# VISITORS TO SAIS AND SA EL-HAGAR

#### **HERODOTUS**

In 450 BC a Greek traveller and historian called Herodotus visited Sais and saw many of its ancient buildings still standing. He described how the palaces were made of marble and contained many columns, there was a large temple to the goddess Neith and one for the god of the dead Osiris and there were also the tombs of the kings of Dynasty 26 protected in the precincts of the main temple. He also related stories about the kings of that time, for example the story of how Psamtek became the rightful king of Egypt by pouring a water offering from his bronze helmet.

### Here is Herodotus' description of one of the wonders of Sais:

"Amasis' first work was the marvellous gateway for the temple of Athene (Neith) in Sais. He left everyone else far behind him by the size and height of this building, and by the size and quality of the blocks of stone of which it was constructed. He then presented to the temple some large statues and immense men-sphinxes, and brought for its repair other enormous blocks of stone, some from the quarries near Memphis, and the biggest of all from Elephantine, which is 20 days voyage by river from Sais. But what caused me more astonishment than anything was a room hollowed from a single block of stone; this block also came from Elephantine, and took three years to bring to Sais, 2000 men, all of the pilot class having the task of conveying it. The outside measurements of this chamber are: length 21 cubits; breadth 14 cubits; height 8 cubits (10.5m by 7m by 4 m). Inside, its length is 18 56/ cubits, its breadth 12 and its height 5 (c. 9.5m, by 6m, by 2.5m). It lies by the entrance to the temple, for the story goes that it was not dragged inside the enclosure, because during the process of moving it, the man chiefly responsible for its construction groaned with vexation at the amount of time and labour which was being wasted, and Amasis took this for a bad omen and refused to have it brought any further."

## **JEAN-FRANÇOIS CHAMPOLLION**

In 1828 Jean-François Champollion, who had enciphered hieroglyphs, visited Sa el-Hagar. He saw and described the 'Great Pit' area before it had been dug out, he stopped in the village where he was mistaken for a Turkish soldier and walked to the northern area (Kom Rebwa) where he saw huge mounds of mud brick debris. He thought that the ruins were the remains of a large burial mausoleum and temple dating to Dynasty 26.

#### He described what he saw:

"When we went to the middle of this debris, we came across the remains of an extensive building, divided up into many small rooms, in different stages - joining and separated by very thick walls. All of this building, of an equal height at least to the enclosure wall (80 feet), was built of unbaked bricks, but whose dimensions were less than those used to build the enclosure. The whole ruin field was covered in pottery sherds, amongst which my Barabra Mohammed collected at my feet, an Egyptian figure of glazed pottery, representing the aegis of Neith, that is, the head of a lioness-headed goddess with the disk [p.61] upon a collar, and some glazed Egyptian pottery sherds. All of these pieces of pots came out, being the pieces used in beds, mixed with bricks in the bulk of the rooms (cloisons), being the great jars set in the walls of each chamber; I noticed seven or eight in place in the small rooms."

The village continued to exist near the ruins of the great city and even kept its name 'Sa' derived from the ancient name of the town. The city had developed its power because of the vast amounts of farmland and marsh at its disposal which enabled it to produce the resources to support the king, his soldiers and officials.

قام بزیارة سایس شخصیتان..

## هیرودوت

عام ٤٥٠ ق.م. قام مؤرخ ومسافر أغريقى يدعى هيرودوت بزيارة سايس شاهد العديد من مبانيها القديمة التى كانت قائمة آنذاك. وقد وصف كيف صنعت القصور من المرمر واشتملت على العديد من الأعمدة، وكان يوجد معبدا للالهة نيت وآخر لاله الموتى أوزوريس، وايضا مقابر ملوك الأسرة السادسة والعشرين محمية داخل منطقة المعبد الرئيسى. وقد روى أيضا قصص عن ملوك هذا الوقت، وعلى سبيل المثال قصة كيف أصبح بسماتيك الأحق بملك مصر حيث سكب قربان ماء من خوذته البرونزية.

وما يلى هو وصف هيرودوت لاحدى عجائب سايس:

# جان فرانسوا شامبليون

فى عام ١٨٢٨، قام جان فرانسوا شامبليون الذى فك رموز اللغة المصرية القديمة بزيارة صا الحجر. وقد رأى ووصف منطقة "الحفرة العظيمة" قبل أن تحفر. فقد توقف فى القرية حيث كانوا يحسبونه جنديا تركيا ومشى الى المنطقة الشمالية (كوم ربوه) حيث رأى تلال ضخمة من حطام من الطوب اللبن. وقد اعتقد أن هذه الأطلال هى بقايا ضريح دفن كبير ومعبد يرجع الى الأسرة السادسة والعشرين. وقد وصف ما رأى قائلا:

"عندما ذهبنا الى منتصف هذا الحطام، عبرنا على بقايا مبنى واسع مقسم الى حجرات صغيرة عديدة فى مراحل مختلفة- متصلة ومنفصلة بواسطة حوائط سميكة جدا. كل هذا المبنى، بارتفاع متساوى على الأقل للسياج (٨٠ قدما) قد تم بناؤه بكتل لم توضع فى أفران ولكن قياساتهم أقل من الكتل التى استخدمت فى بناء السياج الخارجى. وكل حقل الحطام كان مغطى بكسرات من الفخار، من بينها البارابرا خاصتى والتى التقطها محمد عند قدمى، تمثال مصرى من الفخار المصقول يمثل درع نيت، رأس الالهة برأس اللبؤة بالقرص (ص. ٦١) فوق قلادة، وبعض الكسرات الفخارية المصرية المصقولة. كل هذه القطع الصغيرة من القدور تم استخراجها، كونها قطع استخدمت فى الأسرة، اختلطت مع الكتل فى معظم الحجرات (المجتزعات)، كونها جرات كبيرة كانت توضع فى حوائط كل حجرة، وقد لاحظت سبع أو ثمانى جرات فى أماكنهم فى الحجرات الصغيرة".

وقد استمرت القرية باقية بالقرب من حطام المدينة العظيمة حتى أنها ظلت محتفظة باسمها "صا" المشتق من الاسم القديم للمدينة. وقد بسطت المدينة قوتها تدريجيا بسبب المجاميع الهائلة من الأراضى الصالحة للزراعة والمستنقعات تحت تصرفها والتى مكنتها من انتاج الموارد لدعم الملك وجنوده وموظفيه.