



BALLS OF THREAD WOUND ON PIECES OF POTTERY

## BALLS OF THREAD WOUND ON PIECES OF POTTERY

BY BERNICE M. CARTLAND

IN Plate XXII are reproduced some X-ray photographs<sup>1</sup> of two balls of linen thread in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York<sup>2</sup>, showing how the Egyptians used small pottery fragments as a foundation on which to wind thread into balls. The fact that this was usual has already been stated by Professor Flinders Petrie<sup>3</sup>. These two balls date from some time between the Twentieth and the Twenty-second Dynasties (about 1200—1000 B.C.). The accompanying photographs show them full size, as they actually look, with X-rays of each ball in two positions placed above them. Solid cores that appear upon examination to be made of pottery can be seen inside. The larger ball contains one piece of pottery, the smaller has two laid with flat sides together in order the more easily to make the ball round. Such small, roughly circular pottery fragments, varying in thickness from one-quarter to three-quarters of an inch, have been found frequently without any thread on them by the Metropolitan Museum's Egyptian Expedition at Lisht, and their probable purpose is now evident. They are roughly cut out of fragments of pots baked pink on either side, with a dark underbaked layer through the middle.

It is interesting to note that the thread on the smaller ball, which is rather brittle, being poorly spun, was wound so as to leave a hole on one side of the ball, just as some people nowadays wind their yarn in balls, leaving a thumb-hole so that the yarn, when used, will unwind from the inside of the ball. However, it is improbable that this was the case with the ancient ball, though it is impossible to be certain on account of the delicate condition of the thread.

<sup>1</sup> Furnished through the courtesy of Dr C. Winfield Perkins of New York.

<sup>2</sup> From the excavations of the Metropolitan Museum at Lisht.

<sup>3</sup> PETRIE, *Tools and Weapons*, p. 53.