CHAPTER VIII
THE NEW EMPIRE. DOMESTIC LIFE AND ART

THE history of the Middle Kingdom after the XIIIth dynasty is very confused and uncertain. The names of many kings are recorded, but it is probable that several were reigning simultaneously, the kingdom being broken up into independent principalities of which the Theban was the most important. The XVth, XVIth, and XVIIth dynasties are assigned by Manetho to the Hyksos \(^1\) or "Shepherd Kings," a Semitic race who invaded the Delta from Syria and gradually dominated more or less the whole country. Whilst barbarous as conquerors, they were not without some degree of civilization: to them is due the introduction of the horse, previously unknown to Egypt, and the use of the chariot as an engine of warfare. But they were not extensive builders, though they left their mark on many of the existing temples, and a record survives of the building of one in their stronghold of Avaris in the Delta, the site of which is now unmarked.\(^2\)

\(^1\) The word Hyk means "prince," but whether the second syllable is rightly interpreted by Manetho to mean "Shepherd" is doubtful. It is probably a popular or derogatory translation of a word equivalent to Bedawin, implying a person of nomadic or desert race. (See Hall, "Near East," p. 212.)

\(^2\) Breasted, p. 216. What remains of Hyksos sculpture is mostly found in the Delta. It is always executed in black or grey granite, which may have come from Sinai or the quarries at Hammamet. The absence of red granite indicates that they had not command of the quarries at Assuan. See Petrie's "Tanis" (E. E. F.).
WALL AND CEILING DECORATIONS

Found in Theban tombs of the XVIIIth to XXth dynasties. (P. d'A. Hist.)

I Double spiral border with lotus flowers.
II A form of the Kheker ornament with lotus.
III Four lines "nebule" reversed and crossed.
IV A quadruple spiral with rosettes.

V A similar spiral with lotus.
VI Fret with rosettes. From a tomb of XXVIIth dynasty, copied from an XVIIth dynasty pattern.

The quadruple spiral and fret reappear frequently in other countries.
But though they adopted the language of the country, and their kings assumed the titles and customs of the Pharaohs, their rule remained odious to the native prince whom they had made tributary, and in course of time those at Thebes rebelled. After a war which is computed to have lasted nearly fifty years,\(^1\) Aahmes (Amasis), a prince of this family, succeeded in expelling them, and became the first king of the XVIIIth dynasty.

From this time the New Empire was established under the firm rule of a Theban house. Not only were Upper and Lower Egypt reunited in one government, but conquests also were made in the Sudan and Syria which increased trade and wealth, and led to an extraordinary development in building and architecture. From this time also the records are sufficiently explicit to place the chronology on a firm basis. The XVIIIth, XIXth, and XXth dynasties, comprising the five centuries from about 1600 B.C. to 1100 B.C., was the age of the great Pharaohs, the Amenheteps, Thothmes and Rameses, under whom Egypt reached its highest point of power, prosperity and internal development, and to whom the greater part of the existing remains in the neighbourhood of Thebes is due.

That the upper classes in Egypt lived in luxurious and tasteful surroundings is evident from the numerous objects and paintings which have been found in their tombs. Brilliantly coloured frescoes or low reliefs decorated their walls illustrating religious observances, agricultural and industrial operations, and scenes from the chase or daily life. Many of their decorative patterns obviously influenced the later art of other countries. Tables and chairs handsomely inlaid or otherwise ornamented,

\(^1\) See Hall, \textquotedblleft Near East,\textquotedblright{} p. 227.
though deficient in mechanical contrivances, are not inferior in taste and workmanship to modern specimens. Wooden models of ships, houses, soldiers, and artisans show a similar ingenuity in handicrafts, and jewelry in gold, enamel, and precious stones testifies to taste no less than wealth. A light kind of timber-construction was used for pavilions and garden-houses in which the lotus-flower motive was often gracefully adapted. This kind of architecture is only known through representations in wall pictures.¹

The scanty remains of a palace of Amenhetep III on the western plain of Thebes, indicate that the royal dwellings, though not substantially built, were situated in large and agreeable demesnes containing lakes and water-channels for irrigation. From the lower wall-courses which remain, it appears that the building itself was constructed largely of sun-dried bricks, and consisted of a complicated assemblage of rooms and courts, some of which had pillars of wood on circular stone bases to support their ceilings. The walls and floors were coated with white plaster, and beautified with naturalistic paintings of bulls, birds, and sedge-bordered lakes in a style which is more fully illustrated in the palace of his son at Tel-el-Amarna. For Amenhetep IV (Akhenaten),² the religious reformer, repudiated the name of his forefathers on account of its association with Amen, and forsaking the idolatrous Thebes built a new capital for himself.

Its site is a sandy plain on the right bank of the Nile about 200 miles below Thebes. It comprised a temple dedicated to the deity he worshipped through the medium of the Sun-disk (Aten), some idea of which may be formed from a design found in a tomb; and an immense

¹ See Appendix I, p. 231. ² See above, p. 18.
The total length is 1,546 feet.

The road which ran along this side appears to have been crossed by a triple gateway, which may have been the entrance to the precincts of the temple on the north.

GROUND PLAN OF AKHENATEN'S PALACE
From Petrie's "Tell-el-Amarna."
palace, one side of which was 500 yards long, to the adorning of which he seems to have applied all that was finest and most modern in the art of his day. It included at the south end a vast hall 423 feet long by 234 wide, the roof of which was supported by 544 square brick piers,¹ and four smaller halls each containing forty similar piers. These halls were arranged round three sides of a square courtyard which was surrounded by a pilled portico. At the northern end of the palace, which was probably the women's quarter, are several smaller halls or rooms, the floors of which are of stucco beautifully painted with naturalistic representations of vegetation and animal life. The style of this work, compared with the more conventional art which is found in temples and tombs appears altogether exotic, and it is possible that it was

¹ These piers seem to have been coated with stucco and worked with a torus at the quoins. Perrot and Chipiez suggest that they may have formed an undercroft to rooms of lighter construction above. P. and C., "Egypt," ii, 29.
influenced by the contemporary art of Crete to which it has some resemblance. At the same time there are details which seem to have emanated from a single mind with an original though not a very correct or cultivated taste. Fragments of cylindrical columns show palm-leaved capitals similar to those used in the early Memphite dynasties, but decorated with a glazed laying in gold and colours like cloisonné work on a large scale. Other fragments seem to have been parts of pillars imitating the irregular forms of tree trunks, with convolvulus-like creepers carved in naturalistic style up their whole length. It is said that the spiral was first used as an architectural ornament in this building.

After Akhenaten's death, which occurred when he was still young, his religious ideas were soon rejected by his successors, and his city was deserted. The more substantial parts of the buildings were broken up and removed for other uses, and the site, though temporarily occupied in Roman times, remained unbuilt on. Such vestiges as were left were protected by the deposits of ages until again brought to light in modern times, and more completely excavated and described by Dr. Flinders Petrie.¹

Apart from the remains at Tel-el-Amarna, where a broad street alongside of the palace with others leading from it, and the foundations of a number of houses, some of which seem singularly modern in their planning, can still be traced, the plan and arrangement of Egyptian cities and towns under the Empire is largely a matter of conjecture. Memphis, which before the rise of Babylon must have been the largest city of the world known to history, is now

¹ See his "Tell-el-Amarna," from which the accompanying plans and illustrations are copied by his permission.
PLAN OF A PALACE

With accessory buildings, from the tomb of Meri-Ra, a high priest of the Aten, Tel-el-Amarna. (The palace is on the left-hand side.)

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PALACE FROM THE ABOVE PLAN.
(Maspero.)
represented by shapeless mounds and the remains of a few broken statues.

At Thebes there is little to throw light on the character

A. Shallow steps to door.
P. Porch.
Y. Lobby.
L. Loggia or summer room, probably open on the south side.
H. Central Hall, often with a bench (mastaba), in front of which was a hearth.
B-G. The master's room and women's quarters.
I-K. Men's quarters.
M, N. Store-rooms.
S. Stairs to roof.
T, U. Cupboards.

and disposition of its secular buildings, though a good deal of it still awaits exploration. On the east side of the river the ceremonial approaches to the temples were grand avenues lined with ram-headed sphinxes or re-
cumbent rams, which probably formed a frontage for large buildings; and on the western bank there are the remains of a colony of priests and other persons connected with the service of the mortuary temples and tombs. But the dwellings of the middle and higher classes have disappeared owing to the general use of crude bricks which have long ago been reduced to dust; and it is chiefly from representations in the decoration of tombs and sarcophagi that we can form some idea

![Diagram](image)

**FRONTAGE OF A TWO-STORIED HOUSE WITH AN OPEN GALLERY ABOVE. (Maspero.)**

of the appearance of ordinary houses. The great extent of Thebes warrants the supposition that it contained many houses which stood in enclosed gardens with trees, ponds and other agreeable surroundings. The drawing on page 74, by C. Chipiez, reconstructed from a plan in a tomb at Thebes, gives a representation of such a villa on the river-bank. Another more important group of buildings is shown on a plan from Tel-el-Amarna. It depicts, by a convention which is common in old
plans, the enclosure with its divisions in plan, but the objects situated within it in elevation (p. 83).

From various representations it is evident that the Egyptian dwelling-house of the better sort had two or three stories with a flat roof which could be used for repose either by day or night. Sometimes it appears as a covered verandah, and in any case probably had an awning.

Notwithstanding the general scarcity of timber there can be no doubt that it was frequently used at an early period. The fronts of the mastabas are evidently imitations in stone of dwelling houses in which the framework and architraves were made of wood. The details of the sarcophagus of Menkau-Ra, of which a drawing was made before it was lost at sea on its way to England, are obviously suggested by an architectural design in which wooden planks were, at least, partly employed.¹

¹ The design of this sarcophagus has led to the supposition that it may have been renovated at a later date. The hollow cornice and roundels at the angles are said to have come into use in the Vth dynasty (Hölscher, p. 16). See illustration, p. 237, and cf. note p. 66 above.
The arrangement of the humbler dwellings of country folk and small farmers may be seen in wooden and clay models which have been used as funerary appurtenances. They usually contained two rooms on the ground floor, and receptacles for grain or other produce. On the flat roof was a small chamber which was reached by an external staircase. A courtyard in front was enclosed by a high wall of mud or crude brick. The British Museum has a number of such models, two of which are here depicted.
VESTIBULE TO THE SHRINE OF ANUBIS, DÉR-EL-BAHRI

From a drawing by R. Phené Spiers, F.S.A. (1866).