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THE JUBILEE OF AKHENATON

BY F. LL. GRIFFITH, M.A., F.S.A.

ACCORDING to the Greek version of the Rosetta Stone, the *Sed*-festival or "jubilee" was a *τριακονταετηρίς* marking a period of thirty years, and this is confirmed by the fact that its celebration is generally recorded in the thirtieth or thirty-first year of a king. But apart from the fact that the jubilee might be repeated at short intervals after the first occasion in the same reign, there are instances of its celebration before the thirtieth, in the fifteenth, twenty-third and other years. Kurt Sethe suggested that the period started from the proclamation of the future king as crown prince¹, and Spiegelberg thought that the name "feast of *sed*" commemorated the assumption of the jackal's "tail" as an emblem of royalty on that occasion². Against Sethe's theory Ed. Meyer has brought forward the fact that Tuthmosis II, whose mummy shows that he lived no more than twenty-five years, seems to have celebrated the jubilee twice³.

The ceremonies of the *Sed*-festival are illustrated in Professor Naville's memoir on *The Festival Hall* at Bubastis built by Osorkon II, and in Möller's publication of a coffin where the king in the festival is the deity Osiris himself⁴. They are also found in the sculptures of the Sun-temple at Abusîr (Neuserre^c), at Karnak (Tuthmosis III), and at Soleb (Amenophis III), but these as yet are incompletely published. Von Bissing, who has studied all these representations with Dr Kees, is of the opinion that the jubilee was "not any feast for the king, in honour of the king or for his Osirification" or deification in any form, as has been variously suggested; it was in reality "a festival of thanksgiving of the Horus-king to all the gods of the country" for length of years and victory⁵.

Isolated scenes from the jubilee ceremonies are figured in various places⁶. Miss Murray and Prof. Petrie⁷ included Akhenaton in the list of kings who celebrated the festival, on the strength of a scene dated in his twelfth year in the tomb of Huya at Tell el-Amarna, in which the king is carried in a litter, wearing the red crown and holding crook and whip (which belong also to Osiris). But the copy published by Lepsius⁸ on which they relied is now shown by Mr Davies' memoir on the tomb to be incomplete. In the injured scene

¹ SETHE, *Untersuchungen*, vol. I, p. 10; *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*, vol. xxxvi (1898), p. 64.

² *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*, vol. iv, col. 9.

³ *Nachträge zur ägyptischen Chronologie*, p. 43; *Geschichte des Altertums*, 3rd ed., vol. I, Part II, p. 139. The evidence of Tuthmosis II's jubilee, discovered at Amada by Breasted, and published in his *Temples of Lower Nubia*, p. 51 (in *Amer. Journ. of Sem. Lang.*, Oct. 1906) is seen also in GAUTHIER, *Temple d'Amada*, pp. 130—145. G. ELLIOT SMITH, *The Royal Mummies* (1912), p. 45, raises the possible limit of his age at death to twenty-eight years and is altogether less positive as to his youthfulness than in the first report.

⁴ *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*, vol. xxxix (1901), Pls. 5, 6, with p. 71.

⁵ *Die Reliefs vom Sonnenheiligtum des Rathures*, pp. 14, 15 (*Sitzb. kön. bayerischen Akad.*, 1914, Abh. 9).

⁶ An example is shown in *Journal*, vol. iv, Pl. IV.

⁷ MURRAY, *Osireion*, p. 32; PETRIE, *Researches in Sinai*, p. 178. ⁸ *Denkmäler*, Part III, Pl. 100, b.

four feet and an embracing arm prove that the queen was in the palanquin with the king¹. There seems to be no real reason to connect this scene with a jubilee; it is simply, just as the accompanying inscription explains, "the going forth of the king and queen upon the great golden litter to receive the tribute of Syria and Ethiopia, of the west and the east."

Akhenaton reigned only seventeen years, and appears to have died young like Tuthmosis II². Nevertheless, amongst the examples of Egyptian art which Major Gayer Anderson has collected and lent for exhibition to the Ashmolean Museum, is one which seems to prove that he celebrated a jubilee. It is a small slab of limestone giving part of a series of ceremonial scenes (Plate VIII). The slab is injured and the details were much obscured by incrustations until, with the owner's kind permission, Mr Young cleaned it. Neither the material nor the workmanship is good; a depression near the middle has been anciently patched with plaster, a good deal of which above the hands of the principal figure has fallen away.

Two scenes or portions of scenes remain. On the right Akhenaton wears a short cloak, covering the arms, which seems to be reserved for certain ceremonies of the jubilee³. If in the other scene the cloak is the same it is at any rate worn quite differently.

The top of the scenes is lost. At the left-hand end the king stands before an altar piled with offerings; his hands are uplifted and present a vase of ointment to the Aton, whose rays ending in hands reach down to the offerings. The king wears a short tunic and the crown of Upper Egypt with a scarf or streamer attached to the middle of the back. The crown has a double outline in front, but this may be due to a correction. The titles of the Aton are on the right.

"The great living Aton that is in the Sed-festival, Lord of heaven, Lord of earth, in the midst of 'Rejoicing' in Akhet-Aton."

Separated from this by the representation of what may be a stout pillar or wall, with a curious incision at the base, is the second scene. Here the king walks in the short festal cloak, which covers his shoulders and arms in characteristic fashion so that only the hands appear, close together in front of him holding the crook and whip⁴. His crown again has the scarf, which in this case appears to be attached to a peg inserted in the crown. The rays are upon the king, giving him and "life and length of days." Before the king's face are his two cartouches and a remnant of the title of the Aton. Behind him is an attendant figure in the usual submissive attitude, holding a footstool and a pair of sandals; this figure is entitled "chief prophet of Nipkhourya" (Akhenaton). In front of the king are two similar figures; the first is almost destroyed, the second, entitled

"chief lector," holds a roll of papyrus. Over the first are the cartouches of the

¹ *Rock Tombs of El Amarna*, vol. III, Pl. XIII; see p. 10 for the restoration of the complicated central group.

² See G. ELLIOT SMITH, l.c., p. 51, for a full description and discussion of the mummy of Amenophis IV.

³ *Festival Hall*, Pls. X, XXIII and especially XXVI.

⁴ The plaster patch suffered further injury in the cleaning. Mr Young took the precaution to have the slab photographed before cleaning and the accompanying sketch is made from a print.

LIMESTONE SLAB IN THE COLLECTION OF MAJOR GAYER ANDERSON

Aton “*in...in southern On*”; why they should be here is not evident, but the king was probably proceeding towards a shrine of Aton.

Not only does this slab acquaint us with the new fact of a jubilee in the reign of Akhenaton; it also introduces us to the unexpected title of “chief prophet” of that king—implying that Akhenaton was actually worshipped—and to the “chief lector.” To meet with such personages in the reign of the heretic king is somewhat of a surprise, and we may well ask to what phase of the heresy they belong. It may also be questioned whether the slab belongs to Hermonthis or to Tell el-Amarna. Southern On usually means Hermonthis, but it might perhaps be a name for some monument in Akhetaton, which city is also named conspicuously in the inscription; or we might perhaps read “*Pillar of the King*” instead of “*southern On*.”

The Aton which casts its rays on the altar is said to be in the *Hacy* (Rejoicing) in Akhetaton. The palace of Amenophis III on the west bank of Thebes is named “the House of Rejoicing” and contained a great festival hall for the celebration of the jubilee¹. Two “Houses of Rejoicing” are named amongst the buildings designed by Akhenaton to adorn his new capital. In the fourth year of his reign, when he issued the proclamation establishing the city of Akhetaton, “the Horizon of the Sun,” at the modern Tell el-Amarna, Akhenaton caused copies of it to be engraved on the eastern cliffs at the north and south limits of the site. Three of these have been found and Mr Davies has recovered from them about half of the very long and exceedingly important text². Herein the king swears by the Aton to build all kinds of monuments in Akhetaton and binds himself not to remove elsewhere. Among other things he says “*I will make a House of Rejoicing for the Aton, my father, in the Island of ‘Aton distinguished in Jubilees’ in Akhetaton in this place; and I will make a House of Rejoicing...[for] the Aton, my father, in the Island of ‘Aton distinguished in Jubilees’ in Akhetaton in this place*” (ll. 15—16). The gap in the record deprives us of the reason why there should have been two buildings of almost identical name, purpose and situation; perhaps one was a palace, the other a jubilee hall, associated together as in his father’s residence. Further on a very fragmentary passage (l. 40) seems to give “*the celebration (?) of a Jubilee.....the south (?) tablet of Akhetaton, that I may (?) celebrate the Jubilee....*”

Perhaps Akhenaton counted on the gift of long years of reign in return for his piety to ‘Aton the Lord of Jubilees’; perhaps a jubilee hall was at that period considered a necessary part of a royal residence; perhaps the young and fanatical king in his anger against the Theban priesthood was determined that nothing should be omitted to render his new capital at once independent of the city which had been the chief residence of so many famous kings but had so grievously rebelled against his doctrine. In any case the “Rejoicing” of Major Gayer Anderson’s slab must be identical with the “House of Rejoicing” of Akhenaton’s great proclamation, and the name is borrowed from the Theban residence of Amenophis III.

¹ See WINLOCK, *Excavations at the Palace of Amenhotep III in The Egyptian Expedition, 1916—1917, of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, p. 8.

² Published and translated in *Rock Tombs of El Amarna*, vol. v, Pls. XXIX—XXXII, pp. 28—31.