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NEWS FROM THEBES

Dr. George R. Hughes, Field Director of the Epigraphic Survey of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, and a Trustee of the CENTER, writes from Luxor:

"The 1953-54 season has been the best tourist season in Luxor since the war, but strangely enough we have seen fewer Egyptologists than usual. No excavation went on inasmuch as the French Institute is still unable to resume, and the Department of Antiquities did no excavating as such. M. Chevrier's work at Karnak was concentrated on removing the mass of fallen blocks up against the west face of the left (north) tower of the Second Pylon. These loose blocks have been entirely removed now and work can begin toward consolidating the tower.

In this mass of blocks M. Chevrier found, for example, blocks with the cartouches of Horemheb which had been recut by Seti I, Ramses II and IV. Also beneath the pile there was the broken but very nice, nearly life-size, red granite statue presumably of Queen Henuttawy. It had stood literally on the insteps of the colossal standing statue of the High Priest Pinodjem son of Piankh, the parts of which were found last season.

Part of the east face of the Second Pylon next to the doorway and part of the thickness of the doorway were taken down last season and at the beginning of this one. Many more of the small Akhnaton blocks were taken out of the interior, and a number of architrave blocks of Tutankhamon. Still more Akhnaton blocks are visible but must remain in the solid part of the pylon which does not need to be taken down. Consolidation and rebuilding of this part of the pylon which was in such precarious condition has now begun.

Some of the French Institute people have been out. M. Robichon has kept at the tedious but remarkable job of assembling the countless small pieces of the second of the two large Amenophis III statues which had been deliberately broken and buried in the midst of the dromos of the Montu temple in Karnak North. M. Sauneron has been at Esneh engaged in the difficult task of copying the inscriptions of the temple there, and M. Gutbub has been doing the same at Kom Ombo.

Earlier in the season, before he joined Prof. Emerly's excavation at Saqqara, Mr. Harry Smith of Cambridge, England, spent several weeks copying in a

number of New Kingdom tombs at Thebes continuing the work begun last season by Mekhitarian, Janssen, Barns and James for the Griffith Institute under the editorship of T. Säve-Söderbergh.

The Oriental Institute has spent its time without interruption recording at Medinet Habu. The rooms and chapels on the south side of the hypostyle halls back to the Osiris suite are ready for publication as are all those on the north side back to and including the Re Chapel.

News has come in recent days of some clearing done around the forecourts of the Temple of Sety I at Abydos by the Department of Antiquities under Hassan El-Masri. People who have reported seeing the work say that mud-brick walls, column bases and a dais found within the L of the temple south of the second court remind them of the remains of the palaces in a corresponding place at the Ramesseum and Medinet Habu."

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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S REPORTS FOR FEBRUARY, MARCH AND APRIL

"Perhaps the outstanding event of the month of February was the visit of the Muilenburgs from the School in Jerusalem. They had laid themselves out to do everything they could for us while we were in Jerusalem, so we tried to do all we could for them during the all too short time they were here. Fortunately my lectures here did not commence till after they had departed, so that it was possible to give them a good deal of time both before they went up to Luxor and after they returned to the city. In some ways we envy him; for at Jerusalem he has a School, a Hostel, a Staff, a good Library, a batch of activities to direct, but as one talks with him quietly after supper and learns something of the headaches that are the portion of one who directs such a School, one's envy dissolves. It is more comfortable to direct a Center which has a less imposing program. He, like the Directors of our Center, is only a temporary appointment, and in all probability a permanent Director could set up a smoothly working organization which would almost automatically care for certain matters and prevent the causes of headaches from ever arising.

"While they were here they provided the excuse for us to organize trips to the excavations at Saqqara, at Helwan and at Maadi. We had hoped that Mustafa Amer would himself go with us to Saqqara, but he went down with this popular 'flu (which one of our Egyptian friends called "suffering from the influ"), so to our very great surprise and delight Zakaria Ghoneim rang up one morning to say that he had been instructed by Mustafa Amer to hold himself at our disposal on the day we had planned for Saqqara. Consequently, before going to see the usual things, we were able to go to the new site and see the work that is being done on the new step pyramid they have discovered there to the north. There is no doubt that it is a step pyramid, for there are quite clearly the two "steps" and the remains of the third. They have uncovered the four corners and were hopeful that within a few days they would have found the entrance. It is doubtful if there will be any treasure within, for early in the excavation they came on the long tunnel the tomb robbers had made long ago. There were quaint "masons' marks" on some of the stones in the enclosure wall, and even quainter drawings of animals, apparently done for amusement by some ancient stone worker, but so far they have found no inscriptions and can only guess at the name of the ruler responsible for it.

"To my surprise the group seemed more interested in the underground galleries

for the tombs of the sacred bulls than in anything else. The magnificent display of alabaster vases which was open when we were here in 1947 is now closed, but they have taken a selection of the more striking vases and fixed them up with electric light bulbs in a small room in one corner of the temple area. The Curator would not permit any photographing of the new excavations, save of the curious mat-burials from later Dynasties which are thick in all the ground where they are excavating. He says that a full report will be made at the end of the season, and then everything will be made public. Emery has been out from England working there but he was not on the dig the day we were there. On the way home we stopped for a while at Memphis to let them see colossal statues there. It was sad to see that place so dead after all the activity there used to be there some twenty years ago.

"An even bigger group went out to Helwan to see the work on the necropolis and the little museum Zaki Sa'ad has set up at his headquarters. Since 1951 things have been at a standstill, but maybe the Department of Antiquities will now do something about it. They have so far excavated 9351 graves, and I hesitate to put on paper the number of thousands he says they still have there to uncover. The material there on display in that little museum is astounding; it is all from tombs of the First and Second Dynasties, and tombs of common folk not rulers and grandees. There is an excellent account of that Helwan excavation in Arabic by Zaki Sa'ad himself, and he is busy now, with the help of Dr. Suryal 'Atiyya, preparing an English edition. My wife was fortunate enough to pick up a copy of the Arabic edition at a bookstore here, but such an edition naturally has a very limited circulation. Many of you are going to be very much surprised at some of the things you will find in the book when it appears in English.

"The latest excitement in the Egyptological field has been the announcement of a find of a horde of coins from Alexander the Great onwards, at a site in the Delta, named Mit Ya'ish. It seems certain that there was a Hellenistic town there, and they are now exploring the vicinity, but there is so much seepage of water in the whole Delta area that it seems hopeless to expect that any papyri would have survived, or indeed anything save coins and pottery.

"Late in the month we were able to arrange for a visit to the Fatimid walls here in Cairo, under the guidance of Creswell himself. As he is the man who had the walls cleared and restored there is no better guide. Best of all he brought along his little portfolio of photographs which makes everything much clearer, and which greatly amuses all the students for he shows them the state of things B. C. and A. C., i.e. how the place looked "Before Creswell" and how it now looks "After Creswell". The Tanzim cleared away a multitude of slummy houses and little boutiques which were built against the walls, but Creswell is still waging a one man war against certain merchants, particularly a wood merchant, who insists on piling up his new purchases of old wood against a part of the walls. There are still areas that remain to be cleared because each property the Committee on Conservation asks to be expropriated so as to be cleared away involves the Committee in law suits which drag on and on. Still Creswell deserves great credit for what he has accomplished. We were much interested to see that the courtyard of the old mosque of al-Hakim is now being used as an elementary school for Boys. That is in sound traditional sequence, but probably would not have pleased the mad Caliph.

"The Center was called on for one unusual service this month. Dr. Stern who sits in Oxford on the editorial chair of the new edition of the Encyclopedia

of Islam, has been having great difficulties in getting microfilms of MSS in the Taymur Collection at the Library here. It was a terrible sweat finding the MSS in the Library, where everything is now at sixes and sevens, but the work Ihsan Effendi did on them once they were located was excellent. Two double pages proved too black to be readable so he rephotographed them for me without extra charge. Since then it has been a case of waiting on officials in the Ministry of the Interior for permission to send them out of the country, and then on the Censor's Office once this permit has been secured.

"One other advantage to us this month is that Dr. Turyn's request from the University of Illinois brought us into friendly contact with the Greek Patriarchal Library at Alexandria. I had known Mosconas' Catalogue of that Library, but for some reason had thought of him as one of the ancient worthies long since passed away, but here he is right in the Library, and a most friendly and co-operative person. I hope it will be possible to visit him there and see some of the treasures of that Library before we have to leave for home again.

"It was a joy to welcome here the President of our Center, Mr. Edward W. Forbes. We had excellent weather for him. I have known Aprils which were the hottest and most unpleasant months of the year, but this April has been delightfully cool. It was therefore the greater pity that he was indisposed and had to spend so much of his stay in bed. He has left with his daughter for Athens, but the papers say that the day they arrived there was an earthquake in Central Greece worse than the one last summer in the Ionian Islands.

"The Chicago House people have closed down their work at Luxor for the season. I had a note from Dr. Hughes just before he left and Dr. and Mrs. Nims are here quite near us in Cairo for the time being. They are going to North Africa a little later to meet Dr. Kraeling and examine the possibility of undertaking a project at some site in Cyrenaica which is said to have great possibilities. Dr. Kraeling is interested in its Byzantine connections, but Dr. Nims is going because there are said to be certain connections also with ancient Egypt. I myself would like to make another trip to North Africa for there are rumors of recent finds of Arabic MSS there of quite unusual importance. The cultural section of the Arab League is busy inquiring into this."

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EXCAVATIONS AT NORTH SAQQARA, 1954

Professor W. B. Emery, of University College, London, sends the following account of the work done this year by him for the Egypt Exploration Society on behalf of the Egyptian Government's Service of Antiquities at the archaic necropolis of Saqqara. A fuller report will be found in the forthcoming issue of the Illustrated London News.

"Clearance of an area immediately south of the work of last year has resulted in the discovery of another large tomb of the First Dynasty which may be dated to the reign of the Pharaoh Ka-a, the last king of the dynasty. Although the tomb has been completely plundered and burnt out, it yet presents Egyptology with new material of exceptional importance. This new material is principally of an architectural character, for although the monument has suffered to a considerable extent from fire, it is still so well preserved that frescoes painted more than 5000 years ago were found in good condition.

"The tomb consists of a rectangular superstructure of mud brick, with walls more than 5 yards thick retaining a filling of packed rubble which covered the whole area of the interior. The outside has the usual elaborate palace facade panelling, but this only exists on the north, west and south sides; the east side of the superstructure has a simplified panelling similar to that employed in the enclosure wall of the Third Dynasty pyramid of King Zoser. All the panelling had been faced with a white lime stucco as a background to elaborate frescoés of geometrical patterns in imitation of mat-work, executed in red, white, black, blue, green and yellow. Considering their immense age, these frescoes were found in a remarkably fine state of preservation; even the guiding lines of the craftsmen were still visible. Like the tomb, dated to the Pharaoh Uadji, discovered last year, the panelled superstructure was surrounded by a low bench on which were originally hundreds of bulls' heads modelled in clay.

"A descending passage below the superstructure led into a great rock-cut burial chamber which, although entirely destroyed by fire, yet retained the charred remains of a great wooden sarcophagus. The burial chamber was originally roofed with timber and remains of the beams and planks were still found in position. The descending passage to the burial chamber, also roofed with timber, was originally blocked by a stone portcullis which had been lowered, after the burial, by ropes down a grooved cavity cut in the walls of the doorway. The rock-cut magazines on each side of the entrance passage were also destroyed by fire. From them and from the burial chamber, fragments of hundreds of stone and pottery vessels were recovered and, what was more important, clay jar sealings bearing the names of the Pharaoh Ka-a and of high officials of the period, the most prominent of which was that of a nobleman called Mer-Ka.

"Surrounding the panelled superstructure is a massive enclosure wall, and within this enclosure on the north side is a funerary temple consisting of a maze of rooms and passages similar to the mortuary temples of the pyramids. A second enclosure wall surrounds the whole complex of tomb and temple, which was undoubtedly the prototypê of the pyramid installations of the Third and Fourth Dynasties. The whole structure is of immense size, covering an area of nearly three-quarters of an acre. The feet and pedestals of two standing statues of wood were found in position in a niche in the funeral temple. Although these statues have a form usually associated with the Third Dynasty, there is no evidence to suggest that they were a later embellishment.

"Like the big tomb discovered last year, the building had been largely destroyed by fire. All the great tombs of the First Dynasty at Saqqara, Abydos and Nagadeh have been burnt, presumably by plunderers in an effort to obliterate the signs of their sacrilege. But this feature is not apparent in tombs of the Second Dynasty, even though these burials had been rifled in the same way, and it would appear that the burning of the tombs of the kings or the nobility was confined to the First Dynasty. In the present case, the fire not only burnt out the burial chamber and the sub-magazines, but it destroyed large areas of the superstructure. The identity of the owner of this immense tomb is still uncertain. Excavations in the inner eastern corridor resulted in the discovery of a large stela inscribed with the name of the nobleman Mer-Ka, sealings of whom were also found in the tomb in conjunction with the name of the Pharaoh-Ka-a. This find at first convinced us that the tomb must belong to Mer-Ka, but further digging showed that the stela came from a stone-lined subsidiary tomb, built in

the corridor immediately south of the stairway. This subsidiary tomb had been rifled, but the bones of a middle-aged man were found in it, and its character as a burial-place contemporary with, and part of, the main structure is beyond dispute. The problem now is: was the great tomb the burial-place of Mer-Ka, and was the subsidiary burial that of a sacrificed slave interred below Mer-Ka's funerary stela; or does the tomb belong to the Pharaoh Ka-a and was Mer-Ka given the honor of burial within the precincts of his master's tomb?

"Mer-Ka was a noble of some distinction and he is inscribed on his stela as "a Count, a Sem Priest, a Priest of Neith" etc. But the workmanship of the stela is comparatively crude and does not "match up" to the elaborate architecture and painted decoration of the building. Moreover, as with other tombs discovered at Sakkara, the monument is far bigger and more elaborate than the funerary structure known to belong to King Ka-a at Abydos. It is difficult to imagine that a noble of even Mer-Ka's distinction would be allowed to build a tomb so greatly superior to that of his royal master.

"Thus, the problem of whether the tombs at Sakkara are royal or otherwise still remains uncertain and further excavation must be undertaken before any definite conclusion can be reached."

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THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAM FOR EGYPT, 1953-1954

32 Americans went to Egypt for the academic year 1953-1954 as grantees under the Fulbright Act. Their categories and fields of study are reported as follows.

7 Graduate Students: Egyptology, Arabic Literature, Arabic and Islamic Studies, Arabic Language and Literature, Painting, International Relations, Law.

7 Teachers: Physical Education, Music, Speech, English (4).

15 Lecturers: Numismatics, Philosophy, American and English Literature, English (2), Library Science, Geography, Physics, Psychology, Testing Techniques in Education, Comparative Government, International Organization, Pathology, Dentistry, Child Guidance.

3 Research Scholars: Nilotic Ethiopia, Soil Science, Land Utilization.

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