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89. Account of the Newly-Discovered Ruins at Sellali

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not in the centre, but nearer the west end (*see* Fig. 8). Body of man, same position as body in No. 2, head south. Reduced to skeleton; traces of wrappings on bones. Skull a well-defined quadrated ellipsoid; teeth good.

No. 4. A little S.E. of the Coast Guard camp, on spur of cliff. Same type as No. 1. Cairn, $400 \times 250 \times 150$ cms.; cist, in middle, along major axis of cairn, 120×50 cms. Burial of male (?), body on back, head west. Wrappings of coarse

FIG. 8.

FIG. 9.

linen, pinned over breast with neatly made little pegs of wood, square in cross-section. Skull, acute pentagonoid.

No. 5. Same location, same type as preceding, and approximately same size. Burial of old woman, body on back, head west. Outer wrappings pinned; inner, as shown in Fig. 9.

Because of their distribution and their conformity to the well recognised "*regem-type*," I am inclined to consider that these cairn-and-cist burials were erected by poor nomads of Libyan stock. The period to which the graves are to be assigned is indicated by the discovery of the base silver rings mentioned above, and by the shards of pottery which are not infrequently associated with the cairns. Both the shards and the rings are late Roman or early Byzantine. The graves therefore belong to the fourth or fifth centuries of the present era.

ORIC BATES.

Abyssinia : Archæology.

Thesiger.

Account of the Newly-discovered Ruins at Sellali. By Wilfred G. Thesiger.

89

For many years past it has been known by the local inhabitants that the present little round church, built in the usual Abyssinian style with thatched roof and mud walls, stood on the ruins of an older church destroyed during the Mohammedan invasion of Mohammed Grain, and from time to time there was even talk of digging there to see what could be found. Nothing was, however, done until August, 1912, when Dejaz Kassa, the present chief of this country, made trenches along the south wall of the main building, where traces of the old building were most visible, and also along the south wall of the first enclosure.

These trenches, which are about three feet deep, laid bare the base of a square building, on which was carved the pattern of interlaced arches, marked I on the enclosed drawings. The carving is in low relief on large square slabs of stone some four inches thick, which were fixed in some way to the face of the wall, which, so far as one can judge, must have been about four feet in width. The pattern of inverted steps and the moulding on which both rest is carved on smaller stones, square cut and well fitting, but I could find no traces of lime or cement having been used. Pattern No. I is found on the south wall on either side of the steps, and probably runs all round the base of the building.

The patterns marked Nos. II, III, and V are found on small fragments of stone set in the side walls of the flight of stairs which led down from the south door to the inner courtyard, but are evidently not in their original position, as each pattern is found on a single stone irregularly placed and broken, and the corresponding stones

on either side show no signs of the carving having been continued. These stones belonged evidently to another part of the destroyed building, but one cannot say by whom or when they were placed in their present position, as the priests declared everything remains as found when the excavations were made in August, 1912.

The original church was surrounded by a square walled enclosure some 36 feet distant from the building itself with an opening opposite the steps and south door, on the inner side of which there are traces of moulding such as is shown in Pattern IV. This wall can be traced on all four sides. Some 60 feet outside the first wall are the remains of a second rectangular enclosure, marked by mounds of grass-grown *débris*, on the south and east sides, but without further excavations it is impossible to say if it also was built of cut stone.

Plentiful remains of charcoal and calcined stone go to prove that, as rumoured, the church was destroyed by fire. The priests showed me several long nails and iron clamps all rusted and corroded which were dug up in excavating the trenches which are marked on the plan by a dotted line. The whole site of the ruin is covered

with enormous olive and juniper trees, none of which can be less than 300 years old, and many of which grow actually on old ruined walls.

Of the history of the original church one could gather only very scanty details. It is reported to have been built, not by the king, but by a bishop, hence the name which it still bears—Itchege. Whether it had anything to do with the monastery

of Debra Libanos, which is only some five hours distant, they could not tell me, but it is said always to have been a place of especial sanctity.

This ruin appears to me to have three special points of interest—firstly, its position so far to the south, where with the exception of the ancient establishment of Debra Libanos no other ruins of a similar kind are known to exist; secondly, the excellence of the carved work, which I believe would be

noticeable even in the north, and the fact that the pattern of interlaced arches, although often found in early European buildings, has not as yet, so far as I can ascertain, been found on any other ruins in this country; and thirdly, that the evidence of the date of its destruction tends to prove the impossibility of the

Ground Plan of Ruins at Itchege

Excavations Marked thus

Portuguese having had any hand in building it, unless it was designed by the painter Branca Leon or the Portuguese ambassador, Peter Corvillá, both of whom arrived in Abyssinia about 1470, but there appear to be no records of their having done any work of this kind, although the former decorated existing churches and gave great offence by not adhering to local convention. The mission of Roderigo de Lima, which remained in this country from 1520 to 1525, were certainly otherwise occupied than in building churches for a king who would neither do business with them nor allow them to depart, and in 1527 the province of Sellali was laid waste by Mohammed Grain, which is probably the date at which this church or some later construction raised on the same site was destroyed.

I am inclined to believe that at the time of the invasion of Mohamed Grain the original building was already a mere ruin on the *débris* of which the Abyssinians had built a church of their own, as had such buildings as this evidently was still been standing in 1527, it appears to me impossible that even the memory of them should by the beginning of the next century have died out so completely that the construction of the convent and palaces of Father Peter Paez in 1604 should have struck the Abyssinians with the wonder and even terror which are reported by Bruce.

This supposition might account for the steps having been at some time roughly repaired from the *débris* of the old ruins by a people ignorant of building, as is shown by their having been unable to replace the steps themselves and only capable of making of the old stairway an inclined slope to give access to the newer church placed on the mound formed by the ruins of the old one.

If true this account would put the date of the original building back to a much earlier date, probably to about the 11th or 12th century, which period I believe I am right in thinking the style of carving corresponds.

WILFRED G. THESIGER.

REVIEWS.

Africa, North : Anthropology.

Bertholon : Chantre.

Recherches Anthropologiques dans la Berbérie Orientale (Tripolitaine, Tunisie, Algérie), par L. Bertholon et E. Chantre. Tome Premier : Anthropométrie, Craniométrie, Ethnographie. Pp. 662 (fol.), 385 figs., and five maps in colour. Tome Deuxième : Album de 174 portraits ethniques. Frontispiece in photochrome. A. Rey, Lyon, 1913.

North Africa, according to the authors of this splendid monograph, has the lines of an ancient galley with her prow to the east, her poop to the west, and her keel stranded on the sands of the Sahara. She has been boarded on all sides, by the negroes from the south, by peoples of Asia from the east, and by the Mediterranean and European races from the north. This ancient galley—if we may continue the simile—has been recently boarded by the gallant authors, who have subjected the motley crew to a long and accurate investigation, the results of which are contained in these two artistic and pictorial volumes. The authors were well qualified for their task. Dr. Bertholon has seen Barbary for many years with the eyes of an expert medical man, and as secretary of the Institute of Carthage, while his collaborator, Dr. Chantre, is a well-known anthropologist of Lyons. An anthropological investigation of over 8,000 of the inhabitants of Barbary has led the authors to distinguish three chief types of man in North Africa—(1) short, dark-complexioned long-headed people, members of the Mediterranean race; (2) short, dark-complexioned, brachycephalic people of less certain affinities; (3) tall, long-headed, rather fair people, probably descendants of a north European stock. Besides