

A LINK BETWEEN ANCIENT EGYPT AND CYPRUS:

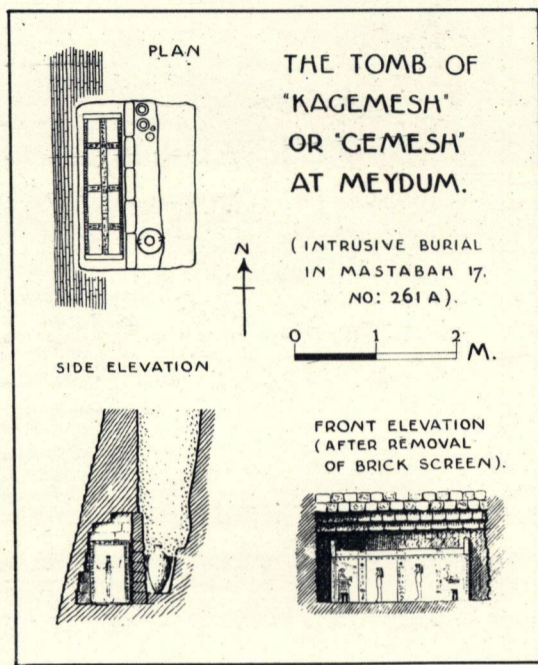
A CYPRIOTE'S TOMB—AND OTHER 18TH DYNASTY "INTRUSIVE" BURIALS—IN THE GREAT MASTABAH AT MEYDUM.

By ALAN ROWE, Field Director of the Egypt Expedition from the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania. (See Illustrations opposite, and on Pages 566 and 567.)

Here follows the second part of Mr. Alan Rowe's article on his excavations in and around the famous Pyramid at Mejdum. The first part (given in our issue of March 22) described the Pyramid itself and the structure of the adjacent mastabah, one of the largest tombs of its kind in Egypt, 354 ft. long by 187 ft. wide, and of a unique stepped form. It is not yet known for whom the mastabah was built. That this personage "was venerated long after his death (writes Mr. Rowe) is perhaps indicated by the fact that the huge enclosing brick wall is literally honeycombed with burials of the XVIIIth Dynasty and later... a time when the mastabah was already a veritable antiquity of about 1400 years." The rest of the concluding paragraph in the first instalment of Mr. Rowe's article is repeated on page 567 of the present number, under photographs to which it closely relates. A third and final section of the article, dealing with a great cache of mummies discovered at another spot near the Mejdum Pyramid, will be published in a later issue.

ONE interesting rectangular coffin (page 567, Fig. 2) held the mummy of a small child about three or four years of age. By the side of its head in the coffin is a pottery dish containing some grapes and some fruit from the *dom*-palm tree. The better anthropoid coffins are plastered all over and painted.

The best intrusive coffin discovered in the mastabah, however, was in a bricked-up chamber excavated in the west wall, the coffin and chamber lying north to south. In the debris in front of the blocking we saw a large amphora of red ware, and various other articles of pottery, all in a good condition (see drawings on this page). From under the coffin came a walking-stick with a forked end, evidently used by the deceased during life; various scarabs, one with the throne-name of Thothmes III; a scaraboid and a seal, and a jasper amulet representing a flying bird. These scarabs and amulets had probably originally been in the



WHERE THE BEST "INTRUSIVE" COFFIN WAS FOUND IN THE MASTABAH AT MEYDUM: THE TOMB OF GEMESH—DIAGRAMS IN PLAN AND SECTION, SHOWING THE POSITION OF THE AMPHORA (IN LOWER LEFT DRAWING) AND THE COFFIN (LOWER RIGHT DRAWING).

jackal on a pylon. On the front end of the coffin (p. 565, Fig. 2) is a vignette of the goddess Isis, and on the other end one of Nephthys. The goddesses have their arms uplifted, and are charmingly drawn and coloured.

Inside the coffin of Gemesh were two mummies laid back to back, the one over the other, placed diagonally in the coffin (p. 565, Fig. 4). Near them was a small basket (p. 566 Fig. 8) having inside it (1) an alabaster cosmetic vase covered with cloth (p. 566, Fig. 3); (2) a miniature vase of Cypriote type; (3) some fruit of the *dom*-palm; and (4) some faience scarabs. From near the basket, and still inside the coffin, came two wooden toilet boxes with sliding lids, one decorated with strips of ivory picked out in black (p. 565, Fig. 5); two spindle-shaped bottles of Cypriote type (p. 565, Fig. 1); a miniature vase similar to the one in the basket; and also a light red-ware jug. Near the head of the under mummy was a wooden head-rest.

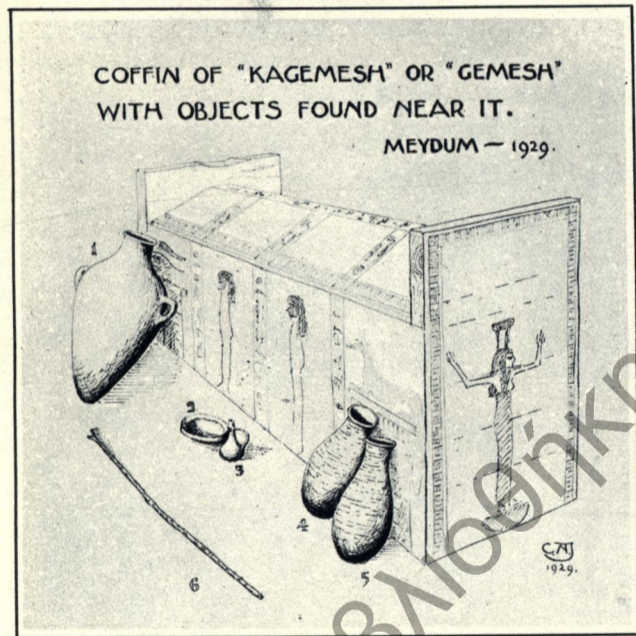
Another coffin is interesting as it bears part of a prayer which was a favourite one to Egyptians of all times: "O Osiris Amen-heru (i.e., the deceased), thy mother Nut descends and spreads herself over thee." A notable example of the prayer appears on the anthropoid coffin which was made, perhaps during the XXVIth Dynasty, for Mycerinus, the builder of the Third Pyramid of Gizeh under the IVth Dynasty. This coffin is now in the British Museum, and bears the following text: "O Osiris, King of the South and North, Mycerinus, living for ever, born of heaven,

conceived of Nut (the sky), heir of Geb (the earth), his beloved. Thy mother Nut spreadeth herself over thee in her name of 'Mystery of Heaven,' and she granteth thy existence as a god without thy foes, O King of the South and North, Mycerinus, living for ever." Incidentally, there has been some discussion in the past concerning the date of this Mycerinus coffin, some holding that it belonged to the original IVth Dynasty burial, and others that it was made during the XXVIth Dynasty. It can definitely be stated, however, that the coffin is not of the IVth Dynasty, for coffins of this period are rectangular and not anthropoid. Further than this, the inscription on the coffin mentions the god Osiris, which is distinct proof that the object was made later than the IVth Dynasty, for the name of Osiris is never found in the texts until the end of the Vth Dynasty. The reason why the name of Osiris was usually placed before the name of the deceased was because he or she was identified with the god. In general, it may be said that many of the later burials

in the great mastabah at Mejdum were disturbed or robbed in ancient times; the coffins were broken open, the corpses injured, and the skeletons frequently dismembered. Sometimes undisturbed burials were found on the top of robbed ones, which seems to indicate that robberies were not always carried out by professional tomb-robbers, but by people who came to bury their deceased relatives. Most of these unrobbed burials yielded some finds. On top of the coffin of a child we found some jars which must have once held offerings; another similar coffin had a dish above it and a jar to the side (p. 567, Fig. 3). Fruit is commonly found in the graves, and the mummy of one female had some grains of corn near the groin, presumably an emblem of fertility or rebirth. From the mummies themselves came quantities of beads and amulets. Some of the objects of everyday life consist of a large fibre basket, sandals, an eye-paint pot (p. 566, Fig. 7) with stick for painting the unguent, and so on. On top of one coffin were some palm-branches; this custom persists to-day, for the local Moslems frequently place such branches on their tombs.

Several tombs were unearthed to the north-west of the pyramid, and these all consisted of a single type—that is to say, a masonry-lined underground chamber having a passage sloping down to it from the north (p. 567, Fig. 4). A shaft leads down from above to the centre of the passage itself. In every instance the original burial was found to have been displaced by one of later date. One of the tombs was certainly robbed in Roman times, for we found a corroded coin belonging to that era near an obviously contemporary skeleton lying about half-way down the entrance passage. The original stone sarcophagus had been smashed. Beyond the south-eastern angle of the tomb-chamber is a small recess; this probably contained either the intestines of the deceased, which were removed during embalming, or a reserve head of stone for the purpose of supplying the deceased with a head in case his actual head should be destroyed. We discovered two or three very old owl's eggs in the shaft and chamber of the tomb, and, in the north side of the brick-built shaft itself, the actual niche in which the owl used to perch. The wall below the niche was still whitened by the droppings of the bird. Many pellets containing indigestible matter, such as bones of small animals, birds, etc., were also found. These pellets are cast up through the bird's mouth after each meal.

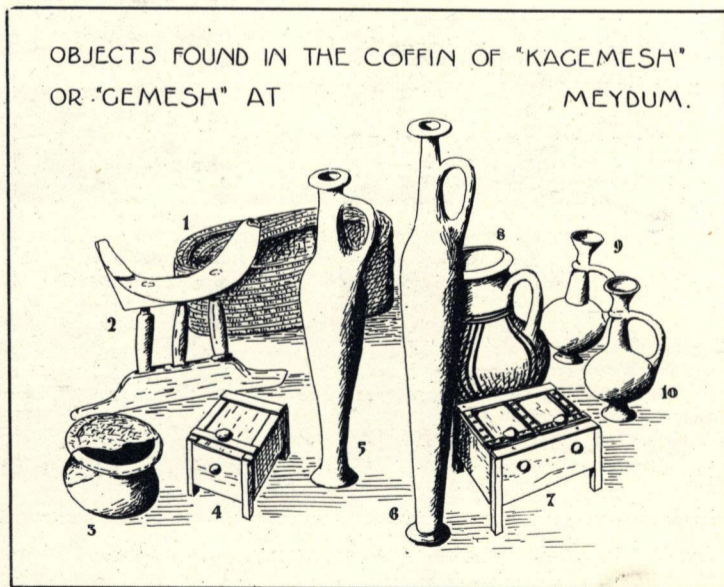
The history of the tomb may therefore be reconstructed as follows: The original burial was made during the IVth Dynasty; the tomb was robbed in Roman times—that is to say, about 2900 years afterwards, when the intrusive burial was made. Later on the tomb was robbed again and the pit left open. This enabled an owl to make its home in the shaft and to lay its eggs in the chamber. After a while the pit gradually sanded up, and, as the evidence of the unbroken eggs would seem to indicate, the owl was forced to leave its home on account of the closing of the tomb. How long ago the final sanding-in took place we have no means of ascertaining, but, judging from the appearance of the desert surface over the shaft, it must have been many centuries before our time. It is from such little things, unimportant in themselves, but valuable when taken together, that we are able to reconstruct the unwritten pages of history.



SHOWING THE POSITION OF THE LARGE RED-WARE AMPHORA AND OTHER OBJECTS FOUND OUTSIDE, INCLUDING A WALKING-STICK: A DRAWING OF THE COFFIN OF GEMESH (ILLUSTRATED IN PHOTOGRAPHS ON PAGE 565.)

coffin, but had perhaps fallen through its cracks. The coffin was made for a man of foreign name, Gemesh, or perhaps Ka-gemesh, who, judging from the fact that some of the pottery found in the burial belongs to the late Bronze Age of Cyprus (p. 565, Fig. 1), must have doubtless been a native of that island.

The coffin of Gemesh (p. 565, Fig. 3), although slightly damaged in places, is vividly painted in bright colours; its vignettes are quite well done. The coffin is rectangular in shape with a vaulted lid, which bears the following text: "An offering which the king gives to Osiris, the lord of Busiris, the great god, the ruler of everlastingness, that he may give invocation consisting of oxen, geese, and things all good and pure, given by heaven, created of earth, and brought forth (by the Nile) for the *ka* of Gemesh (or, Ka-gemesh)." On the extreme right-hand of the right side of the coffin is the sacred eye resting on a pylon. The head of the mummy was placed at this end of the coffin, as it was believed that the deceased would be able to look out through the eye itself; there is another eye on the opposite side of the coffin. Behind the former eye are two of the gods of the embalment with their names, Gesti and Duamutef, in front of them. On the extreme left is the jackal-god Anubis resting on a pylon. Behind the vignette of the sacred eye on the left side of the coffin are the figures of Hapi and Qebhsennuf, two other gods of embalment, while on the extreme right is the Anubis



TREASURES FROM THE TOMB OF A FOREIGNER (PROBABLY FROM CYPRUS) BURIED IN THE MASTABAH AT MEYDUM: THE CONTENTS (BESIDES TWO MUMMIES) OF THE COFFIN OF GEMESH.

The objects seen above, which are illustrated individually in the photographs given on pages 565 and 566, are as follows: (1) basket; (2) head-rest; (3) alabaster cosmetic pot covered with a cloth; (4) box with sliding lid containing eye-paint pot; (5 and 6) "spindle" pots of the Late Bronze Age in Cyprus; (7) wooden toilet-box with sliding lids; (8) jug; (9 and 10) two smaller jugs. One photograph on page 565 shows some of these objects inside the coffin.

CYPRUS