

Excavations at the Palace of Amenhotep III at Thebes

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Theban tombs. At the end of the season's work, in May last, as his study of a number of the tombs had been carried to completion, it was deemed advisable that he should spend the present winter in England, where for various reasons the preparation of his results for publication could be car-

ried through to better advantage. His material for two volumes describing the Tomb of Puyemrê is at the present moment well advanced in preparation, while the past year has seen the appearance of the first volume of this series, devoted to the Tomb of Nakht. A. M. LYTHGOE.

### EXCAVATIONS AT THE PALACE OF AMENHOTEP III AT THEBES

IN the continuation by the Museum Expedition, in 1916-17, of its investigation of the site of the Palace of Amenhotep III at Thebes, the area excavated lay along

these were the symmetrical plan of the building, which developed as the excavations progressed; its isolation from the other structures of the period; the type of deco-

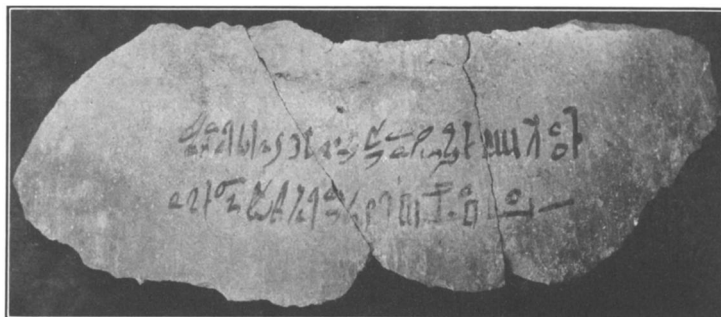


FIG. 3. HIERATIC INSCRIPTION ON FRAGMENTS OF A POTTERY JAR, MENTIONING THE CELEBRATION OF THE SECOND JUBILEE OF AMENHOTEP III IN THE THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF HIS REIGN

the edge of the cultivation north of the parts cleared in previous seasons, and probably forms the northern limit of the buildings erected here during the king's reign. Fragments of sandstone and traces of sun-dried brick construction over a large area were surface evidence that a building of considerable importance was at this point.

A beginning was made on the western edge, the bare desert beyond affording a convenient dumping place, and before much had been cleared something of the nature of the building became apparent. The regularity and shape of a number of long rooms, which were the first to be cleared, had seemed to indicate an extensive storehouse; but several additional features which soon appeared gradually confirmed the assumption that its character was that of a temple or chapel. Among

ration of the ceilings in the main halls, referred to later on; and finally the fact that some of the bricks in its walls were found to bear the impressions of stamps inscribed "The House of Amon in the House of Rejoicing," i.e. a chapel to Amon in the "House of Rejoicing,"—the latter being the regular designation of the palace.<sup>1</sup> In some of the impressions Amenhotep's name was coupled with this definition of the building.

This opinion as to its character proved to be justified, and the purpose of the building was definitely settled when the clearing had been continued to the southeast corner of the great enclosure in which the structure was found to have stood (see plan, fig. 4). There, among the objects thrown out from a series of rooms probably

<sup>1</sup>See BULLETIN for October, 1912, p. 186.

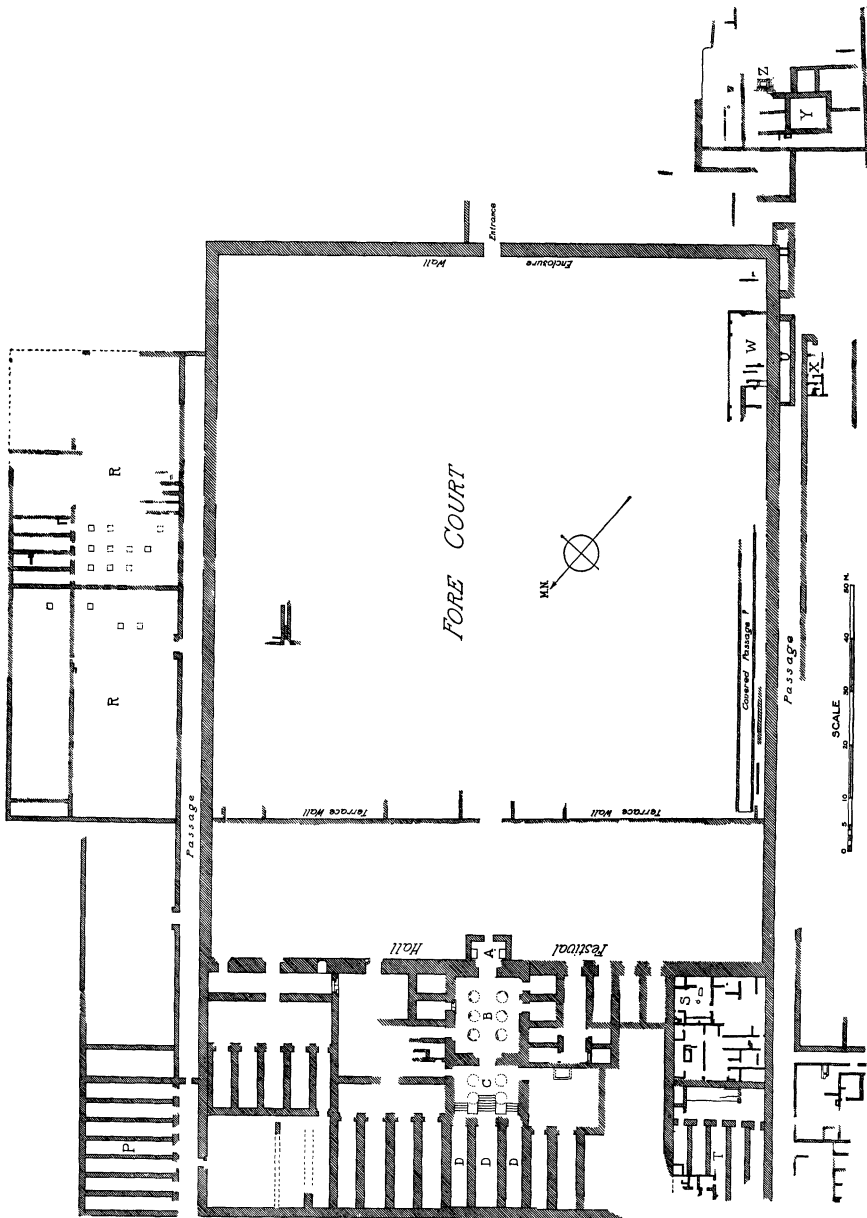


FIG. 4. PLAN OF THE FESTIVAL HALL OF AMENHOTEP III AND THE SURROUNDING AREA EXCAVATED BY THE MUSEUM'S EXPEDITION, SEASON OF 1916-17

occupied by the priests, a great mass of fragments of pottery vases and jars was found. Some were of the blue-figured types found in the *harim* buildings of the palace in the season of 1910-11. Others were decorated with polychrome representations of garlands hung about their necks. But by far the commonest were undecorated jars of the common amphora type. Many of these had been provided with a hieratic inscription on their shoulders stating the nature and purpose of their contents, and from the fragments it was possible to put together a good many complete inscriptions. Such is that in figure 3. It reads: "Year 34. Beaten (potted?) meat for the repetition of the *heb sed*, from the *yakbit* of Tahutmes, son of the slaughterer Kay." *Yakbit* may be translated 'stockyard,' or something similar. The *heb sed* is the jubilee celebrated in the thirtieth year of the kings' reigns. The expression "repetition of the *heb sed*," dated as it is in the thirty-fourth year of Amenhotep's reign, would then refer to his second jubilee, for records already existed both of the jubilee in the thirtieth year and of a third in the thirty-sixth year.<sup>1</sup> Professor Breasted surmised<sup>2</sup> that his second jubilee was celebrated in the thirty-fourth year, as in the case of Ramses II, but hitherto there has been no direct evidence of this fact.

Moreover, from the fact that sandstone fragments were found bearing part of an inscription referring to the festival, which seem to have belonged to a door frame of the building, as well as from the fact that the majority of the inscribed pottery fragments are of the thirty-fourth year, there seems considerable likelihood that the building was erected for the special purpose of the jubilee. At least, we may safely draw the conclusion from our collective evidence that the structure is the "Festival Hall," perhaps constructed for, but certainly employed for, the celebration of Amenhotep's second jubilee, in the thirty-fourth year of his reign.

The main part of the Festival Hall lies

<sup>1</sup>Breasted, Records II, §§ 870 ff.

<sup>2</sup>op. cit.

in the western<sup>3</sup> end of the enclosure, the remainder forming a great open court entered through a gateway in the eastern end of the enclosure-wall facing the Nile valley (see plan, fig. 4). The section of this court nearest the façade of the building proper was on a higher level than the rest, divided from it by a low retaining wall, the result being a low terrace with a ramp leading up to it at the center. Part, at least, of the terrace was smoothly paved with mud brick.

The chapel, or central hall—for the greater number of the chambers of the Festival Hall resemble storerooms rather than rooms of a religious character—lies in the center of the building. There are several doorways in the façade, but the main entrance, unlike the others, is provided with a small antechamber (A on plan) projecting two meters out from the façade. Mud-brick benches within on either side suggest a shelter-porch for the doorkeepers or attendant priests. Here were found sandstone fragments of the main entrance-doorway, which were inscribed with the titulary of Amenhotep; but they are too few to make it possible to determine whether the inscription contained anything more than the usual formulae.

The entrance leads into the largest hall in the building, the first hypostyle (B on plan). It is rectangular in shape, running east and west, the roof supported by six columns. Of these only the foundations exist, and it is impossible to determine with certainty whether the columns themselves were of wood or of stone. The size of the sandstone foundations however, suggests that the columns were probably of the same material. To the north and south small doorways lead into small chambers.

A doorway at the western end of the first hypostyle leads into a second hall of the same nature—this one smaller, having only four columns (C on plan). In these two halls the ceilings were decorated with the regulation temple-pattern of yellow stars on a blue ground. There were also traces

<sup>3</sup>Really northwest, the axis being as usual directed to the river and not due east (actually 47° south of east).

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of the vulture-pattern in the first hall. But here, as in the rest of the building, the preservation left much to be desired, the walls existing but a small height above their

all of practically the same dimensions, and are only to be distinguished from the many other similar rooms of the building by the fact that they are on a higher level. Of the



FIG. 5. THE SOUTH END OF THE FESTIVAL HALL, LOOKING EAST

foundations (for example, see fig. 5), and nearly all the doorways being despoiled of their thresholds and jambs. The walls were undecorated—so high as they are

three, the central one is reached from the hypostyle by a staircase of seven steps, the room itself being 55 cm. above the level of the hall. It is stuccoed in yellow, and

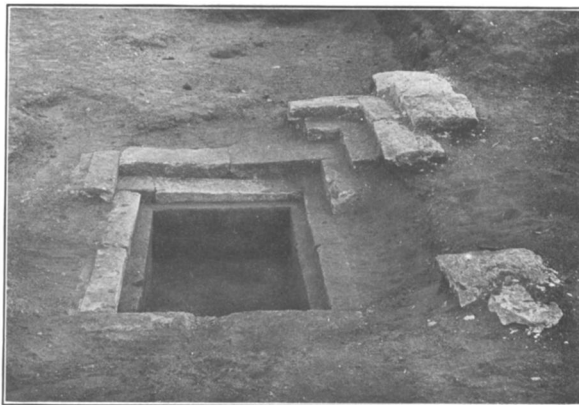


FIG. 6. SANDSTONE TANK WITH REMAINS OF STEPS, IN A VILLA NEAR THE FESTIVAL HALL

preserved, at least—but had been given a coat of plain white stucco over the mud plaster.

The west side of the second hypostyle is formed by the entrances to three long, narrow chambers (DDD on plan). They are

fragments of plaster with *kheker* decoration were found here. The two chambers on either side are provided with only four steps, and are thus not so high as the central one.

One is led to presume that these three

chambers are sanctuaries; in the absence of inscriptional evidence the most likely conjecture is that they were devoted to the service of the Theban triad, Amon, Mut, and Khonsu.

North of this central rectangular block

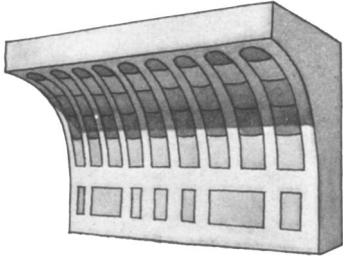


FIG. 7. SKETCH OF A PART OF A WOODEN CORNICE, INLAID WITH BLUE AND GREEN FAIENCE TILES

of the Festival Hall lies a series of chambers of the "storeroom" pattern. One would have expected the clearance of these rooms to have produced substantial remains of their former contents, but such was not the case. Quantities of fragments of large alabaster vases were brought to light,

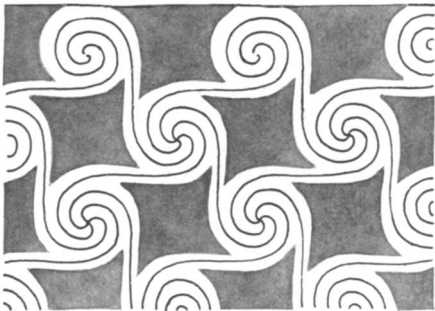


FIG. 8. RESTORATION OF WALL DECORATION OF BLUE FAIENCE TILES, AND SPIRALS ON GILT PLASTER

the inscriptions on which, and likewise on a broken offering-table, bear evidence of the Amon persecution during the reign of the king's successor Akhnaton, for in all cases the Amenhotep name is chiseled out. The vases themselves were wantonly broken. In view of these facts we may perhaps be justified in supposing that the

storerooms, if such they are, were thoroughly despoiled of their contents at the time when the agents of the heretic king were engaged in wiping out all traces possible of the cult of Amon.

The main enclosure-wall bounds the complex of buildings on the west. North of it, however, there is another series of long, narrow rooms (at P, on plan). These open from their southern ends upon a wide passage which separates them from the great enclosure, and extends the full length of its north side. About the center of this passage, or street, is situated a building of considerable dimensions (RR on plan), provided with a large colonnaded court. It is possible that it may be the office of the steward in charge of the stores. Here they could be received, checked, and distributed according to their nature to the proper magazines.

South of the central hypostyle halls the plan is not so complete, for a watercourse has cut away a good deal of the building, and it seems likely, too, that one corner—that between the façade and the south enclosure-wall—was never built. Here buildings predating the Festival Hall still exist, on a lower level than the latter. A whole house may be seen in the plan, with a large room (S) provided with a column for supporting the roof, and a bathroom. In the latter was a stone slab upon which the bather stood and from which the water drained into a neighboring basin (fig. 9). The quality of this house makes it improbable that these buildings were the dwellings of the workmen engaged in building the Festival Hall. Possibly, however, the plan of the latter was enlarged after its construction had commenced, and these houses had to be sacrificed.

At T on the plan are rooms similar to the storerooms north of the central hall. In them, and in the débris of the walls cast down by the water, were found large numbers of blue faience wall-tiles. Plaster, in which they had been imbedded, adhered to their backs; and there were traces of gold leaf on their faces near the edges. The decoration of which they were a part was evidently completed in gilt plaster, the spaces between the tiles being filled by

a spiral pattern (fig. 8), as in the decoration of the palace of Akhnaton at El Amarna.<sup>1</sup>

The tiles had evidently been torn from the walls by the plunderers who afterward stripped off the gold leaf; for in most cases they were found lying in piles close together. It is uncertain what position this decoration had; for no evidence of its presence on the walls up to their existing height was found. A cornice, also, was found nearby which probably had stood originally over the lintel of a doorway. This cornice, which was of wood inlaid with small tiles, had been nearly destroyed by white ants, so that the whole could not be preserved; but it was possible to determine the dimensions, and the order of the tiles which decorated it. In design (fig. 7) it is of the regular *cavetto* type; the feathers, all of the same pattern, being composed of five tiles each, blue and green in color. The roll is represented by rectangular tiles of two sizes, and imitates the binding seen on the ordinary roll. The tiles were let into the wood, plaster being used to fix them, and the intervals were filled with plaster overlaid with gold leaf.

As on the north, the south side of the enclosure was flanked by a long passage, of the same width as the other. At its west end it gives access to houses, now in great part washed away by the *wadi* running past the south side of the group of buildings.

The east end of this way, that is to say, the southeast corner of the main enclosure, is the place where the great quantity of broken pottery vases and jars mentioned above was discovered. The majority were found in a deep, doorless chamber (U) built against the enclosure-wall, into which they had evidently been dumped from the rooms (at W, on plan) within the enclosure, which is on a higher level. Moreover, most of the jars had been sealed with mud stoppers on which had been impressed such stamps as "Potted meat," or "Wine for the Jubilee," or "Honey." Some were unstamped and others smeared over with color. In some cases the jar had been opened by simply cracking off the neck instead of breaking away the sealing, so

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Petrie, Tell el Amarna, Plate X, 2.

that some examples of the sealings were found intact with the mouth of the amphora still imbedded.

In a small house close by (at X, on plan),

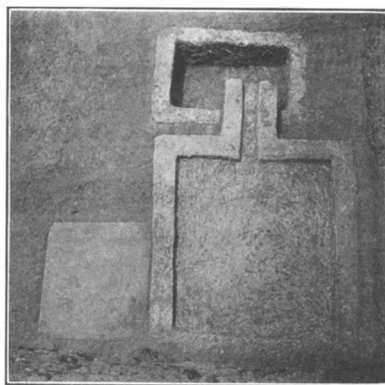


FIG. 9. BATHING SLAB AND DRAIN IN A HOUSE AT THE SOUTH END OF THE FESTIVAL HALL

there is a kitchen with a fireplace and oven (fig. 10).

Between the southeast corner of the enclosure-wall of the Festival Hall and the cultivation are remains of houses (at Y, on plan) which must have been of some



FIG. 10. FIREPLACE AND OVEN IN A HOUSE SOUTH OF THE ENCLOSURE

importance. An interesting feature of one of these is a tank (Z) hewn out of a block of sandstone with limestone steps leading down to it (fig. 6). In this respect it resembles the villas depicted in the tombs at El Amarna. Curiously enough, in the débris near it a small fish in limestone was found.

This villa and traces of others adjoining it extend slightly in front of the east wall of the great enclosure. The ground in front of the remainder is bare desert, unless the denudation has destroyed all that existed there; for in this region there is little débris above the original level.

The forecourt itself, of the Festival Hall,

is a plain, rectangular space of large dimensions with no erections in it except the rooms in the southeast corner and what seems to have been a covered passage along the south side. It may be supposed that the priests, in whose charge the hall was, lived in these rooms and approached the temple through the passage in private.

AMBROSE LANSING.

## THE WORK OF THE ROBB DE PEYSTER TYTUS MEMORIAL FUND AT THEBES

LAST season was again largely spent in satisfying the endless demands of the tomb of Puyemrê,<sup>1</sup> where the mass of fragments recovered invited reconstruction while affording scanty material for the solution of the problems involved. The absence, at the front, of E. J. Mackay, who has been engaged in the work of preservation of Theban tombs under a fund generously given by Robert Mond, put his trained mason at my disposal, and the surveillance of the delicate work of rebuilding and conservation occupied more time than I like to think of. But the responsibilities of having exposed ancient monuments to hazards of weather and theft, though often lightly regarded in Egypt, have always been taken seriously by our Expedition. Points of debate, too, which had been reserved to the last owing to their unattractive and tedious character, had to be dealt with, since publication was imminent. But tedium, like happiness, has no history for the public, and it is to be hoped that further reference to this tomb will be by way of citation of a published volume. The photograph of a reconstruction in color of a decorated doorway of the tomb, which was not available for the last report a year ago, is included here (fig. 11). This will show how much can be done by patient collection of stone fragments and scraps of evidence to restore shattered walls, brilliantly on paper and not unpleasingly in actual masonry.

The balance of my time was spent on the not less large and interesting tomb of

<sup>1</sup>See also report on this tomb in Supplement to BULLETIN for May, 1917.

Kenamón (No. 93), keeper of the cattle of Amon (figs. 12 and 13), who had the good fortune or the good taste to employ on the decoration of his tomb one who must have been the best designer of his day, if not of his era. To this unknown genius his contemporaries or his successors did the signal honor of making facsimiles of what they considered to be his masterpieces, for study or for reproduction elsewhere. Nor does their selection differ much from one that would be made today.

A tedious task involved in the complete publication of this remarkable tomb was the re-excavation of its subterranean burial chambers for more exact measurement. A description of these galleries, which are so rough in character that, as planned on paper, they must perforce be an embellishment of the originals, will feebly show the labor involved in emptying and planning them, filled as they were with repulsive relics of the dead and nauseous odor of bats, and so remote from light and air that it smote the conscience to consign children to the task of removing or turning over the débris. From a side-chamber in the great hall of this rock-cut tomb one descends by thirty rude and very steep steps to a level gallery. One could also have gained this by a narrow passage which by tortuous ways descends from the floor of another part of the tomb and debouches into the gallery by a hole half-way up its wall. One's progress to the local underworld from this point is continued by stumbling down a second twisting flight of steps at the far end, and so reaching a hall with a ceiling supported on four rough pillars of