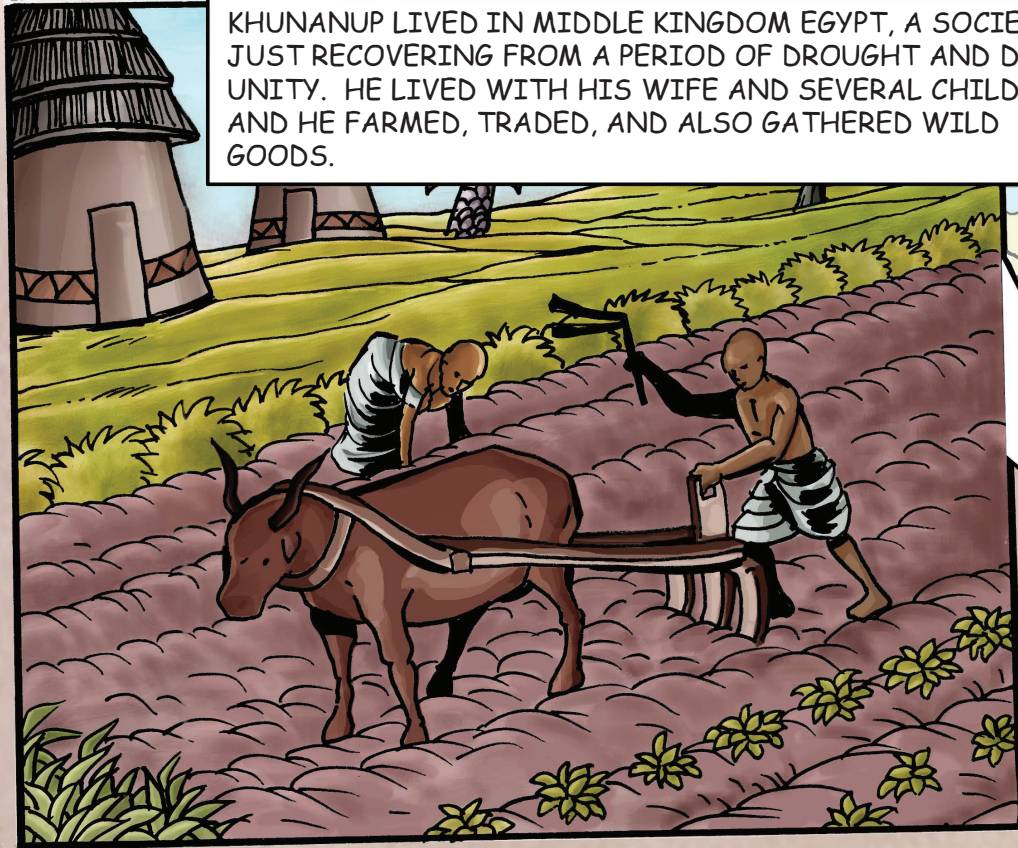


THE ELOQUENT PEASANT

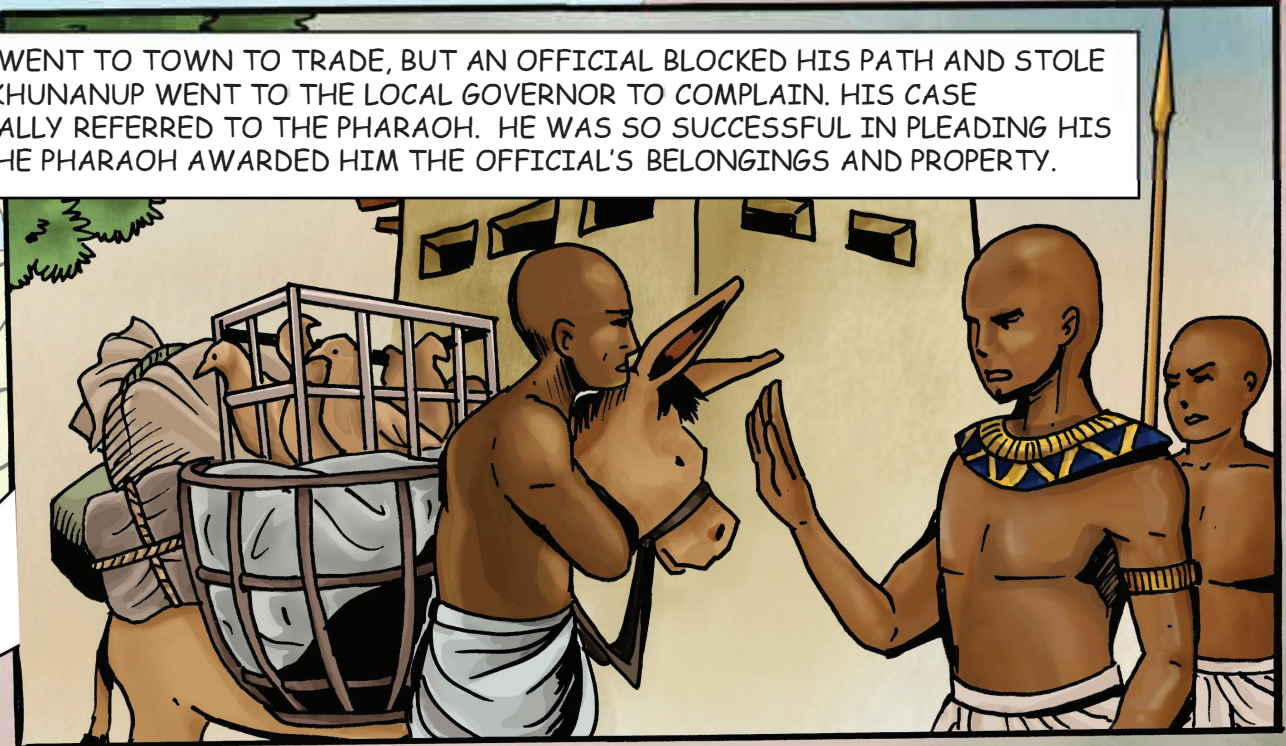
ARCHAEOLOGISTS AND HISTORIANS DISAGREE ABOUT WHETHER BEING A FARMER WAS A GOOD LIFE IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, AND THE ANSWER PROBABLY VARIES FOR DIFFERENT PEOPLE AND REGIONS. EVEN WITHIN A SINGLE SOURCE, THE ANSWER IS SOMETIMES UNCLEAR, AS THE EGYPTIAN STORY OF KHUNANUP, THE ELOQUENT PEASANT (C.2160-2055 BCE), DEMONSTRATES.

GAZA
JERUSALEM

KHUNANUP LIVED IN MIDDLE KINGDOM EGYPT, A SOCIETY JUST RECOVERING FROM A PERIOD OF DROUGHT AND DIS-UNITY. HE LIVED WITH HIS WIFE AND SEVERAL CHILDREN, AND HE FARMED, TRADED, AND ALSO GATHERED WILD GOODS.



ONE DAY, HE WENT TO TOWN TO TRADE, BUT AN OFFICIAL BLOCKED HIS PATH AND STOLE HIS GOODS. KHUNANUP WENT TO THE LOCAL GOVERNOR TO COMPLAIN. HIS CASE WAS EVENTUALLY REFERRED TO THE PHARAOH. HE WAS SO SUCCESSFUL IN PLEADING HIS CASE THAT THE PHARAOH AWARDED HIM THE OFFICIAL'S BELONGINGS AND PROPERTY.



NILE DELTA

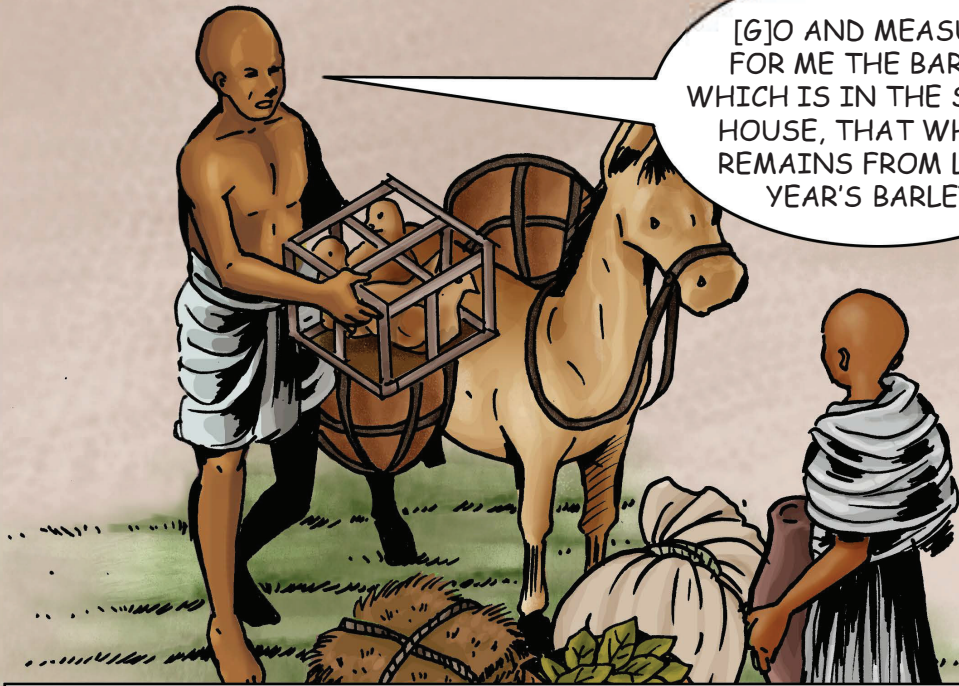
WADI NATRUN

GIZA

HELIOPOLIS

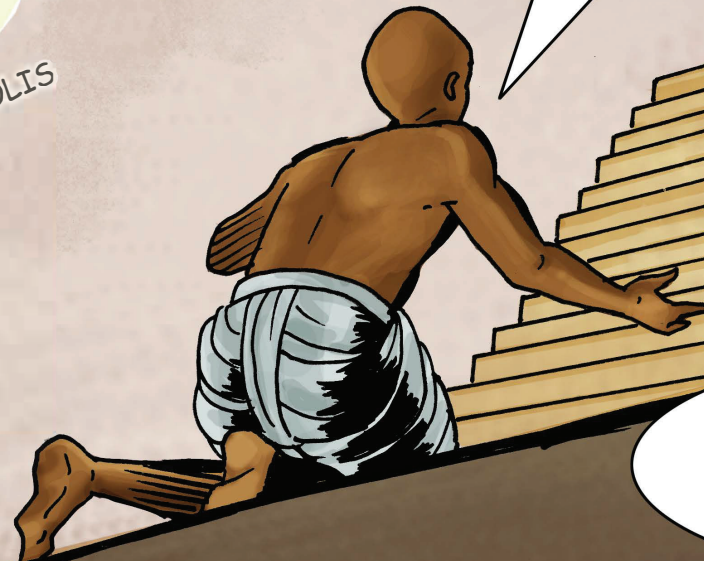
ON THE OTHER HAND, BOTH THE PHARAOH AND KHUNANUP HIMSELF DESCRIBED HIM AS A POOR MAN.

[G]O AND MEASURE FOR ME THE BARLEY WHICH IS IN THE STORE-HOUSE, THAT WHICH REMAINS FROM LAST YEAR'S BARLEY



DO NOT DEPRIVE A PAUPER OF HIS GOODS, ONE KNOWN TO YOU AS A LOWLY MAN. HIS POSSESSIONS ARE THE VERY BREATH OF A PAUPER, AND STEALING THEM IS (LIKE) PLUGGING HIS NOSE

HERAKLEOPOLIS



FOR BEHOLD, ONE OF THESE PEASANTS COMES TO THE CITY ONLY WHEN THERE IS NOTHING IN HIS HOUSE

BUT WE CAN ASK: WAS KHUNANUP A WEALTHY MAN OR A POOR MAN? ON THE ONE HAND, HE SEEMS WEALTHY IN THAT HE CAME TO TOWN WITH A DONKEY LOADED WITH ANIMAL SKINS, MEDICINAL PLANTS, PIGEONS, SEEDS, BERRIES, AND OTHER GOODS, AS WELL AS A SURPLUS OF THE BARLEY THAT HE GREW AS A FARMER.