

### EXCAVATIONS AT MEYDÛM, 1929-30

- knowledge to have visited the sarcophagus chamber. (Communicated by Mr. Engelbach.)
- 1926 *L. Borchardt* (assisted by *Dr. Wolf* and *Dipl.-Ing. Ricke*) again visited Meydûm (see 1897) and made important researches on the construction of the pyramid. He removed some débris from the sides in order to examine the base. His publication is accompanied by valuable drawings. Borchardt mentions that he found persons up on the pyramid who, as they said, "kept watch over their fields" from it. He did not observe any stone-hammers with them! [6]
- 1928 *The Aircraft Operating Company, Ltd.*, of London, made an air survey of Meydûm on August 17. A photograph was taken at an altitude of 11,000 feet. (Communicated by Survey Department of Egypt.)

The above chronological list will thus have given the reader some idea of the amount of work that has been done on the site in the past and of the names of the persons associated with such work.

### III. THE SITE AND ITS NAME

The position of Meydûm in relation to the other pyramid sites of the Ancient Kingdom and the Middle Empire is shown in Plate VII, while the remains at present visible on the surface are shown in the plan in Plate VIII and therefore need not here be described. The most convenient railway station to Meydûm is El-Wâsta, some fifty-seven miles south of Cairo. El Wâsta is the district capital and the junction of the Fayyûm railway, and it lies four and a half miles southeast of the pyramid site itself. An automobile takes twenty minutes to reach Meydûm from the railway station, but when the inundation floods the region to the east of the pyramid, the use of both boat and automobile is necessary and the time occupied in reaching the pyramid is from two and a half to three hours.

The present village of Meydûm is in the cultivated area a little to the southeast of the site of the pyramid which is situated on the high desert plateau. That the village covers the ancient city of Meydûm seems fairly certain,<sup>1</sup> for various stelæ and stone blocks have been recovered from beneath the houses; some of these are in the house of the "Omda" or headman of the village. A fragment of a large red granite stela is to be found against the door of the new mosque; this bears no hieroglyphs but has inserted on it the upper part of the double crown of Egypt, and so forth, beneath a part of the emblem for Heaven displayed across the top.<sup>2</sup> On the desert edge,

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon's Expedition, which visited Meydûm in A. D. 1799, was certainly of this opinion: "Meydoum is moreover a fairly big village where it is thought there had been an ancient village." See 78 : IV, 426, 427.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps from a temple; it might perhaps belong to the Ancient Empire. A limestone block in another house bears the cartouche of Rameses II.

about twelve hundred metres south of the pyramid, are some Roman tombs and Coptic houses, considerably plundered.

The earliest known mention of Meydûm is in an inscription in the temple of Deir el-Bahri at Thebes, erected by queen Hatshepsut during the Eighteenth Dynasty (about 1500), where we read of "The Temple Mer-Itum" (that is, Meydûm) of Thothmes I; this temple-name, which has been altered on the wall, seems originally to have read "The Temple Mer-Itum of Hatshepsut."<sup>1</sup> Mer-Itum apparently means literally, "The Place beloved of the god Itum (Tum)," so we may suppose that, at all events in the later periods, Itum was one of the great gods of the district.

Meydûm is also mentioned in later Egyptian times. For example, during the reign of Akhenaten (1375-1358), we meet with Ipy, a "chieftain of Meydûm, and scribe and overseer of the fields of the god Aten (*Iten*)."<sup>2</sup> This local reference to Aten is interesting. The next known mention of Meydûm occurs in the Papyrus Krall of the time of King Pedibast of the Twenty-third Dynasty (745-721), which refers to Wilheni, a prince of the citadel of Meydûm, and to other people associated with the site.<sup>3</sup> Piankhi, the Nubian conqueror of Egypt (720), also mentions Meydûm, for he informs us that when he sailed northwards he found that the place had shut its gates in order to prevent the conqueror from passing through them. Piankhi then sent the inhabitants an ultimatum, saying: "Behold, two ways are before you; choose ye as ye will: open, and ye shall live; close, and ye shall die. My majesty will not pass by a closed city." The city immediately allowed the king to enter. [7 : IV, 419, 431, 432]

In the Greek papyri of the Ptolemaic Era, which are full of fascinating sidelights on the social life of the times, Meydûm was known as Moithymis, with the variations: Moithymeos, Moiethymis, Moiethumis, and Moethymis. For instance, Zenon of Philadelphia, a place not far northwest of Meydûm, received a letter from a certain Iason, as follows: "I went over to Moithymis to see Leon about the ground tax which he is trying to exact on the vineyard and orchard, for five years past, at the rate of three drachmæ for each aroura. I asked him then to wait and not to sell the wine until I wrote to you. So he has given us three days in which he is prepared to receive a settlement of accounts. Metrodorus also wrote to Hermolaos to stop proceedings until you had been written to." In other letters of the Zenon series (which according to Mr. Edgar date between 250-239) we learn of the threshing floor of Inaros, a native of Moithymis; of a vineyard of Moithymis; of an official of the same village who had sequestered some rent; and so on. Zenon was

<sup>1</sup> 38 : V, Plate CXXVIII. That Mer-Itum and Meydûm are one and the same site, there seems to be no reasonable doubt whatever. See also 23 : III, 38.

<sup>2</sup> 19 : 17, 27, Plate XV. Riqqeh is not far to the northwest of Meydûm. For an Aten Temple at Memphis, compare 30 : 169.

<sup>3</sup> See 56 ; 66 : VII, 55, 65; 8 : 535-36.

originally a landowner and general manager of Apollonius, vizier of Ptolemy II.<sup>1</sup>

It has been suggested that a certain estate-name, Methun, met with in the local mastabah of Nefer-Maāt is the earliest form of Meydûm.<sup>2</sup> This estate-name means, literally, "the Fighting-place of the Bulls."<sup>3</sup> Concerning the suggested identification, Professor Griffith wrote in 1892: "*Metun* [*Methun*] has a curious likeness to *Medun* [*Meydûm*]; but that is *all*; we do not know even whether *Metun* lay in Upper or in Lower Egypt. The modern name of the place was sometimes written *Medun* by early European travellers; the ears are often deceived as to *m* and *n* in a new name or word. . . . There is better reason for supposing that *Mertum* (really pronounced *Maitum*) is the ancient equivalent of the name. . . . [42 : 39]. Professor Maspero [31 : VI, 71] identifies *Methun* with *El-Matânia*, a village a few miles to the north of *Meydûm*, opposite *Lisht*.

Another place, which, according to Professors Griffith [42 : 40] and Erman [20 : 41], must be near *Meydûm* is *Ded-Seneferu*. This ancient town, mentioned on a statuette of the Middle Empire found in the *Meydûm* pyramid temple,<sup>4</sup> was made famous by a magician named *Dedi*, who lived there in the time of *Khufu*. According to a story in the *Westcar Papyrus*, dating from the *Hyksos* period, *Ḥor-ded-ef*, the son of *Khufu*, spoke as follows to his father: "There is a townsman, *Dedi* by name, and he dwelleth in *Ded-Seneferu*. He is a townsman of one hundred and ten years, and he eateth five hundred loaves of bread, a haunch of beef in the way of meat, and drinketh one hundred jugs of beer, unto this very day. He knoweth how to put on again a head that hath been cut off, and he knoweth how to make a lion follow after him, with its leash trailing on the ground" [20 : 41].

The place named *Ded-Seneferu* (literally, "*Seneferu* Endures") calls to mind the *Ded* — "Enduring" — gang of quarrymen who operated in *Meydûm* during the time the pyramid was built [Plate VI, Numbers 11, 12]. The name of the magician, *Dedi*, belongs to the same root as *ded*, "enduring." Incidentally, in the Fourth Dynasty mastabah of *Rā-hotep* at *Meydûm*, there is actually mentioned a certain *Dedi*, who was the son of *Rā-hotep*.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Edgar, *Annales du Service*: XVIII, 160; XX, 26, 27; *Catalogue General, Zenon Papyri*, Nos. 59094, 59141, 59176, 59189, 59257, 59337, 59407; *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*: XV, 118, 119. See also Comparetti and Vitelli, *Papiri Greco-Egizii*: II, 167, 256; Grenfell and Hunt, *The Tebtunis Papyri*: II, 353-390; *The Flinders Petrie Papyri*: III, 100b; Eisner, *Papyri Iandanae*: 8; and others.

<sup>2</sup> Compare 42 : 39; 31 : VI, 71; 12 : 414; 23 : III, 64.

<sup>3</sup> Compare 81 : II, 175.

<sup>4</sup> The statuette belonged to the lady *Seneferu-khety*; it is not of the Fourth Dynasty, as stated by *Petrie*.

<sup>5</sup> *Petrie* 42 : 37, Plates X, XIII, XV. He is not the son of *Nefer-Maāt*, as stated on page 40. Finally, in connection with *Ded-Seneferu*, it may be mentioned that *Maspero* [31 : VI, 71] writes: "Le nom du sheikh *Daoud* qui est appliqué à une butte surmontée d'un tombeau de saint située entre *el-Ouastah* et *Zaouiet-el-Masloub*, ne serait-il pas un reste du nom antique *Didit*, *Doudit*?"

Still another local site which can in all probability be identified in the ancient records is Şaft, or Şaft-Meydûm, a village just to the north of Meydûm; Mr. Edgar thinks that it is probably the Sophthis of the Zenon Papyri. [18]

About sixteen names of estates or villages, all evidently local, are preserved in the mastabah of Rā-hotep and about twenty-three in the mastabah of Nefer-Maāt, at Meydûm. Among the places mentioned in the former mastabah are the following: "The Temple"; "The Place of Pots"; "The Red"; "The Herb-producer"; "Going-growing"; and "Entrance-barred"; [versions by Dr. Griffith in Petrie 42 : 38, 39]. Other estate-names from the same tomb are: "The Granary"; "The Field of Food"; "Bread"; and so on. In the mastabah of Nefer-Maāt we meet with "Beautiful is Maāt" (*Nefer-Maāt*) — an estate named after its owner; "The Field"; "The Fighting-place of the Bulls"; "The Milk Pot"; "The Houses"; "The House of the Plough"; "The Nurse of Seneferu"; and others.<sup>1</sup> The last village reminds us of the village or estate near Beni Ḥasan, in Upper Egypt, called "The Nurse of Khufu." That Seneferu (who seems to have been the builder of the Meydûm pyramid) was the father of Khufu makes the similarity between the names "The Nurse of Seneferu" and "The Nurse of Khufu" all the more interesting. Another village-name in the mastabah of Nefer-Maāt [42 : I, 26, 39; Plate XXI] is ". . . Seneferu," which is doubtless to be restored to "The Nurse of Seneferu" (*Menāt-Seneferu*); on the opposite side of the inner part of the great door, this same name is found at approximately a corresponding place.

The "Lake of Sebek," or the Fayyûm lake, is referred to in Nefer-Maāt's mastabah [42 : 20, 25, 39; Plates XVIII, XXIII] and in the neighbouring Fourth Dynasty mastabah Number 7 [42 : 20, 39; Plate XVI]. Sebek, the crocodile god, was of course the chief deity of the Fayyûm, which was sometimes called "The Land of Sebek" (*Ta-Sebek*) [31 : III, 64, 89]; and it is certainly therefore not by chance merely that a portion of a crocodile's skull found its way into the grave of the Canaanite(?) Gemesh discovered by us this year at Meydûm. The name of the god was sometimes used as part of a proper name; thus in the chamber of the Meydûm pyramid temple there is a graffito of about the Thirteenth Dynasty mentioning the man Sebek-hotep-em-sa-ef [42 : I, 40; Plate XXXII, 2]. Further in this connection, we must remember the names of the rulers Sebek-neferu-Rā, Sebek-hotep, and Sebek-em-sa-ef, who lived from the end of the Twelfth Dynasty onwards.

<sup>1</sup> 42 : Plates XI, XII, XV, XIX, XXI. In connection with the place Ḥut, mentioned in Plate XIX, compare the place Ḥut (here determined by a pig) mentioned in the Fifth Dynasty mastabah of Dua-Rā, an overseer of the two pyramids of Seneferu at Dahshûr. [Maspero, *Trois années de fouilles*, in *Mem. Miss. Arch. Fr.*, 1881-1884, Dahshur mastabah Number 2.] In a few instances there are slight differences between the hieroglyphic forms of the Meydûm estate-names as given by Petrie [42] and as given by Mariette [27].

Methen, a ruler of the temple of Seneferu at Letopolis and elsewhere, who was buried at Şaqqâra in the time of Seneferu, states in his inscription that he was a "monarch and deputy in the eastern Fayyûm," which must surely have included Meydûm, and also a ruler of the Southern Lake, evidently situated in the Fayyûm region [7 : I, 76-78; 64 : I, 1-7]. Whether the town "Gate of the Mansion of Khufu," mentioned on a Fourth Dynasty libation altar found by Petrie at Meydûm [43 : II, 6, 28; Plate XXXI] was near Meydûm or not it is impossible to say.

#### IV. THE PYRAMID

From the evidence afforded by the graffiti in its funerary temple [Plate XXXV, 2], it has been generally assumed that the Meydûm pyramid was made by Seneferu, the first king of the Fourth Dynasty,<sup>1</sup> who died about 2900 B. C. On the other hand, Dr. Reisner [53] suggests that it may have been made by Hûni, the predecessor of Seneferu. However this may be, it is quite certain that Seneferu had two pyramids both of which were called "Seneferu-appears," the southern one being distinguished from the other by the more specific title, "The Southern Pyramid, 'Seneferu-appears'." From a decree issued by Pepi I of the Sixth Dynasty and found by Dr. Borchardt near the northern stone pyramid of Dahshûr, it is evident that that particular monument is none other than Seneferu's northern pyramid. The decree in question was issued in honour of Seneferu, and exempted forever the tenants in the two pyramid towns of Seneferu, one of which was doubtless Meydûm, from carrying out any building works for the royal house, from giving food to any passing messenger, from paying irrigation taxes, and so on. It was addressed to certain high officials and is dated in the twenty-first year of the reign, about 2570 [5 and 76].

It has been suggested that one of the two pyramids of Seneferu was perhaps a cenotaph and the other a tomb, and in this connection some evidence showing the existence of a double cult of the king seems to be forthcoming from the inscription of Qed-shepses, a son of Seneferu, on a stela from his tomb at Dahshûr, from which we see that the prince was a "Priest of Horus Neb-Maât" and a "Priest of Seneferu" [74; 14 : 22]. *Neb-Maât* was the king's official name, which had something to do with his *ka* [22 : 72], while *Seneferu* was of course his personal name. Similarly, Ka-nefer, the eldest son of Seneferu, buried at Dahshûr, was "Director of the priests of Seneferu," and "Master of the secrets of Horus Neb-Maât" [14 : 23]. Also, the following kings appear to have had two "tombs": Zoser, at Şaqqâra and Beit Khallâf; Senwosret III at Dahshûr and Abydos; Amen-em-ĥat III at Dahshûr and Hawâra; and Eye (Ai) at Tell el-Amârna and Bibân

<sup>1</sup> Some authorities regard him as the last king of the Third Dynasty.