The Mortuary Temple of Merenptah on the West Bank at Luxor In Egypt by Mark Andrews

The mortuary temple of Merenptah (Merenptah), Ramesses II's thirteenth son and successor, was mostly destroyed long ago, but recently has been restored to a large degree and is one of the newest of the sites on the West Bank at Luxor (ancient Thebes) available for sightseeing. The restoration work was completed by the Swiss Institute of Archaeology in collaboration with Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA). In addition, a modern museum has been built near the temple complex in order to display items unearthed during the excavations.

Merenptah's Mortuary temple before restoration

During these excavations and restorations, the archaeological team made a number of discoveries, including blocks from a monumental gateway, fragments of a colossal limestone
sphinx and parts of nine jackal-headed sphinxes. We are told by the project director, Horst Jaritz, that some of these objects were stunning. For example, he notes the find of astonishingly well preserved polychrome reliefs of Amenhotep III, which may be the finest examples known from Egyptian history.

The New Museum The structure, which reused considerable material (including statuary) from other monuments (including those of Hatshepsut and Akhenaten), especially those of Amenhotep III mortuary temple, was excavated by Petrie. However, it should be noted that Amenhotep III's mortuary temple was almost completely destroyed prior to Merenptah's quarrying of its stone. Petrie discovered the famous Israel Stele here in 1896. However, this stele too was originally made for Amenhotep III. But it was Merenptah, a 19th Dynasty King, that had the text recarved on its reverse side to describe his victories over the Libyans and other foreign people, including the earliest known historical reference to Israel.
Interestingly, the original destruction of Merenptah’s temple complex resulted from the same forces that took Amenhotep III’s structure. Built not far away from the more ancient temple of Amenhotep III, a Nile flood first swept away the two pylons leading into the temple, along with the first hypostyle hall, its side chambers, the second hypostyle hall and even the cult chapels. Soon the rest of the building also collapsed. This was not unlike the destruction of Amenhotep III's complex, though the earlier king's mortuary temple was built so close to the flood plan that a
The temple, though much smaller than his fathers (just over half as large), nevertheless copies much of the Ramesseum’s design. It is basically the same, only scaled down in size. Like his father's monument, this mortuary temple featured a forecourt with columns along its sides, and a palace adjoining the southern wall. Also, the second court featured Osiride pillars at least on its inner side, and may have also had Osiride statues of the king. After the second court was a twelve columned hypostyle hall, in turn followed by an eight columned and then an inner sanctuary with related chapels. Here was also found a court with a large sun altar.

There we mudbrick buildings along the sides of the temple including a complex of storage annexes to the north where a "treasury" was found. A small sacred lake lay to the south within an extension of the complex. The complex as a whole was then surrounded by a mudbrick enclosure wall.

References:
Date

Publisher

Reference Number

Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt, The
Wilkinson, Richard H.

2000

Thames and Hudson, Ltd

ISBN 0-500-05100-3

Oxford History of Ancient Egypt, The
Shaw, Ian

2000