

NOTES AND NEWS

and villas. Besides those mentioned above I have noted examples from several Saxon cemeteries, from a Romano-British town, a Romano-British village, and a Saxon Shore fort. It is a subject which will repay careful investigation when the contents of our Museums are again fully available for study and when there is once more leisure and opportunity for archaeological work.

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NEW DISCOVERY IN CHINA

The following account is reprinted (by permission) from the *American Journal of Archaeology*, XLVII, no. 3 (July-September 1943), p. 265 :—

Chinese workmen who were digging to make an air-raid shelter in Chengtu, Szechwan Province, have been responsible for an important archaeological discovery. Their picks struck a mound of brick and stone work which has been revealed as the grave of Wang Chien, distinguished official and self-appointed Emperor of the 10th century A.D. Chinese and American archaeologists believe that the contents of the coffin, as yet not fully investigated, will prove of great value to archaeologists and historians alike. Facts of this discovery have just reached United China Relief from the Associated Boards for Christian Colleges in China.

Wang Chien's grave was found a quarter of a mile outside the West Gate of the City of Chengtu in an historical mound believed, until now, to owe its fame to association with the Chinese poet, Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, who died in 117 B.C.

Excavations of the tomb are now going on under the supervision of Dr Feng Han-I, Harvard-trained Director of the Museum of West China Union University. After clearing away the bricks and stones, the tomb chamber was found lying in a mud casing 15 feet thick. The tomb itself is 80 feet long, 20 feet wide and 20 feet high. At the back of the tomb-chamber, on the tomb-throne, was a statue—presumably of the dead man—and lying in front of this was a case, the dragon-shaped handles of which gave the first clue to the regal identity of the occupant. Two other cases, lined with silver and inlaid with silver and gold in discoidal design, contained two sets of jade books, composed of 53 leaves, 1 foot 2 inches long by half an inch thick. The inscription shows this to be a long commentary on the 'gracious reign' of Emperor Wang Chien. A detailed report of all the grave-furniture, including photographs and sketches, is being prepared by students and faculty members of the Department of Archaeology of West China Union University. The Emperor's coffin is expected to give a wealth of lacquer, pottery, copper and jade.

Wang Chien, who was born about A.D. 847, rose from the generalship to the governorship of Szechwan Province. When the house of T'ang collapsed in A.D. 906, he declared Szechwan to be a new kingdom, and proclaimed himself its Emperor. Chengtu was his capital. It was a city of wealth and culture, and is considered by some historians to have been, at that time, the most civilized city in the world.

THE LIVING PAST

It is, of course, a truism to say that exponents of the Past should bring it before the eyes of their audience and make it live. The implication—that the audience has no imagination—is only too often true. Whether the blind can be made to see without a miracle is very doubtful, but worth trying for the sake of the few. Visitors to the Museum of Fine Arts at Boston must have been somewhat shaken recently when they saw a life-size bust of an ancient Egyptian (Ankh-haf, of the 4th dynasty) dressed in modern clothes. Even hardened Egyptologists may have been momentarily taken

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aback by ' the modernity of the face, which might be met with any day on the street '.* The general public, pardonably confused by the ' Egyptian attitudes ' of conventional art, must have been sadly disillusioned by Mr Dows Dunham's bold experiment. If successful it might be worth repeating on a larger scale. It was an American who gave us delightful drawings of men of the old stone age in modern dress. One foresees great possibilities for this method of modernizing the heroes of the past—and also certain difficulties. Take Julius Caesar, for instance. As a military man he should be given a uniform, but exactly what sort of uniform? Some form of battledress would obviously be more appropriate for the Conqueror of Gaul than parade dress or mess-kit; but should he wear trousers or khaki shorts? A beret would seem a little out of keeping, but the cocked hat and feathers even more so. Plato must clearly wear a hood and gown; but hardly Socrates for whom (like Lenin) an old cap is indicated. For Attila some kind of zoo-suiting might be designed, or perhaps he could simply wear an old burberry. Henry VIII should have a loud check suit with a grey topper, and it would be a pardonable anachronism to put a race-card in his hand and a cigar in his mouth. His famous daughter presents a problem, whose solution may be left for the Director of Costumes; there are so few modern parallels to help.

The whole thing seems absurd of course, but it is not really more so than to dress up George III (of all people!) in a Roman toga; and until burnt recently the mid-nineteenth century busts of certain distinguished colonels thus garbed stood on shelves round the library of a Government department. If it was thought possible to make George III look like Julius Caesar, surely it is legitimate to reverse the process on the lines suggested by the Boston Experiment. We commend the idea to the Trustees of the British Museum for incorporation in their post-war reconstruction plan, but without any real expectation that they will adopt it.

* *American Journal of Archaeology*, 1943, XLVII, 334, summarizing Dows Dunham in Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1943, XLI, 10 (2 figs.) The figure thus dressed was a cast.