

NEWS ITEMS FROM EGYPT
THE SEASON OF 1938 TO 1939 IN EGYPT

WILLIAM STEVENSON SMITH

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The season of 1938-1939 in Egypt was marked toward its close by two outstanding discoveries, that of the splendid cache of burial equipment of Dynasty XXII found at Tanis by Prof. Montet of Strassbourg, and, at the opposite end of Egyptian history, by the amazing mass of practical tools and other objects discovered by Walter B. Emery at Saqqarah in a large tomb of Dynasty I. The work at both these sites was great in promise for the future, and, as with other excavations which were being pursued in Egypt, it is difficult to estimate the value of the results without speculation as to how archaeological research may be continued in the field under present world conditions.

In one of the large panelled mastabas which lie along the eastern edge of the archaic cemetery at Saqqarah, Emery found this year that the wood-roofed brick chambers of the substructure had been subjected to a great fire. This had damaged the central burial chamber and its objects almost irretrievably,¹ but had apparently prevented the thieves from looting one of the adjoining magazines. In this was found a mass of furniture and equipment in a remarkable state of preservation. The copper objects are especially interesting, both because of their number and the fact that many of the types had been hitherto known only from small models of a later period. All sorts of tools and utensils were found, ranging from large adzes,² knives and saws, down to tiny needles and awls. In addition to many copper vessels, some of unusual shape, there were ivory bracelets and playing pieces and a number of interesting wooden objects. Of these the best preserved were the frame and legs of a bed, but there were also parts of a canopy, like that of Queen Hetep-heres. A similar fragmentary canopy is known from the tomb under the south wall of the Zoser complex, and less complete fragments were found by Amélineau and Petrie in the royal tombs at

¹ Traces seemed to indicate that the body had lain upon a wooden bier, like a bed-frame with legs, inside the wooden coffin. See *Chronique d'Égypte* July, 1939, p. 263.

² See the photographs of a small number of the tools in the *ILN*. May 20, 1939, p. 891.

Abydos. The Saqqarah objects can be dated by sealings of King Zer to Dynasty I.

Earlier in the season an intact burial chamber of Dynasty II was opened at Saqqarah. There, laid out on the floor in rough pottery platters and alabaster dishes was a complete meal, prepared for the owner of the tomb. The bones of quail, pigeons and fish, ribs of beef, and the shrivelled remains of vegetables, fruit, cakes and little rectangular loaves of bread present us in palpable form the menu which has so long been familiar from the offering lists in every Old Kingdom chapel.³

At Tanis, between the south side of the temple and the brick wall of Pasebkhanu, Prof. Montet opened two tombs which contained an important group of burials of Dynasty XXII.⁴ The first consisted of a granite room, with four limestone chambers opening from it. This contained a broken red granite sarcophagus of Osorkon II and heads from his canopic vases, as well as an intact sandstone anthropoid coffin of the chief priest of Amon, Hornekht. The opening of these coffins was deferred to a later time. In one of the inner chambers a sandstone coffin was inscribed outside with the name of the Chancellor Ameni, but inside with the name of Takelot II. Shawabtis of both Osorkon II and Takelot II were also found. However, an alabaster vase and fragments of jewelry bore the name of Osorkon I.

A neighboring shaft led to a limestone room decorated in the name of Pasebkhanu I. An intact burial chamber contained an electrum coffin of Sheshonk, whose other name Heqa-kheper-ra, Setep-n-ra, was until now unknown. The coffin was raised on a bench, between two badly preserved mummies. The body of the king was magnificently arrayed with a gold mask over the face, a vulture with outspread wings forming a collar, three pectorals and amulets, three bracelets on the right arm and four on the left. Four of the ten canopic vases which stood in the room with the coffin contained little silver mummiform coffins, bearing the name of Sheshonk. From this room opened another chamber decorated with bas-

³ *ILN*. Jan. 14, 1939, p. 51.

⁴ *Chronique d'Égypte* July, 1939, pp. 276, 277.

reliefs and containing a granite coffin. A walled up doorway leads from the main chamber to a granite lined room which has not yet been examined.

It is not yet possible to understand the problems presented by this rich find, but its importance is at once obvious. It looks from the brief reports so far available as though Prof. Montet may have discovered a cache resembling somewhat the great find of the late 19th century at Deir el Bahari and providing missing material for the kings who ruled from the Delta and were buried there and not on the western bank at Thebes. From the point of view of the history of Egyptian art, the electrum coffin and jewelry of Sheshonk are equally important. Again it is not yet possible to speak definitely until the material has been studied and published, but it is interesting to see the high degree of craftsmanship in such individual pieces as the gold mask, or one of the bracelets, which is particularly exquisite in design and workmanship. At the same time the electrum coffin with its hawk's head has a more barbaric magnificence. The cutting of its intricate decoration in the rare and costly metal is vigorous, but crude in comparison with some of the jewelry of Sheshonk.

While producing less dramatic results, the excavating and recording of other sites in Egypt and the Sudan were of exceptional importance. In the region of Luxor, Robichon and Varille investigated the substructure of the temple of Medamud, where they found traces of an earlier shrine, apparently of the First Intermediate Period.⁵ This curious structure, consisting of a polygonal enclosure surrounding a sacred grove in which two underground shrines, covered by mounds and approached by winding corridors entered from a court, seems to have served the cult of Osiris. The presence of this early sanctuary clarifies certain obscure references to Medamud of later times and explains the association through a sacred tree cult of Medamud and Medinet Habu. The worship of Monthu, the god pre-eminently associated with Medamud, seems to have been introduced in the Middle Kingdom by Sesostri III.

At Deir el Medineh,⁶ Bruyère examined the enclosure of the Ptolemaic temple, with the intention of clearing up the problem of the earlier structures which preceded it. These were found to be chiefly Ramesside, although in Dynasty XVIII there certainly seems to have been a simple

⁵ *Chronique d'Égypte* July, 1939, p. 265.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 268 ff.

shrine of Hathor on the spot and perhaps an as yet undiscovered temple of Amon. Around these were built many little chapels of the guild of necropolis workmen. Later a reconstruction of the Hathor shrine was undertaken by Ramses II and his Vizier Paser, and connected with this structure were found traces of a dwelling which is apparently reminiscent of the palaces attached to the great temples of Medinet Habu and the Ramesseum.

At Karnak, where the patiently reconstructed little building of Sesostri I is now standing virtually complete, a perfect illustration of what such work can accomplish, Chevrier continued to sort and catalogue the multitude of fragments from structures destroyed in the long growth of the great Amon temple, while at the same time directing the consolidation of the fabric of the enormous edifice. Herbert Ricke, for the Borchardt Institute, in conjunction with the Egyptian Government, devoted a part of the season to an area near the precinct of Mut, where in the previous year he had laid bare the unusual ground plan of the temple, numbered 16 by Lepsius, constructed by Hatshepsut, and a "landing chapel" connected with it.⁷ Across the river, the Hatshepsut temple at Deir el Bahari is gradually emerging from a mass of scaffolding which has for years obscured one or another of its terraces. M. Baraize has achieved a particularly happy result with the Hathor shrine, the façade of which has been put together from widely scattered blocks and shattered bits.

The Oriental Institute of Chicago worked as usual on its splendid records of the Medinet Habu Temple and Karnak. Two volumes in the Oriental Institute series have appeared during the course of the year, to emphasize the lasting value of this work. One of these is the second volume on the excavations of Medinet Habu by Uvo Hölscher (*The Temples of the Eighteenth Dynasty*); the other, from farther afield at Memphis, is Prentice Duell's volume on the Mastaba of Mereruka. At Gurneh, Mr. and Mrs. N. de G. Davies were again at work on various tasks concerned with the copying and publication of the tombs of the Theban nobles, particularly the fine chapel of Ramose, the publication of which is well advanced. Mr. Harry Burton also went on with his photographic survey for the Metropolitan Museum.

Prof. Michalowski of the University of Warsaw

⁷ See *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* xxxviii, pp. 357 ff.

worked again at Edfu, as in former years, in the Old and Middle Kingdom cemeteries and in the Ptolemaic town, which now gives an interesting impression of what a village of the Southern Thebaid was like in Graeco-Roman times.⁸ At el Eshmunein (Hermopolis) in Middle Egypt, Prof. Roeder followed up the work in the precinct of the temple of Thoth, which had in the previous season produced important reliefs of the time of Akhenaton. Farther out on the edge of the western desert at Touneh el Gebel (Hermopolis Magna), Prof. Sami Gabra excavated a huge catacomb containing ex-votos and burials of ibis and dog-faced baboons, animals sacred to Thoth. There, in the archives office, he found tucked away in a jar a well preserved judicial and mathematical Demotic papyrus which should shed much light on the laws and customs of Ptolemaic-Roman Egypt.⁹

On the southern edge of the Fayûm, Prof. Vogliano, of the University of Milan, has excavated for several seasons the sanctuary of Medinet el Madi, enlarged by the Ptolemaic and Roman rulers of Egypt around a small and surprisingly well preserved shrine of the Middle Kingdom. In the *Illustrated London News* of Jan. 21, 1939, pp. 106-107, he reproduces some photographs of the later constructions and sculpture, as well as the splendid head attributed to Amenemhat III from a previous season's digging, which has for some time been exhibited in the Cairo Museum. Farther north, on the western edge of the Delta, the German Institute devoted a part of the winter to the remarkable prehistoric site of Merimde Beni-Salame, where Prof. Junker has worked for a number of years.

The Nubian expedition of the Egypt Exploration Society worked last year at Amarah West. There Mr. H. W. Fairman completed the excavation of the temple. A photographic record and tracings were also made of its inscriptions and reliefs. A test survey of the neighboring cemetery was undertaken, and it has become apparent that the town is one of the best preserved of Pharaonic times.¹⁰

At Saqqarah, the work of minor clearance and reconstruction in the Zoser Temple continues to produce striking results. M. Lauer's brilliant

restorations on paper of the various buildings of that unique complex are gradually taking form in stone, as blocks are replaced in their original positions under his painstaking direction. A small fragment fitting on the famous statue base of Zoser (that with the name of his vizier and architect Imhotep) was found in the course of this clearance work. A supplementary volume on the Step Pyramid excavations, contributed by M. Lauer, appeared in the spring.¹¹

In the Memphite area, the last two years have been particularly productive in illustrating the development of relief sculpture of the Old Kingdom. In the archaic cemetery at Saqqarah, Emery found two well preserved primitive niche stones. These plaques of limestone, sculptured with a scene in relief of the owner seated at the funerary meal, were apparently built into the upper part of a brick niche, in the position of the tablet of the later stone false-door. One of these, for the first time, had the paint almost perfectly preserved. It is interesting to see how the restricted color scheme, predominantly red, black and white, with small areas of green and probably yellow, carries out the archaic feeling present in the outlines and cutting of the reliefs. At Giza, a short excavation carried out along the eastern face of the Great Pyramid by Selim Bey Hassan produced indisputable proof that the temple of Cheops was decorated with limestone carvings in fine low relief. The tourist road to the Sphinx ran over this area and the basalt pavement of the forecourt has long been visible. Unfortunately, practically nothing remained above the foundations of the temple, and even the ground plan will be difficult to reconstruct. But two blocks, as well as some smaller fragments, retained their decoration. One had the upper portion of a large figure of the king wearing the red crown, and, thrown over his shoulder, a long wavy-edged scarf, such as is worn by the king on a relief of the Middle Kingdom found by Petrie at Memphis.¹² Behind him stands at least one small figure, that may possibly be holding on his shoulder one of the temple door-bolts, but the surface is so badly weathered that it is impossible to be certain. The other block is much better preserved and shows the king, in Heb-Sed garb, seated on a throne, with part of the cartouche of Cheops behind him. A damaged portion contains the head of a much

⁸ *Chronique d'Egypte* July, 1939, p. 267.

⁹ *ILN*, May 13, 1939, p. 840; *Chronique d'Egypte* July, 1939, p. 278.

¹⁰ *Report of the Egypt Exploration Society* 1938, p. 12.

¹¹ Jean-Phillipe Lauer, *Fouilles à Saqqarah, La Pyramide à Degrés Compléments*.

¹² Petrie, *The Palace of Apries*, Pl. VII.

larger kneeling (?) figure. Four broken lines of inscription containing a reference to the Great Pyramid and two minor figures almost entirely broken away complete this very fragmentary but important scene.

The discovery of this evidence that the temple of Cheops was decorated with reliefs is particularly gratifying to the present writer who had put forward a tentative suggestion in a volume now in the press that the causeway, at least, was decorated with reliefs. This was based partly on references in Herodotus and partly upon a block found by Hülscher, which is probably to be assigned to the Chephren causeway. It had been hitherto assumed that the Giza temples, which were largely lined with granite, had at the most been only sparingly decorated with inscriptions cut in the hard stone. The new pieces not only add to our very meagre evidence for the decoration of a royal temple before the beginning of Dynasty V, but they provide material for a stylistic comparison with other reliefs of the reigns of Cheops and Chephren which this writer has been engaged in sorting and trying to piece together in an attempt to reconstruct some of the shattered evidence from the chapels of queens and princes in the royal cemetery at Giza.

For the Fifth Dynasty, the causeway of the Unas temple, excavated by Selim Bey Hassan in 1937-1938,¹³ added a very valuable series of scenes to the known repertoire of the temple decorator. Among these was a rare parallel to the "seasons" scenes of the Abu-Gurob Sun Temple of Ne-usera. Beautifully drawn animals, including a giraffe, also remind one of the Abu-Gurob reliefs and the hunting scene of Sahura. Entirely new for a royal temple is a craftwork scene, which suggests comparison with the scattered reliefs of the chapel of Tep-m-ankh (Mariette D 11 at Saqqarah). Even more interesting are the representations of freight boats bringing the granite columns and architraves of the temple from the quarries at Assuan, and a fragment from a battle-scene like that in two Dynasty VI private chapels.

The publication of these reliefs is all the more eagerly to be awaited since the volume on the reliefs of the Pepy II temple, which appeared last winter, indicates how much can be done with such fragmentary material.¹⁴ Since the publication of

¹³ *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* xxxviii, p. 503.

¹⁴ Gustave Jéquier, *Le Monument Funéraire de Pepi II, Le Temple*.

Borchardt's volume on the reliefs of Sahura in 1913, Jéquier's work is the most important contribution to our knowledge of the decoration of an Old Kingdom temple. No small part of the credit for both the reconstruction of parts of the actual temple itself and its publication is due to the clever assembling of material and excellent draughtsmanship of Ahmed Effendi Yusuf, who prepared the plates under Jéquier's direction.

Dr. George A. Reisner and the Harvard-Boston Expedition continued during the season of 1938-1939 to work upon the publication of the Giza cemeteries, undertaking some minor clearance work in the western cemetery in connection with this. The first volume of the Giza series is now nearly completed and it is hoped that, in spite of war conditions, the Oxford University Press will be able to issue it early in 1940. A history of Old Kingdom sculpture and painting, forming a part of the series, is also in a well advanced stage of printing, and further volumes are in progress. Mr. Joseph Lindon Smith, again making Harvard Camp his base of operations, completed a number of fine paintings of Egyptian reliefs at Luxor, Abydos and Saqqarah, which have been added to the large collection of his work in the Boston Museum.

A further step in another long and laborious task, the restoration of the furniture of Queen Hetep-heres, the mother of the builder of the Great Pyramid, was reached in June, when the reconstructed box which probably held the curtains of her great gold bed-canopy was delivered to the Cairo Museum.¹⁵ Haggi Ahmed Yusuf, of the casting department of the Cairo Museum, had worked for two years on this technically difficult task, at the same time preparing a very beautiful facsimile of the box for the Boston Museum. The thin gold casing and hundreds of faience inlays, forming the patterns and inscriptions with the name of Sneferuw, had to be applied and inserted into the carved surface of a box newly constructed from the careful record taken in the tomb. The result is a splendid addition to the unique series of furniture which once belonged to one of the greatest ladies of Dynasty IV.

In closing this survey of activities in Egypt during the past season I should like to emphasize the importance of Walter B. Emery's excavations at Saqqarah, conducted with the assistance of Zaki Yusuf Saad. In recent years these have not only contributed vital material to our understand-

¹⁵ *ILN*. Nov. 18, 1939, pp. 757-758.

ing of the development of architecture and burial customs during the archaic period, but the objects which have been found give us for the first time a clear impression of the brilliant civilization that flourished in the Nile Valley at the beginning of the Dynastic Period. This has long been apparent, but the evidence had to be pieced together chiefly from the badly shattered objects salvaged by Petrie in his re-examination of the unfortunate excavations of Amélineau in the royal tombs at Abydos. Careful study of the fragments, best seen in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford and in the

Archaic Room in the Cairo Museum, has given a dim impression of the amazing level of craftsmanship that had been reached in Dynasty I. Now, the well preserved objects from Emery's excavations (see his volume *The Tomb of Hemaka*, which appeared with praiseworthy promptness last year) lend form to these tantalizing glimpses of Egyptian accomplishment, and the fragments known for years to scholars are becoming more intelligible.

WILLIAM STEVENSON SMITH

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS
BOSTON