

A NEW PAINTED TOMB IN PALESTINE.

PAINTED tombs are so rare in Palestine that it is with great pleasure we draw attention to a valuable illustrated article by Mr. Warren J. Moulton, in the journal recently inaugurated by the Archaeological Institute of America.¹ Hitherto the best specimens were those discovered at Beit Jibrin by Dr. Peters and Dr. Thiersch, the full account of which was issued by the P.E.F. in 1905 (*Painted Tombs at Marissa*). Since then, the natives, by illicit digging, have found and rifled a number of tombs, the contents of which have come upon the market. In the course of 1913 Mr. Moulton heard of a tomb in the Beit Jibrin containing cocks painted in red on the wall, and after some search located it a full mile away from the "Tombs of Marissa" and close by the modern village. In his article he gives full measurements and details, the most interesting of which are the following:—

"In entering, one slides down an inclined plane of *débris* and then through an opening just under the top of the door . . . Once inside, one finds himself in a small single tomb-chamber . . . it has three arcosolia, or circular arched recesses, each containing a sunk bench grave." The paintings consist in birds and flowers. In one part there are the remains of the bodies and tails, probably of peacocks, while the flowers seem to be intended for anemones. On the right wall were two spirited representations of cocks done in red, facing each other, and separated by flowers and a cross. Below is a grape vine with several clusters of fruit. Mr. Moulton observes that crosses are throughout an integral part of the original scheme of decoration. This is shown both by their colouring and by their position. "Of themselves they would not necessarily prove this to be a Christian tomb, for the cross has been used as an ornament and as a religious symbol from earliest times. However, their nearly equilateral shape, as well as the emphasis given to them in the design, incline one to believe that they belong to the Byzantine period . . ."

¹ *Art and Archaeology*, Vol. I, No. 2, Sept., 1914, pp. 62-71.

“Flowers would indicate the same date, for they were used to adorn Christian tombs at an early period. In the case of those resembling anemones it is possible that the lilies of the field mentioned in the Gospels are intended.” It agrees with this that the vine is an important Christian emblem. As for the peacocks, they represent immortality, on the supposition that their flesh was incorruptible; cocks were regarded as representing immortality or as heralds of the dawn of the coming of Christ. “In the darkness of the tomb they were thought of as proclaiming the morn of the resurrection. For this reason they are painted with open beaks in the act of crowing.” Mr. Moulton points out that in the tombs of Marissa a cock with open beak is depicted, striding away from the doorway leading into the main chamber. Here the chthonic significance is made very evident by the representation of the three-headed Cerberus.

Mr. Moulton, who was on one of the tours of the American School of Oriental Research, had little opportunity for visiting other tombs in the vicinity. He saw enough, however, to conclude that the spot was the site of a necropolis constructed or appropriated by Christians. “We know that Beit Jibrin was early an important Christian centre, but we have as yet only fragmentary information as to the development of its history. Crosses occur in the great domed caverns for which the locality is famous. They are also scratched or painted in red in some tombs near the ruined church of St. Anne. But up to the present no Christian tomb possessing such elaborate decoration as the one here described has come to light in this vicinity or elsewhere in Palestine.”

It remains to add that Mr. Moulton gives eleven excellent illustrations of the site, the paintings and the contents of the tomb.

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