

# THE TOMB OF NAKHT

PLUS Masterpieces

# THE TOMB OF NAKHT

A THEBAN FUNERARY  
CHAPEL AND  
ITS FACSIMILE

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ROYAL MUSEUMS  
OF ART AND HISTORY

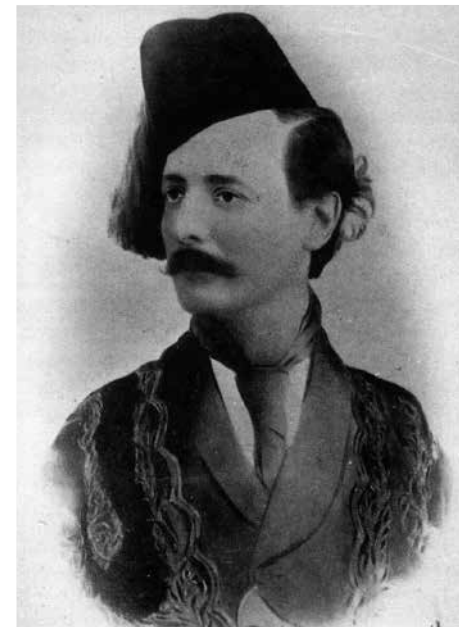
MER. BOOKS

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# Preface

On 21 June 1826, the British traveller and Egyptologist Robert Hay<sup>1</sup> (1799–1863) **FIG.1**, then staying at Sheikh Abd el-Qurna in Upper Egypt, noted in pencil in his personal journal: “Went to the 9th tomb. Had a headache. Forced to return home.” The following day, he added: “Another visit to the ninth tomb.”<sup>2</sup>

Over the preceding two years, Hay had been making drawings of the decorations and inscriptions on ancient Egyptian monuments. This major undertaking proved to be of exceptional importance for future generations. Some twenty-five years earlier, Europe had rediscovered the treasures of ancient Egypt through Napoleon Bonaparte’s expedition. The vogue for all things Egyptian was at its height, while Jean-François Champollion’s decipherment of hieroglyphs was still in its infancy. It was only much later that the name and titles of the owner of the “ninth tomb” at Sheikh Abd el-Qurna were revealed. He was Nakht: “Gardener of the Divine Offerings of Amun” and the “Bearer of Floral Offerings



**FIG.1** Robert Hay.



FIG. 2b Marcelle Baud.

to Amun". The study of the inscriptions in his tomb has since shown that he served at the temple of Karnak in Thebes during the fourteenth century BC, probably in the reign of Amenhotep III (1389–1349 BC).<sup>3</sup> His tomb (TT 161) lies on the west bank of the Nile, to the north of the Theban necropolis, at the site of Dra Abu el-Naga.

On 1 October 1928, the Royal Museums of Art and History (RMAH) in Brussels were delighted and proud to inaugurate a full-scale (1:1) facsimile of Nakht's funerary chapel in the museum's Pavilion of Antiquities. This was the very tomb that Robert Hay had documented a century earlier. Drawing on Hay's original sketches and watercolours, then preserved

FIG. 2a Marcelle Baud.

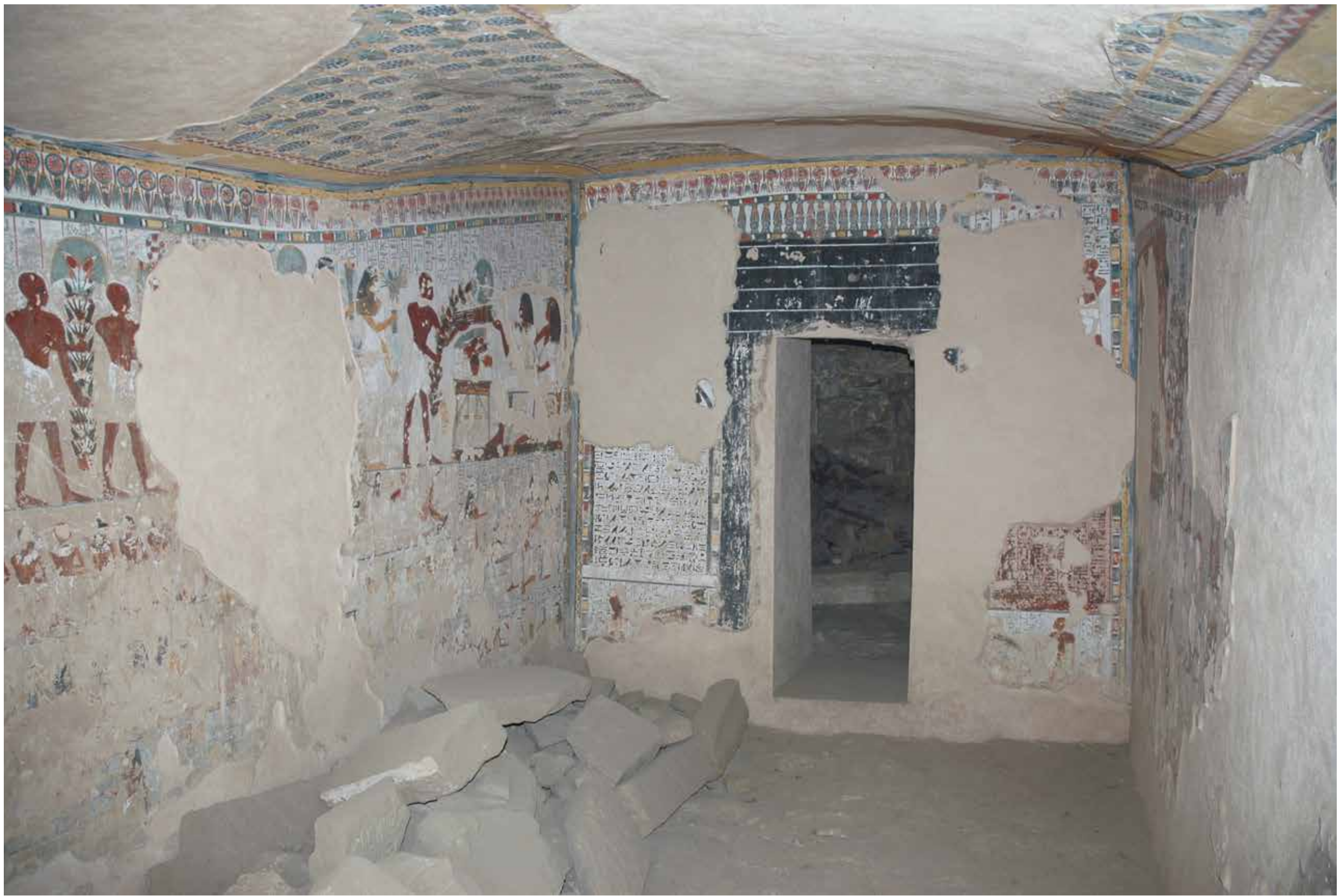
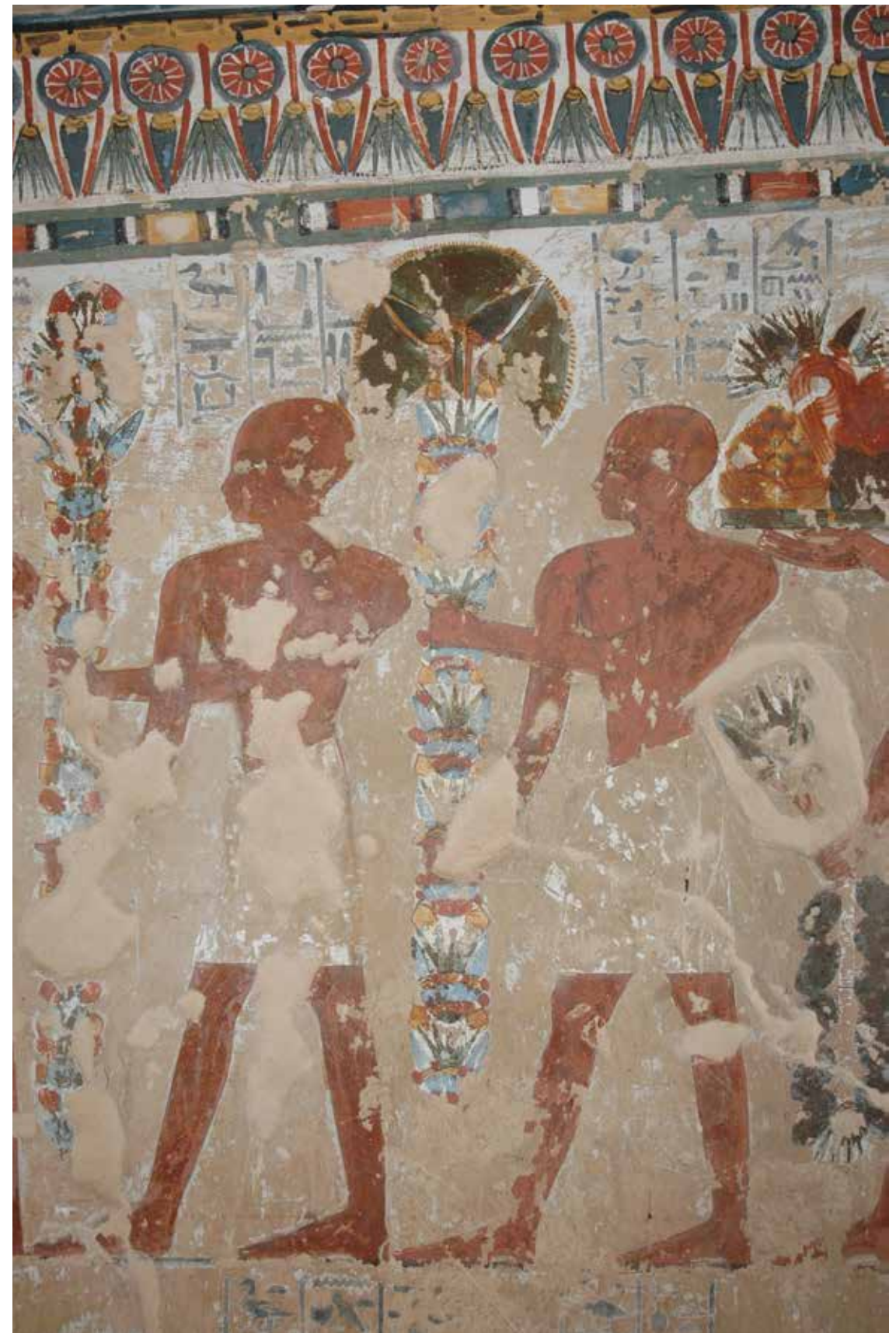


FIG.3 View of the funerary chapel *in situ*.



at the British Museum, the French Egyptologist and artist Marcelle Baud (1890–1987) produced the facsimile, which is still on view at the RMAH today [FIGS. 2a–b](#).

Today, the original Tomb of Nakht is little more than a shadow of its former self [FIG. 3](#). Like many other Theban tombs, it was occupied by villagers who settled in the area during the nineteenth century. Over time, large sections of the painted decoration became detached, blackened, or damaged by insects and rodents. The surviving scenes, however, have since been restored by the Supreme Council of Antiquities in Egypt and are once again accessible to visitors, who will appreciate the freshness of the colours and the luminous light blue that punctuates the many bouquets in the tomb’s decoration [FIGS. 4 & 5](#).

## The Tomb of Nakht

During the period of the New Kingdom (1545–1073 BC), Thebes (modern-day Luxor) was Egypt’s religious and funerary capital. The pharaohs, their families, and high-ranking officials were buried on the west bank of the Nile, beyond the fertile lands where the desert had reclaimed the landscape, transforming it into cliffs and valleys suitable for the construction of tombs. The Tomb of Nakht (TT 161) is located in the northern part of the Theban necropolis, on the site of Dra Abu el-Naga, not far from Hatshepsut’s funerary temple – the Temple of Millions of Years – at Deir el-Bahari [FIG. 6](#).<sup>4</sup>



**FIG. 6** Map of Egypt and the Theban region.