

Before describing the very interesting results of last winter's excavations allow me to say a few words about Abydos itself, and to remind you of the reasons which induced us to spend the several winters in searching thoroughly that spot, though at the beginning some people thought that the results were not very encouraging.

Abydos, in Egyptian Abwot was a city of Middle Egypt built on the border of the desert. Its site is now occupied by two villages, Arab at el Madfouna and Beni Mansur. These villages are now at a distance of more than six miles from the ~~the~~ river, but it is quite possible that four thousand years ago the site was much nearer; for it is well known that the bed of the river has a strong tendency to displace itself towards the East.

Abydos possessed a political importance like Thebes or Memphis. It was chiefly a religious city. The capital of the nome or province in which Abydos was situated, was Thes, or Thes, the god of which was Ankhers. But Abydos was the residence of a god venerated throughout the whole of Egypt, Osiris. Osiris is the most interesting god of the Egyptian mythology. He is the most human, and the only one who has a kind of moral character. Before him the deceased are said to appear to have their heart weighed in the balance. The ceremony takes place in a hall in the Abydos of the Netherworld. Osiris who has chance appeared in the president of the court, and passes the sentence.

Abydos always had a sacred character. At the same time it is connected with the early times and even the foundation of the kingdom. According to a legend which is to be found in Greek authors, Menes the first historical king

left this the city just mentioned as the capital, at a short distance from Abydos near down the river as far as the origin of the Delta and founded Memphis.

At Abydos itself at about one mile's distance in the desert near the foot of the mountain which lines the valley, is a mound called by the natives Mam el Ghab, the mother of pots. This mound is of a red colour because of the enormous number of potsherds with which it is covered somewhat like the Testaccio at Rome. Then M. Amelineau and Prof. Flinders Petrie afterwards has found brick constructions to which the name of tombs has been given. I rather believe that they are sanctuaries devoted to the worship of the kings, like the temples of the Western side of Thebes. There has been discovered a great number of objects of various kinds, among them were a jar bearing the names of the kings of the three preceding dynasties. Thus Abydos is especially interesting both because of the worship of Osiris and of the remains of the oldest kings which have been discovered there.

Along the border of the desert one found ruins of constructions of different epochs. The great attraction for travellers is a temple of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> Dynasty raised by King Set I to Osiris. The greater part of it has been decaying by Merette, many years ago. The Greeks of the Service are now completing the excavation. It is dedicated to Osiris and is ornamented with sculptures which certainly are among the most beautiful found in Egypt. Set's son Ramses II enlarged it, but his work cannot compare with that of his father.

The temple is of a special character. It is like the constructions raised to the memory of a deceased king, and when a worship was celebrated in his honour it seems rather curious to speak of decess in reference to a god. But Osiris was a god who died. He was considered as being

• entkammer  
• Kolonnade

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been killed by his enemy. So who cut his body to pieces and scattered  
the limbs between the various cities of Egypt. However the body of Min was  
reconstituted by his son Horus. The heir of second tomb of Minis; the most  
famous was that of Abydos which was said to contain his feet. It was  
the wish to find this tomb which induced us to excavate at Abydos  
Probably the temple of Seti must have been connected with the tomb of  
the god, who had perhaps a sanctuary for his ka, his double.

In 1908. Prof. Petrie began excavations behind the temple  
to see the desert, along the sacred enclosure the wall of the temenos.  
Prof. Petrie, or rather his assistant Miss Murray discovered there a  
passage leading to a hall covered with texts of the Book of the Dead. At  
the end of the passage towards the South is a chamber ornamented also  
with texts and figures from the Book called the Ankh Hall, which is in  
the Ketherwood. In the side wall of the hall is a door of which Miss  
Murray found the lintel and the doorposts covered with inscriptions  
from the B. of the D. Prof. Petrie considers the hall and chamber as  
being a building for the special worship of Min, and also as being Seti's  
well. The side door <sup>where Miss Murray stopped</sup> would be the entrance for people coming from the  
temple of Seti.

From the first it appeared to me that this hypogeum was not Seti's well  
and that the door discovered by Miss Murray was not the point of access  
but on the contrary the starting point towards a construction which exists  
~~either~~ in the space between the hall and the temple, or perhaps some  
<sup>to which</sup> subterranean sanctuary under the temple of Seti.

Therefore in 1912 we went straight to this doorway which had to be  
cleared again entirely. Behind it was a passage full of rubbish for the  
sandstone ceiling had disappeared. It was about 4.5 feet long. The

• Tents  
• chess player

wells are covered with tents of the Book of the Dead which are written in a curious way. They begin on the left side, at the end of the passage.

• Lintel

The passage at first slopes gently, then it becomes horizontal again with a slope at two wide side openings which we thought at first to be two separate chambers, one on each side. Pushing further we came upon a big lintel 15 feet long. This lintel which is threefold is the top of a door built in a wall twelve feet thick. Beyond it we found two angles which might be doors; but the amount of sand in front of us, did not allow us to go ~~forward~~ forward. We turned to the right, where the mass of rubbish was not quite so high; we followed the top of the wall of the doorway, and at a distance of about 30 feet we met the sidewall of the construction. We ascended the upper part of that angle, and we recognized already that the well consisted of two levels, the outer one of limestone, the inner one of enormous blocks of a red material which Dr. Hume told us was hard sandstone coming from the neighborhood of Assuan. The masonry is extremely fine, and reminds one very strongly of the so-called temple of the Sphinx a very curious building, contemporaneous with the pyramids.

• March 15/12

Such was the state of the work when we left in March 1912. We had cleared the passage, the lintel the top of the well joining the enclosure on the South and we had dug to the bottom of what we thought to be the South chamber, to a depth of about 18 feet. On the North side of the lintel we had now three 30 feet of rubbish to clear away, so we stopped for want of money.

Close to the temple at a short distance from the end of our excavations, we were confronted by a most serious and really disheartening obstacle; an enormous mound <sup>found it</sup> raised by the excavations of Mariette, who, when he cleared the temple of Set I many years ago, threw the rubbish as near

as possible.



o Digging

We started from the doorway with the big lintels and proceeded forward towards the temple. An excavation on such large proportions has to be conducted with method so as to avoid falls which may be serious waste of money. The first thing to do is to trace the form of the building. On the North side which was less advanced in 1912 than the South we searched for the enclosure wall, and we found that it was absolutely symmetrical on both sides.

o. Mounds on the North

o North side

After our week's work, this was seen on the North side. The South side was more advanced, but was more ruined than the North, - quarry - with stones.

o South side

Going forward according to the same method after three weeks digging we had cleared a construction of which I shall first show you the plan. The three places - enclosure wall - cells - pool recessed - middle platform, or island - pillars - chamber of bricks like a robber hole.

o Plan

o General view

General view. The three views. Eastings.

o for the South

" for the South. In Memphis the same, Jesuit's railway well diminished.

o Back wall

The back wall. Eastings - Jesuit's railway

o S. wall

Achilles. Block of 120 feet

o F. 2

Pillars. taken for with stones

o N.W. corner

Eastings. Ledge. water.

o S.W. corner

Cells. Hooks for hanging the stones. How far does the masonry go.

o Staircase

Stairs leading to the water, bricks for washing the feet

o Temple doorway

Reconstruction of the best drawing

Questions raised

We started from the field and from the well when it is

The discovery of this construction which I know half considering one of the oldest in Egypt raises a great number of questions which perhaps the excavation of next winter will help us to solve.

This very old building is neither a tomb nor a temple. It is a hydraulic construction. Is it likely that such a cyclopean building has been raised merely for impounding water. Was there a spring in that place, or some communication with the Nile. It seems probable that these old Egyptians knew very well the laws of the river and the fall of the Nile. They knew also of the existence of what is called now the subterranean Nile which flows under the desert and the cultivated lands and which <sup>the engineers</sup> they try to utilize for the irrigation of the country.

Why was this water stored and sheltered against evaporation by by those enormous ceilings? Was it supposed to have a curative effect? Did people come to the wells to lose their health instead

Or was this pool connected with the worship of Osiris. Was the sacred boat towed by priests walking on the narrow ledge? Or is the worship of Osiris of a later date than the construction of the pool? It may take some time before these questions are answered. Meanwhile let us complete the excavation of this monument which represents in unique in Egypt, and certainly in spite of its deteriorated state of the most striking examples of the architecture of the or Tenos- times.

Holzer

Holzer.