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P. KOUSOULIS and N. LAZARIDIS



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SAITE TOMB N° 14 AT
THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE OF OXYRHYNCHUS (EL BAHNASA)

Esther PONS MELLADO
(National Archaeological Museum, Madrid)¹

The archaeological site of Oxyrhynchus, the old city of Per-Medyer, is situated in the small village of El Bahnasa (Mynia), on the Bahr Yussef, approximately 190 km south of Cairo and it was the capital of the 19th *nome* of the Upper Egypt during the Saite Period.

This place was discovered and identified as the ancient Oxyrhynchus by Vivant Denon, a member of Napoleon Bonaparte's Expedition to Egypt in 1798. He published in 1802 the book *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte* with some drawings about the old architecture of this place².

Some years later, between 1896 and 1907, Grenfell and Hunt found thousands of papyrus rolls and drew up the designs of tombs of the New Kingdom and Ptolemaic and Roman Period³. From the First World War to 1920, when Petrie⁴ and Breccia⁵ started to excavate in Oxyrhynchus, it was spoilt systematically.

In 1982 the Supreme Council of Antiquities took over the excavations at El Bahnasa, and since 1992 this Mission has been shared with a Spanish Mission from Barcelona, whose Director is Dr. Josep Padró Parcerisa (Professor of the University of Barcelona)⁶.

One of the most important areas of this site is the Upper Necropolis. It is a very big place in the center of the ruins of Oxyrhynchus, where the tombs of the Saite Period are located, among which tomb No 14. This tomb was discovered in 2002 and until last year we have been working in this area and the results have been very satisfactory.

¹ My gratitude to the members that have worked in this tomb: Archaeologists-Egyptologists H. IBRAHIM AMER, M. ERROUX-MORFIN, J. MARTINEZ, N. RODRIGUEZ, I. VALENZUELA, A. BARROSO; Topographer T. LÓPEZ; Architects F. ESTRADA, I. CAMIRUAGA and E. ALGORRI; Restorers R. XARRIÉ and B. BURGAYA.

² V. DENON, *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte pendant les campagnes du Général Bonaparte* (Paris, 1802), 90-91; J. PADRÓ *et al.*, *Oxyrhynchos I. Fouilles Archéologiques à El-Bahnasa (1982-2005)*, Nova Studia Aegyptiaca III (Barcelona, 2006), 5-11.

³ V. DARBISHIRE, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyrus* (Paris, 1908), 13-7.

⁴ W.F. PETRIE, *Tombs of the Courtiers and Oxyrhynchus* (London, 1925), 12-8.

⁵ E. BRECCIA, *Egitto Greco e Romano* (Naples, 1940), 104-6.

⁶ From 2004 the University of Barcelona, University of Rovira i Virgili and the Catalan Institut of Classic Archaeology have an agreement to favour the diffusion of the Archaeological Mission of Oxyrhynchus (El-Bahnasa). Also the Ministry of Culture has subsidized some campaigns.

The tomb was built with very big stone blocks and it has a surface of about 200 m² and 11 rooms, some of them with vaulted roofs, although one part of the East and the North of this tomb is destroyed and perhaps it was bigger⁷.

Without any doubt the most interesting rooms both in archaeological and historical terms are the 4, 6 and 7 because they have given great quantity of funerary objects.

In the year 2005 we started to excavate **Offering Chamber No 4**. It was in bad condition as it didn't have either roof or north wall⁸. The entrance was from the South of the tomb and was recovered with fine sand of ochre colour. The room had a surface of about 15 m² but perhaps in the past it was a little bigger⁹. In the beginning we didn't find any archaeological object, only some fragments of clay pots but after 3 days working we discovered along the west wall and very close to it many complete objects: two stone canopic jars without inscriptions with sand inside and 0.25 m in height; one stone jar with two symmetrical handles, plane lip with sand inside and 0.33 m in height; one faience jar with two symmetrical handles, containing a mummified internal organ and 0.18 m in height. The surface of this object was damaged; 13 small clay plates of 0.13-0.15 m diameter and 6 small clay pots of 0.8 m in height. This kind of plates and pots are very common in the Saite Period; ten stone libation vases used to contain the sacred oils for the ritual of the Opening of the Mouth¹⁰; a "model" or "miniature" of set of four calcite-alabaster *nemset*-vessels fixed on a base of rectangular form with angular corners. The shoulders of this piece are wide and have a rounded collar rim and concave lower body¹¹. We can see similar "models" from the Early Dynastic to the Late Period and they are usually made of pottery, metal, faience and stone, but the majority of the Saite Period are made of faience (light turquoise, dark blue and greenish) and sometimes of stone (calcite-alabaster)¹². The studies made by Silke Grallert¹³ show that these vessels are associated with the elite burials of the Late Period. She has found about 90 sets of vessels attached to a single rectangular

⁷ N. CASTELLANO, *L'architettura funeraria al Període Saïta*. Nova Studia Aegyptiaca IV (Barcelona, 2007), 207-10. J. PADRÓ, 'Le site d'Oxyrhynchos: rapport sur les travaux archéologiques menés depuis 1992', *Cadmo* 13 (Lisboa, 2003), 9-25; J. PADRÓ *et al.*, 'Darreres intervencions al jaciment d'Oxirrinc (El-Bahnasa, Egipte)', *Tribuna d'Arqueologia 2000-2001* (Barcelona, 2004), 331-49; J. PADRÓ *et al.*, 'El món religiós d'Oxirrinc a la llum de les darreres excavacions a El Bahnasa, província de Minia, Egipte', *Tribuna d'Arqueologia 2002-2003* (Barcelona, 2005), 183-202; J. PADRÓ *et al.*, 'Campanyes del 2001-2002 en Oxirrinc (El-Bahnasa, Egipte)', *Aula Orientalis* 20 (Sabadell, 2002), 147-61.

⁸ E. PONS, 'Últimos descubrimientos en la tumba Saïta nº 14 del Yacimientos Arqueológico de Oxirrinc (El-Bahnasa), Egipto: habitación nº 4', *Boletín del Museo Arqueológico Nacional* (Madrid, 2008).

⁹ It is situated in the Nord-West of the tomb.

¹⁰ In 2005 we found 9 vases of them and in 2007 we found another one when we removed the coffin of the Offering Chamber. They have 0.4 m in height.

¹¹ This piece has 0.13 m in height and its quality is not very good because it is not well polished.

¹² S. ALLEN, 'Miniature and Model Vessels in Ancient Egypt', in: M. BÁRTA (ed.), *The Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology. Proceedings of the Conference Prague, May 31 June 4* (Prague, 2006), 19-24.

¹³ With grateful thanks to Silke Grallert (University of Bonn, Germany) for all the information about these 'model' vessels.



Fig. 1. Pieces of Offering Chamber No 4.

basis. Sometimes these objects are small containers but other times they are dummy¹⁴. These shapes of vessels, *nemset* or *desheret* vessels, are associated in a choice of ritual tools for the Ritual of the Opening of the Month of the mummy and also are connected with the use of sacred oils during the same ritual.

Four clay models of foundation bricks of 0.4 m in height; two stones amulets of a fish and *ib* and one faience *Djed* of Osiris.

But perhaps, the most interesting object found in the Offering Chamber is a clay pot with 50 Osiris of bronze of different sizes and typology between 0.07-0.15 m in height, a crown of Uraeus also of bronze of 0.07 m in height, a plaque with ten Osiris, a fragment of an Atef crown of 0.10 m in height and a lot of remains of gold leaf inside it. We think that it is a very particular offering but unfortunately we don't have a lot of information about this kind of offering in Egypt during the Saite Period. We have been looking for parallels in other digs of this Period in Egypt but we have not found anything similar. We know that in 1903 the Egyptologist and Archaeologist Georges Legrain found in the Temple of Karnak more than 20000 pieces and 10000 of them were of bronze and many of them of Osiris¹⁵, but the kind of finding is very different.

¹⁴ Silke Grallert has a complete study about these vessels in this publication with the title 'Integrated Sets of Model Vessels in Late Period Burials from Lower Egypt. A Preliminary Report'.

¹⁵ G. RÉVEILLAC and M. AZIM, *Karnak dans l'objectif de Georges Legrain* (Paris, 2004), 29-34.

In the same year 2005 we found **Funerary Chamber No. 6**. It is a small complete room of about 4 m², with vaulted roof and with the entrance from the South of the tomb¹⁶.

When we started to work in this chamber we saw that the thieves took out some stone blocks from the top of the entrance and they moved everything inside this room. Perhaps they removed some objects, but fortunately we found many complete funerary objects of very high quality of the Saite Period.

On the one hand we found remains of the body of a woman in very bad condition with burned bones and remains of a wooden coffin which was also very damaged, burned and without any inscriptions.

On the other hand we found:

- Eight alabaster canopic jars containing the mummified internal organs of the deceased with typical features of the Saite Period¹⁷. All these jars have inscriptions and lids in the shape of the four sons of Horus to protect the internal organs. Each set of four jars and lids has been made for a different individual because the quality is not the same. The first set has a very good quality and belongs to the owner of the Chamber. The eyes and the eyebrows of the faces of the four lids are painted in black colour and have remains of blue colour on the neck

On the body on the vessels is an inscription in five vertical columns enclosed in a rectangular frame in black colour. The hieroglyphs are incised and we can read: *“Tadiher, Daughter of a Prophet of Amon and Orisis, Lady of the House ... Daughter of Hepset and Horibsenef”*¹⁸.

The second set belongs to *“Pedineith, who was Prophet of Amon, Prophet of Osiris-Sokar, Prophet of Osiris, and Scribe of Bastet”*. The inscription consists of two vertical columns without frame. The surface of the stone in places is pitted¹⁹.

- More than four hundred shabtis of faience of green and blue colour, although the glaze of many of them is completely disappeared; only twelve statuettes have an inscription on the back with the name of *Tadiher*. The features are typical of the Saite Period and the quality is not very good. The shabtis are wearing a mummiform dress and are provided with a plain tripartite wig and plain beard. Their arms are crossed and both hands are holding the pick and the hoe, but in many cases the implements cannot be determined because the execution is very rough. In general the faces are

¹⁶ It is situated in the South-West of the Tomb.

¹⁷ See e.g. *CORPUS ANTIQUITATUM AEGYPTIACARUM. Museum of Fine Arts. Boston*, Fasc. I (Mainz, 1978); *CORPUS ANTIQUITATUM AEGYPTIACARUM. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wien*, Fasc. 2-3 (Mainz, 1989); *CORPUS ANTIQUITATUM AEGYPTIACARUM. Pelizaeus Museum Hildesheim*, fasc. 15 (Mainz, 1980).

¹⁸ M. Erroux-Morfin is doing the complete study about the texts of this tomb.

¹⁹ G.A. REISNER, *Canopics* (Cairo, 1967), 63-83.

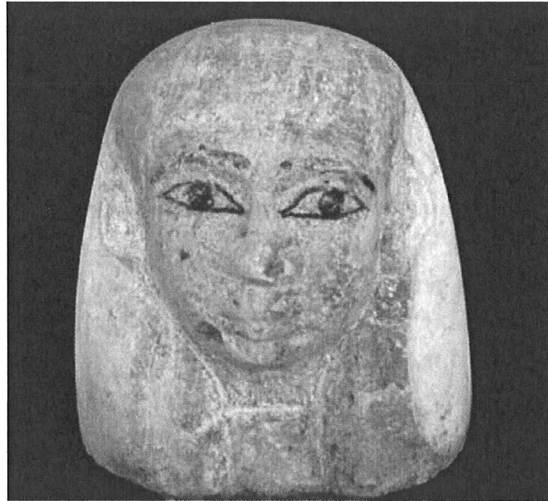


Fig. 2. Lid of Canopic Jar of *Tadiher*.

superficially treated and the figures are standing on a pedestal. Some of the shabtis have a back pillar but in the main the back is flat²⁰.

- Two amulets of *ib* of gold and stone, one dark green stone heart-scarab without inscriptions underside and many tubular beads of green and blue faience and cornelian of the pectoral or necklaces of the deceased.
- Remains of cartonnage with different colours (blue, black, green, white) and a lot of gold leaf primarily for the mummy mask and wood coffin.
- A complete large clay jar without any decorative motifs or handles and with rim. It has 0.63 m in height. This kind of vessel is a rare type in the Saite Period but we can find it in Tell Defenneh and Abydos²¹.
- Eight small pieces of bronze to close the wood coffin.

Two weeks before finishing the 2005 campaign we started to work on the east of **Funerary Chamber No 7**²² with the entrance from the East of the tomb.

This room did not have a roof and it was covered with fine sand of ochre colour. It has a surface of about 16 m². In this area we found two stone anthropoid sarcophagi without inscriptions of a woman and a man with typical features of the Saite Period. Both were open, but one of them, the female, had inside a mummy in very bad

²⁰ *CORPUS ANTIQUITATUM AEGYPTIACARUM*. Allard Pierson Museum. Amsterdam. Fasc. II, 2 (Amsterdam, 1990); *CORPUS ANTIQUITATUM AEGYPTIACARUM*. Museen der Rhein-Main-Region (Mainz, 1984).

²¹ A. KELLEY, *The pottery of Ancient Egypt. Dynasty to Roman Times* (Toronto, 1976), 83.4, 87.1; W.F.I. PETRIE, *Tanis II* (London, 1888), 29, 27, 11, 15.

²² This Chamber is situated in the South-West of the Tomb, just in front of Funerary Chamber No 6.

condition, with many beads of a necklace and some amulets: a very nice *Head-rest* made of haematite of 2 cm in height, *Wedjat* of plain back, *Djed-pillar*, Horus of faience, stone, lapis lazuli... to protect the deceased in the other life. Close to this sarcophagus there were more than 300 hundred shabtis with a plain wig and an artificial painted beard. The arms are crossed right over left and carried the implements. The left hand is holding a pick, and the right hand a hoe and a rope with a bag on the left shoulder on the back. The statuettes are provided with a pedestal and a back pillar. Some of them have text and it is written in horizontal lines running on the front and the both sides. In general the glaze has almost disappeared, and the surface discoloured. The execution is relatively detailed and careful.

In front of the shabtis there was an ostrich egg. We have been looking for parallels in Egypt about this finding, but until the moment we did not find anything similar in the digs of this Period. The male sarcophagus was totally empty and the stone was a badly damaged. The two stone sarcophagi were on a pavement of big slabs.

When we finished this campaign we did not know where the body of *Padineith* was and neither the relation between *Tadiher* and this person. We had to wait until the next campaign to find the answers.

In 2006 we began to dig on the west part of Funerary Chamber No 7, that is to say, in front of the entrance of Funerary Chamber No 6.

The vaulted west wall of this Funerary Chamber was in very good condition and has an inscription of five vertical columns of writing. In this inscription we can read the name of *Padineith* with his titles *Prophet of Osiris*, *Prophet of Osiris-Sokar*, *Prophet of Amon*, *Prophet of all the gods*, *Scribe of Bastet*. The wall had a height of 3.11 m and a width of 3.66 m.



Fig. 3. Two stone sarcophagi on a floor of stone slabs.

Close to this wall we discovered a very nice stone anthropoid sarcophagus with the cover full of inscriptions, some images of gods and goddesses and one inscription round the box.

On the shoulders are the images of the head of the god Falcon-Horus to protect to the deceased and they have some remains of blue colour. On the head is the representation of the goddess Neith and in the central scene and on the feet are the goddess Isis. Both goddesses had their wings outstretched protecting the deceased *Padineith*.

The inscriptions mention two times the name of *Per-Medyer*, the old city of Oxyrhynchus²³ and they say that the owner of the sarcophagus is *Padineith, Prophet of Osiris, Prophet of Osiris-Sokar, Prophet of all the Gods, Prophet of Amon, Scribe of Bastet*, and also that he is the son of *Tadiher*, the owner of Funerary Chamber No 6, and *Ouah-ib-Rê*²⁴.

The sarcophagus was opened by thieves but inside of it we found the remains of the mummy in a very bad condition and many tubular beads of faience of a necklace, several small amulets of gold of *Falcon-Horus, Uraeus, feather*, some sheets gold and one of them with the representation of *Falcon-Horus*, two tubular beads of gold and one *Djed-pillar* of cornelian and one stone *wedjat*.

The sarcophagus is made of limestone, similar to the other two sarcophagi of this Chamber, and it has the typical features of the Saite Period. Without doubt it is the most beautiful sarcophagus found in this big tomb. It was on a floor of sand without stone slabs.

Room No 2 had a stone anthropoid sarcophagus with three vertical columns of inscriptions in red colour and a necklace *Usekh* with remains in blue and ochre colour on the cover. The face has remains of red painting. It was opened but it had inside a mummy of a woman with many beads of green faience and several amulets of Horus, *Djed-pillar, ib* of stone and faience; Room No 3 had only a big stone block, similar to a column base and perhaps this room was destined to offering; Room No 5 had two levels and it was very damaged but had inside fragments of a sarcophagus without inscriptions and amulets of stone of *Djed-pillar* and Horus and one *Tit* knot or Isis knot of gold.

Room No 8 had several covers and boxes of stone sarcophagi, totally empty, and other two stone anthropoid sarcophagi *in situ* with the mummies of two women inside of them. One of the anthropoid sarcophagi had on the cover an inscription of two vertical columns in red colour and remains of black and red painting on the face.

Funerary Chamber No 9 had an anthropoid sarcophagus without inscription in bad condition with some shabtis of faience of the Saite Period with mummiform dress and a plain tripartite wig and plain beard. Their arms are crossed and both hands are holding

²³ We also have this name in room 3 of tomb No 1.

²⁴ We have an alabaster canopic jar with an inscription with this name.

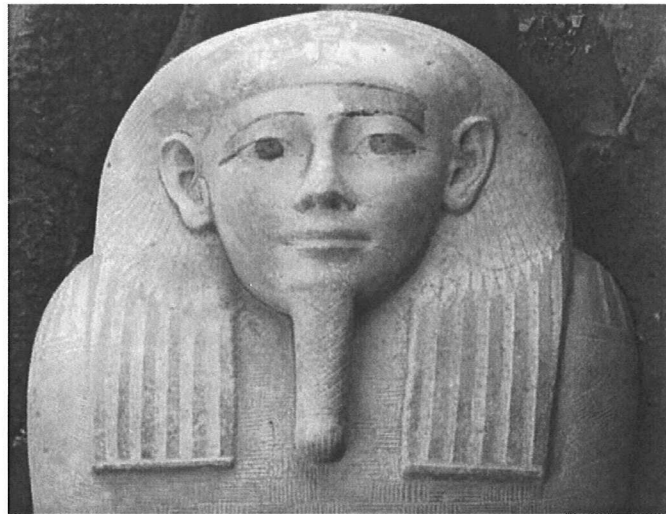


Fig. 4. Sarcophagus of Pedineith.



Fig. 5. Funerary Chamber No 6.

the hoe and the pick but in some cases the execution is very rough and the implements are few visible. In general the faces are superficially treated and the figures are standing on a pedestal. The shabtis are also without inscriptions and the glaze on some of them has disappeared. Rooms No 1, 10 and 11 were empty.

Tomb No 14 is the second biggest tomb of the Saite Necropolis in the archaeological site of Oxyrhynchus (El-Bahnasa). The builders did a big cut in the geological stratum

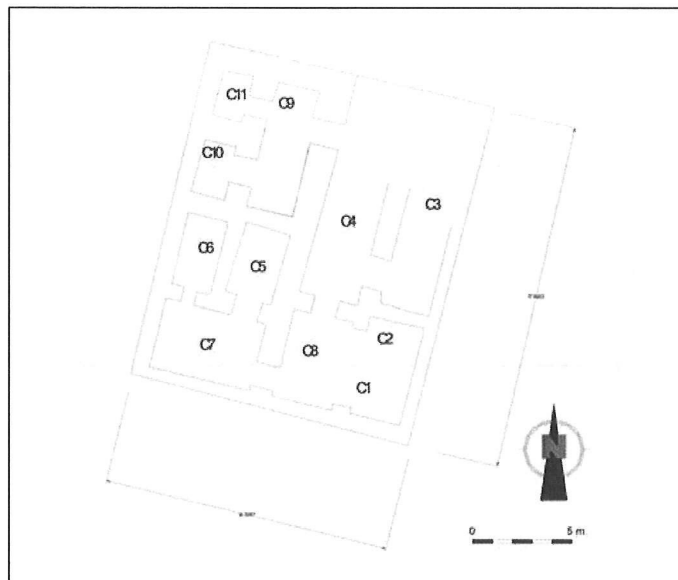
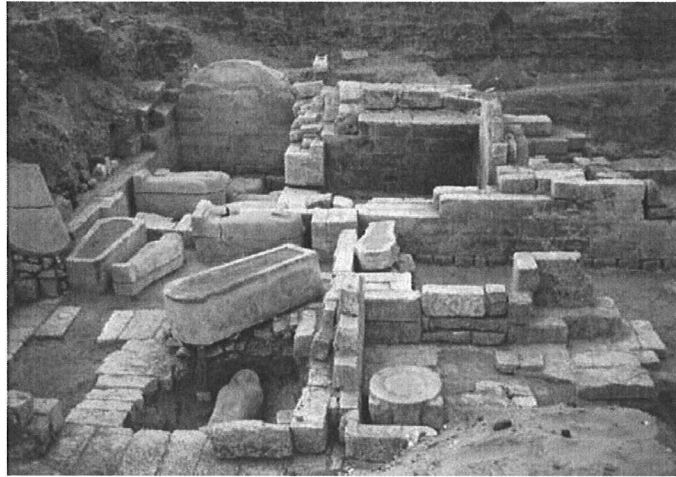


Fig. 6-7. General view and plan of Tomb No 14.

to built the tomb as we can see in other big tombs of Saite Period²⁵ and built this tomb with big limestone blocks of good quality²⁶, but depending on the location of the blocks in the walls, roofs and floors, the shape, size and weight is different²⁷. The main

²⁵ We can see this in tombs No 1, 7 and 13 of this Necropolis.

²⁶ In El-Bahnasa (Oxyrhynchus) and close to Beni Hassan there were sandstone open quarries from the Ancient Period.

²⁷ Height: 0.30-0.40 m; Length: 0.55-0.60 m.

type of the stone blocks are polished and smooth with straight right edges, but the blocks of rooms 9, 10 and 11 have beveled edges and marks of stone picks. They used mortar (clay, sand or mixture of both with an addition of powdered limestone or other material) as a binding material between blocks of stone and as a sliding or lubricant material to reduce friction when blocks were pushed in position.

The tomb is in bad condition and in general it only preserves three or four courses of limestone blocks of the walls, parts of limestone pavement and the foundation of smaller blocks with desert sand in which these blocks were floated. This sand provided protection against the infiltration of ground water. The only exception is Funerary Chamber No 6 because it is not damaged and preserves all the structure.

We know that Chambers No 5 and No 7 had vaulted roofs like Funerary Chamber No 6 because they preserve the beginning of the vault, and in the case of No 7 we are sure that the vault is one of the biggest in Egypt in this Period. Unfortunately we are not able to know if the roofs of the other rooms of this tomb were vaulted or not.

When we started to work in this tomb in 2002 we found thrown inside it many fragments of boxes and covers of sarcophagi, and also many limestone blocks of the walls of the tomb, and we think that this tomb was used as container after it had been destroyed by human action. In the past the complete tomb was covered with sand of ochre colour and a big layer of brown earth²⁸.

Last year we have started to restore the walls of this big tomb and we hope to finish it as soon as possible.

²⁸ We hope to publish the complete report of this tomb as soon as possible.

