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Portrait of Rameses III
Egyptian Tile XX Dynasty



Egyptian Portraiture of the XX Dynasty

THE Egyptian Department is fortunate in being able to exhibit an excellent collection of works of the Second Theban or "New" Empire (Dynasties XVII-XX, 1600-1100 B. C.), but few among them possess the artistic merit and the historical interest of the series of enamelled tiles shown in the accompanying illustrations.

These tiles formed a part of the wall-decoration of a building erected by Rameses III (Dynasty XX, 1198-1167 B. C.), and, with other similar remains dating from his reign, give evidence of a distinct revival of this branch of ceramic art.

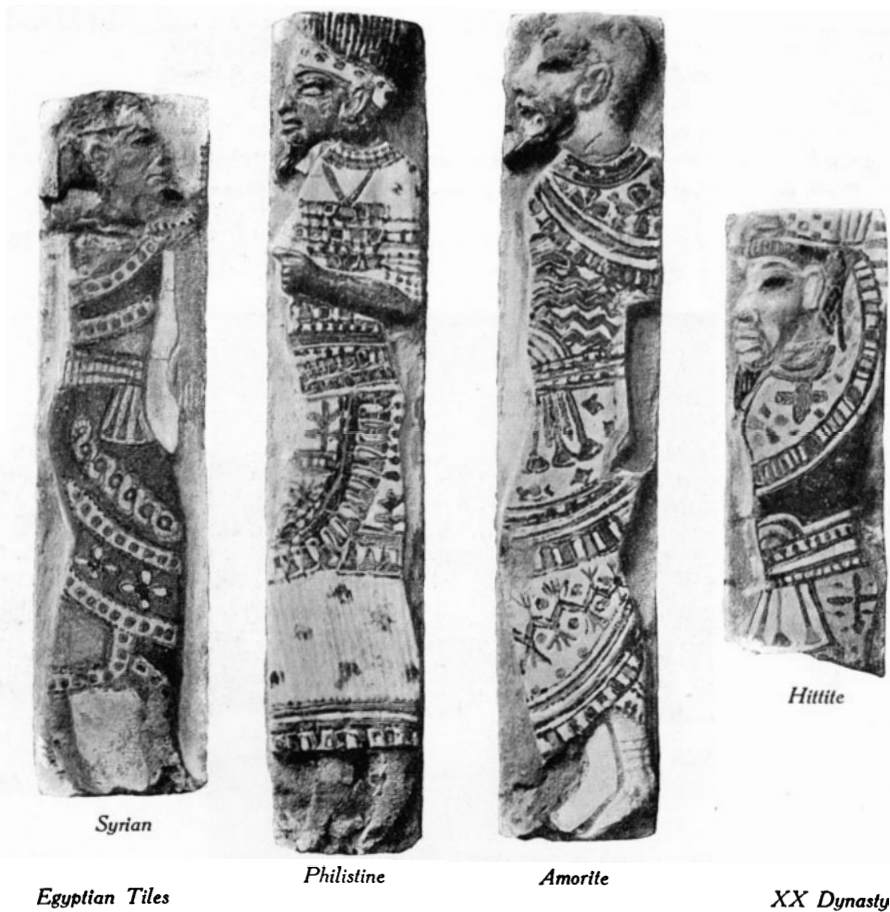
Their provenance is a matter of question. They were purchased from a dealer in Luxor, and were said to come from Medinet Habu, at ancient Thebes, where Rameses III carried on extensive building operations, enlarging the small temple of the eighteenth dynasty already on the site, and erecting a temple and a fortress-like structure, known as the "Pavilion of Rameses III." In a letter to Professor T. Hayter Lewis, Mr. Bononi mentions seeing a similar object at this place: "I have seen at Medinet Haboo a porcelain figure inserted into the jamb of a door leading from the Great Court

into the second, the flesh of a red-brown color and every part of the dress of its proper color, in porcelain. It was excellent work of that period."* Another authority surmises that tiles of this kind may have originally come from the site now known as Tell-el-Yehûdiyeh (Hill of the Jew), about twenty-one miles north of Cairo.† This must have been an important place, as it was on the direct route to the Wadi di Tourmilat, the watered valley which was the easiest approach to the land of Goshen and Syria. On this spot, as its name recalls, Onias, the Jewish high priest, was permitted by the Egyptians to build a counterpart of the Temple at Jerusalem (circa B. C. 160). A number of fragments of like tiles from the excavations at this place are for the present shown with the series here illustrated. The fact that a tile similar to this series was picked up in Koptos‡ further complicates the problem and suggests the possibility that the use of this type of tile-work by the decorators of Rameses III extended to Upper Egypt. At Koptos the great caravans across the Arabian

* Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology, Vol. VII, Part 2 (1881), p. 180 sq.

† Wallis: "Egyptian Ceramic Art" (1898), p. 28 sq.

‡ Wallis: "Egyptian Ceramic Art" (1900), p. XV.



Desert left the Nile for their destinations on the Red Sea, and it is known that Rameses III erected a mortuary temple, or Ramesseum, there.

The walls of the temples in Egypt are decorated with scenes of warfare with tribes from without the natural boundaries of the country, which, attracted by the richness of the Nile valley, sought to gain a foothold in that favored land. As their inferior numbers met the trained armies of the Egyptians, many of them were defeated and made slaves. This accounts for the diversity of racial types shown in the reliefs and the mention of so many tribal names in the hieroglyphics. But few are so easily identified as those represented in the present series of tiles, which commemorates the victory of Rameses III over the strange army of temporarily allied tribes that assailed the power of Egypt in his reign and were overcome in two sharp battles, one on land and the other at the mouth of the Nile. In this motley army of invaders were the Khita, or Hittites, the Amar, or Amorites, the Takari, or Teucrians (?) (Cretans ?), the Shairdana, or Sardinians, the Shaklasha, or Sicilians, the Tuirsha, or Tyrrhenians, and the Pulistha, or Philistines. The present tiles include also two representatives of the black tribes of Kush, hereditary enemies of the Egyptians from prehistoric times. These, then, are some of the captives who might

be expected to be represented on the walls of a building erected by Rameses III.

At Medinet Habu the northern pier of the second pylon of the temple is decorated with a long inscription giving the details of the invasion by the eastern Mediterranean peoples, and of the successive triumphs of Rameses III. This inscription offers evidence for the identification of the three series of captives which are represented in relief on the walls of the southern pier, and also the series illustrated in this article. It certainly is of the greatest interest to have archæological evidence of those restless forces which made the second millennium B. C. one of change and growth, but even more so when we have racial portraits, seen through Egyptian convention to be sure, but none the less true in detail of character or dress. The Philistine, with his feather cap of the type worn by Lykians and Mykenæans,* his reddish skin and small pointed beard, the smooth upper lip, noted as a feature of the northern and eastern Mediterranean peoples, the long white plaited robe, the elaborate embroidery and the decorative fringes, is well worthy of study. The color scheme is hardly less attractive, for the Egyptian artist used white, red, cream, and gray. The Syrian in his

*H. R. Hall: "The Earliest Civilization in Greece," p. 180.



People of Kush
Egyptian Tiles



Fragment with Cartouches of Rameses III



Tile showing Two Rekhits
XX Dynasty

long gray robe with embroidered bands and fringes, his head bound with a cloth tied in a knot behind with the ends hanging, his yellowish skin and small beard, shows how cleverly the artist caught essential characteristics. The Amorite is striking, with his Semitic cast of features, the long dark beard, the light yellow complexion and the shaven head. His long robe also reveals the beauty of the textile designing of his day, and is colored yellow, cream, red, gray, and brown. One of the most mysterious peoples of that time were the Khita or Hittites, and the fact that we have a contemporary portrait of a Hittite prince lends additional interest to the series. The lower part is missing, but the important section remains, showing the black beard and hair, the light-colored skin and the rich robe. There are also two tiles which show two of the inhabitants of Kush, in which the negro characteristics are markedly in evidence. The curly hair, the black skin, the thick lips, the large ear-ring, and the loin-cloth reaching only to the knees, are points worthy of note.*

Although it is not known exactly how these tiles were used, it is probable that they decorated a small chamber or corridor. Their size, at least, would warrant that inference. They must, however, have been part of a design showing the long line of captive princes approaching the figure of Rameses III. the head of which is seen in the first

illustration. This figure was a combination of glass and faience, for the face is of glass with the eye inlaid, while the ribbed wig is of faience, covered with a blue glaze. As separate arms and legs of glass were found with this head, it might be fair to infer that the robed torso and thigh were of faience, either glazed or enamelled.

The other two fragments are of importance, especially the smaller; for the cartouches (or seal patterns) cut in the surface and still showing traces of the filling, are those of Rameses III. The larger, on the other hand, shows two of the figures called rekhits,* whose prototype is unknown. They have been likened to the phoenix and to the bat.

The technique of these tiles is worthy of note. The artist apparently has his clay worked up into a flat rectangular tile, and on its surface he makes a trial contour drawing. The proof of this is seen in the outline sketches present on the backs of several, the best being on the reverse of the Amorite and the complete tile of the native of Kush. The design finally decided on is then raised in bas-relief, and the decorative details are given by colored inlays of enamel and glass. The glass is used chiefly for the eyes, and in the Amorite possibly for the arms also. The use of glass for the face, arms, and legs in the portrait relief of

*For the identification of these types, see Flinders Petrie: "Racial Types from Egypt."

*Rekhit was the name of one of the four goddesses of the desert. E. A. W. Budge: "Gods of the Egyptians," London, 1904, Vol. I, p. 356.

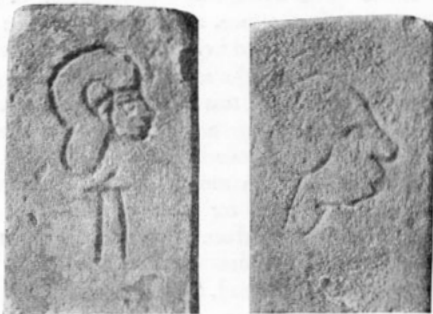
Rameses III has already been noted. The quality of the enamel used is excellent, preserving the colors and bringing out many delicacies of modeling, especially in the faces. The thinness of the layer is noteworthy, hardly one-sixteenth of an inch. Occasionally other decorative substances are employed, as in the Rekhit tile, where the checker design in the base is formed by alternations of light blue enamel and inserts of mother-of-pearl. The background of this tile is made by cutting blue enamelled faience into forms approximate to the spaces between the figures, and then cementing them in place.

If we return to the tiles representing the captives, bearing in mind the usual canons of Egyptian relief, we find that the artist has in part modelled the figures at will. The head of the King, on the other hand, follows closely the conventional Egyptian type of a man of royal blood, and, aside from its decorative qualities, lacks the charm of the captives.

The position which tiles such as these occupy in the history and achievement of Egyptian ceramic art is unique. The number of known specimens is very limited, and few collections possess so comprehensive a series as the present.

Note. The sizes of the tiles are as follows: Head of Rameses III; h. 0.124 m., w. 0.103 m.; Syrian; h. 0.252 m., w. 0.062 m.; Philistine; h. 0.30 m., w. 0.058 m.; Amorite; h. 0.295 m., w. 0.058 m.; Hittite; h. 0.168 m., w. 0.058 m.; Kush; h. 0.255 m., w. 0.065 m.; Kush; h. 0.25 m., w. 0.06 m.; Cartouche tile; h. 0.095 m., w. 0.082 m.; Rekhit tile; h. 0.095 m., w. 0.195 m.

L. E. R.



Reverse of Tiles, showing trial sketches

Charles Eliot Norton

AT a meeting of the Trustees of the Museum, held on October 27, to take action upon the death of Professor Norton, the following minute was adopted:

The Trustees of the Museum of Fine Arts desire to put on record in the proceedings of this meeting their sense of the high value of the services which their late associate, Charles Eliot Norton, rendered to the Museum for thirty-one years as a member of this Board.

Professor Norton was elected a Trustee of the Museum on July 19, 1877, the year after the opening of the building, and was an active member

of the Committee on the Museum Library from 1885 until the discontinuance of the Committee in 1904.

Professor Norton's influence in the Board of Trustees was invariably exerted to set and keep high the standards of the institution, in accordance with the avowed purpose of its founders. It was on Professor Norton's motion, twenty-five years ago, when the Museum's resources for the purchase of works of art were very scanty, that the Trustees adopted and published a report announcing the collection and exhibition of the best obtainable works of artistic genius as the chief purposes of the Museum. It was on Professor Norton's motion that the first two considerable appropriations were made by the Trustees for the purchase of objects of classical art. Many years before the establishment of the present Museum Bulletin, Professor Norton proposed and repeatedly urged that the Museum should begin the issue of such a publication. Professor Norton warmly welcomed the increased intellectual activity at the Museum in recent years. He said that the institution had begun to fulfill its function both in the matter of art and of education as it never had done before. His influence on the Museum will stand among its many inheritances of wise counsel and high aims nobly expressed.

The Graphic Arts and Education

THE third of a series of annual receptions to the Directors and Teachers of Drawing and Manual Training in Massachusetts was held in the Fifth Gallery of the Museum on Saturday morning, November 14, and was addressed by Mr. Emil H. Richter, Curator of the Department of Prints.

Mr. Richter spoke as follows:

The print is a side issue, a step-sister of painting, disregarded, ignored by the generality of the public. The neglect of so interesting and delightful a branch of art may largely be due to the immense abundance of every imaginable kind of commercial picture printing. The illustrations in the newspapers and magazines, the advertisements and posters, are prints to be sure, and in the rush of our busy life we are apt to generalize, to put under one heading the good and bad and the indifferent. We put it all aside as not worthy our attention, or else we may accept it all, good, bad, and middling alike.

This generalizing "I don't know and I don't care" attitude toward the graphic arts deprives the public of one of the most useful and attractive means which can be offered them for the broadening of their understanding of art. Especially is this true in our country, where treasures of art are as yet thinly scattered over vast distances.

In the training of our artistic faculties, prints, by their numbers and their diversity of type and technique, should occupy an important place. I do not contend for a moment that prints should