
REPRINT FROM

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF
HARVARD UNIVERSITY**

SINCE THE INAUGURATION OF
PRESIDENT ELIOT
1869—1929

EDITED BY
SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON
CLASS OF 1908



CHAPTER XIV

EGYPTOLOGY, 1896—1928

BY

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XIV. EGYPTOLOGY

1896-1928

By ^{MR.}GEORGE ANDREW REISNER, PH.D.

Professor of Egyptology

PROFESSOR David Gordon Lyon was chiefly responsible for founding the Department of Egyptology at Harvard, and for the connection of the Egyptian Expedition with the University. The first course on the Egyptian language and hieroglyphics was given by myself in 1896-97, when an Instructor in Semitic Languages.¹ The principal student in the course was Mr. Albert Morton Lythgoe (A.B. 1892).

This early attempt to found a department of Egyptology came to an end in 1897 when I became a member of the International Catalogue Commission of the Khedivial Museum in Cairo. I resigned from this commission in 1899 to organize the Egyptian Expedition of the University of California, 1899-1905, supported entirely by Mrs. Phoebe Apperson Hearst. Mr. Lythgoe was my chief assistant from 1899 to 1904, when he was appointed Instructor in Egyptology at Harvard. In 1904-05 he gave two courses, one on Egyptian Art and the other on Egyptian Archaeology.

In the summer of 1905 President Eliot formed a general plan for the future of the Egyptian and Semitic Departments, by which Mr. Lythgoe was appointed Assistant Professor of Egyptology, and I, Assistant Professor of Semitic Archaeology. With Mrs. Hearst's approval, her expedition was taken over as a working organization. It was named the Joint Egyptian Expedition of Harvard University and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, a title since shortened to the Harvard-Boston Expedition. Gardiner Martin Lane (A.B. 1881), then president of the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Fine Arts, obtained by subscrip-

1. Professor Reisner (A.B. 1889, PH.D. 1893) from 1893 to 1896 held a travelling fellowship for research in cuneiform, and at that time studied Egyptian under Professor Sethe at Berlin. His publications include *Tempelurkunden aus Telloh* (1901); *The Early Dynastic Cemeteries of Naga-ed-Dêr*, Part I (1908); *Models of Ships and Boats* (1913); *Excavations at Kerma* (2 vols., 1923). S. E. M.

tion the money for the expedition, and remained its chief support until his death in 1914. I was appointed Director and Professor Lythgoe Field Director of the Egyptian Expedition. He resigned in the spring of 1906 to take a position with the Metropolitan Museum of New York.

In 1905-06, the expedition continued clearing the great western cemetery at Giza, excavating the mastaba tombs of Cem. G 2000, under the immediate supervision of Professor Lythgoe. The next year, with Mr. C. M. Firth of Oxford as chief assistant, the expedition turned to the area of the Third Pyramid (Mycerinus) and excavated the pyramid temple and its surroundings. In 1907, with the approval of the University and the Museum, the whole organization was loaned to the Survey Department of the Egyptian Government (Director General, Sir Harry Lyons) for the Nubian Archaeological Survey, on which it was engaged from 1907 to 1909.¹

In the summer of 1908, the workmen, not being needed in Nubia, were employed under the direction of Oric Bates (A.B. 1905) to begin the excavation of the Valley Temple of the Third Pyramid (Mycerinus). In this campaign, seven masterpieces of Egyptian sculptures were discovered and became the decisive factor in the continuation of the Harvard-Boston Expedition. In the summer of 1909 and 1910, I was engaged in excavations in Samaria.² In the winter of 1909-10, working as the Harvard-Boston Expedition, we continued the excavation of the Valley Temple of Mycerinus, and discovered the famous slate statue of Mycerinus and his queen now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. In the latter part of that winter, Mr. Clarence S. Fisher of Philadelphia went up with me to the scene of our former work at Naga-'d-Dêr, where we cleared and recorded a large part of the predynastic cemetery of Mesa'eed. This was in accordance with the general policy of obtaining archaeological material from all periods of Egyptian history, a policy which was also calculated to obtain a complete series of objects for the Museum of Fine Arts. The main purpose of the expedition has always been historical research. The objects found, although necessary for the continuation of subscriptions, have always been regarded by the expedition as a by-product of historical research.

1. This survey was continued by Mr. Firth with part of the organization from 1909 to 1911.

2. See Professor Lyon's chapter on Semitic, above.

In 1910 I was transferred from the Semitic Department, and as Assistant Professor began the present Department of Egyptology. In 1910-11, the expedition, under Fisher, carried out excavations at the pyramid and cemeteries of Zawiet-el-Aryan (Dyn. I-III and XVIII). In January, 1911, I returned to Cambridge and listed the six courses which have been offered ever since as often as the expedition work permitted: the Egyptian Language (for beginners); an advanced course in the language; the History of Egypt; the History of Egyptian Art; Egyptian Archaeology; and Theory and Practice of Archaeological Fieldwork as a Branch of Historical Research. With these courses, instruction was finally offered in the whole field of Egyptology. President Lowell laid down the principle that instruction should be given at the University once in every three or four years. These years have been 1910-11 (second half), 1911-12 (first half), 1921-22 (first half), and 1924-25 (second half).

During 1911, Mr. Lane succeeded in providing adequate support for the Egyptian Expedition by organizing a group of sustaining subscribers, mostly Bostonians and Harvard graduates, but including also Mr. Henry C. Frick. With the support thus assured, work was resumed on January 1, 1912, at Giza Pyramids (Cem. G 2000) and carried on for the rest of the season 1911-12 with Fisher and Mr. L. Earle Rowe of Providence as my associates. As an auxiliary to the Giza excavations the expedition made another short campaign at Naga-'d-Dêr and excavated the cliff cemeteries of Mesheikh (Predynastic, Dyn. V-VIII, and late New Kingdom).

In 1912-13, during the first half of the season, the excavations at Giza were continued in Cem. G 2000 and in the Mycerinus Quarry, with Fisher and Louis Coulton West (A.M. 1912) assisting. In the second half of the season, I sent West to make minor excavations at Naga-el-Hai, Sheikh Farag, and Mesa'eed. I myself proceeded to the Sudan to carry out in Dongola Province the reconnaissance which led to the greatest adventure in the history of the expedition: the recovery of the lost history of Ethiopia. The reconnaissance terminated abruptly at Kerma, an ancient site at the head of the Third Cataract. I discovered there the remains of an Egyptian trading post of Dyn. V-VI, together with the fortified administrative center and the cemetery of an Egyptian colony of Dyn. XII. The preliminary work lasted only six weeks, but committed the expedition to the com-

plete excavation of the site. We carried out further campaigns in 1913-14 (West), 1914-15 (Fisher), and 1915-16 (Walter Kemp).

While the work went on at Kerma, the Giza excavations were continued during 1913-14, 1914-15, and 1915-16 by a series of short campaigns in Cem. G 4000 which yielded eight life-size portrait heads of princes and princesses of the royal family of Dyn. IV. I was arranging to return to the University in 1914-15 when the Great War broke out and detained me in Egypt until 1921.

Dr. F. L. Griffith, Reader in Egyptology at Oxford, invited me in 1915 to take over the permit for excavations at Gebel Barkal (Napata), the most important site in the Sudan; and the Sudan Government very graciously confirmed the transfer. With the assumption of this concession, the exploration of Ethiopia entered on a new phase. In 1915-16, the main part of the expedition, with Dows Dunham (A.B. 1913) as assistant, began the excavation of the temples of Amon-Ra at Gebel Barkal (Napata) and the two groups of pyramids on the adjacent desert. The temples proved to have been built by the kings of the first independent kingdom of Ethiopia, but the largest of all had been begun by Egyptian kings of the New Kingdom. Here we discovered eleven large granite statues of Tirhaqa and his immediate successors. The pyramids were of the Meroitic Dynasty of Napata, but the chief importance of their excavation lay in the fact that we discovered for the first time the position of the burial chambers. This discovery enabled the expedition to work out the burial chambers of all other Ethiopian pyramids with the greatest ease. The campaign of 1915-16 ended with the identification of the pyramids of Nuri (suburbs of Napata) as the tombs of the kings of the first monarchy of Napata.

During the next two years, the expedition excavated the pyramid field of Nuri; twenty pyramids of kings of Ethiopia (including Tirhaqa) and seventy-five pyramids of their queens. In 1918-19, the tombs of the remaining kings, Piankhy, Shabaka, Shabataka, and Tanutamun, who ruled Egypt (Dyn. XXV) as well as Ethiopia, were identified in the royal cemetery of El-Kur'uw (on the 'north' side of Napata), together with the pyramids of their ancestors (including King Kashta) and their queens. The excavation of the six temples of the gods of Gebel

Barkal (Napata) was continued by Kemp and Dunham during this and the subsequent year, and a number of important historical inscriptions were discovered.

Independent Ethiopia had passed through two periods: the earlier kingdom of Napata, and the later kingdom of Meroë. Having, by 1920, recovered as completely as possible the evidence on the kingdom of Napata, the Harvard-Boston Expedition obtained a concession for the pyramids of Meroë, and transferred its work southwards to Begarawiyah, the village nearest to Meroë, between the Fourth and Fifth Cataracts. The attention of the expedition during the next three years (1920-23) was concentrated on the three fields of pyramids at that site; Ashton Sanborn (A.B. 1905), Mr. H. L. Story, and Mr. and Mrs. Dunham being in charge. Here the chronological outline of the history recovered at Napata was extended to cover the Meroitic Kingdom.

This series of campaigns at Napata and Meroë yielded up not only a chronological outline of the independent monarchy of Ethiopia during eleven centuries (750 B.C. to 350 A.D.), but also a fairly full view of its cultural development. The 'finds' included twelve statues of the kings, four important historical inscriptions, a large number of reliefs, and a wonderful collection of the funerary furniture of the royal tombs (gold, silver, faience, alabaster, and so forth). With the work of 1922-23 the royal sites were finished, but a number of others remained of manifest importance. Among these were the twelve Egyptian forts which guarded the passage of the fifty miles of cataract just above Wady Halfa (Second Cataract). Accordingly in 1923-24 Mr. and Mrs. Alan Rowe began the excavation of the two forts at Semna for the Expedition.

In August, 1921, while the exploration of the pyramids at Meroe was still in hand, I returned for the first time since 1912 to America, and gave several Egyptology courses at Harvard. At the end of the Semna campaign of 1923-24, it was decided that I should return again to the University. It was therefore arranged to concentrate the work of 1924-25 at the Giza Pyramids, and to open the excavation of the royal cemetery of Cheops east of his pyramid, beginning on November 1, 1924. The importance of this cemetery was proved immediately by the identification of the tombs of Prince Kawa'ab, eldest son of Cheops, four other princes, and the Princess Meresankh II, as

well as the tombs of the pyramid priests, Qu'ar and Iduw. In January, 1925, I returned to give Egyptology courses, leaving Alan Rowe in charge of the work. In March he cabled me the news of the discovery of an intact royal tomb, afterwards identified as the secret tomb of Queen Hetep-heres I, the mother of Cheops. This discovery of the only intact royal tomb of the Pyramid age was of such paramount importance that it held the attention of the expedition during the next two years, and forced me to concentrate on the Giza excavations. The burial chamber of Hetep-heres contained among other things a mass of gold-cased household furniture such as had never been seen before. The record of this tomb was the finest and most detailed which the expedition had ever made, and took my entire time with that of an assistant from August 1925 until March 1927. Meanwhile the excavation of the cemetery continued with Lieut. Comm. Noel Wheeler in direct charge, and in April, 1927, resulted in the discovery of the tomb of Meresankh III, a granddaughter of Cheops, which gave us the final clues to the history of the family of Cheops. The excavation of the cemetery east of the Cheops Pyramid was continued in 1927-28 and 1928-29. The restoration of the furniture from the tomb of Hetep-heres was begun by Dunham in 1926-27, and has been continued by Mr. W. A. Stewart during 1927-28 and 1928-29.

In 1927, the expedition resumed the work earlier begun at Semna. Wheeler was in charge. He finished the two forts at Semna by 1929, and has begun the excavation of the third fort, at Uronarti.

The Egyptian Expedition has now worked for thirty years in the field in Egypt, Palestine, and the Sudan; Augustus Hemenway (A.B. 1875), has succeeded Gardiner Martin Lane as chief supporter of the expedition and as Chairman of the Egyptian Committee. Thirty-four other persons have given various amounts; and the trustees of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts have made considerable contributions to the annual requirements of the expedition. All the objects assigned to the expedition by the Egyptian and the Sudan Government have gone to enrich the collections of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and have made the Egyptian Collection in that museum one of the most distinguished in the world. Harvard University has the right to publish the work of the expedition. Both the Egyptian and the Sudan Governments have given the expedition every

assistance in its research, and have been very fair in their division of the objects discovered.

The outstanding features of the Harvard-Boston Egyptian Expedition have been:

Development and improvement of methods of excavation and recording, with the idea of making archaeological field-work a scientific method of historical research.

The creation of a working organization carrying out as a matter of habit the principles laid down for efficient work.

Historical results concerning the provincial culture of Egypt, from the Predynastic Period; the history of the royal family of Dyn. IV and the development of the arts and crafts during the Pyramid age; the history of Lower Nubia, from the Predynastic Period; the history of Samaria from Omri to the Byzantine Period; the history of Ethiopia from about 4000 B.C. to 350 A.D.

Since 1905, 'Harvard Camp' at the Giza Pyramids has been the base of all operations and the storehouse of all the records of the expedition. Here also the results are studied and the publications written.