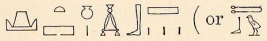
ABYDOS III.

CHAPTER I.

THE SHUNEH, MIDDLE FORT AND DEIR.

By E. R. Ayrton.

1. The great cemetery of Abydos is divided into two parts by the valley which runs up to the Royal Tombs. In the midst of the northern part stands a high fortress of brickwork, the dark mass of which is the most prominent feature of Abydos. Although a well-known place, yet its real nature had still to be worked out, and the excavation of it occupied most of my time this season. To the modern Egyptian this building is known as the "Shunet-ez-Zebib" or "storehouse of dried grapes," which Rochemonteix suggests is probably a corruption of the ancient name  (or), "The place of the ibis-vases," (*Œuvres diverses*, Num. § iii, p. 80.), because, from the XXIInd Dynasty onward, the greater part of the enclosure was used as a cemetery for the sacred birds.

Nearly the whole of the eastern half of the Shuneh was dug over by Mariette's workmen, and a general plan and section were made at the same time (Mariette, *Abydos* II, p. 46 and pl. 68). Nothing seems to have been found without the actual enclosure of the fort, except a very large number of vases containing the mummied ibis, some of which had brightly-coloured scenes upon them and a dedication to Thoth of Hermopolis.

In the narrow space which separates the two walls, nothing was then found on the north, east, or west sides. But the space on the south side seems to have been used as a cemetery; there the walls were hollowed out in parts, and small coffins of coarse baked clay, containing infants, were placed in the recesses. Steles upon which were the invocations to "Osiris, lord of birth," were also placed in the walls. These coffins and steles were of course later than the XIXth Dynasty. Mariette, however, found no object which could throw any light on the date of building of the fort. M. Maspero at first considered that it was built towards the time of the XVIIIth Dynasty, but changed his opinion in favour of the period between the VIth and XIIth Dynasties (*Dawn of Civilization*, p. 450, note 5), basing his argument entirely on the style of building. Within the enclosure of the Shuneh are a series of chambers, built rather askew to the other walls, with an entrance in the north face. Mariette notices the most southern of these on his plan, but considers their building to have been later than that of the rest of the fort.

2. Before I arrived on the scene of the excavations, Mr. Currelly, who was engaged on some cemetery work to the west of the Shuneh,

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