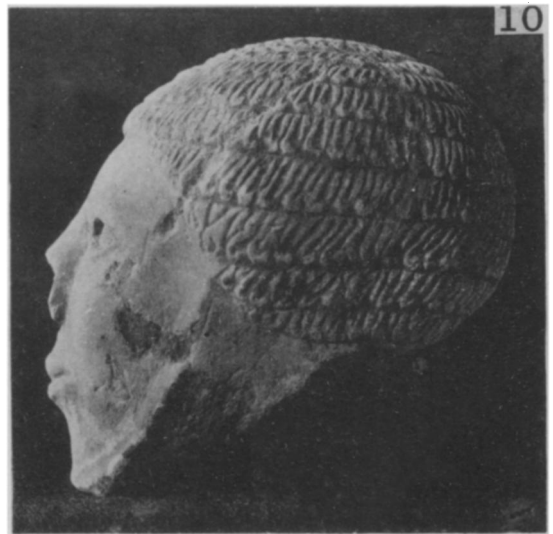
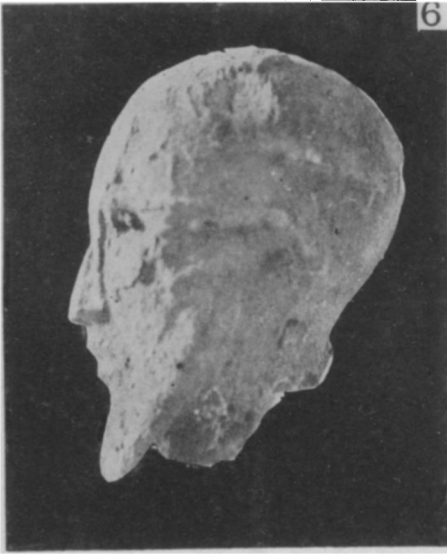
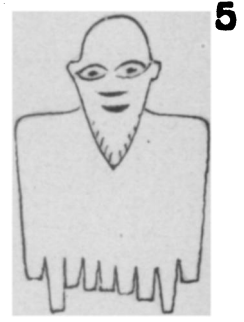
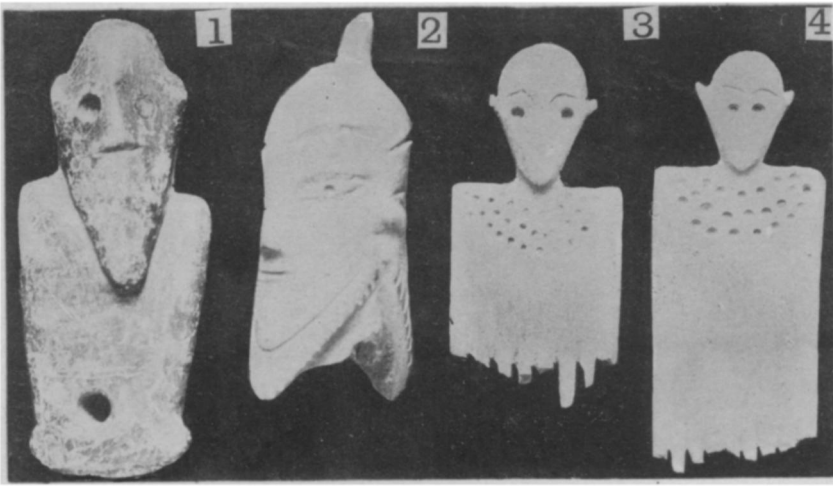
BY W. M. FLINDERS PETRIE, D.C.L., Edwards Professor of Egyptology at
University College, London.

[WITH PLATES XVIII-XX.]

As very various opinions have been expressed lately about the type of the early Egyptians, it is desirable to place together the best data that we yet have for observation. In two respects this subject may yet be amplified: (1) it is hoped that more material of the early dynasties may be forthcoming from the clearance of the early temple site of Abydos, which it is intended shall be done in the next three years; and (2) the comparisons with the types figured on the Egyptian monuments of later ages, with localities stated, may help in connecting the early races with those known otherwise. To undertake stage (2) while stage (1) is yet unaccomplished would be in some cases premature; but to postpone all observation of the variety of race till stage (1) is fulfilled would hinder knowledge. We have enough now to make a first classification, and that is what is brought forward here.

We must disabuse our minds of the prevalent feeling that stepping back a few thousand years will lead us to a simpler condition of races, and that at the present beginning of our information we deal with "purer" races than those around us in the present day. On the contrary, before man was tied down to the permanent possessions of domestication and agriculture he probably roamed and mingled more widely than in historic times. We must expect to deal with mixture of origin as much in 5000 B.C. as in 1900 A.D.

It is unfortunate that the appreciation of portraiture is so blunted at present. The ancient artists showed a keener discrimination than is to be found in most people of intelligence now. Nothing is commoner when differences of features are pointed out to educated people than to see a blank look of distaste, followed by the honest remark that "they all look very much alike, and I can't see where you find the difference." That these differences are not mere accidents of work is shown by the same hand on the same stone, carefully figuring marked differences in one part, and an exact identity of type in another part. It really needs a training of the eye and judgment to make any use of the figures, or to give any opinion worth hearing about them. No one can be an authority on



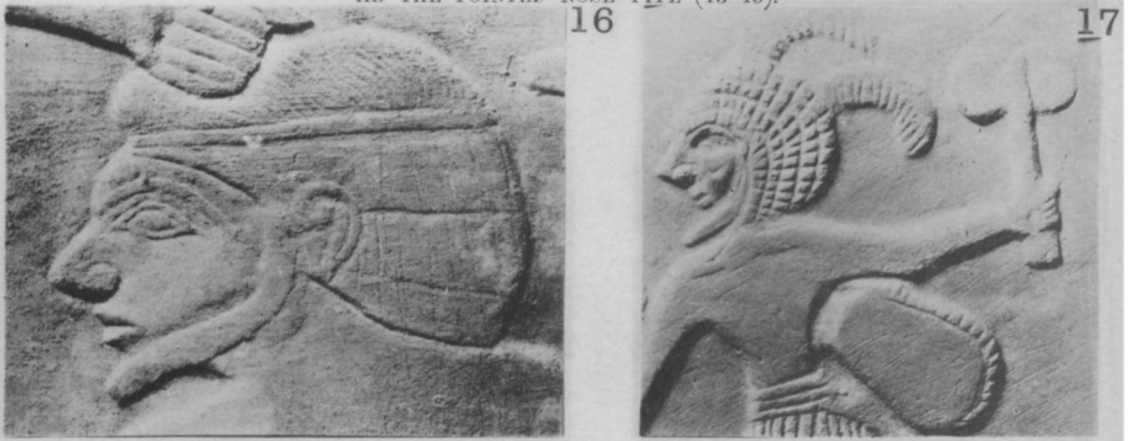
THE RACES OF EARLY EGYPT. i. THE AQUILINE TYPE (1-10.)



ii. THE PLAITED BEARD TYPE (11-12).



iii. THE POINTED NOSE TYPE (13-15).

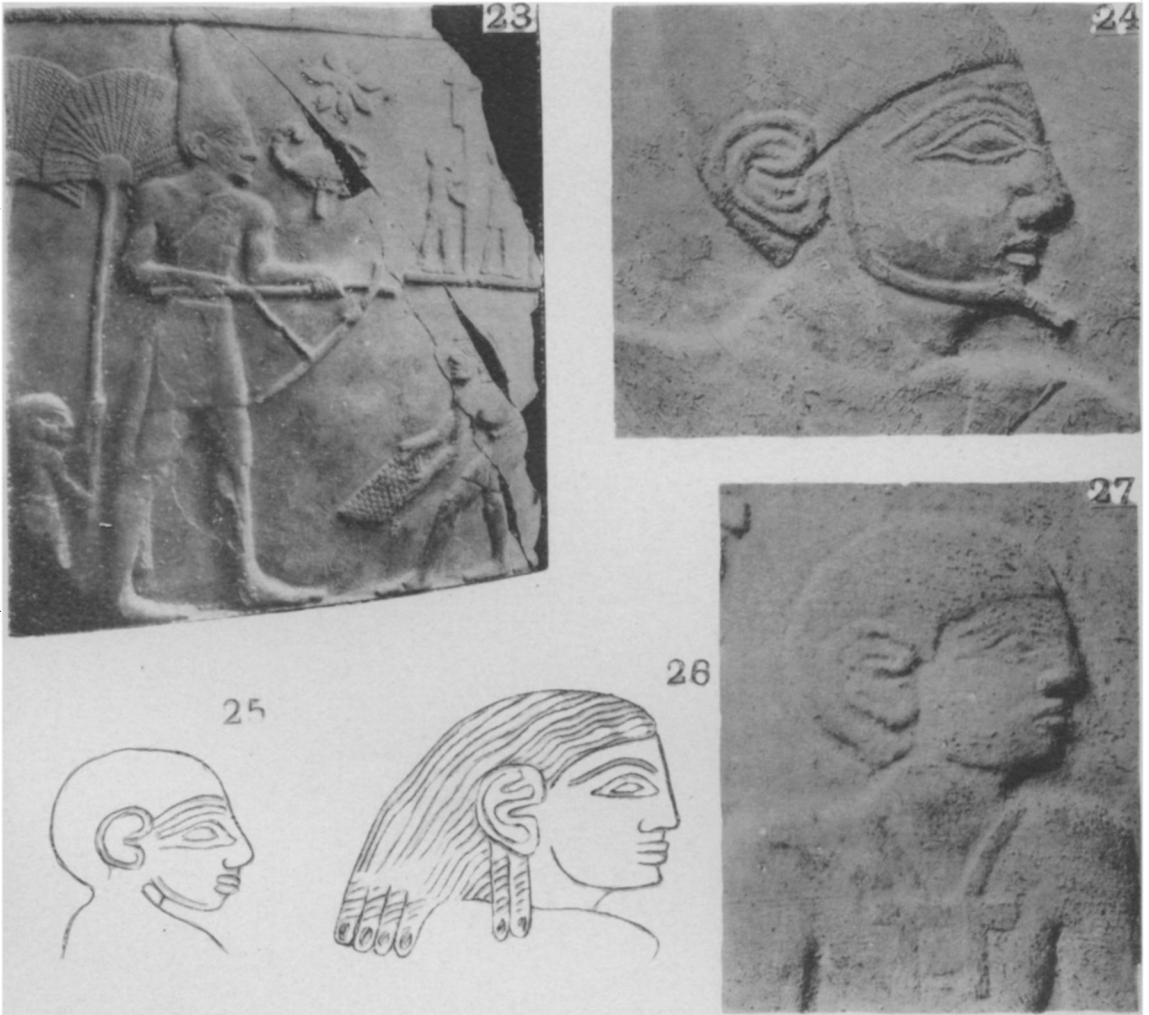


iv. THE TILTED NOSE TYPE (16-19).

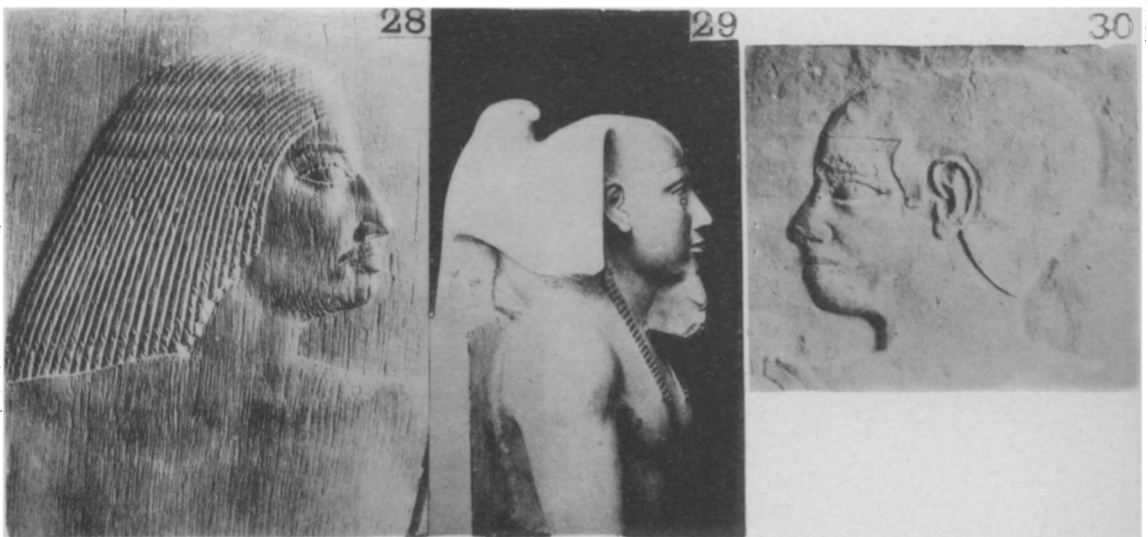


v. THE FORWARD BEARD TYPE (20-22).





vi. THE STRAIGHT-BRIDGED TYPE OF THE DYNASTIC RACE (23-27).



vii. THE MIXED RACE OF THE FOURTH DYNASTY (28-30).

modern pictures and historical portraits without insight and experience; and ancient art and portraiture need at least as much preparation, as they are further from our common knowledge.

SOURCES.—The material for our observations on the early races has all come to light in the last few years. Of the prehistoric age there are several rude figures (see *Nagada*, lix; lx, 21; lxiv, 81; and here Figs. 1 to 5) which all agree in a general type. There are also figures of a very different and steatopygous form (*Nagada*, vi); this probably became mixed with the other type. Of the earliest dynastic times there are the invaluable slate carvings, of which retouched photographs were published in *Journ. Anthropol. Inst.*, xxx, Pls. B, C, D. There are also the ivory carvings, stone figures, and sculptured mace heads from Hierakonpolis (see *Hierakonpolis*, Pls. I, III, V–XII, XV, XXI, XXVI, A, B, C, XXIX, XXXIX). Of the first dynasty there are the ivory carvings from Abydos (*Royal Tombs*, vol. i, Pls. XII, XIV; vol. ii, Pls. III, A, IV). With later times we do not attempt to deal at present; though it would be highly desirable to have a complete *corpus* of photographs of every head of importance throughout Egyptian history. The references to the figures here given is as follows:—1 to 4, in University College, London; 5, *Nagada*, lix, 5; 6, *Hierakonpolis*, vi, 4; 7 to 9, *Racial Portraits*; 10, *Hierakonpolis*, vi, 1; 11, *Journ. Anthropol. Inst.*, xxx, D; 12, *Journ. Anthropol. Inst.*, xxx, C; 13, *Royal Tombs*, vol. ii, Pl. IV, 5; 14, *Hierakonpolis*, xxvi A; 15, *Royal Tombs*, vol. ii, III A, 2; 16, *Hierakonpolis*, xxix; 17, *Journ. Anthropol. Inst.*, xxx, B; 18, *Hierakonpolis*, xxix; 19, *Hierakonpolis*, xxvi, C; 20 to 22, *Hierakonpolis*, xxix; 23, *Hierakonpolis*, xxvi, C; 24 to 27, *Hierakonpolis*, xxix; 28, *Petrie, History*, i, Fig. 20; 29, *Petrie, History*, i, Fig. 33; 30, *Racial Portraits*. These are only stated to show the position of the originals; in many cases the actual heads shown here are taken from casts.

DATES.—It is essential to observe the relative ages of the various heads, as the condition of the peoples represented was changing from hostility to captivity, and lastly to union with the spreading government of Egypt. The system of sequence dates (described *Journ. Anthropol. Inst.*, xxix, 295, and *Diospolis*, 4–12) is best suited for this, as there will be but one number to observe. But this system must be extended into the early history; and happily the junction of the sequence numbers 30–80 with the history is now fixed; the cylinder jars of King Ka are of the form dated s.d. 78, and those of King Mena are of s.d. 80. Nar-mer therefore between Ka and Mena must be dated s.d. 79. The order of the carved slates (see *Journ. Anthropol. Inst.*, xxx, B, C, D) has not yet been studied; but from the art, and its connection with that of the first dynasty, I believe the order should be (referring to Pls. B, C, D, above):—

IV. Louvre fragment, wiry, over-detailed style	75
V. Gizeh fragment, similar	76
II. Louvre and British Museum, more free and active...	77
VI. British Museum and Oxford, fine style arising	78
I. Gizeh, elaboration of anatomy	79

Purely provisionally, in order to distinguish the sequence quickly, I shall give these the sequence dates last named, 75 to 79, though very likely they may really all belong to 78-79.

The sequence dates of the prehistoric heads are probably about as follows:—No. 2, S.D. 40, and Nos. 3, 4, S.D. 43, judging from similar examples already dated; and No. 5 is about 52. No. 6 was from the great find of ivory at Hierakonpolis, S.D. 79. Nos. 7, 8, 9 are from sculptures of the nineteenth dynasty; No. 10 is probably of S.D. 79.

THE RACES.—In dividing the various types as follows it must not be supposed that they are all separate peoples; some may well be mixtures of others, but the first step is to classify the forms.

1. *The aquiline type.*—Setting aside the steatopygous race, which is only found modelled in the earliest known graves, and which appears to have been early extinct as a separate people in Egypt, there is but one type seen in all the prehistoric figures. Some examples of it are given, Figs. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; and others in slate, paste, ivory, etc., are only poorer variants. All come from Upper Egypt. The characteristics of this type are the high domed head and pointed beard, the profile being too slight to give much indication. Though this inartistic people did not leave any fine images, yet luckily their artistic conquerors made some excellent ivory carvings, one of which (Fig. 6) is clearly of a man of the usual prehistoric type. There is the same high domed head and pointed beard, with a long nose, which is clearly indicated in the prehistoric head, Fig. 2. The growth of the beard and the high head both mark off these examples from all the other types in Figs. 11 to 30.

Now it so happens that this type is very well known already on later Egyptian monuments. The precise resemblance of Figure 6 to Figures 7 and 8 is beyond question; and the latter represent (7) the Tahennu and (8) the western race in general. For popular convenience we may call them Libyans, a term which covers many allied races. The closely similar physiognomy of the Amorites, Figure 9, points to a common origin; and as these Amorites were a fair people (by the remains of colour on the monuments) they join well with the fair Libyan race. So far, from physiognomy we reach the simple conclusion that North Africa, Egypt, and Syria were occupied by allied tribes of a European character. The head, Figure 10, is apparently of the same race crossed with negro, which has made the hair curly, the lips weak, the beard short, and the outline less orthognathous.

Beside this strong resemblance of type, and the presumption that a race that was on each side of Egypt probably occupied that land at one time, there are still remaining, especially in the pottery and decoration, very strong cultural resemblances between the prehistoric Egyptian and the present Kabyle of Algiers. These have been already detailed by me in *Naqada*, p. 63, and are so generally accepted that we need not re-state the case here.

But lately it has been asserted emphatically that the prehistoric Egyptians were not Libyans, on the ground of asserted differences in the cephalic, the

alveolar, and the nasal index. As this is based on the comparison of two peoples who are over 1,500 miles apart, and with over 7,000 years interval between them, one in mountains, the other in a plain; one by living heads, the other by dead skulls, it is clear that many unstudied data are involved. The fixity of cranial characters is yet quite unknown, and all we can do is to compare a few cases. The alveolar index it is however agreed is similar, both prehistoric Egyptians and modern Kabyles¹ being orthognathous. The nasal index is quite ambiguous, the values being :—

	Nasal In.	Years ago.
Prehistoric Egyptian	540	7,000
Algerian skulls	490	2,000 ?
Living Kabyles	680	0

Thus the Egyptian is between the ancient and modern Algerian. The sole question left therefore is that of the cephalic index. This ranges thus :—

	Ceph. In.	Years ago.
Prehistoric Egyptian	720	7,000
Algerian (Dolmens and Biskra) ...	740	2,000
Living Kabyles	770	0

Here is at once a suggestion of change in Algeria alone. The index has shifted 15 per 1,000 years (from 740 to 770); and the difference of 4 per 1,000 years (from 720 to 740) between Egypt and Algiers is only a quarter of the rate of change shown in Algiers itself.

Is this change comparable with that in other lands, apart from any serious change of race? In Middle Italy we have a fair case, in one region, not much disturbed by invasions so far south. From Flower's Catalogue we find :—

	Ceph. In.	Years ago.
Aquinum	790	2,000
Middle Italy, general	794	2,000
Middle Italy, modern	802	0

Here there is a change of 5 per 1,000 years, as determined entirely by skulls or a greater rate of change than that between Egyptian and Algerian skulls.

But when we compare skulls and living persons we find much larger differences, which suggest that measurements on the living are not comparable with those on skulls. For instance—

¹ The word Berber should be avoided, as it is used for totally different races, the Kabyle and the Nubian, fair and black.

	Skulls.	Difference.	Living.	
Anglo-Saxon, 1,200 years old.	750	40	790	South England.
Whitechapel, 200 years old.	747	47	794	South-east England.
Modern English, all ...	770	21	791	All England.
Ancient Algerian ...	740	30	770	Living Kabyles.

Here we see that the difference of ancient and living Algeria is of the same character as that between skulls and living heads in other instances at home, even where there is no lapse of time. Hence the only difference we need consider as regards the Egyptians is that between the prehistoric Egyptian and ancient Algerian; a change of only 20, or 4 per 1,000 years, which is far within the scope of likely variation in any one race. Moreover no one has ever asserted that the two races were united by direct descent, but only that they were akin. The differences produced by amalgamation with other peoples, by the lapse of 7,000 years, by the life in a hot plain and on cold mountains, by the distance as much as from England to the Crimea;—all these will well account for a difference of 20 when the human range of racial averages is as much as 170.

On one other point of the Libyan connection a mistaken statement has been made, owing to trusting entirely to a modern transliteration of Egyptian. The royal bee in Egyptian had the phonetic value written with the leg *b*, the reed which the Greeks transliterated *a*, as in *Amen* and *Anubis*, and the drill-cap *t*; reading *bat*, or *byti* as some prefer it. The resemblance of this royal title *bat* in ancient Egypt, to the Libyan *battos*, a king, as stated by Greeks, is as close as could be expected. To deny that the Greek value of the reed sign might be *a*, is impossible when we see the examples that I name above.

I fail to see that craniometry has any serious evidence to bring against the connection of the prehistoric people of Upper Egypt with those of ancient (or even modern) Algiers. It is only when ignoring all the many causes of variation that the amount of difference seems of importance. But the physiognomy gives a decisive proof of connection between prehistoric Egypt and ancient Libya, and thus anthropology fully supports the many evidences which archæology has given for a close connection between Egypt and Libya.

We now turn to the other types found on the early monuments.

2. *The plaited-beard type.*—See Figures 11, 12. This is extremely different from the prehistoric aquiline type. The characteristics are close curly hair, a plaited hanging beard, thick straight nose rounded at the end, rather thick lips, and receding chin. The examples are only on the carved slates, dating about 75 and 78 s.d.; both are conquered peoples. On one slate they are seen to be circumcised, on the other a sheath is worn with a belt, but no other clothing

appears. Occurring so early, they seem to be not far from Upper Egypt; but no such people recur on later monuments. They may then have been an invading race from a distance, which was exterminated in Egypt; or possibly they may belong to the Red Sea coast. The nearest instance of this type is that of the deity and worshipper on the relief at Ibriz.

3. *The pointed-nose type.*—See Figs. 13, 14, 15. This is a well-marked type, with a large slender nose sharply pointed, a somewhat projecting beard, and the hair tied up in a thick pigtail from the crown of the head in Figs. 13, 14, showing that the hair was long and lank. In two cases the figures wear a loin cloth, and in the other case a long spotted robe from the neck to the calf of the leg. A figure with the same peculiar robe appears as conqueror on Slate VI (*J.A.I.* xxx, Pl. D) date 78; the robe then being trimmed with an edging all round. A similarly robed figure, nearly life size, in limestone, was found at Hierakonpolis (not yet published). The huts of these people are shown on an ivory slip (*Royal Tombs*, ii, iv, 11; see p. 22) as being circular, made of reeds or stems bound together, with a dome top of interlacing palm branches (?). In no case do they appear as captives, so they must have been early united to the conquering tribe; but yet they were tributaries, Fig. 13 bearing a branch and bowing, Fig. 14 bearing a stone vase and a palm spathe (?), Fig. 15 bearing also a vase. From the substantial long robe we must suppose that they came from a colder and elevated land; the highlands of the eastern desert (Gebel Dokhan, Gebel Ataka, etc.) are the nearest such region, and the tribute of stone vases, and early union with the conquerors who came from the Red Sea, agree with this placing.

4. *The tilted-nose type.*—See Figs. 16, 17, 18, 19. The characteristics are a short thick nose, projecting and sloped upward below; the chin short and rather receding; the brow well marked. The hair is wavy (Figs. 16, 19), like the prehistoric and later Egyptians, or curly as in Figs. 17, 18. Figs. 16 and 19 wear a belt and tie in front; 17 a kilt with an animal's tail hanging behind; 18 a waist-cloth and sheath; the slain figures on the slate are shown as circumcised. The weapons used by this type are spear, bow and arrows, double axe, throw-stick, and mace; they also used the lasso (*J.A.I.* xxx, Pl. B). They carry the hawk standard and the eastern standard. The title or name of Fig. 16 appears above him as *ua she*, which may probably mean "chief of the lake," *i.e.*, Fayum district. These people appear as conquerors at s.d. 77 and 79; but yet conquered in 79. As, however, there are some differences (especially in beard and hair) between each of the examples given, it is likely that they were a wide-spread people which were conquered in sections. I should be inclined to see in these the general type of middle Egypt at the time of the dynastic invasion.

5. *The forward-beard type.*—See Figs. 20, 21, 22. These seem different from the preceding by the horizontal base to the nose, and the very forward growth of the beard, like that on early Greek vases (*Defenneh* xxx, 1). These heads are those of the standard bearers of King Narmer (20, 21), and that of the people over which they triumph (22). There is a difference also in 20 and 22 having

moderate hair, and 21 having long hair. The dress of 20 is a loin cloth, that of 21 a belt and hanging tie; 22, being a slain figure, is stripped, but the other heads along with it wear the skin and horns of an ox. As all of these heads are very small I have drawn them larger for clearness. This type must belong to a district partly conquered and incorporated before Narmer, and partly conquered by him. The standards borne in procession are the piece of flesh (Letopolis, north of the pyramids) carried by No. 25; the jackal (Cynopolis, 100 miles above Cairo) carried by 20; and two hawk standards borne by two men of type 21. As these have conquered similar men, it suggests that they extended further on down the west of the Delta. If the standard be that of Cynopolis it might be due to a conquering settlement of these people among the type 4 which seems likely to belong to the Fayum and Middle Egypt.

6. *The straight-bridged type.*—See Figs. 23, 24, 26, 27. This is unquestionably the conquering dynastic race. Fig. 23 is a king, apparently designated by a scorpion, who came probably just before Narmer. Fig. 24 is Narmer himself: 26 is his high priest: 27 is his servant. All of these have the straight bridge to the nose, with a very slight frontal swell in Narmer, but otherwise the forehead and nose in one line. The face is orthognathous, the jaw large, lips well formed; beard slight, and the hair long and wavy ending in ringlets, but generally shaven. This type of royal race lasted to the end of the second dynasty, as the straight bridge appears on the statue of King Khasekhem, of which the nose and chin are unfortunately lost. The dress was the loin cloth, with a tail of an animal hanging behind, for the king; a girdle with long ends for the servant; and a plain loin cloth (of the form usual in historic Egypt) for the common people, *e.g.*, the servants on Fig. 23, who are of the same type. As the conquering race appear to have started at Abydos it seems most likely that they came into Egypt from the Red Sea, along the Kosier road.

7. Lastly, at the end are some examples of the mixed race of the fourth dynasty. The head of Hesy, Fig. 28, shows much of the prehistoric type, the high domed head and long aquiline nose. The head of Khafra, Fig. 29, is of much the same type, and shows little or no trace of the early dynastic type. The head, Fig. 30, of a noble of the fourth dynasty, Sem-nefer, shows how a little of the old dynastic type remained in the mouth and chin (see Fig. 27), but the nose seems more like the Figs. 20, 21, which appear to belong to the west of the Delta. Altogether the lapse of eight or ten centuries seems to have fused the varieties, and enabled the old prehistoric type of Upper Egypt to reassert itself.

These notes will serve to show how many different strains and mixtures have to be dealt with, and how needful it is to know more of the locality and age of each type from further examples.

The table opposite shows the principal results.

Type.	Region.	Head.	Nose.	Chin.	Beard.	Hair.	Dress.	Subject.	Ruling.
Aquiline ...	Upper Egypt	High dome ...	Aquiline ...	Good	Pointed ...	Wavy...	—	S.D. —	S.D. 30—75
Plaited-beard ...	Red Sea ?? ...	Short dome ...	Thick and straight.	Varying ...	Plaited, hanging.	Close, curly ...	Sheath ...	75	—
Pointed-nose ...	East? high-lands,	Medium ...	Slender, pointed.	Good	Long	Lank, pig-tail	Loin cloth, long robe.	—	78
Tilted-nose ...	Middle Egypt?	Low ...	Short, thick, sloping up.	Short, receding.	Narrow, short.	Wavy...	Belt and tie, sheath, kilt.	79	77 79
Forward-beard ...	Lower Egypt?	Low ...	Strong, sloping down.	Strong	Forward ...	Lank ...	Belt and tie, loin cloth.	79	79
Straight-bridge...	Upper Egypt and descending.	Short dome ...	Straight with forehead.	Strong	Narrow, short.	Long, wavy, shaven.	Belt and tie, loin cloth.	—	75