

SPENCER, P. — Amara West III. The Scenes and Texts of the Ramesside Temple. (Excavation Memoir, 114). Egypt Exploration Society, London, 2016. (30 cm, XXIV, 44, 206 pls.). ISBN 978-0-85698-227-9. £ 70.00.

The site known today as Amara West is located roughly halfway between the Third and Second Cataracts in Sudan. The geographical addition to the name is somewhat of a misnomer as it would normally refer to a location on the west bank of the Nile, whereas Amara is actually situated to the north of the river, which runs from west to east here. In antiquity the fortified town with its Ramesside temple was built on an island in the Nile, the northern channel of which has since dried up. The site was excavated by an expedition of the Egypt Exploration Society directed by H.W. Fairman during two seasons in 1938–9. After the interruption of the Second World War the expedition returned in 1947–8, when its first priority was to rebury the temple which had stood unprotected from the elements for eight years. Even in 1938 Fairman had expressed his concern that there would be ‘heavy loss’ during the summer as ‘the stone is of such poor quality’. Reburying the temple meant that its exterior walls had to be left uncopied and they remain so to this day.¹⁾ Unfortunately publication of the results of both excavation and epigraphical work was delayed time and again due to Fairman’s commitments to complete the final volume of Pendlebury’s *City of Akhenaten* III and many other projects including his own excavations at Sesebi as well as his ever increasing workload as Professor of Egyptology at Liverpool University, and at Fairman’s death in 1982 both Amara and Sesebi were still unpublished.

In 1993 the Committee of the EES entrusted Dr Patricia Spencer, then EES Secretary and an experienced archaeologist, with the publication of the Society’s work at Amara based on the extensive records left by Fairman and his team. This daunting task – it is never easy to publish someone else’s work, let alone if it was carried out half a century before – she has accomplished admirably. After publishing two volumes on the architecture and on the pottery and the cemeteries²⁾ she has now produced a full report of the epigraphical work on the scenes and inscriptions of the Ramesside temple. The front matter of the book is followed by 41 pages of text containing an Introduction, a description of the wall decoration of the temple based on Fairman’s notes, diaries, letters and preliminary reports,³⁾ a chapter summarizing the history of the temple and an Appendix dealing with the Viceroys of Kush in the Twentieth Dynasty, some of whom are attested at Amara only, their inscriptions being published here for the first time. After an index of personal names and objects (i.e. the locations where these objects are housed nowadays), the text is followed by 206 Plates containing photographs, facsimile drawings and, where the latter are not available, hand copies of the scenes and inscriptions.

¹ Excavations were continued during two seasons in 1948–9 under the direction of P.L. Shinnie, but no further epigraphic work in the Temple was done. Since 2008 work at Amara has been resumed by an expedition led by the British Museum, see the popular account in N. Spencer, A. Stevens, M. Binder, *Amara West: Living in Egyptian Nubia* (London, British Museum, 2014). See also www.britishmuseum.org/AmaraWest

² *Amara West I: The architectural report* (EES Excavation Memoir 63; London, 1997); II: *The cemetery and the pottery corpus* (EES Excavation Memoir 69; London, 2002).

³ *JEA* 25 (1939), 139–44; 34 (1948), 3–11. Fairman’s unpublished records are preserved in the EES Archive in London.

The aim was obviously a straightforward presentation of the material and no translations or commentary on philological or epigraphical details are offered.

The fortified town of Amara was founded by Seti I, possibly in order to provide a better vantage point for controlling the desert route from Selima Oasis than the much larger town on Sai Island, only a few kilometers further south.⁴⁾ Throughout the Ramesside Period the town served as the residence of the Deputy of Kush, the second-in-command of the Viceroy of Nubia. When construction began of the temple, which occupies the north-east corner of the walled enclosure, has been the subject of some debate, but it now seems certain that it, too, was initiated by Seti I. No decoration prior to Ramesses II is in evidence, but the lower courses of the mud-brick temenos wall surrounding it contained several bricks stamped with the cartouche of Seti I and there are also a few stelae of that king and a doorjamb,⁵⁾ although the latter was found reused in the town rather than in the temple itself. Construction most likely began with the inner sanctuary of the temple, which was decorated by Ramesses II very early in his reign, as is clear from the cartouches with the short nomen (without epithet) which was only used during his first year. The reliefs are partly in raised relief, a further indication of such an early date. This strongly suggests that Seti I had started the construction of the temple 'very late in his reign' (p. 35) and that he died when the work was only in its preliminary stages, after which it was continued without delay by his son Ramesses II. This, combined with a stela of Year 8 of Seti I found in the temple and recording a seven-day Nubian campaign against the 'enemies of Irem'⁶⁾ perhaps provides further, admittedly circumstantial evidence that Seti I died early in his 9th regnal year.⁷⁾ In connection with Seti I a further stray block should be mentioned here. It was found in the sanctuary area of the temple⁸⁾ and was once part of a scene depicting a king worshipping Thoth *nb mdw(t)-ntr*.⁹⁾ The inscription mentions a king [...] *m3't-r'* [...] which has been taken to be Seti I by Fairman, Spencer and Brand, but the crudely carved sunk relief would seem to be stylistically at odds with the refined reliefs Seti I is justly famous for and the block may well date to the reign of Ramesses VI (*[nb]-m3't-r' [mry-Imn]*) or even Ramesses XI (*[mn]-m3't-r' [stp.n-Pth]*), kings who are both attested elsewhere in the temple.

The temple was finished by Ramesses II, who also saw it through some of several changes of plan and even of orientation, the *raison d'être* of which is not always clear. Relief panels on the columns of the Hypostyle Hall showing the

king worshipping various deities were at some point after the second decade of the reign plastered over and recarved at about three times the size of the originals. Since the plaster has long since fallen away both versions can now be seen, providing interesting comparisons between the early and the later style. A paved forecourt was added on the north side of the temple which unusually extended beyond the buttressed enclosure wall of the town. As in several other temples of Ramesses II two commemorative stelae were set up there, one with the proclamation of the First Hittite Marriage of Year 34, the other with the so-called Blessings of Ptah.¹⁰⁾ The temple lacks a pylon, perhaps, it may be suggested, because its north-south orientation made it impossible for the sun to rise and set between the towers of the pylon. No major architectural changes or additions were effectuated after the long reign of Ramesses II, but many Ramesside kings added their inscriptions in various parts of the temple, including Merenptah, Amenmesse, Ramesses III, VI, IX and XI. Successive Nubian Viceroys and their Deputies also left inscriptions.

The epigraphical method used by Fairman and his team is described on pp. 3–4:

'The expedition copied the Temple walls and columns by taking rubbings and then tracing over them in front of the actual scenes. This method of achieving full-scale copies of large monuments was used by many epigraphic missions at the time (and later) but has now been abandoned. Its accuracy was always dependent on the eye and drawing skills of the copyist, and in the high winds which prevailed at Amara West the EES team often found it difficult to trace scenes accurately in the field'. ... 'the epigraphic copying was mainly undertaken by [Fairman] himself and David Bell who, as a draughtsman, would have had good copying skills, but he was not an Egyptologist and may not always have understood what he was seeing, especially on damaged surfaces. Both men ... were working under pressure at the end of a very long and physically demanding season, so it is, perhaps, not surprising if the copies, when compared with the photographs, do not always seem to be as accurate as they should be.'

Given these strenuous circumstances one can only admire what they achieved.¹¹⁾ In the present publication, however, the comparison with the photographs (most of them taken by the expedition's photographer Peter Fell) is severely hampered by the small scale at which many of them have been reproduced compared with the large scale of the drawings. In many cases this makes it difficult or even impossible to check the line drawing against the photograph. Scanning a photograph and then blowing it up on the computer screen produces a raster that obscures the details rather than clarifying them. This is particularly annoying when there is good reason to doubt the accuracy of the drawing. A case in point is the scene shown in Pls 106/107a and 108. It depicts the king being ushered into the presence of Amun by a falcon-headed god and a lion-headed goddess, presumably Khonsu and Mut. The top of the column of text between the god and

⁴ N. Spencer, in *Amara West: Living in Egyptian Nubia*, 10.

⁵ *Amara West I*, 124, Pl. 104.

⁶ Stela 101 (Pl. 202b), Brooklyn 39.424. As Peter Brand rightly observes Stela fragment 111 (Pl. 203c), now Khartoum 3063, may well represent the top of the Brooklyn stela, see P.J. Brand, *The Monuments of Seti I. Epigraphic, Historical and Art Historical Analysis* (PÅ 16; Leiden etc., 2000), 291–2 (3.144 and 3.145).

⁷ J. van Dijk, "The Date of the Gebel Barkal Stela of Seti I", in D.A. Aston et al., *Under the Potter's Tree. Studies on Ancient Egypt presented to Janine Bourriau on the occasion of her 70th birthday* (OLA 204; Leuven etc., 2011), 325–32.

⁸ *Amara West I*, 23 and 46, Pls 18d–19. Fairman's field diary quoted there clearly indicates that the block was found in Dec. 1938 in the Sanctuary area of the temple, not in the so-called 'Governor's Palace' excavated in 1947–8, as stated by Brand, *The Monuments of Seti I*, 292 (3.146). The confusion is due to the fact that Fairman included the block in his 1947–8 preliminary report in *JEA* 34, 5 and 9, Pl. VI: 2.

⁹ Not Re-Harakhty as surmised by Brand, loc. cit.

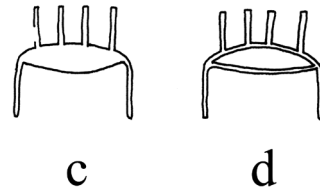
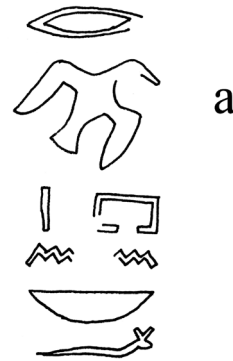
¹⁰ These texts as well as some other inscriptions from Amara had already been incorporated in Kitchen's *Ramesside Inscriptions*, based on Fairman's copies, see *KRI I*, 102–4; II, 212–22, 233 (242–55), 258 (272–81), 322, 777; III, 72–3, 117, 119; IV, 33–7, 203; V, 2, 382–3; VI, 63–4, 461; VII, 8–11.

¹¹ It should also be mentioned here that all of the drawings were recopied in 1987–89 by H.M. Stewart 'since the original inked drawings had become very yellow and brittle' (p. vii).

the king is incomplete and badly damaged and it is not easy to make sense of Fairman's text here. The fragment of a column framing line on the left given by Fairman is perhaps more likely to be part of an *s* as none of the rest of the column has a framing line. The standard phrase in such scenes is *k prt bs nsw r hwt-ntr nt Imn* 'entering and leaving, ushering the king into the temple of Amun', but although *bs* (reversed) may be present, the signs following it are unclear. If Fairman's rendering of the traces is correct one might suggest [*šsp* (?)] *r nsw¹ r bs=f r¹² hwt-ntr nt Imn r hnw* (?) *n nb=f* '[receiving (?)] the king in order to lead him into the temple of Amun to the shrine of his lord'. The word *hnw*, if that is the correct reading here, is written with a sign of a bird flying up which is quite different from the usual sign for *hn* (G40/41; see Fig. a).¹³ Here a larger and clearer photograph would have been helpful.

Another interesting inscription is that of the Nubian Viceroy and general Ramessesnakht on Pls 10–11, where he is shown kneeling below horizontal bands of text naming Ramesses VI. On Pl. 10 the column of text behind the kneeling figure of this man clearly gives the name of his father, but the signs as shown in the line drawing (see Fig. b) can hardly be correct. Here again, the two photographs of the scene in question are reproduced at about a quarter of the size of the line drawing and they are useless for checking the inscription. The name of Ramessesnakht's father is undoubtedly to be read *In-šfnw*,¹⁴ a rare personal name derived from the word for an obscure profession 'collector/remover of shrubs'. The Viceroy's father's title is not mentioned, but it seems very likely that he is the *In-šfnw* 'who was a general' mentioned in the Great Harris Papyrus (61a, 12 and 62b, 2) as being in charge of two minor temples of Ramesses III in Middle Egypt, presumably as a 'pension' after retiring from active service in the military.¹⁵ At any rate this Viceroy and general Ramessesnakht cannot be the same man as the Viceroy with the same name who served under Ramesses XI, as suggested on pp. 39–40, for this second Ramessesnakht was the son and successor of the Viceroy Wentawat.

Other places where one would have liked to be able to check the drawing against a photograph include the inscription in front of the first royal statue underneath the processional barque on Pl. 141b (*/// nbt* (sic?) *šps*...?; cf. Pl. 144b) and the text above 'a figure wearing the double crown offering to the deified king' (p. 19), actually a falcon-headed deity welcoming the king (Pl. 95b). The traces above the god suggest he is Horus of Buhen. A real missed opportunity is the treatment of the hieratic graffiti in the western thickness of the gateway leading to the Hypostyle Hall. Fairman mentions them in his field diary, but 'there are no copies or notes about



Figs a–d



them in the surviving records' (p. 15) and it is therefore a real shame that the only photograph showing them, which moreover appears to be a good one, is reproduced at such a diminutive scale (Pl. 39e).

Interesting from a palaeographical point of view are the two bandeau inscriptions of Year 8 of Ramesses IX on Pls 22–33, including some very peculiar forms of *šw* (Sign-list F40) in *šfw* (= *fšw*) 'awe' (see Figs c–d). They record variants of the Horus, Nebty and Golden Horus names of that king which do not seem to be attested anywhere else.¹⁶

The few criticisms voiced above notwithstanding, this volume is an important contribution which makes many scenes and inscriptions available for the first time and shows them in their context, something that is inevitably lacking from text corpora like Kitchen's *Ramesside Inscriptions*. The author deserves our unrestricted gratitude for undertaking what may at first have seemed a thankless task.¹⁷

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¹² Reading Fairman's first *nb* as the fish (Sign-list K 5) and the second as *r*.

¹³ For the meaning cf. *KRI* I, 66, 15–16 = S. Schott, *Kanais. Der Tempel Sethos I. im Wadi Mia* (Göttingen, 1961), Pl. 19, Tekst B, 8–9: "... the building of a town in which there is a shrine (*nīwt hnw m hnw=s*). How excellent is a town which has a temple (*hwt-ntr*). I will build a shrine (*hnt*) in this place..."

¹⁴ Ranke, *PN* I 35, 24; cf. M. Thirion, "Notes d'onomastique. Contribution à une révision de Ranke *PN*", *RdE* 31 (1979), 90–91.

¹⁵ Cf. W. Helck, *Zur Verwaltung des Mittleren und Neuen Reichs* (Pä 3; Leiden, 1958), 371 and 222–3; J. van Dijk, "A statue of Yupa and his wife Nashaia in the New Kingdom Necropolis at Saqqara", in id. (ed.), *Another Mouthful of Dust. Egyptological Studies in Honour of Geoffrey Thorndike Martin* (OLA 246; Leuven etc., 2016), 98 n. 19.

¹⁶ These names are not listed in J. von Beckerath, *Handbuch der ägyptischen Königsnamen* (MÄS 49; Mainz, 1999), 172–3. For the eastern bandeau see *KRI* VI, 461 (12).

¹⁷ On a different note, the curious habit of the Dutch to write their *y* as *ij* continues to baffle many of our foreign colleagues, as this reviewer has experienced first hand. Here the name of Ad Thijs is consistently misspelled as Thjis (pp. xxiv and 41).