

The Egyptian Expedition 1916-17

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THE EGYPTIAN EXPEDITION

1916-17

THE present world conflict, since its beginning in 1914, has imposed its restrictions in increasing degree on every side of human activity, scientific as well as otherwise, not directly related to the conduct of the war itself. Thus in the case of the Museum's Expedition in Egypt, with which the present statement deals, each year since that time has seen the enlistment in some form of war activity of one or more members of its staff, until now, following the entry of America into the war last April, six out of its total personnel of ten are in the service of the British and American armies. Lieut. Arthur C. Mace is with the British force in northern Italy. Lieut. Hugh G. Evelyn-White was with the British army which advanced through the desert east of the Suez Canal into Palestine, until illness obliged him to return to England last spring. H. R. Hopgood, who was wounded at the Battle of the Somme in October, 1916, has since recovered and returned to the front. Henry Burton is Assistant Director of the Registration of Enemy Aliens at Cairo. Capt. Herbert E. Winlock, of the Coast Artillery Officers' Reserve Corps, is now assigned to duty at Fortress Monroe, Virginia. Sergeant Albert B. Nixon is in the training camp at Camp Upton, New York.

Under this reduction of its staff, the scope of the Expedition's work has necessarily been lessened, but it is certainly a matter of great good fortune that under such world conditions as now exist it has still proved possible to continue the main programmes upon which the Expedition was engaged when the war began. Thus we have been able not only to make constant progress toward the completion of investigations which were previously in hand, but, what was of urgent importance,

to assure employment to the Expedition's trained force of native workmen, at a time when lack of such employment could only have proved disastrous to them under the existing economic conditions in Egypt. Consequently this very important side of the organization of the work has been held intact, when otherwise what might have amounted to almost permanent disruption would have been the outcome.

The last report to be published concerning the Expedition was contained in a Supplement to the BULLETIN for May, 1917, and covered the winter season of 1915-16. In the following season of 1916-17, which we are now to consider, the excavations were conducted under the direction of Ambrose Lansing, on both of the Museum's concessions—at the Pyramids of Lisht and at Thebes—on the former site from October, 1916, to January, 1917, and on the latter from January to May, 1917. The investigations at Lisht were carried out on a part of the area adjacent to the Pyramid of Sesostris I (the southern pyramid of the Lisht group) and took up the excavations there at the point where they had been interrupted in the summer of 1914 by the unexpected opening of the war.¹ Beginning at the pyramid-temple, which lies on the eastern side of the pyramid facing the Nile valley, the clearing was continued southward from that structure as far as the southeast corner of the pyramid, and resulted in bringing to light in that area the remains of the two enclosure-walls of the royal monument and its surrounding pavement, as well as a ruined smaller pyramid inside the inner enclosure-

¹See Excavations at the Pyramid of Sesostris I at Lisht during 1913-14, in Supplement to the BULLETIN of the Metropolitan Museum for February, 1915.

wall, the existence of which was previously unsuspected. Outside the pyramid-enclosure the tomb-shafts of private tombs yielded interesting types of funerary furnishings of the XII dynasty. The publication of Mr. Lansing's report on these excavations will follow in a later number of the BULLETIN when supplementary work on the site has been completed during the present season.

The work at Thebes during the later part of the season of 1916-17, which is described in Mr. Lansing's present report, was centered on one of the most interesting points in the Museum's concession there, the site of the palace- or residential-city of Amenhotep III, upon which the Expedition first began its investigations in the season of 1910-11. The site lies on the west bank of the Nile, opposite the position of Thebes itself, on the desert-edge bordering the cultivated land of the valley and about a kilometer south of the Temple of Medinet Habu (see the map, fig. 1, and view, fig. 2). Beside it are the huge embankments of the Birket Habu—commonly supposed to have been the site of the pleasure lake dug by Amenhotep for Queen Tiy, his wife. The basin of this ancient lake is now dry during the greater part of the year; but at the time of the inundation, in the late summer and early autumn, the rising waters fill the basin and cover as well the cultivated fields round about, the former then taking on something of its ancient appearance. An interesting reference to this fact may be quoted from a recent letter received by the Museum from Mr. Lansing, written from the headquarters of the Expedition at Thebes in October last, just after his arrival there preparatory to undertaking the excavations of the present season: "It was rather amusing crossing the river from Luxor, for the water is all over the flats and the boat stuck twice on the mud, not to be moved without much shoving and lifting. The Colossi are surrounded by water, which means that the ordinary road is impassable, and I had to take the one around to the north by the Temple of Gurneh. I rode down toward the Palace yesterday afternoon—tried to get there by way of the Birket Habu, but

that too requires wading. The Birkeh is one great sheet of water, as it ought to be, broken only by one or two *sagieh* posts (the native water-wheel) and the head of an occasional *gamus* (the Egyptian buffalo). A lot of cranes can be seen stalking around, and I hope yet to see some pelican which ought to be here now."

The construction of the pleasure lake for Queen Tiy is described in an inscription on one of a series of commemorative scarabs recording events of Amenhotep's reign, reading in part as follows: "His majesty commanded to make a lake for the Great King's-Wife, Tiy, in her city of Zerukha. Its length is 3700 cubits: its width, 700 cubits. His majesty celebrated the feast of the opening of the lake, in the third month of the first season, day 16, when his majesty sailed thereon in the royal barge 'Aton-Gleams'."¹ Weigall draws an attractive picture of the time, when he says: "In order that there might be gardens near the palace in spite of the barren nature of the ground, he (Amenhotep) caused an enormous lake to be made on the east of the palace; and the visitor may trace its limits by the mounds of rubbish which were thrown up during its excavation. These are especially to be noticed on the immediate east side of the palace. The lake, which is now called Birket Habu, was made by Amenhotep IIIrd in the eleventh year of his reign (B. C. 1400), and is said to have been designed for the entertainment of his much-loved queen, Tiy. One may suppose that the lake was surrounded by trees and flowers, and as our inscriptions tell us that here the royal couple sailed in their beautiful dahabiyeh, which was called 'Aton-Gleams,' we may reconstruct in the imagination a picture of great charm. It was probably in this palace that the heretic king Akhnaton was born, and here Amenhotep IIIrd, who has been called 'The Magnificent,' and the beautiful Tiy held their brilliant court."²

The excavations of our Expedition on the site of Amenhotep's palace during the seasons of 1910-11 and 1911-12³ were con-

¹Breasted, Records, II, § 869.

²Antiquities of Upper Egypt, p. 291.

³See BULLETIN for October, 1912.



FIG. I. MAP OF THE WEST BANK AT THEBES, SHOWING THE POSITION OF THE PALACE-CITY OF AMENHOTEP III

ducted on the southern and western quarters of the area and laid bare a part of the palace buildings containing the king's own apartments and throne rooms, as well as the *barim* or apartments of the royal ladies. Nearby was a row of houses of practically uniform plan, apparently for the use of courtiers and officials; while farther south a dependent village of workmen's quarters was cleared, in which artisans had carried on the manufacture of faience beads, rings, scarabs, and other types of ornament for the inmates of the royal dwelling. Some of the interesting results of the excavations of these years are now to be seen in our Museum, in the Tenth Egyptian Room, including examples of the painted wall- and ceiling-decorations of the palace and many objects of faience and glass.

In the season of 1914-15¹ work was resumed upon the palace-area to the north of the point covered by the excavations of the earlier seasons, and here a distinct quarter of the palace was uncovered which proved inferior only in interest and importance to the royal apartments found in the first season's work. Its most striking feature consisted of a large, rectangular residential structure containing a throne room, halls, and suites of rooms similar in arrangement to those of the royal suites; but from the absence of anything in the nature of extensive *barim* accommodation, as in the royal quarter, it seemed probable that the building had served as the residence either of Queen Tiy, as Amenhotep's principal wife, who might well have had an establishment of her own, or of the heir-apparent, Amenhotep IV, later the famous Akhnaton, and the other royal children.

The next stage in the Expedition's excavation of this site is that described in the accompanying report by Mr. Lansing, conducted during the past season of 1916-17. Still continuing the northward trend of the excavations from the sections cleared by the Expedition in the preceding years, and at a point which seems to mark the most northerly limit of the area, there was brought to light a large enclosure, with walls approximately 110 x 185 meters in length, containing a structure of great

¹See BULLETIN for December, 1915.

historical interest. Its general purpose would seem to have been that of a palace-chapel dedicated to Amon, as the stamped bricks in its walls tell us. But what is of primary importance, inscriptional evidence yielded by the excavations proves it to have been the Festival-Hall of Amenhotep's Second Jubilee, the celebration of which—as this newly discovered evidence now affords us the first proof—took place in the thirty-fourth year of his reign. Interesting remains of some of the decorative features of the building have also been recovered, in the form of painted ceilings, faience wall-tiles, and wooden cornices inlaid with a faience feather-pattern. Additional types of decorated pottery supplement and increase the many previously found in other buildings in the palace-area, of which representative examples are now shown in our Museum collection.

During the present winter of 1917-18 the excavation of the palace-city is being continued. Work began on November 1 on a section west of the residential-building uncovered in the season of 1914-15, and in reports already received from Mr. Lansing he describes that section as proving to have been occupied by manufactories of glass and faience. Crucibles, glass rods of different colors, which were employed in the manufacture of polychrome glass, as well as many varieties of the glass itself, have been found; also material illustrating the processes followed in the making of objects in faience, including many terracotta moulds in which the various types of objects were cast, as well as unfinished material in different stages of its manufacture. It seems likely that the excavations of the present season will see the completion of the work on the palace-area still remaining to be covered, and the total results derived by the Expedition in its investigation of this site can then be correlated and made ready for their final publication.

In the accompanying report by Norman de Garis Davies, he describes the results achieved in the season of 1916-17 in that branch of the Expedition's work at Thebes which is conducted under the Robb de Peyster Tytus Memorial Fund, devoted to the investigation and publication of



FIG. 2. VIEW SOUTH FROM KURNET MURRAÏ

1. SITE OF THE PALACE-CITY OF AMENHOTEP III
2. EMBANKMENTS AT THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF THE BIRKET HABU
3. EMBANKMENTS AT THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF THE BIRKET HABU
4. TEMPLE OF MEDINET HABU

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-

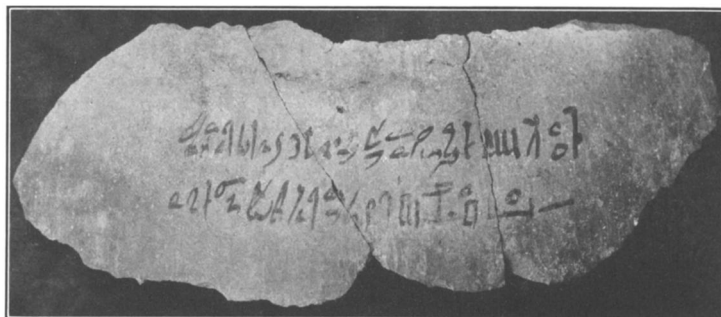


FIG. 3. HIERATIC INSCRIPTION ON FRAGMENTS OF A POTTERY JAR, MENTIONING THE CELEBRATION OF THE SECOND JUBILEE OF AMENHOTEP III IN THE THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF HIS REIGN

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.¹ 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

¹See BULLETIN for October, 1912, p. 186.