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Enlarged Detail from a Chinese Painting

Early Sung Dynasty (960-1279)

Ross Collection

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The main Nile channel west of Uronarti, showing the difficulty of Navigation

Harvard-Boston Expedition in the Sudan, 1930-1931

I. Inscription of Senwesert III

LAST winter the Harvard-Boston Expedition recorded at Uronarti a short dated inscription of Senwesert III (Sesostris III, about 2000 B. C.), the conqueror of Nubia. The brief five lines throw an unexpected light on a journey of this king up the Nile to the land of "miserable Kush" in the nineteenth year of his reign. The only previous evidence of this journey was to be found in the stela of Sisatet, who was sent as assistant to his kinsman Ikhernofret by the king to restore the temple of Osiris at Abydos with gold brought from Nubia. Ikhernofret and Sisatet both left stelae, that of the former relating to his work at Abydos. The stela of Sisatet, which was found at Abydos and is now in Geneva, is translated in Breasted's *Ancient Records of Egypt*, Vol. I, par. 672. Sisatet says:—"I came to Abydos, together with the chief treasurer Ikhernofret, to carve (a statue of) Osiris, Lord of Abydos, when the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Khakawra (Senwesert III), 'living forever', journeyed while overthrowing 'wretched Kush', in the year 19".

There came to light during the Expedition's work this season a contemporary inscription of this same nineteenth-year campaign, cut on the stone face of a landing quay on the island of Uronarti, thirty-five miles south of Wady Halfa on the Nile. The inscription is dated very precisely "year 19, month 4, Akhet season, day 2, under the Majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Khakawra (Senwesert III) 'living for ever to eternity' ". The date gives us the time of year when the expedition passed by Uronarti on its way back to Egypt, which was approximately March 15th-18th. At this time of year the Nile was low and still falling,

as it was in the middle of March 1931 when we found the inscription; in fact the level of the inscribed quay was only some couple of meters above the river level when we found it,— and the Nile is exceptionally low this year.

The record goes on to give a very vivid picture of the difficulties of such an undertaking in those days, which a familiarity with the cataracts of this part of the Nile certainly bears out. One has only to read the account of the recent expedition against the Mahdi through this region with gunboats, given in Royle's *Egyptian Campaigns*, to realize that the Nile in these parts has changed but little. It would seem that the problems encountered by the Canadian "voyageurs" and Indians in the more recent campaign differed not much from those met with by Senwesert's boatmen, though the former had modern equipment, ropes, winches, and steam power.

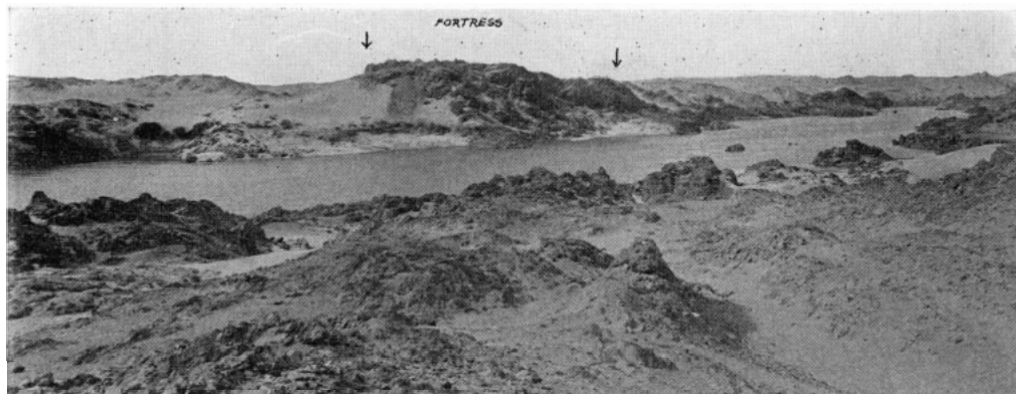
The Uronarti inscription continues, after the King's name and titles, in substance:—

"The King proceeded, 'living, healthy, and well', in going north from the overthrowing of 'miserable Kush'. One had to find navigable water for getting past Yashemuk and hauling the boats, as the season demanded; every shoal likewise. As for the shoal of . . . (an illegible place name), it was bad; it was far from easy to get through by hauling the boats over it, on account of the time of year".

The inscription is fairly well cut on a block of very hard granitic rock forming part of the outer face of a quay which lies at the foot of a long stairway and tunnel, leading from the fort down to the river's edge.

II. The Fortress of Shalfak

During this past season the Harvard-Boston Expedition has excavated the small Middle Kingdom



Shalfak Fort, seen from the east bank of the Nile



The quay at Uronarti, with the inscription of Senwesert III



Inscription of Senwesert III at Uronarti



Interior of Shalfak Fort, after excavating, looking southwest



Street in Shalfak Fort, showing tiles laid down the center

fort of Shalfak at Sarras, some miles north of Uronarti, which is much smaller than the Uronarti fort but similarly situated on the crest of a rock cliff overlooking the Nile, in this case on the west bank of the river instead of on an island. Work was commenced on February 20 and finished on March 21, during which time we excavated the eighty-three interior rooms of the fort, the outside of the fort including four exterior rooms, and the small cemetery which lay in a sandy plain west of the fort.

The main fort is roughly rectangular, but, as at Semna and Uronarti, additional wings run out to the west, east, and north, along ridges of rock which require covering protection. The River Stairway descends by a winding and precipitous route on the east side of the fort down to the river, making use of a tongue of rock which runs out into the water at this point. Along the remainder of the east side of the fort the cliff descends very steeply, in some places overhanging the waters of the Nile. The construction of the fort itself resembles that in the other forts hitherto excavated in this region. It is of mud-brick throughout, in horizontal courses, reinforced by a considerable quantity of timber. The timber consists of tree-trunks from which the bark has not been stripped. The outside of the main walls on the west and south, where the approach is steep and difficult, but possible, presents a continuous series of rectangular buttresses added to the outer face. Inside the fort there are seven blocks of rooms separated by streets. Block 1, comprising nine rooms, forms a large building at the south end of the fort; block 2, of nine rooms, includes two stairways leading up toward the north; blocks 3, 4, 5, and 6 are smaller blocks in the western part of the fort, block 3 of five rooms, block 4 of ten rooms, block 5 of six rooms, block 6 of five rooms; block 7 is a large block of eight three-room apartments, filling the north part of the fort.

A street, "Wall Street," encircles the whole fort inside the main wall, and was probably crossed by a bridge from one of the stairways mentioned above. South Cross Street, running east and west, separates block 1 from blocks 2, 3, and 4; Middle Cross Street separates blocks 3 and 4 from blocks 5 and 6; North Cross Street separates blocks 2, 5, and 6 from block 7. Middle Street, running north and south, separates block 2 from blocks 3 and 5; and another street separates blocks 4 and 6.

Block 1 is in two parts, bonded together. The smaller part, consisting of three rooms, may have been a chapel or small temple; and it is not connected internally with the rest of the block. One of its rooms has a sandstone column base in it and a sandstone basin with a dedicatory inscription around the rim set in the northeast corner of the room. The other part of block 1, of six rooms, has no exterior doorway on the floor level and must therefore have been in the nature of cellar

rooms. They appear to have formed the cellar of a building of the same plan, with its floor at the roof level of the cellar, and probably at about the roof level of the "chapel" part of the block. These cellar rooms have intermediate doors, and their walls are still standing to a height of one and one-half meters. The entrance could have been only from the floor above by means of a ladder, stairway, or trapdoor with rope. Such cellars could have been used either as prisons or storerooms. Their form is clearly adapted to storage purposes, and a second story of this building would most probably have served as a magazine for the men guarding the ramparts.

Block 2 is the next in size and importance. From the arrangement of its rooms and the fact that two stairways go up from it, it would appear to have been an administrative building. One of the stairways probably led to the roof of the rooms of this block, the other to the top of the fort walls forming the main line of defence. From the measurements of the remaining parts of these two stairways we have estimated the height of the first story of this block to have been about three meters and the ramparts of the main fort walls about nine meters. The main part of block 1 certainly had a story resting on the three meter level, with an estimated height also of three meters, making a total height of about six meters. It is obvious that the access to the second story of block 1 could easily have been by means of the stairway already mentioned and through the second story of block 2. It may be presumed that there was access at the second story level to the second and longer stairway leading to the ramparts to enable the garrison to reach them from this floor without descending to the lower level. Through this doorway on the second story level munitions could have been brought to the ramparts from block 1. Blocks 3 to 6 were probably officers' quarters, administrative offices, and shops, although the exact purpose of each block is difficult to determine. Block 7 clearly formed the barracks for the men, with its three-room apartments, and these rooms give us some idea of the size of the garrison. The outer room of each apartment was presumably the living court where cooking and eating took place, and may not have been roofed over. The two inner rooms are probably sleeping quarters where the men would keep their personal belongings in chests or sacks. Such a room would accommodate from two to five men, indicating a total of from thirty-two to eighty men for the whole block.

Of the fort gateways the main entrance was on the south as at Uronarti. It is a plain doorway blocked by two heavy wooden doors of which the sills remain. Outside the doorway a massive construction adds a gate-room and a second narrow entrance, of similar form to that at Semna. This external structure was built on a steep slope inclined to the south which descends irregularly as far as the river itself. The gateway could thus have been

approached from the plain west of the fort or from the water; in fact, during the excavations, we used this latter route to and from the fort. The water-gate, to the north, was also a plain, straight gateway with two wooden doors giving access to a street which skirted the outer walls of the fort on the north and east. To the north this street ran to the end of the rocky ridge on which the fort was built, to which point the long north wing wall of the fort also extended. To the east the street followed a similar but shorter east wing to the edge of the cliff, whence the steep and precipitous river stairs descended to the water level.

It is possible that the ramparts of Uronarti were originally visible from the tops of the Shalfak walls, but they are not so today. There is high land and a bend in the Nile between the two forts, but it seems reasonable to assume that the two garrisons were originally within visual signalling distance of one another, as were the forts of the Semna-Uronarti group. Two other sites, much destroyed and rebuilt, respectively five and ten miles north of Shalfak, appear to carry the line of visual signalling almost down to the forts on the Second Cataract.

The streets in the fort are mostly paved with irregular stone slabs of granitic rock, but in some of them a single strip of burnt brick tiles serves the purpose of "duck-boards" down the centre. The walls of the rooms are still standing in some places to a height of four meters above the floors, but in the more weathered portions of the fort they are worn down to the rock level.

In a preliminary search for the site of the cemetery, graves were discovered in widely separated positions over a flat plain a quarter of a mile wide, but when we came to excavate the cemetery it was found that the areas used were not extensive. The graves were shallow trenches in the sand, apparently untouched by plunderers, but containing very little in the way of objects beyond pottery. Some twenty graves were all that were found, two of them being cut in the rock slope at the foot of the fort walls on the west.

The fort seems to have been in military occupation only during the Middle Kingdom. It is mentioned in the Hieratic list of forts found in the Ramesseum (see Bulletin No. 163, p. 64), under the name of Wa'af-Khasut, "Overcoming the Foreign Lands", and was probably built by Senwesert III. Later there was a short and unimportant occupation in the Meroitic period.

The objects recovered included none of exceptional interest,—an inscribed stone basin, a broken private offering stela, a decorated faience bowl, and the usual common objects of daily life. The most important objects were several seal impressions made by the seal of "the granary of Wa'af-Khasut", which identifies definitely Shalfak as the fort called "Overcoming the Foreign Lands".

N. F. WHEELER.

Two Examples of Muḥammadan Metal Work

ALTHOUGH the Museum collections are singularly poor in important examples of Muḥammadan metal work, the two examples now to be described are of outstanding interest. The first is a brass bowl, richly decorated with geometrical designs, inscription, and armorial medallions, in gold, silver, and copper overlay, made for an official of an Egyptian Mamlūk Sulṭān, and no doubt of middle fourteenth century date. This piece, measuring .061 m. in height and .142 m. in greatest diameter (at the shoulder), is registered as M. F. A. 21.2547, and was given to the Museum by the late William Sturgis Bigelow.

The thuluth inscription, occupying four separated sections of the shoulder band, reads:

Mimmā 'umila bi-rasmi al-janāb al' a li is-saifi Timūr ras nubā al-maqar al-ashraf is-saifi l'Illughā amir al-majlis al-Malikī an-Nāṣirī

"Of what was made by order of his excellency Timūr, Captain of the Guard of the exalted al-Ashraf is-Saifi Yalbugha, the President of Council of Our Lord an-Nāṣir."

The last title refers to the then regnant Mamlūk Sulṭān of Egypt, probably an-Nāṣir Nāṣiru'd-Din al-Hasan b. an-Nāṣir, r. 1347/1348—1351/1352. Illughā can also be read Yalbugha, and must be the man who was Governor of Aleppo 1345/1346—1349/1350, and received the title of Amir al-Majlis (found in the present inscription) from the Sulṭān an-Nāṣir above mentioned. Yalbugha, also known as Tankizbugha, died in 1358/1359, before which time the bowl must have been made. Yalbugha was a great official, third in rank at the Mamlūk court. His tomb near Cairo was completed in 1362.¹ I have not been able to trace his Captain, Timūr (or possibly Aẓtimūr).

In each of the eight small medallions on the same zone, roughly scratched on the metal, and only visible where the gold overlay has disappeared, there is the inscription 'izz li maulā(nā) (as-)sulṭān, "Glory to Our Lord the Sulṭān."

The armorial bearing (*renk*) forming each of these medallions consists of a circular shield, divided by a broad fess or (gold, covering the last-mentioned inscription), the chief gules (overlay of copper), base with hachure sable (black wax overlay), charge a cup reserved in silver outline. From this bearing it may subsequently be possible to identify the Sulṭān more exactly. According to Lane-Poole,² the cup is the most frequently met with of all the Mamlūk charges, and it indicates that the user held the important post of cup-bearer to the King; but in the present case this can scarcely

¹Zambaur, *Manuel de Genealogie et de Chronologie pour l'Histoire de l'Islam*, pp. 34, 103; van Berchem, *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum*, I, p. 274, note 3; Quatremère, *Sultans Mamlouks*, II a, p. 97.

²*Loc. cit.*, p. 272.