EGYPT AND THE PHARAOHS

From the Sand to the Library

Pharaonic Egypt in the Archives and Libraries of the Università degli Studi di Milano

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Università degli Studi di Milano
Turning Points
in Egyptian Archaeology
1850-1950

Christian Orsenigo
IV. Turning Points in Egyptian Archaeology 1850-1950

Christian Orsenigo

The story of the great discoveries made in Egypt between the mid nineteenth and mid twentieth centuries is well documented in the Egyptological Archives and Library of the University of Milan through the writings of the discoverers themselves, such as Auguste Mariette, Victor Loret, and Pierre Montet, to name but a few. The University has large collections from these eminent scholars, in some cases their entire archives. In addition references to great discoveries by Egyptologists whose main archives are housed elsewhere – or have been lost – emerge from other materials kept in Milan. These include manuscripts, letters, glass plates, photographic prints, and often rare volumes in which the great masters of Egyptian archaeology published the results of their research.

Here we give a brief overview of some of the great archaeological discoveries made in Egypt between 1850 and 1950, concentrating on those about which the Milan Archives contain particularly rich documentation and omitting other discoveries that are nevertheless indisputably important. The biographies of the archaeologists whose archival collections are kept in Milan can be found in Chapter III of this volume.

Auguste Mariette: From the First Great Discoveries to the “Pyramid Texts”

It is no exaggeration to say that it was the arrival in Egypt of Auguste Mariette (1850) that marked the beginning of the great archaeological discoveries in the land of the pharaohs. Though many discoveries had been made beforehand – even if mainly by chance – Mariette was one of the first scholars to document them scientifically and to carry out the intellectual will of Champollion, the father of Egyptology, by fighting to preserve the monuments that were brought to light. As the first Director of the Egyptian Antiquities Service which still exists – a position specially created for him by the Khedive Said Pasha in 1858 – he succeeded in promoting and creating what might be defined as the first real museum of antiquities in Egypt, the Bulaq Museum, inaugurated in 1863.

Mariette’s name is linked to some of the greatest archaeological discoveries made in Egypt, the most important being that of the Serapeum of Saqqara. In a letter dated 1860 addressed to the archaeologist Charles Ernest Beulé he wrote:

Je sais à la vérité que, dans ma carrière scientifique, j’aurais fait deux choses, le Sérapeum et le Musée du Caire, que plusieurs personnes veulent bien regarder comme des services rendus à la Science.

(Letter from A. Mariette to C.E. Beulé, June 25, 1860. Eg. Arch. & Lib., Varille Collection)

Located north-west of the Step Pyramid of Djoser, the Serapeum of Saqqara is a vast complex of underground galleries destined for the burial of the sacred Apis bulls, the animal hypostasis of the god Ptah, which found their final resting place there – at least from the middle of
the Eighteenth Dynasty until the Ptolemaic Period – after a process of mummification and funeral rites worthy of a king.

Following his arrival in Egypt in October 1850, Mariette identified a group of almost identical limestone sphinxes in the gardens belonging to a diplomat in Alexandria, all with the same provenance: Saqqara. Once in Cairo, he found more in the possession of collectors and private individuals. He guessed correctly that they must be part of a single archaeological complex. He found proof of his theory among the sands of Saqqara where one day he discovered the head of a sphinx that was exactly like the ones he had identified previously. Mariette clearly recollected a passage from Strabo referring to a temple of Serapis built in a desert place with a dromos of sphinxes in front of it. Work began, amidst endless problems of budgeting as well as conflicts with the authorities and the powerful art dealers of the period. The great adventure of the discovery of the Serapeum was underway. After identifying the more recent constructions from the Ptolemaic Period and the last centuries of pharaonic Egypt, Mariette proceeded to excavate the underground vaults of the monument, first the “Greater Vaults” for burial of the bulls that died between year 51 of Psamtek I (Twenty-sixth Dynasty) and the end of the Ptolemaic Period, then the “Lesser Vaults” with the tombs of bulls that died between the end of the reign of Ramesses II (Nineteenth Dynasty) and year 20 of Psamtek I, and finally a group of earlier isolated burials, dating from the reign of Amenhotep III (Eighteenth Dynasty) to year 30 of Ramesses II.

The discovery of the Serapeum brought Mariette great renown and from then on he entered into a daring program of excavation and exploration all over Egypt. He started digs everywhere, which obviously meant it was impossible for him to be present at all the discoveries, which were often carried out by workers following his instructions, even when they were of inestimable value. This was what happened in February 1859 at Dra Abu el-Naga – a vast necropolis stretching along the Theban West Bank from Deir el-Bahri to the Valley of the Kings – when various precious objects were found inside a coffin labeled for a “King’s Great Wife” named Ahhotep. Even if today the identification of this queen is much debated – some maintain that she was a wife of Kamose (Seventeenth Dynasty); others say she was the wife of Taa II and mother of Ahmose I, founder of the Eighteenth Dynasty – the importance of the objects found is undeniable. The woman’s mummy was accompanied by a rich assortment of ceremonial weapons, jewelry, amulets, and other objects made of gold and silver, many of them inscribed with the names of Kamose and Ahmose I. Mariette was extremely proud of his discovery, and wrote enthusiastically about it in a letter to his friend Heinrich Brugsch little more than a month later. Underlining the richness of the finds, he compared them to “Ferlini’s Treasure,” one of the first and most spectacular archaeological discoveries made in Nubia about twenty years before and still much talked about in Mariette’s day:

Mon centre d’opérations est à Thèbes. Entre autres belles choses j’y ai trouvé […] la tombe encore inviolée de la reine Aahhotep de la XVIIIe dynastie. Dans cette dernière tombe, j’ai recueilli une cinquantaine de bijoux admirables, tous au nom d’Amosis et d’autres rois de la XVIIIe dynastie. Je crois, contre l’opinion de Lepsius, la reine Aah-hotep mère d’Amosis et épouse d’un certain roi qui s’appelait Kamés. Entre autres curiosités la tombe royale m’a donné une barque en or massif avec douze rameurs en argent, le tout monté sur un char à quatre roues, en argent. Le pilote, le chanteur, et un 3e bonhomme dont j’i-
However, the archaeological site that gave Mariette the most satisfaction of all, even more than the Theban area, was undoubtedly Saqqara. Thanks to the long period spent in the Memphite necropolis during the exploration of the Serapeum, Mariette had developed a deep knowledge of those places and he constantly brought to light monuments and objects that today are among the masterpieces of the most important Egyptian collections in the world, such as those in the Cairo Museum or the Louvre.

Among the tombs discovered by Mariette at Saqqara, that of Hesyra holds a special place. He was an important official of the Third Dynasty – among his many titles we find “overseer of the King's scribes” and “chief of dentists” – who prepared his burial place to the north of the funerary complex of King Djoser, the sovereign in whose service he probably pursued his brilliant career. It was a large mastaba in mud brick, built like a house, consisting of a long corridor with painted decoration on one side representing some of the items of the funerary equipment and geometric motifs, whereas on the opposite wall, there was a series of eleven niches which originally contained acacia wood panels carved in delicate raised relief. Five of the panels were found by Mariette and taken to the Bulaq Museum and a sixth was found by James E. Quibell during his excavations in 1911-12 to the north of the Step Pyramid. It was Quibell who rediscovered the location of Hesyra’s tomb, which had been lost when it was covered with sand to protect it from theft and acts of vandalism, according to what was common practice in Mariette’s time. Quibell resumed the excavations and thanks to his work, we now have a fairly precise idea about the funerary complex and the archaeological context of the discovery of the wooden panels, considered to be among the masterpieces of Egyptian art.

Recently a series of photographic prints has been identified in the Archives of the University of Milan relating to Quibell’s excavation of the tomb. The Quibell Collection in Milan, which mainly concerns his excavations at Saqqara, is apparently the richest in existence. In the reports on Quibell’s excavations, the thousands of objects recovered often appear only in facsimile or in photographs taken after removal from their place of origin. This archival material is therefore an invaluable source of information, which will provide very useful data for studies of the archaeological items themselves or of the context of their provenance. This is the case for the recently identified photographs of the tomb of Hesyra, only a few of which were published by the archaeologist.

There are many other references to Mariette and his activities in the Archives of the University, especially in those that belonged to Victor Loret. Of particular interest is the information relating to Mariette’s explorations in the Valley of the Kings, which emerges from notes made by Loret. These have allowed a better understanding of the excavations conducted by Mariette in the Theban royal necropolis. For a long time there was uncertainty concerning the extent of his explorations in this area but the analysis of the Milanese documents has made it possible to establish that he cleared four tombs in the Valley, now known as KV 26, 27, 28 and 29. These numbers were assigned to the tombs by
Loret while he was Director of the Egyptian Antiquities Service.

Loret arrived in Egypt in January 1881, following his master Gaston Maspero, just before Mariette’s death. The great scholar died on January 18, 1881. A few months later Loret embarked on a journey to Upper Egypt with Maspero, lasting from 22 March to 18 April. This is reported in one of Loret’s diaries kept in Milan (Diary III. Eg. Arch. & Lib., Loret Collection).

Having completed the mission, on his return to Cairo, Loret produced a miscellaneous notebook which is particularly important for the many references to Mariette and his activities. It contains copies of inscriptions and notes most of which concerning monuments brought to light by this archaeologist.

The first dozen pages refer to hieroglyphic texts and scenes from the mastaba of Ti, reproduced by Loret, starting with a series of photographs given to Maspero by Mariette. It is to the latter that we owe the discovery, at Saqqara North, of the tomb belonging to Ti, a very important dignitary who worked for several sovereigns of the Fifth Dynasty. For its size, quality and the choice of subjects of the reliefs adorning its walls, this mastaba is considered one of the most significant of the Memphite necropolis dating from the Old Kingdom.

Other pages in the same notebook refer to another of Mariette’s discoveries, that made at Abydos in February 1860. Here Loret copies the hieroglyphic text of the “Autobiography of Uni,” originally engraved on a block of limestone conserved at the time in the Bulaq Museum. The story of Uni’s brilliant career, who rose to the highest spheres of power at the beginning of the Sixth Dynasty, is one of the most important texts produced during the Old Kingdom.

Other pages of the notebook contain copies of hieroglyphic columns carved on the walls of the pyramid of Pepy I (Sixth Dynasty) at Saqqara South, known today as the “Pyramid Texts.” These are a kind of funerary anthology, present in the inner chambers of the pyramids of some kings and queens of the third millennium BCE, starting with that of Unas, the last ruler of the Fifth Dynasty, which mainly addresses the theme of departure from the earthly life and the subsequent ascent of the king (or queen) into the afterlife. Loret specifies that he worked from a copy by Urbain Bouriant made from paper squeezes by Mariette.

Bouriant, along with Loret, was among the first members of the École française du Caire and he often collaborated with Maspero. The paper squeezes available to Bouriant, made by the afore-mentioned Heinrich Brugsch and his brother Émile, while they were working for Mariette at Saqqara, gave rise to a long debate on the existence of inscribed pyramids. Mariette, despite documentation presented to him by his assistants, remained unconvinced and insisted that what was to be seen in the pyramid of Pepy I was nothing but a mastaba from the Old Kingdom that had belonged to a private individual named Pepy-pen.

Until shortly before his death, Mariette remained faithful to one of his strongest convictions, namely, that the pyramids were “mute” monuments. When a second inscribed pyramid was discovered – that of Merenra, Pepy I’s successor – Mariette was forced to reconsider his position and with extreme reluctance, by now on his deathbed, he uttered the famous sentence, “Il y a donc, malgré tout, des pyramides écrites, je ne l’aurais jamais cru!” This marked the beginning of the study and systematic publication of the “Pyramid Texts,” which are a highly important testimony of one of the earliest forms of religious thought in
et cie. Cette inscri. est en ce moment analysée
et publiée par M. Maspero.
the ancient world ever recorded in writing. Maspero’s contribution to this field of study remains fundamental.

The “First Royal Cache”

Following Mariette’s death, Maspero became Director of the Egyptian Antiquities Service, a position which he held until 1886. For Egyptology this was a period of important explorations, studies, and discoveries. One of the most extraordinary of these, for the richness of the finds and their significance for historical and scientific research, was undoubtedly that of the Deir el-Bahri cache, also known as the “first royal cache.”

The story of the discovery has been told many times and it has all the elements of a crime novel. A family of robbers – the Abd el-Rassul family, residing in the village of Qurna – accidentally discovered a tomb full of rich “booty,” ancient artefacts that started to appear on the antiquities market, often bearing the names of kings whose burial places were unknown. An inquiry was opened, followed by arrests, tortures, and releases, until the suspects finally confessed and the officials of the Service were able to “solve the case.” It was July 1881.

The place where the artefacts came from was identified as a tomb, now known as DB or TT 320, accessible via a shaft concealed in a ravine in the circus of the Deir el-Bahri cliffs on the Theban West Bank.

At the time of the discovery Maspero was in France and it was Émile Brugsch, assistant at the Bulaq Museum, who acted in his place, helped by Ahmed Kamal, the first Egyptian Egyptologist. Once they had penetrated the long shaft, Brugsch found himself face to face with a breathtaking spectacle. The tomb was full of coffins and other items coming from different burial equipments. The names that could be read on the coffins were enough to understand from the beginning that this was a unique moment. They were the names of some of the most important kings of ancient Egypt such as Thutmose III, Sety I, and Ramesses II.

Fearing that news of the discovery would spread rapidly among the local people, Brugsch decided to clear the tomb as quickly as possible, employing an impressive workforce of 150 or perhaps 300 men. In just two days, over five thousand objects were removed though many suffered damage because of the speed of the operation and the difficulty of getting them out of the tomb. This applied particularly to the coffins, on account of their bulky dimensions.

Although this was one of the most outstanding archaeological discoveries made in Egypt, it left later scholars with much to regret, for example, the absence of any direct documentation relating to the various stages of the tomb clearance – this may have been lost but more likely it was never written – and the dispersal of the materials brought to light. Many objects, including some coffins, ended up in the sale room of the Museum and others were given by the Egyptian government to their allies. Furthermore, it is highly probable that much of the material plundered by the el-Rassul brothers, before they revealed the existence of the tomb, has never been identified or recovered. It is thought that the robbers had known about the cache since 1874. Without a detailed inventory of the objects or plans indicating their original position at the time of the discovery, it remains extremely difficult for present Egyptologists to reconstruct the tomb’s contents.

Yet irrespective of the way operations were conducted, the importance of the discovery at Deir el-Bahri is unquestionable. The cor-
rect interpretation of the cache has long been the subject of debate. Today, however, thanks to explorations carried out by a German-Russian team who, among their many merits, produced the first correct map of the tomb, the situation has become clearer. TT 320 appears to be a tomb originally prepared for the family of the High Priest of Amun Pinudjem II, of the Twenty-first Dynasty, into which the royal mummies had been introduced during the reign of Sheshonq I of the Twenty-second Dynasty. At the time of the discovery, coffins with the bodies of Pinudjem II and members of his family occupied the burial chamber at the end of the tomb, while intrusive coffins were mostly crammed into the corridors.

The mummies of these illustrious personages were probably laid in the tomb on a single occasion by priests or officials of the Twenty-second Dynasty to save them from certain destruction. Beforehand, the bodies, or often the remains, had been recomposed, placed in new or replacement coffins if the original ones had been destroyed, then moved to tombs that were difficult for robbers to reach, and finally transferred to their final resting place, the cache at Deir el-Bahri. It has recently been suggested that it was these “pious” officials who may have removed precious materials still left on the mummies or inside their tombs after pillaging by robbers.

The documentation in Milan relating to the “first royal cache” is mainly in the form of photographs, mostly showing the mummies and the various artefacts brought out of the tomb. Many of these photographs are now difficult to find on the antiquarian market and some seem to be unique shots.

Among the Egyptologists whose archives are preserved in Milan, Victor Loret was the one most closely associated to the exciting discovery of the Deir el-Bahri cache. As already mentioned, when only in his early twenties, Loret took part in the first journey of inspection undertaken by the new Director, Maspero, along the Nile in March-April 1881. The aim of this journey was not only to visit the main archaeological sites of Upper Egypt, it had another specific purpose. The facts are summarized in a few lines by Eugène Lefèbure who at the time was Director of the École française du Caire:

M. Maspero dont l’attention était éveillée par un certain nombre d’objets funéraires mis en vente, soupçonnait les Arabes d’avoir fait main basse sur un tombeau qu’on jugeait être celui du roi Pinedjem, d’après quelques indices. Lors de son premier voyage dans la Haute-Égypte, en mars et avril 1881, il fit saisi et emprisonner un des délinquants, afin d’obtenir quelques révélations, et se livra en outre à des recherches qui, pour le moment, restèrent infructueuses.


From one of Loret’s diaries preserved in Milan (Diary III, Eg. Arch. & Lib., Loret Collection), it is known that he was in Luxor when Ahmed el-Rassul, chief suspect in the trafficking of antiquities from what at the time was not yet known to be the “Deir el Bahri cache,” was imprisoned and interrogated in vain on Maspero’s orders. Though not actually present when Brugsch proceeded to clear the tomb, Loret was one of the first to view the objects brought to light when they reached the Museum in Cairo. As a member of the École française du Caire, he assisted Brugsch in preparing the preliminary report to be submitted to Maspero to inform him of the contents of the cache.
Ironically, it was Loret who in 1898, nearly twenty years after these events, discovered a second cache containing royal mummies: the tomb of Amenhotep II.

The Cache of the Priests of Amun and the Treasures of Dahshur
In 1886, after Maspero’s return to France, Eugène Grébaut became head of the Egyptian Antiquities Service. This Egyptologist, one of the first pupils of Mariette’s successor, was not well remembered either as a person or as an administrator. However, it was during his mandate that a particularly important discovery was made at Deir el-Bahri, to the north of the lower court of Hatshepsut’s temple. In 1891 a tomb was identified, accessible through a shaft and used as a cache like the one discovered ten years previously, again at Deir el-Bahri. Unlike this one, however, the cache identified by Grébaut did not contain royal mummies; it was intended to receive the bodies of the Twenty-first Dynasty Amun priests, taken there from their original burial places together with some objects from their funerary equipment. Later dubbed “Bab el-Gasus” (Gate of the Priests) or the “second find of Deir el-Bahri,” the tomb was found to contain 153 sets of anthropoid coffins, over one hundred shabti-boxes, thousands of shabtis, some stelae, wooden statues, papyrus, sets of canopic boxes, and many other materials.

In 1892, Jacques de Morgan was appointed Director of the Service, replacing Grébaut, who was forced to resign following numerous complaints from both political and diplomatic quarters as well as from scholars. De Morgan had no experience in the field of Egyptology. Although in the three years prior to his arrival in Egypt, he had been head of a scientific mission in Persia on behalf of France. As he had been trained as an engineer at the École des Mines, he was more prepared for geology than for archaeology. His appointment was primarily a political compromise at a particularly sensitive moment when Britain was strongly exerting her influence, in the hope of taking over the direction of the Service.

The choice of de Morgan, at least initially seemed to be a happy one. He was warmly welcomed on his arrival in Cairo and he enjoyed good relations with both the French and the British communities. He also dealt with many of the administrative aspects neglected by his predecessor.

He launched a series of ambitious projects, some of which he did not have time to complete, however. One of these, in which he involved the entire workforce of the Mission permanente du Caire, consisted of a systematic archaeological survey of the Nile Valley, with the aim of producing a catalog of all the ancient monuments and inscriptions visible in Egypt at the time. He undertook a journey along the Nile and worked assiduously for several weeks, concentrating mainly on the epigraphic and architectural features of the temple of Kom Ombo. Unfortunately his successors did not continue the work, at least not in the way that de Morgan had conceived it.

He undertook numerous excavations, such as that at Saqqara where he discovered the famous mastabas of Mereruka and Kagemni, dating from the Sixth Dynasty, but most importantly he was one of the first scholars, along with Flinders Petrie and Émile Amélineau, to draw attention to the prehistory of Egypt and the Near East and to the old issue of the origins of the Egyptian civilization. In this regard, his discoveries at Naqada, in Upper Egypt, were of extreme importance. These included a great mastaba – the so called “Royal Tomb” dating from the...
very beginning of the First Dynasty.

However, the name of de Morgan is linked to Egyptian archaeology mainly for the excavations that he carried out between 1894 and 1895 at Dahshur, near three pyramids from the Middle Kingdom belonging to three kings of the Twelfth Dynasty: Amenemhat II, Senusret III, and Amenemhat III. Although the pyramids – which before de Morgan’s excavations had not been attributed with certainty to any specific rulers – had already been completely plundered, by excavating the surrounding tombs the archaeologist brought to light some of the finest treasures of ancient Egypt.

During his first season of excavations, de Morgan identified a subterranean gallery of graves for royal ladies in the north-eastern corner of the enclosure of the pyramid of Senusret III. It is reached through a shaft leading to a long gallery that gives access to four small pyramids at an upper level, while at a lower level, it leads to another gallery with eight niches containing sarcophagi. Here the archaeologist discovered the burials and a hoard of magnificent jewelry belonging to Sithathor and Mereret, probably both daughters of Senusret III.

Between 1894 and 1895, de Morgan discovered a series of burials to the west of the pyramid of Amenemhat II within its enclosure wall. Those belonging to the daughters of Amenemhat II, Ita and Khnumit – the latter perhaps wife of Senusret II – were found intact and contained a wealth of amazing funerary objects.

Also the excavations near the pyramid of Amenemhat III led to lucky finds. Indeed, de Morgan not only identified the pyramidion, now on display at the Cairo Museum, but he also discovered twelve funerary shafts on the north side of the outer enclosure. In one of these, he found the almost intact burial of King Hor (Awibra) of the Thirteenth Dynasty – famous for the wooden statue representing his ka inside a shrine – revealing the earliest hint of what once lay within a royal tomb of that period. Another remarkable discovery was that of the intact burial of the princess Nubhoteptikhered, perhaps a daughter of King Hor (Awibra).

The Archives of the University contain a series of letters that testify to a close epistolary relationship between de Morgan and Victor Loret. These are mostly letters written to accompany de Morgan’s shipments of various kinds of substances, such as resins, perfumes, and organic residues from his excavations in Egypt. Loret was particularly interested in these materials because they were associated with the natural sciences, one of his main fields of research. Some lists bearing the name of the samples received by Loret and their exact provenance are preserved in Milan.

We are grateful to Laure Pantalacci who enabled us to identify the significance of these lists. She is currently carrying out a concordance study with the materials kept in the antiquities collection of the University of Lyons acquired through Loret.

De Morgan, in his letters, often gives a very precise description of the context in which the samples were discovered – most of them coming from the excavations at Dahshur – thus providing Loret with useful clues as to their identification:

Cette fois je vous adresse un petit lot d’échantillons qui je le pense vous fera plus de plaisir encore que mes précédents envois. Il s’agit des neuf substances que renfermait la caisse à parfums de la princesse Noub Hotep, de la XIIe dynastie. J’y joins 2 échantillons de poussières renfermées dans des vases bouchés d’un mastaba de la XIIe. Les parfums de 1 à 9 étaient étiquetés en hiéra-

(Letter from J. de Morgan to V. Loret, May 12, 1894. Eg. Arch. & Lib., Loret Collection)

or again:

Je vous envoie une substance de la XIIe dyn. trouvée dans un vase d'albâtre dans une caisse, au sud de la pyramide du nord de Dahchour. La bouteille contient tout ce que j’ai trouvé de cette substance. Aucun nom n’était marqué sur le vase. L'albâtre semble avoir été attaqué par la drogue. Il est résulté de cette altération la poudre blanche qui accompagne la résine noircière.

(Letter from J. de Morgan to V. Loret, June 1, 1894. Eg. Arch. & Lib., Loret Collection)

For his planned publication on the excavations at Dahshur de Morgan asked Loret to write a chapter on the perfumes and organic materials discovered during the 1894 campaign, describing him as “le grand maître en pareille matière.” Illustrating his plan for the work, he wrote to Loret as follows:

Je prépare en ce moment un volume sur mes fouilles de cette année à Dahchour. Je suis aidé dans ce travail par MM. Le grain et Jéquier de la mission française. Nous avons déjà environ 400 dessins faits par M. Le grain et par moi même. Les inscriptions par M. Jéquier qui fera le chapitre historique, M. Berthelot me donne les analyses des métaux et le Dr Fouquet fait l’étude anthropologique. Comme vous le voyez ce sera un travail très complet dans lequel chacun de mes collaborateurs signera les œuvres. Ce volume sera terminé pour le 1er Juillet, à moins de découvertes considérables avant cette époque. Je compte le mettre sous presse dès Juillet à Vienne et l’avoir vers le mois de Novembre – tous les bijoux seront figurés en couleurs. Voulez vous me donner un chapitre sur les substances que je vous envoie, ou simplement une note pour chacune des substances?

(Letter from J. de Morgan to V. Loret, May 12, 1894. Eg. Arch. & Lib., Loret Collection)

Loret’s reply, though not among the documents in Milan, must have been in the affirmative, for he wrote a joint contribution with a colleague from the University of Lyons, Albert Florence, in his typical severe style, rich in philological references (“Le collyre noir et le collyre vert du tombeau de la princesse Noûbhotep”, in J. DE MORGAN, Fouilles à Dahchour en mars-juin 1894, Vienne 1895, pp. 153-164). De Morgan’s publications on his excavations at Dahshur (Fouilles à Dahchour en mars-juin 1894, Vienne 1895 and Fouilles à Dahchour 1894-1895, Vienne 1905) are considered exceptional for the age in which they were written, both for the refinement and quality of the iconography and for the speed with which they appeared.

De Morgan and Loret addressed other issues in their correspondence. One of the oldest letters is dated at the beginning of 1894: it is de Morgan’s reply to Loret about the necessary procedures for obtaining antiquities from Egypt with the aim of increasing the collection in Lyons, the city where Loret held the Chair of Egyptology at the time. De Morgan put forward various proposals in addition to purchase, including that of an exchange to be effected through Egyptological publications – with a view to building up the library of the Museum, which was then located in the palace of Ismail Pasha at Giza – and the possibility of conducting excavations in Egypt, either personally or through the Service, with a partage of the objects found:

J’ai inauguré un système de fouilles qui nous rend de grands services. J’autorise les amateurs à fouiller eux-mêmes sous la surveillance d’un de mes employés payé aux frais du fouilleur à raison de 5f= par jour. Tous les objets sont
Dahchour 16.94.

Cher Monsieur,

Je vous envoyais une substance de la XXIe dyn. Trouvée dans un vase d'allabah dans une couve, au sud de la pyramide du Nofra de Dahchour. La bouteille contenait une Caque qui, lors de cette substance. Aucun nom n'était marqué sur le vase. L'allabah semble avoir été attaqué par la caque, il est évident que cette attaque la foudre Blanche qui accompagnait la résine minéraux.

Je pense que vous avez reçu les échantillons des parfums de la princesse Noub-Hotep. Je vous ai adressé la recette à pour père de Caque en formant la Vacre.

Croquez bien chez l'ecoutini, à l'attente d'une réponse

J. de Morgan.
Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte

Bâcheaux le 29 mars 1825.

Cher Monsieur,

Cette fois j'ai voulu envoyer un peu de terre, de vos sarcophages dans la cafétéria. 30 fleurs provenant des parfums d'île, de 4 princesses, plus quelques offrandes. Une bouteille contenant du liquide trouvé dans un vase égyptien dans la galerie des princesses de l'Égypte. De plus, il y a une boîte d'une adresse envoyée d'Alexandrie, par Darby et Contemoue des leb de dessert à la préparation de vos monnaies. Ces leb étaient dans un magasin.

Je vais que le temps de vous annoncer mon secrét.

J'ai été à Notre Dame de vous envoyer. Quoique compliqué du Val de Bâcheaux que nous avons eu du/envoi.

Quoique bien. Cher Monsieur, à vous sentiments bien cordialement.

J. M. Morgan
apportés à Gizeh aux frais du fouilleur et partagés. Je ne me montre pas très difficile dans le partage et avec les amateurs je le suis bien moins qu'avec les marchants, bien entendu.
Si donc vous connaissez quelqu'un qui puisse se livrer à une fouille pour vous ce sera encore un moyen de vous procurer pour votre musée bon nombre d'objets. Si même vous le désirez la fouille peut être faite par un de mes employés à vos frais les conditions resteront les mêmes et il ne sera pas besoin d'envoyer spécialement à grands frais quelqu'un de votre part. Voilà une combinaison qui joignée à des échanges de livres peut vous permettre d'acquérir à peu de frais une intéressante collection pour votre musée.
(Letter from J. de Morgan to V. Loret, February 8, 1894. Eg. Arch. & Lib., Loret Collection)

Despite his administrative and scientific successes – both the excavations and the publications resulting from them – in the last few years of his mandate, de Morgan incurred hostility both at the political level and among his colleagues in the Service. He also lost the support he had originally had from Maspero and it was one of Maspero’s students, Victor Loret, who was called upon to take de Morgan's place. He held the position from 1897 to 1899.

The “Second Royal Cache” and Tutankhamun’s Family Tree
At the end of the nineteenth century, despite the discovery of the “royal cache” at Deir el-Bahri, many New Kingdom pharaohs’ bodies remained unaccounted for. Since the number of known or explored tombs in the Valley of the Kings was considerable, it was not unreasonable to suppose that another site had been chosen in which to place and preserve the bodies, or the remains, of other sovereigns, and that these had been removed from their original burial grounds following the systematic plundering of the Theban royal necropolis towards the end of the New Kingdom.

Victor Loret, who became Director of the Egyptian Antiquities Service in 1897, was responsible for the discovery of a second “royal cache” during the first of the two excavation campaigns that he conducted in the Valley of the Kings in 1898-99. As has been pointed out many times, unlike the Deir el-Bahri cache, this was in every sense a “royal” cache. It was not only the final resting place of numerous royal mummies but also the tomb of a king, Amenhotep II. The sepulcher (KV 35) was discovered by Loret in 1898, shortly after the discovery of that of Thutmose III (KV 34), father of Amenhotep II. The very valuable documentation relating to these discoveries has been in the Archives in Milan for some years now and it has been the subject of many studies and publications.

We confine ourselves here to mentioning briefly that Amenhotep II’s tomb contained fourteen mummies, most of which certainly belonged to pharaohs, including Amenhotep II. The mummy of the king was found lying in an anthropoid cartonnage coffin placed inside a quartzite sarcophagus. The coffin was not the one originally intended for the king, but it was a replacement coffin used by priests or officials of the necropolis, who, at the beginning of the Third Intermediate Period, recomposed the king’s remains and replaced them inside the sarcophagus from which they had been removed and desecrated by thieves. Another nine mummies were found in one of the four rooms adjoining the burial chamber, namely, the second room on the right of its entrance. This room, which has been known since its discovery as the “pièce IV” (annexe 4), was sealed by a wall which was incomplete at the top right-hand side. This allowed Loret to take a look inside when
Fouille d'Amenophis III, Pièce IV

Momie n° 1 (Thoutmô 11°)

Case en couleurs apparentes. Long. 4.92, larg. 4.7, haut. 40.
Cuir, légèrement peint en noirc dans un rectangle brun.

Momie n° 2 (Amenophis III)

Case en couleurs apparentes. Long. 4.92, larg. 3.7, haut. 36.
Bois noir avec cercueil de terre et de bois. Tête noire, yeux noirs, bandes, poir, barbe, ongles de couleur, dans la tête, dessus de champ de cornes.


Momie n° 3 (Mentou IV)

Case en couleurs apparentes. Long. 4.92, larg. 3.7, haut. 36.
Bois noir avec cercueil de terre et de bois. Tête noire, yeux noirs, bandes.

the tomb was first explored on 9 March 1898. When he entered the small room he found nine coffins, some with their lids and some without, arranged in two rows, six at the back and three in front. The coffins contained nine mummies. They were those of Amenhotep III and Thutmose IV, sovereigns of the Eighteenth Dynasty, Merenptah, Sety II, and Siptah, sovereigns of the Nineteenth Dynasty and Ramesses IV, Ramesses V, and Ramesses VI, sovereigns of the Twentieth Dynasty, whereas the ninth body belonged to a still unknown woman.

Like the TT 320 at Deir el-Bahri, the tomb of Amenhotep II was chosen as the cache in which to lay these royal remains – after an odyssey of successive transfers from other sepulchers in the Valley of the Kings – probably because it was considered to be a very safe place, or at least safer than other places. The fact that the body of Amenhotep II, the only body prior to the discovery of that of Tutankhamun, was found in his own tomb lends weight to this hypothesis. Moreover, the quantity of objects brought to light by Loret – which is very impressive compared with other royal tombs in the Valley – would appear to confirm the status of insula felix which this sepulcher enjoyed.

As previously mentioned, the nine bodies and that of Amenhotep II were not the only ones that Loret found in the tomb. He also discovered a mummy known as the “mummy on the boat,” on account of its being found inside a model boat in the antechamber of the sepulcher, and it is thought by some to be that of the pharaoh Sethnakht of the Twentieth Dynasty. There were three more bodies, two of which recently hit the headlines after being identified as the grandmother and mother of the famous Tutankhamun.

When, on March 23, 1898, Loret began to explore the first room adjoining the funerary chamber to the right of its entrance, the so-called “pièce I” (annexe 1), on one side of the room he found a collection of miscellaneous objects and on the left side three mummies that had been laid side by side on the floor. The three bodies, without coffins and partially unwrapped, were those of a young man and two women. Grafton Elliot Smith, the Australian anatomist who was the first to examine the mummies, named the older woman the “Elder Lady” to distinguish her from the other woman, known as the “Younger Lady.” The fact that the three mummies share some common characteristics, such as the same type of mummification, suggests that they were all placed in Amenhotep II’s tomb on the same occasion, probably after being removed from another burial place in the Valley of the Kings in an attempt to preserve them.

As in the case of “pièce IV,” although it has been possible to identify most of the objects in “pièce I” reported by Loret in his excavation journal with those registered in the Journal d’Entrée of the Cairo Museum, none of them can be linked with certainty to the bodies found. The same is true of the small quantity of material found beneath the mummies when they were removed from the room.

Long speculation ensued about the identity of these three bodies; then in February 2010, many of the mysteries surrounding the two female mummies were cleared up, as mentioned above. This was possible thanks to the publication of the results of an important study carried out over two years under the aegis of the Supreme Council of Antiquities: the Family of King Tutankhamun Project (FKTP). Radiological and genetic analyses were performed on ten mummies thought to be related to Tutankhamun; five other presumed royal mummies from an earlier period were used as the control group. The mummies, some
1. Os sain do 
2. Plaque royale 
3. Franges 
4. Scellé (appuie au mur) 
5. Vers le haut, face, bon chevelure, couler de l'eau dans la fosse 
6. Bon pour blond 
7. Peau était amollie (ou ancr. ) très blanche

N°5.

Tout le reste surmonté de bon chevelure, de chiffons années en

2. Franges, cheveux, cheveux, et le cou de la fosse de la saum 
3. Franches, blanc, mélange de marine ;
4. Très port-blanc

5. Très bleu glosé.
6. Cuir voire (ou peut être)

7. Très bon
8. Très bien
9. Très bien
10. Pile en velours, de poing à
11. Très bien
12. Très bien
13. Très bien
14. Très bien
15. Très bien
16. Très bien
17. Très bien
18. Très bien
19. Très bien
20. Très bien
21. Très bien
22. Très bien
23. Très bien
24. Très bien
25. Très bien
26. Très bien
27. Très bien
28. Très bien
from the Valley of Kings, others from the “royal cache” of Deir el-Bahri, were mostly anonymous and only a few of them were identified with certainty through archaeological evidence. The aim of the project was “to introduce a new approach to molecular and medical Egyptology, to determine familial relationships among eleven royal mummies of the New Kingdom, and to search for pathological features attributable to possible murder, consanguinity, inherited disorders, and infectious diseases” (see Chapter I). Three mummies found by Loret in the tomb of Amenhotep II were also included in the project, namely the “Elder Lady” and the “Younger Lady” from the “pièce I” and that of Amenhotep III, found in the “pièce IV.”

From this study it was possible to establish that the “Elder Lady” had died at the age of about fifty and that she was genetically related to Tutankhamun – his grandmother, to be precise. The analyses showed that she was the daughter of Yuya and Thuyu and that she and Amenhotep III were the parents of the owner of a male mummy found in 1907 in the tomb KV 55 and of the “Younger Lady.” These last two were siblings – with the same mother and the same father – and the parents of Tutankhamun.

In view of these results it appears certain that the “Elder Lady” must be Queen Tiye. Indeed, according to archaeological sources, it is known that Tiye was the daughter of Yuya and Thuyu, wife of Amenhotep III and mother of Akhenaten, very probably the male body found in KV 55. As far as is known, no other person could have been at the same time daughter of Yuya and Thuyu and grandmother of Tutankhamun by two children she had with Amenhotep III.

It should be noted that before the publication of the FKTP results Tiye was already one of the favorite candidates for the “Elder Lady.” This possible identification was based on an analysis of her hair, showing it to be practically identical to that found in a miniature coffin inscribed for the queen and placed in the tomb of Tutankhamun.

It should, however, be remembered that it is not scientifically possible to establish with certainty the identity of either the KV 55 mummy or that of the “Younger Lady,” and there are even some doubts about the mummy of Amenhotep III (CG 61074) – for which the ancient identification has been accepted but without performing any DNA tests on the mummies thought to belong to Thutmose IV, father of Amenhotep III, or on Amenhotep II, his grandfather.

The case of the identification of the “Younger Lady,” a woman who died at the age of twenty-five to thirty-five and the genetic mother of Tutankhamun, as stated previously, is much more complex and it is difficult to find an answer. Even if the equation “Elder Lady” = Tiye and the mummy CG 61074 = Amenhotep III, the number of possible candidates is high. She could be any of the five – or four – daughters of the couple whose names are known.

So one of the unsolved mysteries of Tutankhamun remains the identity of his mother. Certainly, in the light of these results, it is highly unlikely that she is Nefertiti. Apart from her age at the time of death, which is too early, there is no text claiming the title of “King's daughter” or “King's sister” for Nefertiti. The same applies to Kiya, the secondary wife of Akhenaten, and the theory that she could have been the mother of Tutankhamun, long sustained by many scholars, now seems scarcely plausible.

Unfortunately, the mummy of the young man found lying in Amenhotep II’s tomb between the “Younger Lady” and the “Elder Lady”
was not included in the FKTP project. Loret thought he was Ubensenu, a son of Amenhotep II, because some objects from his funerary equipment were found in the tomb. More recently it has been suggested that he could be Prince Thutmose, eldest son of Amenhotep III and Tiye, who died prematurely. As no genetic analyses were performed on the young man’s body, it is impossible at present to determine what relation he was to the “Younger Lady” and the “Elder Lady,” their close association lends support to the Prince Thutmose theory.

Below is a hypothetically family tree showing the relationship between Tutankhamun and the three mummies found by Loret in the tomb of Amenhotep II included in the FKTP project: The “Elder Lady.” Nevertheless the mummy CG 61074 and the “Younger Lady.”

Yuya + Thuyu
|                  |
“Elder Lady”       CG 61074
|                  |
( = Tiye) + ( = Amenhotep)
|                  |
________________________
|                  |
male body from KV 55
|                  |
( = Akhenaten?) + “Younger Lady”
|                  |
Tutankhamun

Without realizing it, Loret had discovered some important members of Tutankhamun’s family: his two grandparents – at the same time paternal and maternal – and his mother. The vicissitudes that followed Loret’s remarkable discovery are well known. On government orders he was forced to leave the mummies inside the tomb. It was argued that the act of moving the mummies from the tomb in order to put them on display in Cairo Museum was a kind of “sacrilegious desecration.” It is more likely, however, that this was simply a pretext aimed at thwarting Loret’s activities. He did not have a good reputation either in the higher echelons of power or among some of his colleagues. Loret was therefore forced to take the mummies – already packed and loaded onto the dahabiya of the Service – back to the tomb. He was concerned – quite rightly, as subsequent events revealed – about the exposure of the mummies to theft and vandalism.

After a second season of excavations in the Valley of the Kings, crowned by a number of important discoveries such as that of the almost intact tomb of Maiherperi (KV 36) and a sepulcher probably prepared as the first burial of Thutmose I (KV 38), Loret resigned his post as Director in 1899. Maspero was recalled to Cairo to take over the position, which he held until 1914.

It was Maspero who, soon after starting his second term of office, decided to transfer the nine mummies found in the “pièce IV” to Cairo and to leave in the tomb the mummy of Amenhotep II, the “mummy on the boat” and the three bodies found in “pièce I.”

The Archives in Milan contain a series of very rare photographic prints belonging to the Lacau Collection documenting some of the most important stages in the transportation of the mummies from the tomb of Amenhotep II to the dahabiya of the Egyptian Antiquities Service which was to take them to Cairo. It is moving to look at these prints while reading Maspero’s account of that day, January 12, 1900 (G. Ma-
SPERO, “La mise en route des momies royales”, in Io., Ruines et Paysages d’Égypte, Paris 1910, pp. 110-117). Gestures, facial expressions and glances of the workmen as well as details of the landscape are immortalized in the photographs and brought to life through Maspero’s words, so that we, the onlookers, almost feel that we were actually present at the event.

The undertaking, which for security reasons had to be completed in a single day, involved the employment of at least one hundred men who were assigned to widely varying tasks. The route was very long, about nine km, and it took at least eight men to carry each coffin. Undeterred, Maspero decided to enlist “strongmen” from the nearby Karnak site, placed at his disposal by Georges Legrain. It was an ideal solution because these were “gens exercés à manier des blocs de grès plus lourds que le plus lourd de nos rois.” At nine o’clock in the morning, under the astonished gaze of a group of tourists who knew nothing of the spectacle they were about to witness, the workmen arrived from Karnak. Fully equipped, they aligned themselves to await orders from Maspero, filling the space between the tomb of Ramesses VI and that of Amenhotep II.

Les hommes, pour qui cette expédition si différente de leurs corvées ordinaires est une sorte de promenade récréative, sont demeurés en groupes au voisinage des civières. Les uns mangent ou boivent, d’autres dorment au soleil en prévision de la fatigue prochaine, d’autres chantonnent ou se racontent des histoires, plusieurs supputent la valeur des Pharaons et ils n’imagine pas assez de milliers de guinées pour la chiffrer : des éclats de querelles et des rires s’échappent parfois de leurs rangs, aussitôt réprimés par les contremaîtres. Quelques éperviers, étonnés au bruit, tournoient au-dessus de la multitude en poussant des cris aigus.

The young Howard Carter, twenty years before making the most famous discovery in the history of Egyptian archaeology, directed operations inside the tomb of Amenhotep II. He indicated the order in which the coffins were to be taken out and checked that they suffered no damage. As the first mummy came out, Maspero prosaically recounts “elle refait en sens inverse son chemin d’autrefois, des ténèbres à la lumière, de l’Amentít brumeuse à la terre du Soleil.” Within two hours, all the nine coffins left behind by Loret had been removed and, after tidying up the tomb, Maspero and Carter also left. The long procession towards the Nile, which so reminded Maspero of a funeral cortège in the Valley at the time of the ancient Egyptians, was ready to set forth.

**The “Karnak Cachette”**

In 1903, during Maspero’s second term as Director of the Egyptian Antiquities Service, an extraordinary discovery was made at Karnak by Georges Legrain. He had arrived in Egypt in 1892 as a member of the Mission archéologique française au Caire; in 1895 he was appointed by the then Director of the Service, de Morgan, to supervise all the works at Karnak. Legrain held this position for over twenty years, working assiduously until his death in 1917. One of his many merits was the excavation of the Avenue of the Sphinxes leading to the Great Temple and the restoration of its Second Pylon. He also repositioned, one by one, the eleven columns of the hypostyle hall that had collapsed after an earthquake in October 1899.

The important discovery made by Legrain mentioned above oc-
curred almost by accident as a result of works being carried out in the
north-west section of the courtyard in front of the Seventh Pylon of Kar-
nak Great Temple. Under a large stele inscribed with the name of Sety I,
the second pharaoh of the Nineteenth Dynasty, three colossal statues we-
re found, underneath these more statues were uncovered and then mo-
re again, a real “pêche aux statues”, in Maspero’s words. The definition
is appropriate, for as work progressed, Legrain’s workmen had to de-
scend further and further into a sandy, muddy pit, reaching a depth of
several meters. However, because of water increasingly infiltrated, after
a few years Legrain was forced to give up the search. The operation
must have been impressive, judging from contemporary accounts and
photographs, partly for the difficulties involved in recovering the ob-
jects and also for the quantity of items unearthed:

Statues intactes et fragments de statues, bustes, troncs mutilés, corps sans tête,
têtes sans corps, bases sur lesquelles il n’y a plus que des cassures de pieds,
Pharaons trônant, prêtresses d’Amon et particuliers tenant devant
eux des naos ou des images de divinités, accroupis, agenouillés, assis, saisis
dans toutes les attitudes de leur profession ou de leur rang, en calcaire, en gra-
nit noir ou rose, en grès jaune ou rouge, en brèche verte, en schiste, en albâ-
tre, c’est un peuple complet qui remonte à la lumière et qui vient réclamer un
abri aux galeries de notre musée.

(G. MASPERO, “La pêche aux statues dans le temple de Karnak”, in I D., Ruines et Paysages
de l’Egypte, Paris 1910, pp. 162-175)

The result is astonishing. It has been calculated that seven hun-
dred statues, seventeen thousand bronzes and innumerable votive ob-
jects were brought to light. The dates of the artefacts range from the
Old Kingdom to the Ptolemaic Period. Nevertheless, some periods,
 especially more recent ones – albeit with some breaks – are better do-
cumented than others. This is due to several factors in part linked to
the more or less important role occupied by the city of Thebes through
the centuries.

A long-debated question among scholars is what made the an-
cient Egyptians put together and bury such a large number of items in
the same place. Today it is thought that the operation took place on a
single occasion during the Ptolemaic Period, because none of the ob-
jects found appears to be dated later than the first century BCE. The lar-
ge cavity discovered beneath the floor of the courtyard of the Karnak
Great Temple could have had no other function than that of a sort of
“favissa,” an underground treasury. When the quantity of statues depo-
sited by visitors in the temple and the number of votive and ritual ob-
jects became excessive, the priests would move them en masse to a pit
dug specially for the purpose.

Unfortunately for Egyptology, no excavation journals written by
Legrain at the time of the discovery survive. Reconstructing a record of
all the finds brought to light is a daunting task, partly because over ti-
me they have been dispersed to different collections. Nevertheless, for
some years an attempt to remedy the matter has been under way,
thanks to an ambitious project by the Institut français d’archéologie
orientale in Cairo in collaboration with the Supreme Council of Anti-
quities, involving the creation of a database aimed to collect as much
data as possible for each object found during Legrain’s excavations
(www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/cachette/about).

The Archives of Bernard V. Bothmer in Milan contain a large
quantity of documents relating to numerous statues from what was re-
named the “Karnak Cachette.” The reason why this documentation

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G. Legrain (1865-1917). Photograph, 1894 (?).
Eg. Arch. & Lib., Lacau Collection

Facing page:
Workmen waiting in the Valley of the Kings before
carrying to a boat on the Nile the mummies found
by V. Loret in “annexe 4” of the tomb of Amenhotep II
(KV 35), according to the decision taken by G. Maspero
to send them to Cairo. Maspero can be seen in the
background. Photograph, January 12, 1900.
Eg. Arch. & Lib., Lacau Collection

Following pages:
P. Lacau and G. Legrain standing near the statue
of Senefebra Semusert IV, coming from G. Legrain’s
excavations in front of the Seventh Pylon
of the Great Temple at Karnak (Cairo CG 42026).
Photograph, beginning of 1902.
Eg. Arch. & Lib., Lacau Collection

Late Period statues from G. Legrain’s excavations
in 1904 and 1905 of the “Karnak Cachette”
(top to bottom, left to right: Cairo JE 36733, 36969,
37435, 37884 & 38002, 38006). Photographs.
Eg. Arch. & Lib., Bothmer Collection
Bothmer put together the most complete corpus of statues of the Late Period. Since many of the statues of this period came from Legrain's excavations at the “Karnak Cachette,” the materials preserved in Bothmer's Archives are particularly valuable as a source of study.

The Tomb of Tutankhamun

During his second term of office, Maspero proceeded to reorganize the Service, creating, among other things, the positions of Inspector of Upper Egypt and Inspector of Lower Egypt.

The first to take on the job as Inspector of Upper Egypt was Howard Carter. In this role he took part in the excavations in the Valley of the Kings financed by the American tycoon, Theodore Davis, bringing to light in 1903 the tombs of Thutmose IV (KV 43) and Hatshepsut (KV 20), though the latter had already been explored previously.

Later James E. Quibell and Arthur Weigall held Carter's position. More tombs were discovered in the Valley during those years: the almost intact tomb of Yuya and Thuyu (KV 46) in 1905, the famous KV55 or the “Amarna cache” in 1907, and the tomb of Horemheb (KV 57), the last king of the Eighteenth Dynasty, in 1908.

The story of the discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb – like the biographies of its protagonists, Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon – has been recounted many times, and thus here, we give just a brief summary.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Tutankhamun was one of the few sovereigns whose burial and mummy had not been located, which is why Carter made this search his prime objective. What Carter did not know was that the tomb was virtually intact – it had been plundered in antiquity only twice – which meant that it held a wealth of funerary equipment in excellent condition. Such was the quantity of objects found that ten years after the discovery they were still working on them.

On November 6, 1922 Carter sent a cable to Lord Carnarvon: “At last have made wonderful discovery in Valley; a magnificent tomb with seals intact; re-covered same for your arrival; congratulations.”

The main stages of the adventure were as follows: on November 24 the first sealed door was opened; on November 27 the second door leading to the antechamber was opened; on February 16 of the following year Carter officially entered the burial chamber; on November 11, 1925, the innermost coffin was opened and the first analyses of the mummy began. In the years that followed all the treasure was removed: five thousand items of incomparable beauty, which became the major attraction for visitors to the Cairo Museum from all over the world. The objects include the famous funerary gold mask of the young pharaoh, the gilded shrines and coffins, and the so-called “throne” made out of material as varied as gold and silver leaf, colored vitreous pastes, faïence and semi-precious stones.

The structure of the tomb does not reflect the features of a royal burial and it is still difficult, if not impossible, to understand what its original form was before it was adapted to receive the remains of Tutankhamun. Beyond the entrance stairway a passage leads to the antechamber with its side annexe. On the right is the funerary chamber and adjoining room, which Carter called the “treasure room.” Only the funerary chamber is decorated; the classic scenes portraying the deceased in the presence of various deities are accompanied by more unu-
DANS LA CHAMBRE FUNÉRAIRE DE TOUT-ANKH-AMON. — Ouverture des vasteaux sculptés des quatre coffres, ensevelis l'un dans l'autre, et révélant le sarcophage de gypse noir qui contient le sarcophage ou reposa la mummy du Pharaon.

Au centre se trouve le sarcophage, M. Édouard Cioran — Vue de deux photographies et l'article aux papiers jaunes.
usual scenes, such as the one depicting Tutankhamun lying in a shrine, which is on a sledge being drawn by members of the funeral procession. Scenes like this have been found only in private tombs. In the centre of the sepulcher stands a sarcophagus in red quartzite, which today still contains the first of the three coffins that originally enclosed the pharaoh’s body. At the time of discovery, four bottomless shrines housed the quartzite sarcophagus and the three inner coffins. The shrines are made of cedarwood overlaid with gilded stucco and decorated. All have double doors that could be closed with three ivory chains running through copper rings.

Having dismantled the shrines, Carter had to open the three anthropoid coffins before he could behold the mummy of Tutankhamun with his gold mask. The innermost coffin is all in solid gold, an impressive testimony to the skill achieved by the Egyptians of the New Kingdom when working with extreme refinement with all types of material.

Among the objects of the funerary equipment, there was also a gilded shrine, placed on a sledge and designed to accommodate an alabaster canopic chest divided into four hollowed-out sections. Inside each was a small miniature coffin which served to preserve the viscera extracted from the mummified body of the king. These coffinettes are remarkably similar to the middle coffin of the king. They are made of gold inlaid with glass, obsidian, and carnelian. As far as is known they are a unique creation of their kind, not found in other royal tombs.

The sudden death of Lord Carnarvon just a few months after the opening of the tomb, together with a series of supposedly inexplicable deaths, caught the fancy of many journalists who started to talk about the “curse of King Tut.” The deaths of all those who, in various capacities, had come into contact with Lord Carnarvon and Carter were interpreted as proof of the existence of the curse. Naturally they were only flights of fancy; most of those who were closely involved with the discovery died from natural causes at a ripe old age, a case in point being Carter himself.

The discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb allowed archaeologists to see and admire for the first time the richness of a funerary equipment virtually intact from a royal tomb. Sadly, we can only imagine the quality and quantity of the treasures that might have been found in the tombs of the great pharaohs, such as Thutmose III and Ramesses II, had they not been violated.

However, the novelty, as far as Tutankhamun’s tomb is concerned, is the sheer amount of gold it contained – calculated to be at least two tons. The shrines, statues, and various implements were all gilded and overlaid with precious metals. Similar objects in other royal tombs were made of pitched wood. Black was the color that symbolized life and rebirth, according to the funerary beliefs linked to Osiris, king of the afterlife. At the time of Akhenaten (Eighteenth Dynasty) the cult of Osiris was partially abandoned. This would explain the widespread presence of gold, the color of the sun at its zenith, worshipped by the “heretic” king. Perhaps Tutankhamun wished to create an afterlife illuminated by the rays of the sun, in accordance with the beliefs of his predecessor. This is an interesting line of inquiry.

It should not, however, be forgotten that Tutankhamun’s burial was actually rather hurriedly prepared, with a funerary equipment being hastily put together using objects from at least two other burials intended for his predecessors, which had to be re-adapted. This does
not of course detract from the magnificence and inestimable value of this "treasure," which has enchanted generations of Egyptologists and enthusiasts.

The discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb was made when Pierre Lacau was Director of the Egyptian Antiquities Service, the post which Maspero had resigned from in 1914. In the personal archives of Lacau, kept in Milan, there are many documents regarding this unique event in the history of archaeological discoveries in Egypt. They are mostly photographs showing the protagonists of the discovery of the tomb, the stages of its clearance, and the many official visits when Lacau represented the Service. There are also many newspaper cuttings from the period, as well as letters and notes on the subject edited by Lacau. In addition, many “mementoes” on the discovery and the subsequent events have been collected by one of Lacau’s daughters, Marie-Jeanne Lacau-Bodelec.

The Chair of Egyptology of the University of Milan is carrying out a study on these materials, to be published shortly. The aim of the study is to reconstruct in particular the actual role played by Lacau and the Service at the time when the tomb of Tutankhamun was discovered. Currently, most of the documentation published tends to blame Lacau for the limitations he imposed on Carter when directing his excavations. The majority of the American and English Egyptologists of the period shared this opinion, as can be seen, for example, from this extract from a contemporary newspaper:


Dans cette lettre, les savants spécialistes appelaient l’attention du directeur général sur les vexations dont M. Carter et ses collaborateurs étaient l’objet de la part du gouvernement égyptien et terminaient par ces lignes:

Nous sommes obligés de constater qu’en tant que directeur général des antiquités, vous ne parvenez pas à vous acquitter de votre noble rôle qui est de protéger le progrès scientifique de ces fouilles capitales. Point n’est besoin d’insister sur les conséquences désastreuses de votre échec sur l’opinion publique.

Our goal is to reassess the role played by Lacau and to clarify many still obscure aspects of these episodes, which often seem to be the result of anti-French propaganda and of choices made for reasons that were not always for the "good of science."

Even in Maspero’s day Lacau was not on good terms with Carter. He could not tolerate the behavior of the discoverer of Tutankhamun’s tomb, which he often found immoderate. The clashes and misunderstandings between the two men became increasingly bitter in the years following the discovery. The main reason for the disagreement was that the Service felt excluded from the events (which it was), and it therefore came under great pressure from Egyptian Government. Another reason was Lacau’s firm conviction that the objects found in the tomb should all remain in Egypt and enter the collections of the Cairo Museum.

Just to give an idea of the level of tension that was reached, we report the short text of an article that appeared in a newspaper follo-
wing the closure of the tomb of Tutankhamun by Carter as a form of protest in response to a decision taken by the Service. The newly appointed Minister of Public Works had forbidden the wives of members of Carter’s expedition to participate in the official lifting of the sarcophagus lid on 12 February 1924.

Le 12 février après-midi, assisté du gouverneur de la province de Kéneh et d'un délégué du contentieux de l'État, M. Pierre Lacau, directeur du service archéologique d'Égypte, a pris possession de la tombe de Toutankamon, et de la tombe n° 15 servant de laboratoire.
M. Carter avait été averti deux fois par écrit d'être présent ou de remettre les clefs ; il refusa par écrit.
M. Lacau et ses collaborateurs brisèrent le cadenas et trouvèrent tout en bon état. Les premières précautions furent prises concernant le couvercle suspendu. Les travaux préparatoires pour la visite commencent aujourd'hui.

The Treasures of Tanis

In 1936, after Lacau’s return to France, Étienne Drioton became head of the Egyptian Antiquities Service. He held the position until 1952 and he was the last non-Egyptian Director of the Service. Drioton was not only an excellent administrator, he was also very popular. The Archives in Milan contain dozens of letters which he wrote to Alexandre Varille. The two men were respectful to each other, even if at some point they had very different scientific opinions.

During Drioton’s mandate a remarkable discovery was made by Pierre Montet at Tanis, the modern Sân el-Hagar in the north-eastern Nile Delta. This discovery was second only to that of the tomb of Tutankhamun for the quantity of treasures brought to light. It was the finding of the partially untouched burials of some important pharaohs of the Twenty-first and Twenty-second Dynasty.

After studying at the University of Lyons under Loret, Montet joined the Institut français d’archéologie orientale in Cairo as pensionnaire. For this institution he took part in various archaeological missions, the earliest being at Abu Rawash, Asyut, and Beni Hasan. After World War I he went to Byblos in the Lebanon, hoping to locate traces of an Egyptian presence there, for he was particularly interested in the relationship between Egypt and the Near East. Here, between 1921 and 1924, Montet discovered a temple and several burials of local rulers dating from the first half of the second millennium BCE. These revealed many objects showing the close contacts which had existed between Egypt and the famous port city on the Phoenician coast.

It was this same wish that made Montet choose Tanis for his subsequent research. He was in fact firmly convinced that the city stood on the ruins of Avaris, the ancient capital of the Hyksos. Montet stuck to this theory till the end of his days, incurring the criticism of most Egyptologists.

Tanis, which was the capital and royal necropolis of Egypt during the Third Intermediate Period, had been previously extensively excavated by Mariette from 1860 to 1864, and later by Flinders Petrie in 1884.

Montet’s mission began in 1929 and its primary objective was to investigate the area of the Great Temple of Amun, unearthing, among other things, the ruins of a smaller temple dedicated to the goddess Mut, which the archaeologist called the “temple d’Anta.”

As many monuments bear the name of Ramesses II or other Ramesside kings, Montet formulated the hypothesis that Tanis had been
built on the site of Pi-Ramesses – the residence in the Delta of the pharaohs of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasty – and that Pi-Ramesses itself had been built on the ruins of Avaris. It is now certain that those are three different sites: more precisely, Avaris, that is the modern Tel el-Daba, Pi-Ramesses, that is the modern Qantir, and Tanis, the modern Sân el-Hagar. The presence of material from the Ramisside period at Tanis can be simply explained by the fact that the sovereigns of the Twenty-first and Twenty-second Dynasty had pillaged the nearby site of Qantir, the ancient Pi-Ramesses.

In these early years, Montet often corresponded with both Alexandre Varille, as well as with Victor Loret. In the many letters kept in Milan addressed to the latter – his master and of whom he was very fond – Montet would inform him about the activities of the mission, often enclosing photographic prints. Sometimes Montet wrote to Loret to ask his opinion about the translation or interpretation of the texts he had brought to light.

In a letter written in 1934 shortly after his return to Strasbourg, where he was Professor of Egyptology since 1919, Montet mentions a particularly interesting discovery. It was the famous sculpture group representing Ramesses II as a child protected by the god Hurun in the form of a falcon. The statue is known as the “Rebus Statue”, since it is possible to read the name of the sovereign in some figurative elements as if they were hieroglyphs. The sculpture is now one of the highlights of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

However – as mentioned previously – the greatest surprises for Montet were yet to come. Between 1939 and 1946 he discovered the burial of Psusennes I and Amenemope I of the Twenty-first Dynasty, and Sheshonq II, Osorkon I, Takelot I, and Osorkon II of the Twenty-second Dynasty, as well as that of some illustrious personages interred with their kings.

The tombs, subterranean structures constructed of a combination of mud-bricks and re-used blocks, stand at the south-west corner of the Great Temple enclosure. In this area Montet had unearthed a group of mud-brick constructions from the Ptolemaic Period. After dismantling one of these he found what has proved to be the roof of a tomb. Montet was about to discover the sepulchre that contained the remains of Osorkon II, among others. It was 27 February 1939. Recalling that moment, he wrote to Varille:

[... après deux jours j’avais la conviction que nous étions sur un tombeau et non sur le soubassement d’un petit temple comme nous l’avions d’abord cru. Un grand tombeau royal fort bien conservé à Sân, qui l’avait cru ? Et ce n’est que le premier d’une nécropole royale.

(Letter from P. Montet to A. Varille, March 14, 1939. Eg. Arch. & Lib., Varille Collection)
Il en est venu une autre idée, dont je ne m'occuperai pas le casse-tête avec hystérie. Peut-être le vent, elle danse du tout, mais avec voix, s'il est la statue d'Houyoum en quatrième voix, n'est pas celle qui unique en son genre. Nous
The story of the construction, plundering, and partial destruction of the royal necropolis of Tanis is particularly complicated.

Montet discovered six tombs, and he numbered them progressively according to their discovery, from I to VI:

“Tomb I” was made up of four rooms: the first room contained the remains of a reburial of Sheshonq III, the second contained an empty uninscribed sarcophagus, the third a granite sarcophagus usurped by Takelot I (formerly identified as Takelot II), and the fourth the burials of Osorkon II and one of his sons, Prince Hornakht. It is very likely that Osorkon II appropriated this tomb, whose intended occupant remains unknown.

“Tomb II,” leaning against the southern wall of the tomb of Osorkon II, probably was intended to house the burial of Pamy, the successor of Sheshonq III.

“Tomb III” – the most interesting in the necropolis – had various phases of utilization. They are particularly complex and span almost a century. The tomb was initially created for Psusennes I and his wife Mutnedjemet, with twin granite chambers to house their bodies. The body of Psusennes I lay inside two sarcophagi and one coffin. The sarcophagi, one in pink granite and the other in black granite, had been usurped for the king’s burial and actually date to the Ramessid Period. The inner anthropomorphic coffin, in silver with gold elements, is a typical example of the skill of the Tanis goldsmiths. The face of the mummy was covered by a gold mask inlaid with lapis lazuli and vitreous paste, while on the body were many jewels including six pectorals. At the time of discovery the room contained not only the body of the king but also various objects of the funerary equipment. These included numerous vessels in precious metal of rare workmanship. “Tomb III” had been enlarged at a later date and a small room had been added to receive the body of the “general of the King’s army” and his son Ankhfenemut but the sarcophagus that should have contained his body was empty. In a nearby room, the “chief of the archers,” Unudjebauendjedet, had been laid to rest. Inside a granite sarcophagus, the mummy – its face covered by a gold mask – lay in two coffins, the outer in silver and the inner one, containing the body, in gilded wood. The other objects of the funerary equipment were also precious. Later the coffin of King Amenemope was removed from another tomb that had been prepared for him in the north-west of the royal necropolis – the “Tomb IV” – and placed in the room originally intended for Queen Mutnedjemet. In this case, too, significant goldsmith’s artefacts were brought to light. Finally, the ante-chamber of “Tomb III” housed the falcon-masked silver coffin of Sheshonq II. This was found together with two mummies, which can probably be identified as the reburied corpses of Kings Siamun and Psusennes II.

“Tomb IV,” situated very close to the north-east corner of the tomb of Psusennes I, was composed of a single undecorated room containing a quarzite sarcophagus inscribed with the name of King Amenemope. The body and some items of the funerary equipment of the pharaoh were found in a room in “Tomb III,” as mentioned earlier.

As the excavations proceeded, “Tomb V” was discovered. At first
it was not thought to be a burial by the archaeologists but then a funerary chamber was found inside with scenes and inscriptions referring to Sheshonq III. The burial of the king in a sarcophagus which was in origin a lintel dating from Middle Kingdom, was presumably conducted by Sheshonq IV, whose sarcophagus was found in the tomb alongside that of his predecessor.

Finally, before excavations were interrupted on account of the Second World War, the anonymous “Tomb VI” was discovered, a few meters west of that of Psusennes I. The owner of this tomb remains unknown.

Though extensively plundered, the necropolis of Tanis yielded some important treasures – now all in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo – consisting of exceptional objects. Among these are coffins, funerary masks and vessels in gold and silver, as well as an impressive quantity of jewelry, amulets, and funerary statuettes.

The vicissitudes of war meant that the wider public was scarcely aware of one of the most spectacular archaeological discoveries of the twentieth century in Egypt, not only for the treasures found but also for the fact that it threw light on a historical period about which hitherto little was known.

_The romance of exploration is by no means a thing of the past._

(J. BAIRIE, _A Century of Excavation in the Land of the Pharaohs_, New York-Chicago 1923, p. 45)
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