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Author(s): Fran Weatherhead

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WALL-PAINTINGS FROM THE KING'S HOUSE AT AMARNA*

By FRAN WEATHERHEAD

New information about the wall-paintings discovered by Petrie, and later by Pendlebury, in the King's House at Amarna has been obtained by the author from archival sources and from a visit to the site in 1993. This has led to a new interpretation of one of the rooms as a throne room.

THE King's House is part of a complex of ritual and administrative buildings located in the centre of the ancient city of Akhetaten. It lies to the north of the Small Aten Temple and close to the Great Palace, to which it is connected by the Bridge.

Petrie was the first to excavate the King's House, in 1891–2. In his brief investigation, apparently lasting little more than a week, Petrie found no objects, not even sherds,¹ but he was fortunate in discovering several areas of wall-painting still *in situ*. He considered that there had been many more paintings originally, but that these had disappeared due to the destruction of the walls by villagers removing the mud bricks for fertiliser.² The wall-paintings were probably all found in the north-eastern block, a complex of rooms which included a hypostyle hall, immediately to the south of the garden court (fig. 1). The building was re-excavated in 1931–2 by Pendlebury, who spent little more time at the site than Petrie. He had originally hoped to excavate part of the house not shown on Petrie's plan, but soon found that where Petrie had worked, the plan was unreliable and the area needed redigging, although not necessarily to floor level.³ He also found painted plaster adhering to the walls in this part of the house, along with a large number of fallen fragments. The wall-paintings were important to Pendlebury's re-evaluation of the building, which Petrie had thought must have belonged to a high official.⁴ He identified it as the King's residence not only because of its close connection with the Great Palace, but also because the paintings included scenes unlikely to be found in a commoner's house.⁵ Later authors have suggested that it was an administrative palace.⁶

*This article has benefited from discussion with Mr Barry Kemp and Mr Andy Boyce, whom I thank. It has been written as part of a project to study the wall and floor paintings at Amarna, funded by the Leverhulme Foundation, to which I express my gratitude. I am also grateful to Mr Boyce for providing the illustrations, and to Mr A. Baxendale and Mrs L. Shearman for their assistance on site. I wish to thank the following individuals and institutions for allowing me to study and publish material in their collections: Mrs B. Adams and Dr R. Janssen, Petrie Museum, University College London; Dr P. Bienkowski, Liverpool Museum; and the Committee of the EES.

¹W. M. F. Petrie, *Tell El Amarna* (London, 1894), 23; Petrie's diary (in the Petrie Museum, University College London), 70–3.

²Petrie, *Tell El Amarna*, 15.

³J. D. S. Pendlebury, *JEA* 18 (1932), 147; Pendlebury's diary (in the EES archives), entries 21 December 1931 to 2 January 1932.

⁴Petrie, *Tell El Amarna*, 23.

⁵J. D. S. Pendlebury, *City of Akhenaten*, III (London, 1951), 86 (hereafter COA III).

⁶B. J. Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilisation* (London, 1991), 287–8; D. O'Connor, 'City and Palace in New Kingdom Egypt', *CRIPEL* 11 (1989), 85–6, fig. 2.

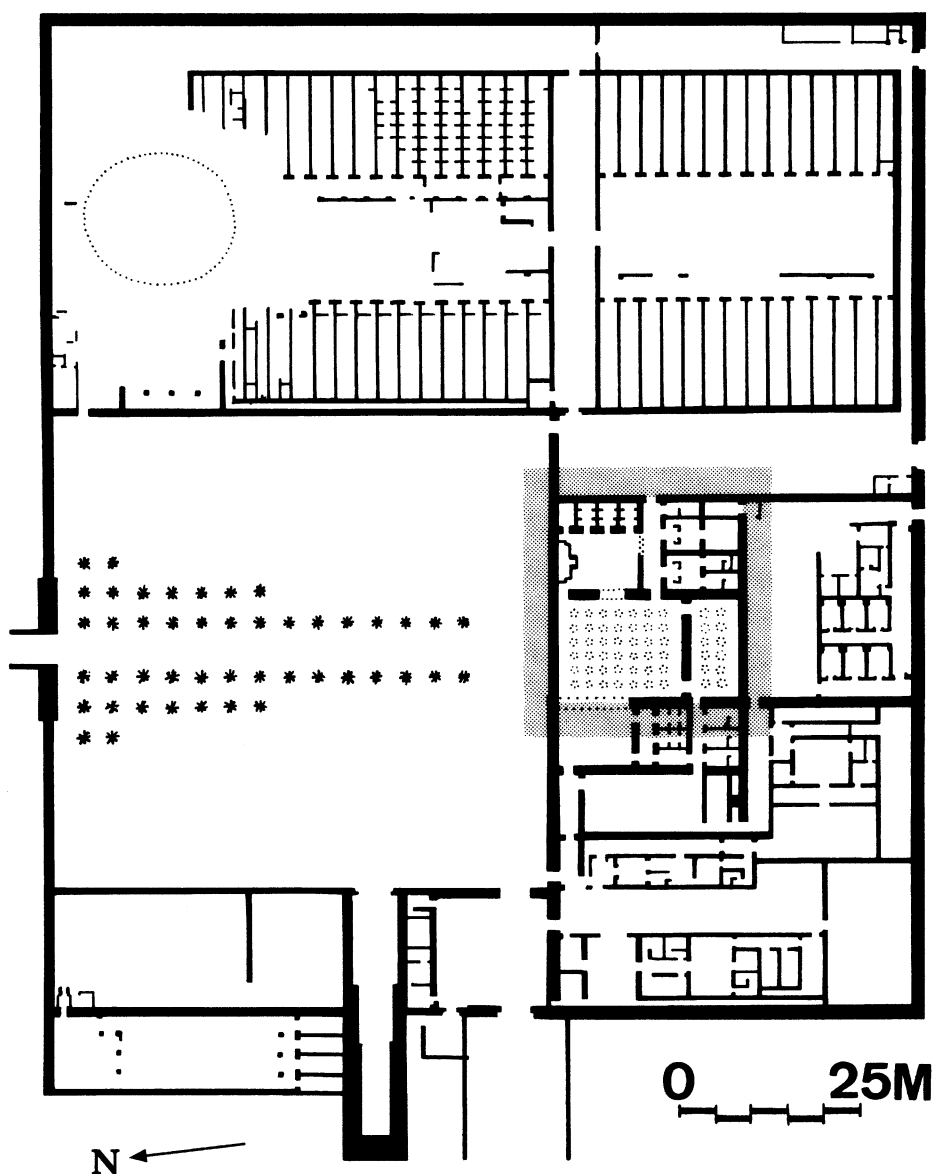


FIG. 1. Plan of the King's House showing the north-east quarter where paintings were found (after COA III, pl. xvi).

The descriptions of the wall-paintings in the published works of Petrie and Pendlebury are disappointingly brief and often imprecise. Following their accounts, in March 1993 the author decided to investigate the north-east section of the King's House. The aim was to ascertain whether any painted plaster still remained on the walls and to see if further information could be obtained about the designs. It was found, somewhat unexpectedly, that this was the case; providentially Pendlebury had protected several areas of painting by stacking rubble or bricks and fine sand in front of them. Small areas of these coverings were removed, sufficient to reveal the presence of the paintings and

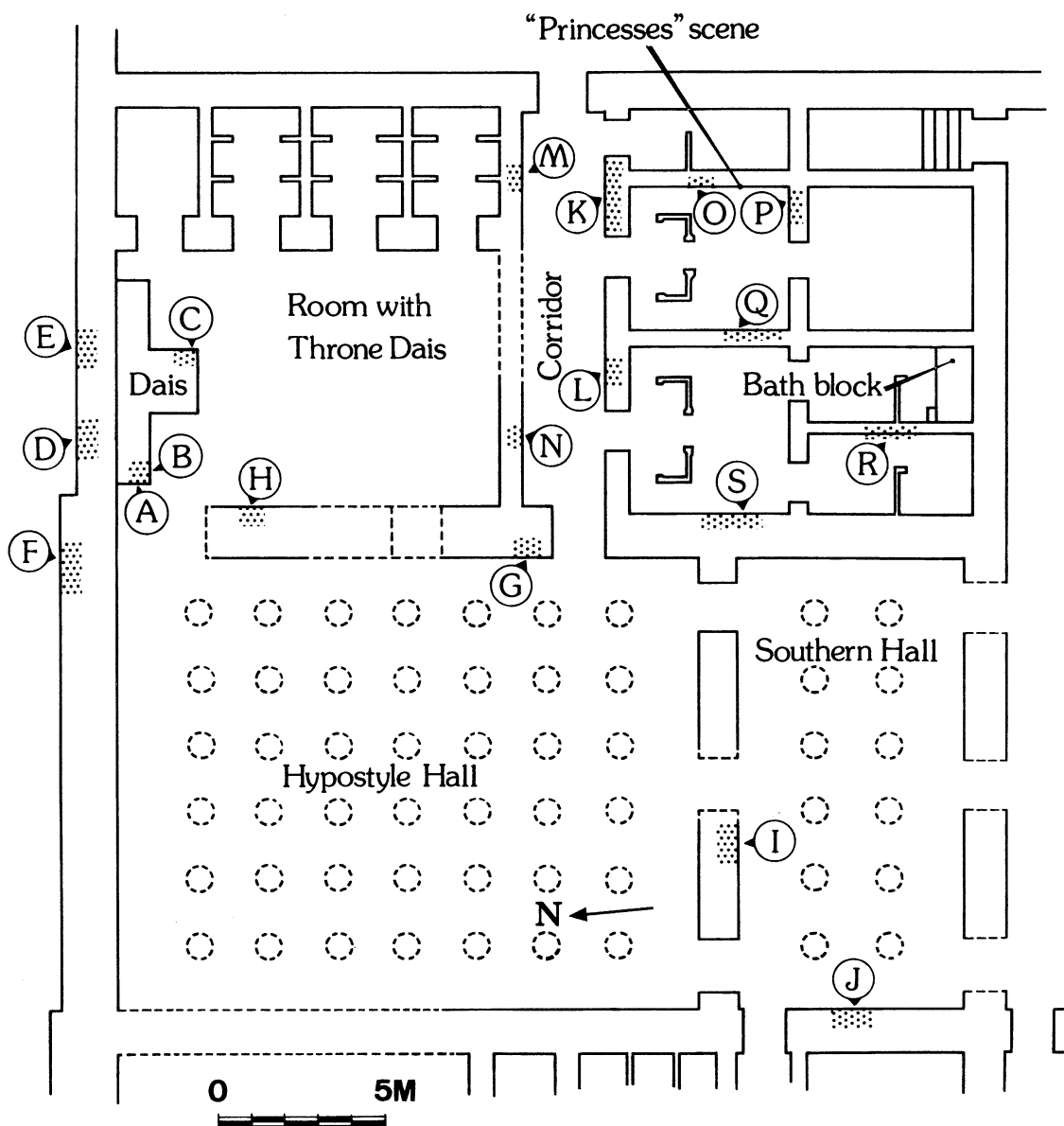


FIG. 2. North-east quarter, showing the main features. Letters in circles indicate areas where wall-paintings were found in 1993. This figure has slight modifications made to certain walls on the plan in *COA* III, pl. xvi, based on observations made at the site in 1993.

to give an indication of their designs. It is clear that there has been some erosion of the painted plaster since Pendlebury's time, and probably much more since Petrie's. In figure 2 each of the 'test' excavations of 1993 has been given a letter, A to S, which are also referred to in the text.

The most famous fragment of wall-painting found by Petrie is the 'Princesses panel', now in the Ashmolean Museum,⁷ which appears to show a scene from the private life

⁷Petrie, *Tell El Amarna*, 15, 23, pl. i.12.

of the royal family. After describing this in the excavation report, Petrie lists other subjects he saw depicted on the walls of the King's House, but without giving precise locations. These were, '... the legs of two kneeling captives (Asiatic and Negro) with a bowl on a stand between them, and the legs of some figures and a flight of stairs.'⁸ On the ground he noted fragments fallen from the walls which included depictions of ornamented coffers and groups of faces.⁹ He collected some of these, and they are now in the Petrie Museum, University College London.¹⁰ During Pendlebury's excavations, many more fragments of painted plaster were found in the room from which Petrie had removed the 'Princesses panel'.¹¹ Pendlebury's other discoveries included dado panel designs which had figures above them in at least one room¹² and possibly foreigners painted on an outer wall.¹³

The main designs found by the early excavators, then, are captives or subject foreigners and the dado panels. The descriptions of Petrie and Pendlebury will be enlarged upon below with reference to the recent discoveries, and some paintings will be more precisely provenanced.

Subject foreigners

A previously unpublished site photograph from Pendlebury's excavation of the King's House, with no exact provenance noted, shows a section of wall with parts of two kneeling foreigners (see pl. VII, 1). The position of this fragment was identified in 1993, (fig. 2, A) on the west side of the platform, which Pendlebury called an altar, in the room east of the Hypostyle Hall. Some of the design shown on the photograph is now missing but a substantial part remains, due to the protective covering heaped against it. The painted surface is extremely delicate, but still intact (fig. 3a).

The foreigners are situated at a low level on the side of the platform. They are painted on a bright yellow ground, and placed on a black band above plain white skirting, 15 cm high. On the photograph there were originally two figures, but now the formerly less complete left-hand figure has eroded away completely. The photograph shows only his knees, covered by a white skirt. The better-preserved figure on the right can be studied *in situ*. Probably an Asiatic, he wears a white costume with a striped blue girdle, two tiers of red and blue fringes on the upper part of the skirt, and another fringe at the base. His foot is painted a light red-brown, slightly paler than the usual Egyptian male skin-colour. In front of the Asiatic is a white offering-stand supporting a dish with a cross-hatch design, perhaps imitating basketry. A trace of the green offerings remains. The photograph possibly shows traces of another offering-stand between the figures, but this is now totally lost. The extant width is 65 cm, and, by using this as a guide, the original width of the area containing both figures may be estimated to have been about 90 cm. The plaster bearing the paintwork is an unusual pinkish-buff colour. It is 0.3–0.7 cm thick, and coats a layer of the usual type of mud wall-plaster encountered elsewhere at the site.

⁸ Ibid. 15.

⁹ Ibid. 15.

¹⁰ These were later studied by N. de Garis Davies, *JEA* 7 (1921), 1–7, pls. i–iv.

¹¹ COA III, 88. The fragments associated with the 'Princesses panel' are the subject of another article.

¹² Pendlebury, *Tell El Amarna* (London, 1935), 90; COA III, 87, pl. xlvi.3.

¹³ COA III, 38, 88.

An area of painting totally unrecorded by the early excavators was found in 1993: about 50 cm wide, it shows another foreigner (fig. 3b), and is on the south face of the platform only a few centimetres from the other figures (fig. 2, B). The painted front of the platform showing this area is just visible in the distance on plate xlv.4 in *COA* III. The skirt of the figure appears to be plain white, and no fringing can be seen. The foot is painted a paler skin colour than the figure on the other side of the block, implying that he could have been of a different race. No offering-stand is visible.

On Pendlebury's plan of the King's House, the 'altar' is shown with indented sides and a wide central stairway or ramp. Our investigation of the dais showed it to be a simple rectangle (see fig. 4). The inaccuracy on Pendlebury's plan is no doubt due to the ruinous state in which he found this structure,¹⁴ which probably already had the sides partly robbed of bricks, as was found in 1993. From the recent more careful investigation, the platform was found to be 0.97 m wide, with a length of 5.37 m, and the central stairway, 1.9 m wide, extends 1.47 m into the room.

Pendlebury also found a portion of the eastern side of the central stairway or ramp leading to the platform. This preserved some moulding features and a white skirting.¹⁵ It was located in 1993, the torus loose and barely existing but with a section of cavetto cornice still attached (fig. 2, C). This is striped in red, blue, and green, separated by white. There is a sketchy, unintelligible white design on a yellow ground between the torus and skirting. The surviving length is c. 20 cm, and the skirting is 8 cm high (fig. 3d). There is reason to assume that a torus and cavetto cornice continued from the ramp or stairway along the top of the platform (see below). By extending the angle of the torus moulding on the surviving length of stairway, and allowing for the height of a row of kneeling foreigners with a torus moulding and cavetto cornice on the sides of the dais, it can be estimated that the dais originally stood about 70 cm high.

More evidence of supplicating foreigners comes from Petrie's excavation report, where he mentions two kneeling captives, Asiatic and Negro, with an offering-stand between them, but does not specify where in the King's House the design was found or illustrate it.¹⁶ A carefully painted drawing has recently been found in Petrie's portfolio of his work at Amarna, held at the Petrie Museum. The drawing (fig. 3c) shows the lower part of an Asiatic and a Negro, separated by an offering-stand; this is presumed to be the same as the design mentioned in the published volume. It is also very similar to the design of the kneeling figures on the platform described above. Although the paper on which the drawing was done is browned and fragile, and a little of the right-hand figure is lost at the bottom of the sheet, the drawing is very clear. Both foreigners wear long tunics with decorative girdles, the Negro's having additional ties in front. The tunic of the Asiatic is fringed, the colouring being the same as that on the figure recently rediscovered on the platform. The background has not been coloured in, but yellow shown between the struts of the offering-stand suggests this was the overall background colour. Colour is also not indicated on the tunics, but they would probably have been white. The offering-stand holds a cross-hatched dish, again similar to the one on the platform. Its contents are painted green, mottled slightly in black.

¹⁴*COA* III, pl. xvi. The shape of the dais on Petrie's plan (*Tell El Amarna*, pl. xl) is altogether unreliable.

¹⁵*COA* III, 87, pl. xlv.4. The description states that the fresco of kneeling figures is on the wall of the ramp or steps, but it is actually on the wall of the dais.

¹⁶Petrie, *Tell El Amarna*, 15.

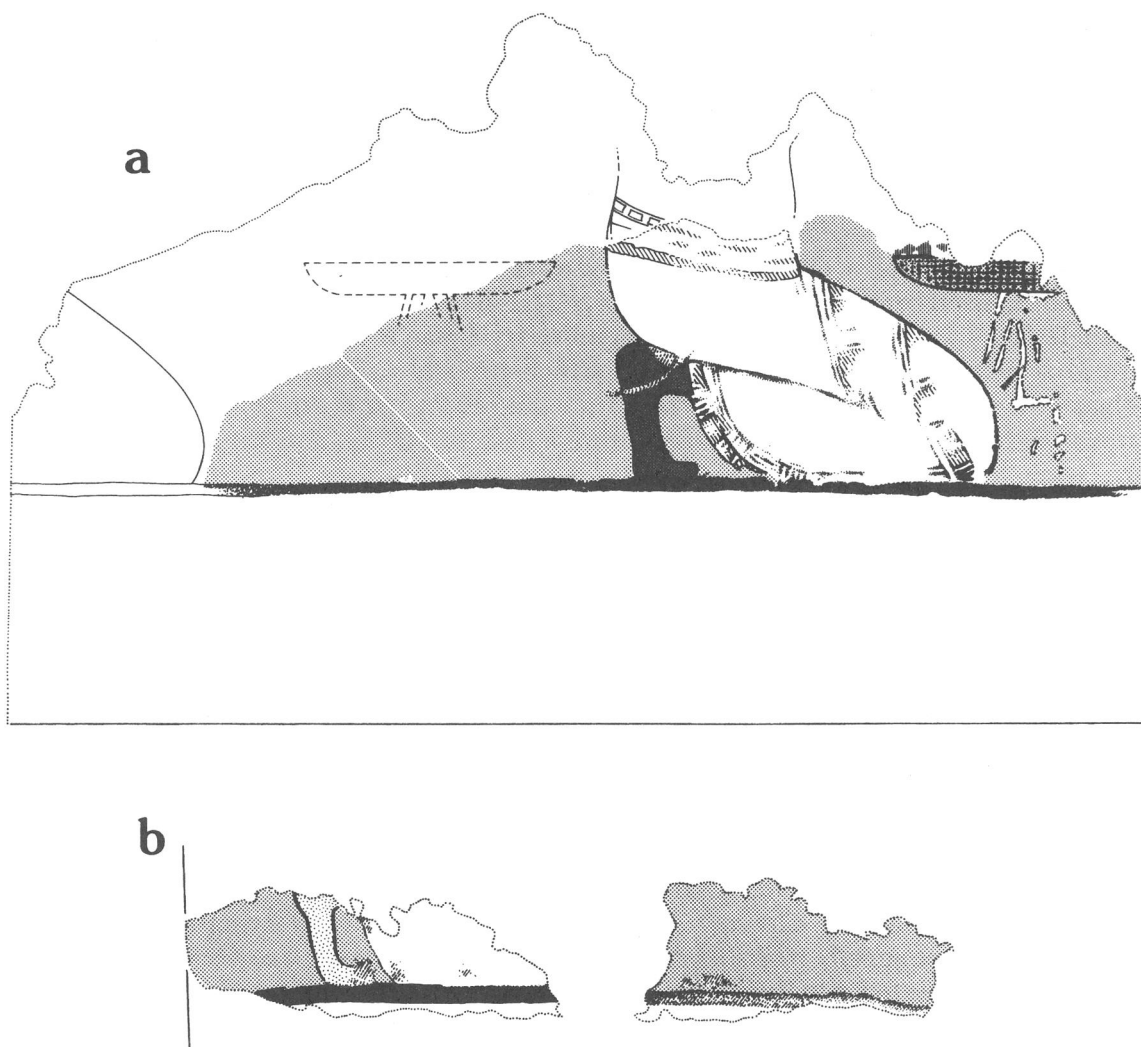
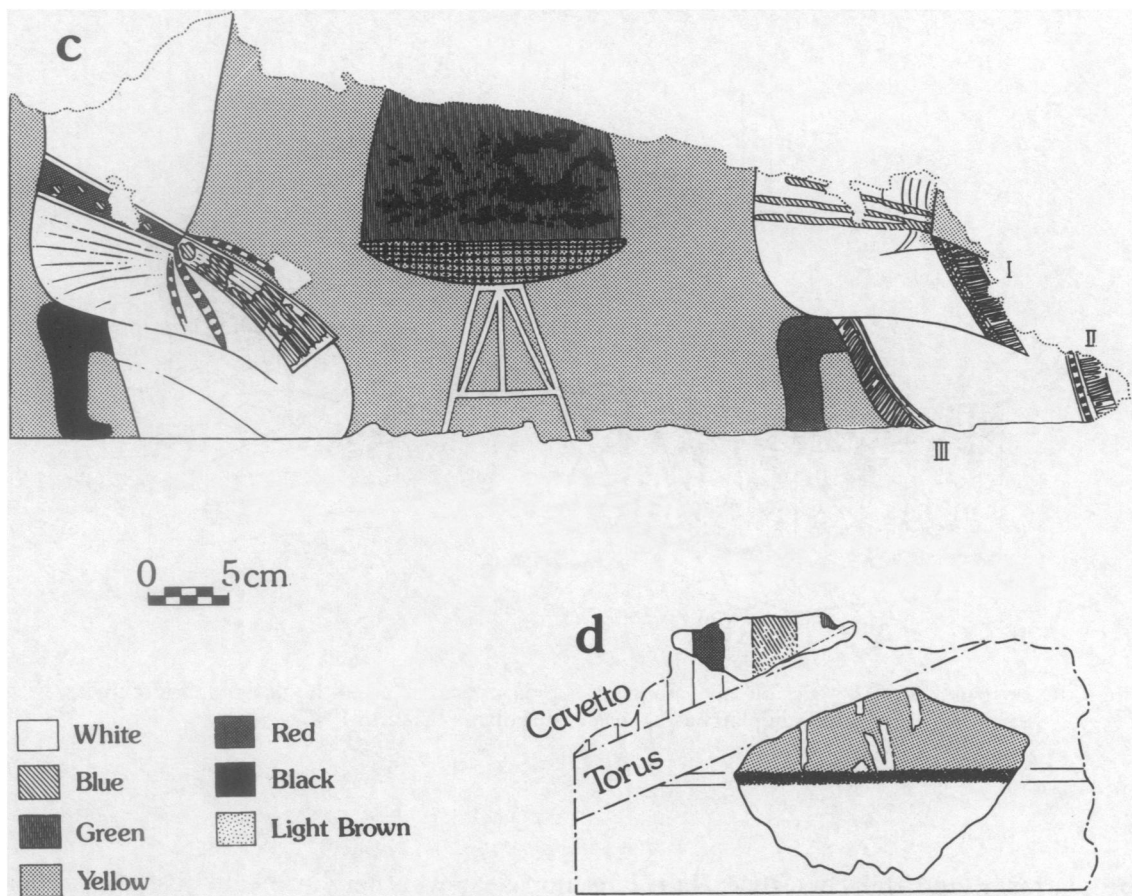


FIG. 3. Designs on the dais, including kneeling foreigners.

- (a) Painting on the west side of the dais, A. The shaded area shows the extent of the painting in 1993, which is within the outline of the paintwork found in 1931–2. Possible traces of an offering-stand exist between the figures. All the outlines are painted in red.
 (b) Painting on the south face of the dais, B, as found in 1993.

(Continued on facing page)

An obvious place to position the figures drawn by Petrie is on the platform, as part of a continuous frieze of foreigners in obeisance. Not only are the designs similar, but so too are the widths of the figures (on the drawing 20 cm and 24 cm, on the platform 25 cm). The expanse drawn is 70 cm wide, which could fit, with room for one more figure, along the front of the platform, the figures facing towards the central stairway or ramp (fig. 4). Unfortunately, except for the corner area, the front of the platform, including any painted plaster, is now destroyed. However, Petrie removed more fragments from the walls than the well-known 'Princesses panel' (he admitted to half a dozen in



- (c) Copy of Petrie's facsimile believed to represent paintings on the south face of the dais (fig. 4). The Roman numerals around the right-hand figure relate to the fringes. i. Two rows of blue dots, separated by a row of red dots. To the right, groups of 5–6 blue stripes, alternating with groups of 5–6 red stripes. ii. A single row of red dots, with stripes at the right, as on (i). iii. Groups of blue and red stripes, similar to (i); the groups of blue stripes are wider than the red. To the right are two rows of small blue dots.
- (d) The east side of the ramp or stairway, C, showing an area of paintwork surviving at the base. The shaded area shows the extent of the painting in 1993; this is within the outline of the paintwork found in 1931–2 (*COA* III, pl. xlv.4).

his memoirs), using a technique which involved removing bricks from behind the painting.¹⁷ Thus, where Petrie had decided to remove a painting, no trace would remain of either wall or painting. An interesting design, such as that shown on his drawing, might have been an obvious candidate for his attempts at recovery.

It is possible that processions of people, which may have included subject foreigners, were continued on the upper main walls at the King's House, but the evidence is far from clear. In Pendlebury's general account of Amarna, he specified processions of subject races—Negroes, Asiatics and Libyans—which occurred in the 'public rooms' of the King's House.¹⁸ The 'public rooms' are taken to mean the Southern Hall, the room with

¹⁷ Petrie, *Seventy Years in Archaeology* (London, 1931), 138–9.

¹⁸ Pendlebury, *Tell El Amarna*, 90.

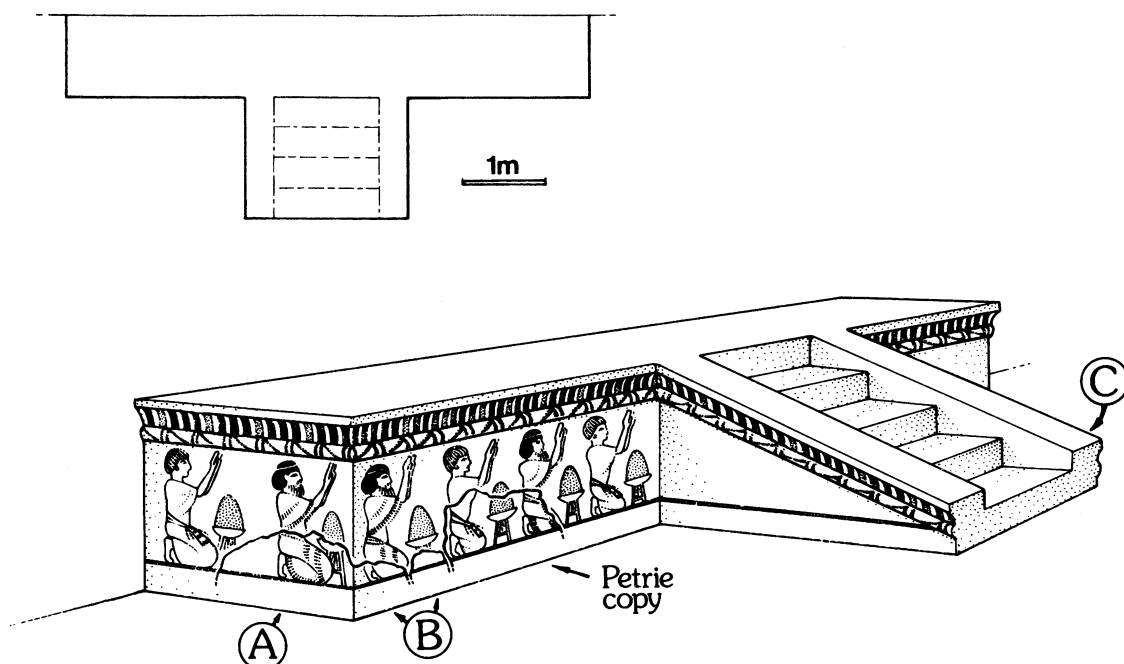


FIG. 4. Reconstruction of the possible appearance of the dais, incorporating the designs of foreigners, with a groundplan based on measurements taken in 1993.

the platform, and the Hypostyle Hall. It is not clear whether he meant just the upper walls, or whether he also included the foreigners on the platform, thereby reducing the evidence for this decoration on the upper walls. If they existed here, they were never clearly photographed. Only on plate xlv.3 in *COA* III is the east wall of the Hypostyle Hall shown with a small area of paintwork above the dado, but, unfortunately, it is unintelligible. A trace of this upper wall still remains, but not the paintwork. Otherwise in all three rooms, the recent investigations have shown that where there is covered paintwork, it no longer reaches higher than dado level, so that Pendlebury's description cannot be checked. Elsewhere, in the main report, Pendlebury noted figures, without describing them, above a dado (probably the east wall again) in the Hypostyle Hall.¹⁹ Petrie, too, vaguely noted 'legs of some figures' among the designs found at the King's House,²⁰ but we do not know where these were located, except that they were most likely in the north-east section.

The platform was interpreted as an altar by Pendlebury,²¹ but with the painted decoration showing supplicating foreigners, it should be considered as a throne dais. Although fairly narrow, the dais would comfortably hold a chair or throne. Foreigners as decoration of the tops, steps and sides of daises (in faience, stone and plaster) are

¹⁹ *COA* III, 87.

²⁰ Petrie, *Tell El Amarna*, 15.

²¹ *COA* III, 87.

attested at other sites, such as Malkata, in Rooms F²² and E,²³ in the Nineteenth Dynasty palace of Merneptah at Memphis,²⁴ and at Qantir.²⁵ At Qantir, Hayes had evidence that there had been a torus and cavetto cornice on the top of the platform and also along the sides of the stairway, similar to that at the King's House at Amarna.²⁶ The depictions of kneeling figures with offerings in front of them are also remarkably similar.

In the tomb of Mery-re II at Amarna a depiction of Akhenaten enthroned shows him with his daughters on a dais.²⁷ This has a baldachin, and the sides of the dais and the ramps or stairways appear to have cornice mouldings. In New Kingdom tombs at Thebes paintings of royal throne daises show these features, and frequently the decoration includes processions of subject races which can be compared with the platform in the King's House.²⁸

Another problematic area is the decoration supposed by Pendlebury to be that on the outside wall of the King's House immediately behind the 'altar', which we have suggested is a throne dais.²⁹ The interest of this lies in the extreme rarity of finding painted plaster on the outside of a building. In COA III, Pendlebury did not himself describe the design in the relevant chapter, presumably because so little remained, but referred to the description in Petrie's report of the legs of Asiatic and Negro captives kneeling with a bowl on a stand between them,³⁰ and stated that this was probably what he had found. This identification is unlikely, however, as it has been shown above that this particular description matches Petrie's drawing, where there is a strong case for locating it on the front of the platform. Elsewhere in the volume Pendlebury was more helpful in stating that he saw the feet of human figures.³¹

An important aim of the investigations in 1993 was to see if these feet, or foreigners, were to be found on the outer wall of the King's House. Two or three courses of bricks are the visible remains of the north wall of the room with the dais. At the western end rubble had been heaped in front, a sign that something was worth preserving. However, the result from the removal of the heap was disappointing, revealing only a white-painted stretch of plaster nearly 2 m wide, and 30 cm high (fig. 2, D). The white paint was on a 0.3 cm thick layer of the same pinkish-buff plaster as on the dais, which was over a layer of the common type of mud plaster. Where the paint was abraded, it could be seen that the pinkish plaster was composed of about one-third chaff as a filler. A similar patch,

²² G. Daressy, *ASAE* 4 (1903), 166 and accompanying plate; R. de P. Tytus, *A Preliminary Report on the Re-excavation of the Palace of Amenhetep III* (New York, 1903), 11, 17–18 (Tytus's room designations are used in this article).

²³ W. Stevenson Smith, rev. W. K. Simpson *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt*² (Harmondsworth, 1981), 286, 459 n. 7.

²⁴ C. S. Fisher, *University of Pennsylvania, The Museum Journal* 8/4 (December 1917), 218, figs. 79, 82; D. G. Jeffreys et al., *JEA* 72 (1986), 10–13, fig. 6. The throne daises at Memphis and Malkata are more square than the one proposed in the King's House at Amarna.

²⁵ W. C. Hayes, *Glazed Tiles from a Palace of Ramesses II at Kantir* (New York, 1937), 13, fig. 1.

²⁶ Hayes, *Glazed Tiles*, 16–18, fig. 1, pl. iv.

²⁷ N. de Garis Davies, *The Rock Tombs of El Amarna*, II (London, 1905), pl. xxxvii.

²⁸ Examples occur in the tomb of Ken-Amun (TT 93), on the dais of Amenophis II (N. de G. Davies, *Ken-Amun* (New York, 1930), I, 22–3, pls. xi, xii, and II, pl. 11a); and in the tombs of Anen (TT 120: C. K. Wilkinson, *Egyptian Wall Paintings: The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Collection of Facsimiles* (New York, 1983), 26–7, 125) and Kheruef (TT 192: Oriental Institute of Chicago, *The Epigraphic Survey, The Tomb of Kheruef* (Chicago, 1980), pls. 1, 48–9), both showing daises of Amenophis III.

²⁹ COA III, 88.

³⁰ Petrie, *Tell El Amarna*, 15.

³¹ COA III, 38.

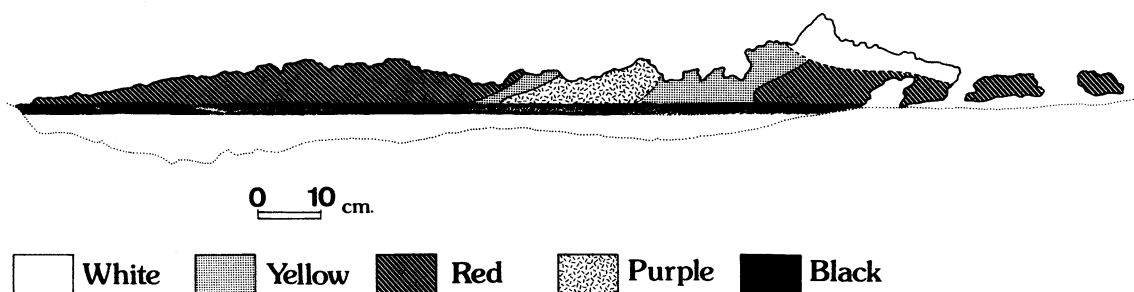


FIG. 5. Remains of painting on the outer wall of the Hypostyle Hall, F.

c. 10×15 cm, was also found in the centre of the wall (fig. 2, E). No trace of any design occurs on either white area, but it is possible that designs had once been painted further up the wall, and that these have been lost. A row of feet could have disappeared completely only if they had been a few centimetres high,³² as there is no evidence that a significant amount of plaster has been lost in recent years. A study of the small fragments of painted plaster found within the covering heap showed that this was almost exclusively spoil from a cleared room. Although there were a few unintelligible fragments on pinkish-buff plaster which could have fallen from the outer wall, in the main there were more pieces of ordinary mud plaster from internal walls and, somewhat surprisingly, other pieces from a painted pavement (see fig. 6). The finding of pavement plaster is discussed below.

The outer wall of the Hypostyle Hall is a more hopeful location for the feet or foreigners mentioned by Pendlebury, implying that a mistake was made in their location in COA III.³³ A heap of sand and rubble was removed from the outside of an easterly section of the surviving wall; the area to the west was not investigated in the time available, but it is thought that Pendlebury did not excavate here.³⁴ The fact that Petrie did not note a painted design on the outer wall can probably be explained by his practice of not clearing sand down to the original ground level, and of confining his activities mainly to the interior of buildings.³⁵ A piece of paintwork, almost 2 m wide and c. 19 cm high, was found (fig. 2, F), executed on the same type of buff plaster as outside the previous room. A white skirting is present, 8 cm or more high, then a black band 2 cm wide. Above this is a curious design in red, yellow, purple and white (fig. 5). The relatively large areas of colour suggest the remains of a large-scale design, not surprising, perhaps, for decoration on the outside of a building intended to be viewed from a distance. It is extremely difficult to interpret, but, if two enormous feet are excluded, it

³²The efficacy of the heaps to protect the tops of walls can only be truly known where comparison can be made between what now survives and what is shown on the excavation photographs from 1931–2. This can be done at sites A, C, G and H, where the preservation of the walls is good, but the condition of the more vulnerable paintwork is variable, ranging from relatively little loss at A, C and G, to a loss of several centimetres at H. Elsewhere at Amarna it is common for one or two courses of bricks to be lost from the tops of unprotected walls over a similar period of time.

³³I am reluctant to reject this statement, but the recent investigations cast doubt on what Pendlebury saw, and where he saw it. It is unclear why he did not mention painted plaster outside the Hypostyle Hall, if not because of a confusion in location between the two rooms.

³⁴B. Kemp, personal communication.

³⁵B. J. Kemp, *Amarna Reports*, III (London, 1986), 96.

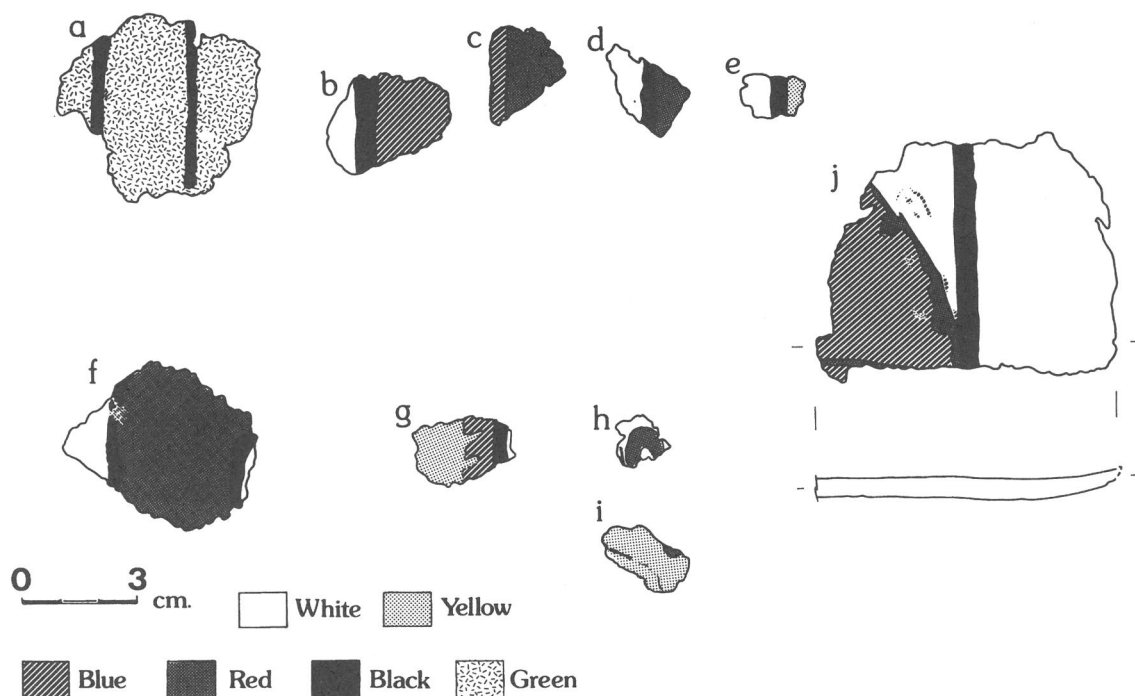


FIG. 6. Fragments from wall- and floor-paintings found in 1993. A number of small fragments which do not preserve any recognisable design have not been illustrated.

- (a)–(e) From the spoil outside the wall of the Hypostyle Hall. Fragment (a) is of pinkish-buff wall plaster, all others are of pavement plaster.
- (f)–(i) Found outside the room with dais (throne room). Fragment (f) is of pavement plaster, all others are of pinkish-buff wall plaster.
- (j) Found within the remains of the dais. This fragment is of pavement plaster and preserves part of a pavement edge, shown in section.

could represent the lower parts of two kneeling figures with one leg extended, as in depictions of foreigners in the tomb of Nakht.³⁶ However, the red is too bright to be a skin colour, and the design does not entirely correspond. However, this could well be the design that Pendlebury identified as feet or foreigners. Therefore, the case for foreigners on either the Hypostyle Hall or the room with the dais is unresolved.

It is uncertain how much above the present plaster on the outer wall of the Hypostyle Hall has been lost since the excavations of 1931–2, but again, we may suspect that not much has gone. The covering also contains a variety of fragments apparently from spoil collected from a room (see fig. 6). The pavement fragments here, like those in the adjacent heap, strongly indicate that traces of a painted floor had been found by Pendlebury and ignored. This was probably in the Hypostyle Hall, Southern Hall or the room with the dais. In the halls, Pendlebury noted the remains of brick floors. While their presence does not necessarily imply pavements, Petrie noted that brickwork lay under the pavements in the Great Palace.³⁷ At the Great Palace and in the palace at Malkata, the

³⁶ A. P. Kozloff and B. M. Bryan, *Egypt's Dazzling Sun: Amenhotep and his World* (Cleveland, 1992), 269, 297, pl. 28. A reconstruction of this design is shown in Wilkinson, *Egyptian Wall Paintings*, 127, where the provenance is given as the tomb of Nakht (TT 161).

³⁷ Petrie, *Tell El Amarna*, 12; see also COA III, 87.

TABLE 1. *Dimensions for dados from the King's House*

Room and excavation letter	Plant/'false door' widths in cm
Hypostyle Hall G	11.0/12.0
Room with Dais H	lost
Southern Hall I	lost
Southern Hall J	13.6/?12.6
Corridor K	14.0–15.2/12.1–12.5
Corridor L	lost
Corridor M	lost/?13.5
Corridor N	lost
'Princesses panel' room O	17.0/lost
'Princesses panel' room P	15.8/13.2
'Princesses panel' room Q	18.3/12.8
Removed dado —	15.5–16.0/15.5–16.0

state apartments had painted pavements decorated with marsh scenes, crossed by pathways of bound captives to be trodden underfoot on the way to the throne.³⁸ Most of the pavement fragments are small and the designs difficult to identify, but one piece could be a foot from a captive (fig. 6f).

Dados

Evidence for several dados in the King's House was found in 1993. The design consists primarily of striped 'false-door' panels³⁹ alternating with panels containing heraldic plants of the north and south. The plants are either blue lilies with a red central petal, or green papyrus plants detailed with red on the umbels and at the base of the stalks. They are painted on a yellow ground. The false-door panels are made up of stripes, alternatively blue and green, enclosing a red central stripe on three sides; these stripes are outlined in black, with white bands between. Where the panel is predominantly green, there is a small rectangular blue block on top of the enclosed red stripe; where the panel is predominantly blue, the block above the red stripe is green. There is some variation in panel widths, even within the same room (see Table 1). Below the dados are white skirtings. Horizontal bands of blue, then red (?then blue and green) separate the dado from the upper register, but these rarely survive.⁴⁰ Petrie recorded the dados he found only in his diary,⁴¹ where he noted that the plant design occurred on all dados at the site, which probably means the north-east corner where he principally worked, and not the building as a whole, which he excavated summarily. Pendlebury rediscovered these dados, which had almost certainly been recovered with Petrie's spoil, although this is not recorded. He described the dado in the Hypostyle Hall and stated that similar dados occurred in all rooms of the north-east block.⁴²

³⁸F. Weatherhead, 'Painted Pavements in the Great Palace at Amarna', *JEA* 78 (1992), 179–94; Tytus, *Preliminary Report*, 17.

³⁹Called 'panel pattern' by Petrie and Pendlebury in their publications.

⁴⁰See COA III, pl. xlvi.3.

⁴¹Petrie's diary, 70; the plants are wrongly identified as lotus groups.

⁴²Pendlebury, *JEA* 18, 147; COA III, 87, pl. xlvi.3.

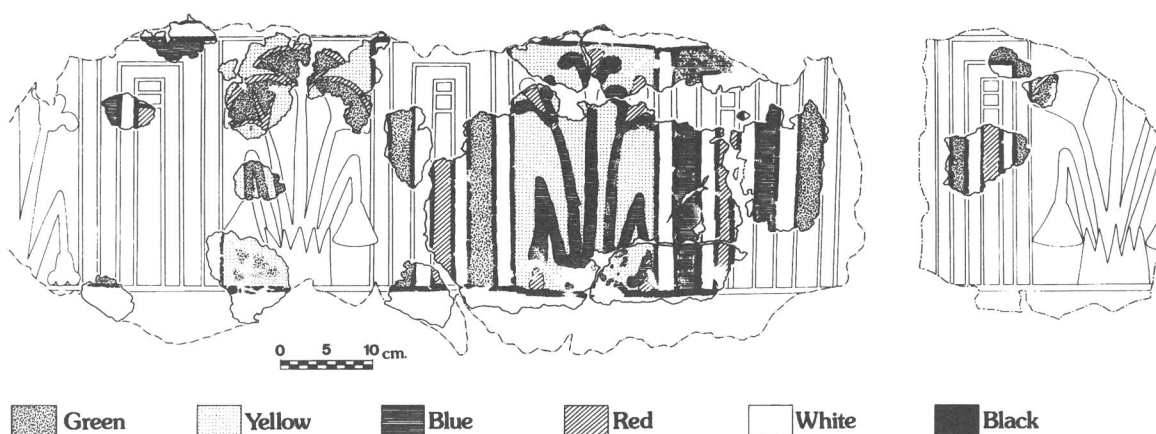


FIG. 7. Part of a dado design removed from the King's House, formerly in the Wellcome Collection. Fragments now preserved in Liverpool Museum are shaded; these are within the outline of the design displayed at the Wellcome Institute in 1932. A number of small fragments preserved in Liverpool have not been included in this design. For the dado when first removed from the wall, see pl. VII, 2.

Hypostyle Hall

There is evidence of two areas of dado in this room. Pendlebury mentions that a large piece of dado was found *in situ* in the 'main room' or Hypostyle Hall.⁴³ This was removed by one of the team members, Miss Chubb, but accidentally broken in half by Pendlebury soon afterwards.⁴⁴ The excavation photograph (1931-2/A239) shows two parts of a dado meeting at a corner, altogether three plant panels and four striped panels (see pl. VII, 2). The dado was displayed, suitably repaired, in an exhibition held at the Wellcome Institute in 1932. An EES photograph (1931-2/A12a) shows it lying flat, encased in plaster of Paris which had supported it during its removal and transport. Large cracks can be seen on the surface.

This plaster has recently been located in Liverpool Museum, broken into several fragments, amongst unprovenanced material from the Wellcome Collection. The accession numbers are 1973.1.527A-B and 1973.1.512. Most of the design can be reconstructed with the help of the early photographs (see fig. 7). The plant panels and the striped panels are both 16 cm wide and 27 cm high. Two stripes, green and another colour, occur in what had been the corner between adjacent false-door panels. Most of the white skirting shown on the photographs has not survived, and nothing remains of the white band at the top. According to the catalogue of the exhibition, scenes on a strong yellow background were painted here, but this information might not refer to what was above this particular panel, since no upper part is shown on the early photographs.

Study of the plan of the Hypostyle Hall suggests that the most likely place from which the dado was removed is the south-east corner. The excavation photograph was labelled as taken in this room, but the proximity of the spoil heap shown behind the dado suggests

⁴³ Pendlebury, *JEA* 18, 147.

⁴⁴ In his site diary Pendlebury stated that there were other slabs worth removing, implying that he found others in a good state of preservation. However, the records reveal no other areas of plaster removed in the 1931-2 excavations; instead, the paintings were left *in situ*, duly protected (Pendlebury's diary, entry 27 December 1931).

the south-east corner of the Southern Hall, where a spoil heap still exists, as an alternative location.

COA III records that another dado of panel design was found in the Hypostyle Hall.⁴⁵ In 1993 it was still on the east wall (fig. 2, G). Cracks on the right-hand side of the dado shown in *COA* III on pl. xlvi.3 were seen on the excavated portion. As mentioned earlier, Pendlebury noted that figures had been painted above the dado in this room,⁴⁶ but our survey in 1993 showed that if there once was a design above the dado on the east wall, it has eroded away.

The excavated portion (fig. 2, G) showed the top of a section of dado. The width of the papyrus panel is 11 cm; the predominantly blue striped panel is on the right, the green one on the left, each 12 cm wide. At the top a width of about 7 cm was exposed showing blue, then red, stripes separated by white bands (fig. 8b). In the excavated area, the surface is slightly pitted and worn, toning down the colours a little from their original brightness. To judge by the length of wall left, some of the panels shown in the early photograph may now be lost. Further along the east wall there is another mound covering a smaller section of wall, implying that another portion of dado may be preserved. Something similar occurs on a longer stretch of wall on the south side.

The dado panels on the east wall of the Hypostyle Hall are slightly smaller than those on the dado now in Liverpool Museum. The proportions are also slightly different; the ratio of height to width of panels on the east wall averages 2:1, whereas on the Liverpool panels it is 1.7:1 (compare figs. 8a and b).

Room with dais

A painted dado is shown in the background of *COA* III, pl. xlvi.4. By reference to the plan on pl. xvi (also figs. 1 and 2 here), this can be identified as the west wall. This bears the same design as that in the Hypostyle Hall, with four floral panels and five striped panels above a white skirting. In 1993 the wall survived to the height shown on the photograph, but the upper part of the dado was lost. The covering heap has either deteriorated, or, more likely, was inadequate in the first place. (It was also noticed that the doorway along this wall is wider than shown on the published plan.) A small area uncovered in 1993 from the bottom of the dado shows a papyrus umbel and the blue band of the beginning of the striped panel to its left (fig. 2, H); on the two dados previously discussed, the blue band is on the right. The presence of this painted dado suggests that it was not in an open court but a roofed room; however, no traces of column bases were found. The lower walls are reasonably well preserved in this room, especially the south wall, but no other remains of dados are apparent.

The presence of the kneeling foreigners decorating the platform has led to the suggestion that this room had a throne dais (see above). Given this potential significance, it is regrettable that there is no clear report by either Petrie or Pendlebury of designs above the dado.⁴⁷ A fragment of painted pavement was found close to the surface within

⁴⁵ *COA* III, 87, pl. xlvi.3.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 87.

⁴⁷ At Malkata, in throne room F behind the dais, there was a scene of a hunt in the desert(?) which included a wild bull (Daressy, *ASAE* 4, 167; Tytus, *Preliminary Report*, 18); elsewhere in the room, there was a large female figure with an elaborate headdress above a panelled dado (Tytus, *Preliminary Report*, 18–19, fig. 10).

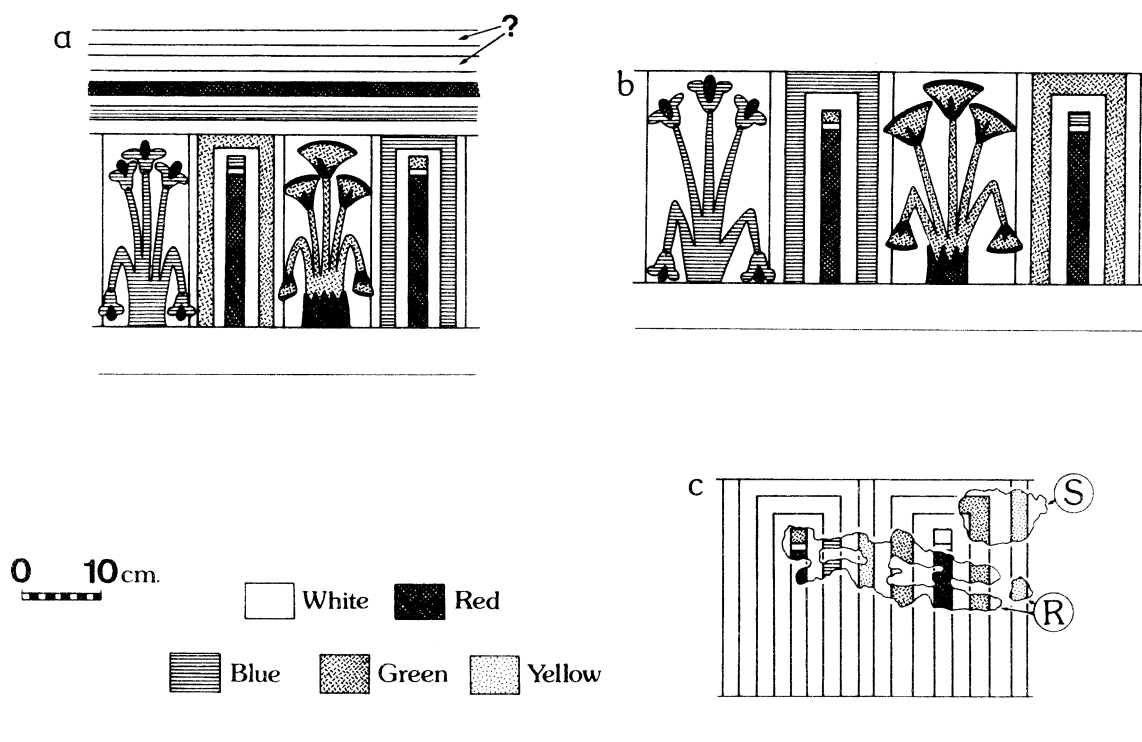


FIG. 8. The main patterns of dado design.

- (a) Dado from the east wall of the Hypostyle Hall, drawn from an excavation photograph (COA III, pl. xlv.3) and information gathered in 1993. Below the dado is a white skirting; above are four coloured bands, separated by white. The colour of the top two bands is not known.
- (b) Dado removed from a wall, now in Liverpool Museum (see fig. 7). Although this is said to have been removed from the Hypostyle Hall, the proportions are very different from (a). The yellow background to the plant panels has been omitted on (a) and (b) for clarity.
- (c) Reconstruction of the dado design in the room to the west of the 'Princesses panel' room. This incorporates the areas of design found in 1993.

the remains of the dais (fig. 5j); a painted pavement in this room accords with what is known of the decoration of throne rooms in the late New Kingdom. The fragment shows a papyrus flower, probably from a formally-arranged clump in the usual type of marsh scene. On one side of the fragment, part of the edge of the pavement appears. A black line, which is probably part of a border, runs parallel to it.

Southern Hall

The only painted plaster Pendlebury mentioned as having been found in the Southern Hall is ceiling plaster showing waterfowl on a yellow ground.⁴⁸ Presumably this was not kept; efforts to trace its present location have not been successful.

In 1993 the remains of panel decoration were found in two areas, other walls being missing or very denuded. On a preserved section of the north wall a stretch of skirting

⁴⁸COA III, 87. A ceiling with a pigeon design was found in one of the 'harim' rooms at Malkata (Smith, *Art and Architecture*², 289, pl. 285).

was exposed, *c.* 15 cm high from floor level, and *c.* 90 cm wide (fig. 2, I). Above it is a black line. Traces of red from the base of a plant and of coloured stripes provide evidence for plant panels alternating with false-door panels as in the previous two rooms. The plaster was too damaged for the widths of the panels to be measured. The same design was found in much better condition on the west wall. In the area uncovered, most of a papyrus plant is preserved in a panel 13.5 cm wide above a skirting (fig. 2, J). On either side the striped panels are badly damaged. The left panel has predominantly green stripes; only the outer stripe can be seen on the right-hand panel.

Corridor

Investigations in 1993 showed that the set of small rooms, which included the 'Princesses panel' room and the corridor south of the room with dais, had been painted throughout with dado designs. This was not mentioned in *COA* III, in spite of the remarkable amount of painted plaster still *in situ*.

Pendlebury had carefully piled up bricks and sand against four areas of wall in the corridor.⁴⁹ In 1993 one area was completely uncovered, and others investigated quickly to check for consistency of design. The uncovered area (fig. 2, K) was on the south wall of the corridor, immediately outside the room which had contained the 'Princesses panel' and the room east of it. The highest part measures 30 cm. Four plant panels 14–15 cm wide and four striped panels 12–13 cm wide are represented, in an arrangement which runs: papyrus panel/green outer striped panel/lily panel/blue outer striped panel/papyrus panel, etc. The paintwork is very fragile, degraded by general abrasion and termite attack. In places the paint is a thin unsupported skin behind which termites have tunnelled away the plaster. As was noticed elsewhere, the yellow paintwork has survived better than the other colours. The bottom of the panels and the skirting are completely lost.

Further along the wall, outside the room with the 'Princesses panel' and the room west of it, a small strikingly well-preserved area was revealed (fig. 2, L), showing a lily plant on a yellow ground, and part of the horizontal border above the panel. Below the top of the remains of the wall are a black line, a white stripe, then a blue stripe. The dado design continues on the north wall of the corridor (fig. 2, M and N). The striped panels are particularly badly preserved here.

'Princesses panel' room

Pendlebury interpreted the suite of rooms south of the room with the platform as being for the private use of the King. He believed that the 'Princesses panel' room served as a bedroom and the room west of it as a latrine and bathroom.⁵⁰

In the 'Princesses panel' room, three walls were investigated in 1993 (fig. 2, O, P, and Q). The plant panels here are wider than elsewhere (see Table 1). Along the east wall, below where the 'Princesses panel' had been, bricks were neatly stacked against the dado. The wall now is only the height of the dado, for Petrie removed the bricks behind the upper section in order to extract the painting. He referred to the dado only in his site

⁴⁹In this set of rooms, small brick walls occasionally afford protection to the paintings. It is assumed that, as elsewhere in the building, this is the later excavator's work, and not Petrie's.

⁵⁰*COA* III, 88.

diary.⁵¹ In the small area re-exposed the paintwork is very fragile, and the plant outlines on two panels are almost eroded away (fig. 2, O). The plant panel measured is 17 cm wide. The blue stripes of the exposed false-door panel, on the right of the papyrus panel, are almost non-existent.

On the east side of the doorway in the south wall of this room, more dado survives (fig. 2, P). Above a white skirting is the red base of a papyrus plant in a panel 15.8 cm wide. Parts of striped panels on either side were exposed; the green striped panel to the right measures 13.2 cm. On the west wall, near the partition leading to the back room, another section of dado was exposed (fig. 2, Q). This was well preserved and had the greatest amount surviving above dado level found in 1993—about 12 cm of horizontal stripes, red, then blue, separated by white bands. The sequence of panels exposed was lily/green outer stripe/papyrus/blue outer stripe. The walls of the back room lack protective heaps in front of them, so no painted plaster can be expected to survive here.

Room to the west of the 'Princesses panel' room

In this room are two areas where wall surfaces have been protected. Investigations showed a different dado design from that encountered so far in the north-east part of the King's House (fig. 2, R and S), consisting entirely of striped panels 14 cm wide.⁵² In the back part of the room, on the east face of the central partition, two panels were exposed (fig. 2, R). These have blue stripes enclosing a central red stripe, next to green stripes enclosing a central red one; the panels are separated by a yellow stripe 1.7 cm wide (fig. 8c). The top of the dado is lost. On the west wall of the front portion of the room a smaller area of the same design was uncovered, showing that the yellow stripe also appeared to run horizontally at the top, but no paintwork survived above this (fig. 2, S). The fact that the whole room was decorated with a different type of dado from that found elsewhere may reflect its special function; the rear of the room originally contained a stone bath slab with a basin.⁵³

Dados with false-door panels, both with and without alternating plant panels, have been found at other royal buildings at Amarna. Dados with plant panels occurred at the North Palace in the hypostyle hall leading into the throne room.⁵⁴ In the Great Palace, the type without plant panels was probably a frequent form of decoration. It was recorded by Pendlebury in the garden court of the 'North Harim'⁵⁵ and in the corridor immediately south of the Bridge.⁵⁶ The dado in the long cross hall E, noted by Petrie, had a different colour scheme from those in the King's House; the stripes were painted in red, blue, and white. In his description he indicated that this was a common design in the Great Palace, without specifying the location of examples.⁵⁷ Dados with plant panels were

⁵¹ Petrie's diary, 70.

⁵² In a general account Pendlebury wrongly stated that this simplified design was used throughout the private suite (*Tell El Amarna*, 90).

⁵³ COA III, 88.

⁵⁴ H. Frankfort, *The Mural Painting of El Amarnah* (London, 1929), pl. xii.A; F. G. Newton, *JEA* 10 (1924), 296.

⁵⁵ COA III, 39, fig. 8. In a sketch made at the site the false-door panels are shown in the same colours as at the King's House, but instead of white bands there are yellow ones (site notebook, Amarna Document 11.8; EES archives).

⁵⁶ COA III, 47, pl. xxxiv.5.

⁵⁷ Petrie, *Tell El Amarna*, 14.

apparently not found at the Great Palace, but this might be an accident of preservation. The simpler design also occurred in the large ornate house R43.1 in the Central City, in a room with a dais.⁵⁸

These two dado designs are also known at other royal sites. The first type (including plant panels) was found in the throne room of the palace of Merneptah at Memphis.⁵⁹ Daressy recorded this type at Malkata, but did not specify the room(s) in which it occurred. The colours of the plant panels (papyrus only is mentioned) and the false-door panels are the same as those in the King's House.⁶⁰ The second type was found at Malkata, in the antechamber D to the small throne room E,⁶¹ the antechamber to room G⁶² and rooms L5 and B5.⁶³ In the King's bedroom false-door panels alternate with panels of *ankh*- and *sa*-signs.⁶⁴ A false-door design also occurred in the large columned hall H.⁶⁵ In addition, a dado with red, blue, and white stripes, apparently similar to those in the Great Palace at Amarna, is said to have been found in throne room F.⁶⁶ From these examples no simple formula can be identified for the use of particular dado designs in throne rooms or other state apartments.

Conclusion

The repeated presence of dados depicting false-doors and the emblems of the two lands over which the King ruled suggests that the area under discussion was a coherent unit. Based on the evidence of the design of supplicating foreigners around the platform in the north-eastern room, this structure has been reinterpreted as a throne dais. The surrounding area may therefore be a throne-room complex, where the rooms were interconnected by use, associated with rituals and administrative functions of the throne room. No additional conclusions can be drawn from the regular occurrence of dados with panels showing the plants of the north and south, which have also been found in throne room complexes at the North Palace and at Malkata. The components of the proposed throne-room complex at the King's House—external open court, long and square columned halls adjacent to a throne room, and a corridor leading to a suite of small rooms, one of which was used for ablutions—are found in different arrangements at other state apartments, at the North Palace and at the Great Palace (where the suite of small rooms was too denuded to show whether it contained a bathroom), and at Memphis.⁶⁷

Kemp has suggested that the north wall at the back of the platform contained a Window of Appearance.⁶⁸ While the dais could have acted as a platform for a Window of

⁵⁸ COA III, 139–40, pl. xxii.

⁵⁹ Fisher, *Penn. Univ. Mus. J.* 8/4, 218.

⁶⁰ ASAE 4, 167. More recently, fragments of this design were found in room F (Waseda University, *Studies on the Palace of Malqata, 1985–1988* (Tokyo, 1993), pl. 6e).

⁶¹ Tytus, *Preliminary Report*, 15.

⁶² Waseda University, *Studies*, pl. 15f.

⁶³ Waseda University, *Studies*, pl. 15a, c, d.

⁶⁴ Smith, *Art and Architecture*², 289, pls. 286–7; Waseda University, *Studies*, fig. 2-2-7.1, pls. 18–19.

⁶⁵ Tytus, *Preliminary Report*, 20.

⁶⁶ Smith, *Art and Architecture*², 291.

⁶⁷ T. Whittemore, *JEA* 12 (1926), pl. ii; COA III, pl. xiiiA; Weatherhead, *JEA* 78, 192–3, fig. 6; Fisher, *Penn. Univ. Mus. J.* 8/4, 213–20, fig. 79. For a similar analysis see O'Connor, *CRIPEL* 11, 76, figs. 1–2.

⁶⁸ B. J. Kemp, 'The Window of Appearance at El-Amarna, and the Basic Structure of this City', *JEA* 62 (1976), 81–99.

Appearance, iconographically it appears to be nothing other than a New Kingdom throne dais. Kemp has pointed out that, based on the evidence of mortuary temple palaces at Western Thebes, a window would be better placed in the Hypostyle Hall facing the avenue of trees in the garden.⁶⁹ Painted foreigners on the outer wall of the Hall would add weight to this, but evidence for such a design is uncertain on the outside of either the room with the dais or the Hypostyle Hall, although we have established that the outside wall of the latter was painted with coloured designs.

⁶⁹ Personal communication.



1. Remains of two kneeling foreigners on the west side of dais. Unpublished photograph from Pendlebury's excavations in 1931-2



2. Early stages in the removal of two faces of dado joined at a corner, undertaken during the excavations of 1931-2. From the Hypostyle Hall, or possibly the Southern Hall
(*Courtesy of the EES*)