

THE OSTRACON

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CALL FOR ARTICLES

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CALL FOR ARTICLES

The Ostrakon: The Journal of the Egyptian Study Society

Volume 26 (2015)

Submission deadline: May 1, 2015

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The Tausret Temple Project: 2014 Season

University of Arizona Egyptian Expedition

By Pearce Paul Creasman, Rebecca Caroli, Tori Finlayson and Bethany Beckett

As regular readers of this journal are aware, the University of Arizona Egyptian Expedition (the “UAEE”)¹ has been excavating at the site of the 19th Dynasty female pharaoh Tausret’s memorial temple in Western Thebes since 2004. While work on the temple proper was completed largely in 2012 (while reserving some areas for future archaeologists, with the expectation that excavation methodologies will advance), there are numerous other structures and features around the temple in need of investigation. For the last several years, these have been our primary focus. When W. M. Flinders Petrie visited and excavated at the site briefly in 1896,² he reported some of these other features in passing, often in a single sentence or less. The UAEE’s recent work has focused on developing a greater understanding of the temple and the occupation of the surrounding site.

Permission to conduct excavation was granted kindly by the Ministry of Antiquities and Heritage (formerly the Ministry of State for Antiquities) and its Permanent Committee in March 2014.³ The fieldwork was conducted between May 21 and June 19, 2014, including excavation from May 25 until June 17. This article summarizes the findings from our most recent season.⁴

2014 GOALS

The goals for the 2014 field season were to continue to clean, map, record, and publish the limited remains of the Tausret temple; to uncover and document the tombs in and around the temple complex; and to continue to explore the anciently used cave features (now termed “tombs” with high confidence) uncovered in 2012 in the scarp on the north side of the temple complex.⁵ In addition, we continued our previous efforts to improve the safety and appearance of the site.



Fig. 1. Site of Tausret’s “Temple of Millions of Years.”

CONTEMPORARY TEMPLE STRUCTURES

The purpose of our investigation in the northwest corner of the temple was to evaluate whether any supplemental structures, similar to those found at contemporary temples such as the Ramesseum, existed outside the main walls of the temple. Indeed, we found mud brick features consistent in both alignment and construction with the temple. We also uncovered a series of later mud brick walls, courtyards, and tombs, all of which had been entered in antiquity and seemed to have been inspected by Petrie’s workmen. It is certain that these later features postdate the construction of Tausret’s temple in the 19th Dynasty and its destruction in the 20th Dynasty, having been built over the temple rubble and in a different alignment and construction than the temple. Based on the associated artifacts

found in and around them, we suspect that these features date to the Third Intermediate or Late Period.



Fig. 2. Google Map of northern portion of the concession with 2013 and 2014 excavations (2m² grids) superimposed and Features in escarpments (west at left, the “TC” area; north at right, the “TD” area) labeled.

Immediately above the *gebel* (bedrock) level reached by our excavations in the northwest corner of the temple and seemingly attached to the outside of the northern wall of the temple, we found what appeared to be a series of mud brick chambers or rooms (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Mud brick ancillary temple structure; northwest corner of Tausret's temple. (Photograph from the north).

Their purpose and complete forms are not yet understood fully, but it is possible that these were intended to serve as storerooms for Tausret's temple, similar to those found on the north side of the Ramesseum. The contemporary relationship to Tausret's temple is clear from their orientation (aligned with the walls of the temple); their location (abutting the temple's northern wall); and in their use of New Kingdom mud bricks, many of which were stamped with royal cartouches from the New Kingdom. These factors indicate a likely date for their construction during the 19th Dynasty. Furthermore, these features were found under the remains of later structures (see below), separated by almost one meter of nearly sterile sand and fill, accumulated probably during the temple's ancient destruction and subsequent neglect.

Feature 5 was excavated in TC units 29, 36, 40, and 44.⁶ The feature is comprised of at least seven layers of mud brick. The mud bricks that compose this feature average 40 x 13 x 20 cm, with several bearing the cartouche of Tuthmosis IV; many of the mud bricks associated with the construction of Tausret's temple also feature this king's cartouche.⁷ The organized layers of mud brick are broken by two rubble piles of additional mud bricks. One pile is between the eastern face of the gebel scarp and the western side of the feature, probably representing a collapsed superstructure. The second pile is situated 2.74 m west of the eastern extent of the feature. The eastern side of the feature is broken by a mud brick wall presumed to date to the Third Intermediate or Late Period, and that wall delimits the eastern edge of the TC area. Beyond the eastern side of this wall, more organized mud bricks were uncovered, but further work is needed to understand the purpose and extent of this feature fully.

As contemporary temples were known to have priests' houses, granaries, and other ancillary buildings around them, it is possible that Feature 5 may have been associated with one of those purposes. Careful screening of the fill in and around it, however, has not yielded any artifacts or organic materials that might suggest its use. Consequently, it is possible that Feature 5 was uncompleted, or unused, or used for a purpose that did not leave an archaeological signature. The structure extends to the east (Fig. 4), and some evidence of its use may be discovered in the future as we pursue it in that direction.

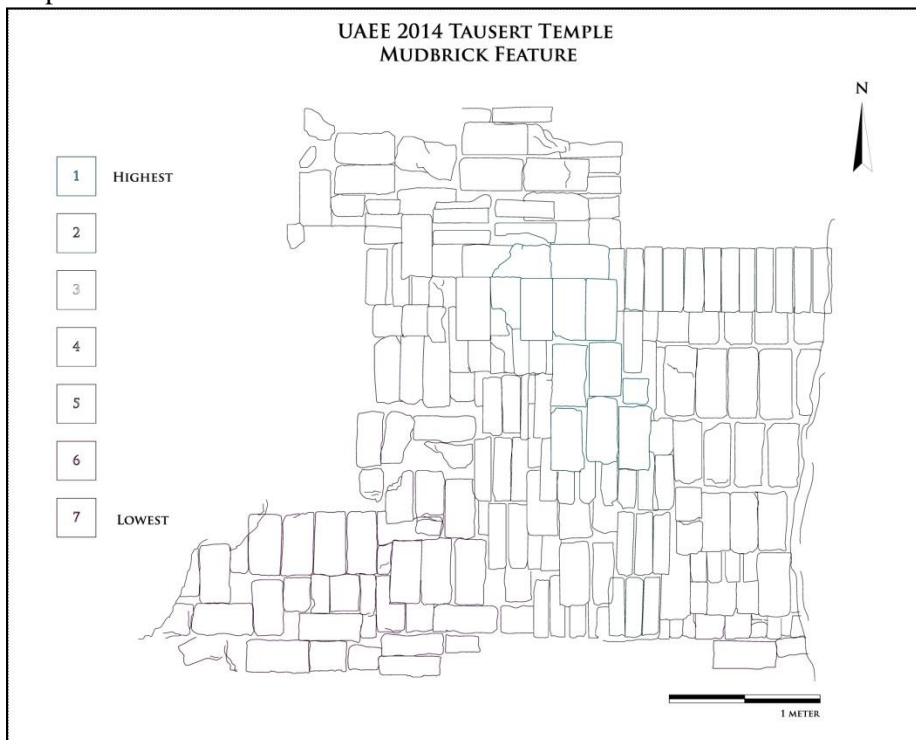


Fig. 4. Eastern portion of "Feature 5" (R. Caroli).

THIRD INTERMEDIATE OR LATE PERIOD TOMBS IN THE TEMPLE COMPLEX

Cave-like features that appear on the site postdate Tausret's temple construction and have been known at least since Petrie's work there. According to local rumors, one such feature—a rock-cut tomb—was used as a storehouse successively by Petrie, Howard Carter, an unknown German team, and the Egyptian Antiquities Organization. Although said to have been located about 25 m north of the temple in the western scarp, the precise location of this “tomb” is unknown. No maps or publications of which we are aware record anything more than a passing reference to *any* such features east of (or beneath) the modern road within our Tausret concession.

Nonetheless, during the last three years the UAEE has recovered evidence of later burials at the base of the western scarp. We made more such finds in 2014. During the past two years, we have revealed at least four caves cut from the poor-quality alluvium deposits in the scarp (see Features 1, 2, 3, possibly 4 and 6 in Fig. 2) and our evidence indicates that additional, similar features may still exist in both the western and northern scarps.

Specifically with regard to the area to the east of the western scarp and the modern road, we dug two test trenches (“TTC 4” and “TTC 5” in Fig. 2) to the north of the known mud brick walls related to construction in the western scarp and discovered still another mud brick wall more than 20 m north of our current excavations. It is unknown at this time whether the newly discovered wall is a continuation of those previously found to the south, or if it represents an entirely separate structure. It is likely that at least one and probably more features remain concealed under the wash and rubble that form part of the embankment of the modern road. It is equally likely that these features may have been entered by Petrie's workmen, since the oppressive volume of rubble did not exist at that time.

The discovery and excavation of Feature 6 (see Fig. 2) proved to be a substantial endeavor. In 2013, we discovered mud brick walls that seemed to indicate a feature, possibly a tomb chapel, not associated with Tausret's temple.⁸ While following that wall this year to determine its extent, we discovered other mud brick walls oriented perpendicular to the face of the western scarp, as opposed to Tausret's New Kingdom temple which is set at an acute angle from the scarp. The two sets of later walls run approximately parallel to one another and perpendicular to the gebel cliff corner (Fig. 2). The northernmost of these two walls turns 90 degrees to the north, suggesting another or an extended courtyard in that direction.

Within the bounds of the walls and the face of the scarp, we discovered a moderately sized opening, leading to an artificial “cave.” The feature is at least 5.20 m deep (east-west) and 4.82 m wide (north-south). It is about 2.55 m high in the center of the cave. The entrance has stairs cut into the gebel leading down into the cavity. It is likely the same feature described by Petrie as:

... three or four chambers with an outer court wall. ... had a long flight of steps, going 171 inches horizontally, and steeply inclined, a doorway at the bottom opened into a chamber 114 x 86 inches, from which opened out another chamber 104 x 92 inches. We cleared out nearly all of these tombs, but found only a few amulets and a poor set of canopic jars of about the XXIIIrd dynasty. One tomb was filled with bones of oxen.⁹

As noted above, Feature 6 contains a flight of stairs inside its entrance. In addition, we recovered the remains of at least ten individual oxen, animals not otherwise found at the site. The remains were concentrated near the entrance and in the inner walled area of the cavity. The bones were disarticulated, and there was no evidence that the animals had been mummified. These similarities make us fairly certain this is the same tomb Petrie noted briefly in his report. To date, we have not been able to locate the canopic jars Petrie mentioned to confirm that their style be dated to the 23rd Dynasty, as he suggested. If they can be, Feature 6 would represent a significant construction for that time period in Thebes.

The interior of the tomb contained modern refuse from the 1920s to the 1980s (including a letter envelope addressed to or from “L. Borchardt” and an unknown person, dated c. 1923–4 based on the

stamp), suggesting the tomb had been entered multiple times since Petrie's work there in 1895, or perhaps had been left open. The feature is almost devoid of cultural material apart from the animal remains, a few human bones, and refuse. However, we discovered the partial remains of at least five mummified humans just outside the entrance to the tomb, presumably from disturbed ancient burials within. We hope to include a specialist on our team during a future field season to evaluate both the human and animal remains.

Most of Feature 6 is cut primarily into *tuffla*, a soft sedimentary layer that is susceptible to collapse, and is in close proximity to the gebel scarp and the modern road above it. Because of the potential danger to the road, we consulted with local government officials, our inspector, and our engineer, and opted to excavate the feature only partially (enough to note the similarities to Petrie's description). Then we protected it with steel beams at the entry (Fig. 5) and with fired bricks to support the four primary interior walls (Fig. 6).



Fig. 5.
Protection of
the entry to
Feature 6 with
steel frame and
fired bricks.



Fig. 6.
Construction
of interior
support walls in
Feature 6.

NORTHERN SCARP TOMBS

In 2012, we removed over 1 m of modern refuse that accumulated at the base of the high gebel scarp on the northern edge of the Tausret temple site. During that clearance, we discovered a series of cave-like features. At least three of these cavities certainly had been used as ancient tombs and contained remnants of funerary cones and other burial items. At least one of the tombs (“Feature 1”) had a sealed entry in antiquity, using mud bricks consistent in construction with those used in the Tausret temple itself, probably placing its use after the destruction of the temple. We recovered heavily disturbed and disarticulated mummified human remains from in front of and within Features 1 and 2. A small selection of prestige items were found in relation to Feature 1, including: parts of several Mycenaean stirrup jars,¹⁰ large sea shells (still to be identified, but not otherwise found in other burials in the immediate area), and enigmatic ostraca (including what may be a poor quality “magic wand”).

Our research indicates that Petrie knew of at least one of these features (probably our “Feature 1”) and identified it as belonging to one or more persons connected with the Assyrian occupation of Thebes at the end of the 25th Dynasty (c. 665–657 BCE). Our understanding of the materials found in and around Feature 1, which had been disturbed significantly both before and after Petrie, is consistent with his conclusion. It is probable, however, that Feature 1 was reused several times (e.g., as a shelter; though seemingly only once for burial) and we cannot assign dates or dynasties conclusively yet to any of the individuals who were buried in these crude tombs.



Fig. 7. Northern scarp (photograph from southeast).

Flanking Feature 1 at the base of the northern scarp are two similar cave/tombs, designated Features 2 and 3, that were also discovered during the 2012 season.¹¹ The partially disarticulated mummies of several juveniles were found in front of Feature 2, though little else in the way of diagnostic material culture accompanied them apart from fragments of Canaanite amphorae. During the 2014 season, we continued to clear and map the areas in and around all three features. Little

additional diagnostic material was discovered, although we were able to determine what we believe to be the western extent of the features along this scarp. Plate 1 (see page 13) shows the distribution of the artifacts found in association with all three features.

As can be seen in Fig. 7, at the top of the northern scarp is a mud brick pillar commonly referred to as part of the so-called temple of Khonsuwardis.¹² There remains a significant question as to whether or not the features we found at the base of the northern scarp, and thus underneath the temple that was used in the 22nd–23rd Dynasty and again in the late 25th or 26th Dynasty, bear any relationship to that temple or its builders. We hope to obtain approval to investigate this possibility at some time in the future.

OTHER INTERESTING FINDS IN THE NORTHERN SCARP

Cache of New Kingdom offering sherds

Thousands of sherds from hundreds (or more) of broken offerings vessels (beer jars, ring base stands and red rimmed bowls typical of the New Kingdom) were found outside the burial features in the northern scarp, also. None of the sherds were found inside the features (except where modern disturbance can be attributed) and all appear to have been underneath several layers of thin mud floors associated with crude chapels for the cave-tombs. The location and volume of these sherds suggest strongly their deposition at a time prior to the use of the cave-tombs and during a short interval (possibly a singular event). The sheer volume of these relatively consistent kinds of ceramics is interesting unto itself, for it is unusual at this site. They are under continued study.

A jar seal/stopper with the cartouche of Ramesses II

Discovered in the lower stratum at the western edge of the northern scarp (near Feature 3), this stopper (Fig. 8) was found in what appears to be a small midden of broken ceramics, as noted directly above. Given Tausret's intentional and direct efforts to associate with her ancestor,¹³ it should not be surprising to find some such examples of his "presence" on the site. Nevertheless, until the ceramics found near the northern scarp are understood better, interpretation of this find remains elusive.



Fig. 8. Ramesses II
seal/stopper (R. Caroli)

A set of sun-baked offering stands and small dishes

A cluster of sun-baked dishes and fragments of small stands was found in 2013 at the base of the northern scarp, near the entrance of Feature 1. Since these items are extremely rare anywhere in Egypt during any period, we continued studying them this season. Most were broken, but their

general shape could be ascertained. Small, flat-based dishes are found frequently in deposits dated to the New Kingdom. Stands are found less often. Finding them together, unfired, is highly unusual. Sun-baked mud vessels are noted rarely in the literature and, when they are mentioned, they usually appear in contexts associated with the embalming process. Why these vessels were unfired is a mystery. They all are wheel-made and finished coarsely. A few of the dishes have traces of black on their inner surfaces. They appear ready to have been put into a kiln, but no kilns have been found near the Tausret site.

The collection of vessels was found in association with several disarticulated human remains (including at least four juveniles) in a one square meter area at the base of the northern scarp, about 1 m east of the entrance to Feature 1 and about 1 m above the bedrock surface. It appears as though they may have been part of an offering cache. The vessels will be the subject of a manuscript to be published soon.¹⁴ The apparent absence of such vessels in the literature to date invites further investigation.

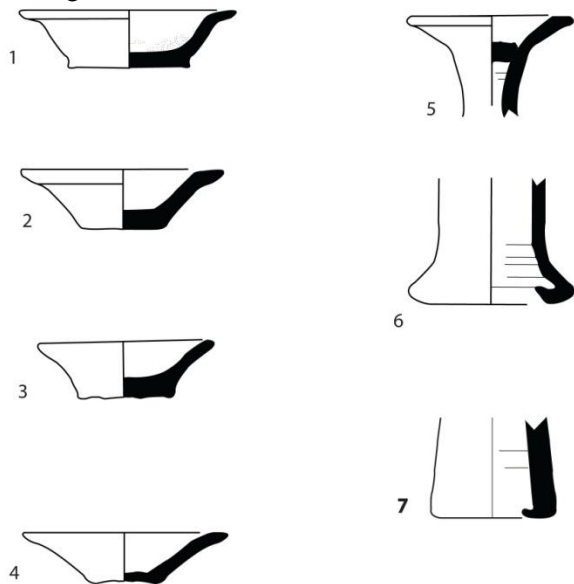


Fig. 9. Drawings of the sun-baked offering stands (R. Hummel).

1:2

Fig. 10. Photograph of select pieces of the sun-baked offering stands.



SITE IMPROVEMENT, PROTECTION AND MONITORING

This season we conducted a large-scale series of tasks designed to improve the longevity, safety and appearance of the site. With the expert guidance of our engineer, and in consultation with our inspector and other members of the local archaeological administration, we undertook the following:

- 1) We removed the weeds from the southernmost side of the Tausret site near the wall of Merenptah's temple. This was done at the request of the Merenptah temple inspector and other government officials.
- 2) We stabilized the modern road embankment near the northwest corner of Tausret's temple with mud-brick retaining walls constructed with more than 7,000 bricks and clean fill.



Fig. 11. Northwest corner of Tausret's temple with thorough reinforcement.

- 3) We replaced and cemented the fence beside the road above the site (Fig. 11).
- 4) We inserted more than thirty plaster architectural test patches (seen at right in Fig. 11) into the cracks and fissures of all exposed areas of the northern and western gebel scarps. These were monitored at least daily to observe cracks that might suggest instability. Similar patches inserted during our 2013 season show no signs of instability, but we will continue to monitor them for any environmental changes.
- 5) We spread sterile sand in the temple's foundation trenches and other recently excavated areas to protect the edges of the trenches and temple rooms, and to highlight the temple outline with a color similar to the sandstone from which the original walls of the temple would have been constructed. Sand was not spread on top of surface areas, which represent the area of rooms in the temple. As a result, the floor plan of the temple is now discernible from elevated views.
- 6) With the approval and in the presence of representatives of the Ministry of Antiquities, we removed over seventy-five truckloads of flood debris and modern refuse that accumulated near the base of the western scarp during the last 100 years.
- 7) We stabilized the interior walls of Feature 5 with fired brick and plaster, and sealed the entrance to protect it.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

We are pleased to report that our latest season of work on the Tausret Temple Project proved very valuable. With the assistance of local workmen, we were able to clear two large areas of the temple site successfully. We continue to develop our understanding of the form and history of the temple, including its extent of completion, and the later occupations at the site. In addition, we revealed at least one previously unmapped Theban tomb, albeit one that is unpainted, undecorated, and now nearly devoid of cultural material. We will continue to study the material culture and context of the site, and publish additional information and conclusions beyond those that are possible in this report. As always, we thank the Ministry of Antiquities and Heritage for the opportunity to work with our colleagues in Egypt who were most helpful and are acknowledged above, and we look forward to working with them again in a future season.

NOTES

1. <http://egypt.arizona.edu/>
2. W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Six Temples at Thebes* (London: 1897), 13–20
3. We would like to acknowledge the kind permission of the Ministry of Antiquities and Heritage to work in Egypt, as well as long-standing support from the members of the Permanent Committee. In addition, we would like to thank Hany Abu El-Azm, Director of Foreign Missions, for his kind and continued help in arranging our work in Egypt; Dr. Hazim Karrar, Director of Upper Egypt; Talat Abdel Aziz, Director of the West Bank at Luxor; Fahti Yaseen, Director of Middle Thebes; Hekmat Araby and Ezz Adin, Chief Inspectors of Middle Thebes; the American Research Center in Egypt, especially Mme Amira Khattab, and their many colleagues. Osama Saad Alla Hamdoun Abdella served as our inspector, for whom we are extremely grateful. Finally, Reis Omar Farouk Sayed el-Quftawi and Reis Ali Farouk Sayed el-Quftawi managed our team of workmen with excellence, as usual. Certainly not least, we are immensely grateful to the benefactors of the UAEE, who truly make all of our efforts possible. Finally, we thank the editorial board of *The Ostrakon* for assisting in bringing this work to press and improving it along the way.
4. The 2014 field team (Plate II) consisted of: Pearce Paul Creasman, Director; Nancy Ackelson, Field Assistant; Rebecca Caroli, Photographer and Field Archaeologist; Clinton Creasman, Engineer; Stephanie Denkowicz, Field Assistant; Ayad Barliary Hessein, Ceramics Illustrator; Richard Harwood, Associate Director and Section Leader; Rexine Hummel, Ceramicist; James Van Arsdel, Field Assistant; Suzanne Vukobratovich, Object Registrar; Mariel Watt, Assistant Registrar; Jessica Sue Wiles, Assistant Ceramicist; and graduate student participants Bethany Beckett, Erin Denbaars, Benjamin Denton, Tori Finlayson, Leah Guillaume, and Kelli Williams.
5. Throughout the following discussion, “north” and other cardinal points are based on local north as utilized by the ancient Egyptians of the New Kingdom. Local north on the Tausret site lies at 40 degrees east of magnetic north. Other structures, especially of later periods, appear to be oriented in relation to the gebel scarps on the west and north sides of the temple site.
6. The UAEE uses “TC” to denote the area in the northwest corner of the temple and immediately east of the western scarp, “TA” and “TB” to denote units in temple proper, and “TD” to denote the area immediately south of northern scarp.
7. Tuthmosis IV’s mortuary temple lies to the north of Tausret’s temple, between her temple and the Ramesseum, and incorporated thousands of mud bricks in its construction. It was not uncommon for later kings to pillage resources from their predecessors’ monuments.
8. Pearce Paul Creasman, “Tausret Temple Project: The 2013 Season and Other Notes,” *The Ostrakon* 24 (Fall 2013): 3–11.
9. Petrie 1897, 18.
10. Pearce Paul Creasman and Rexine Hummel, “Foreign Pottery at the Site of Tausret’s Temple of Millions of Years,” *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 5.4 (2013): 14–16.
11. The Features were labeled in order of discovery. Since we were initially unsure of their use (as tombs) we have opted to keep their field labels here as they correspond to our excavation records and field notes.
12. Petrie believed that this site belonged to “Khonsuwardus, goldsmith of the temple of Amen” of the 25th or 26th Dynasty (Petrie 1897, 18). Later excavations by Edda Bresciani determined that it had belonged previously

to a vizier named Nebneteru, son of the vizier Hor, and dated to the 22nd or 23rd Dynasty [Bresciani “L’attività archeologica in Egitto (1966-1976) dell’Istituto di Papirologia dell’Università di Milano” and *Un decennio di ricerche archeologiche/Quaderni de ‘La ricerca scientifica* 100 (1978), 243–258].

Nevertheless, it is still commonly referred to in most publications as the temple of Khonsuwardis.

13. See Richard H. Wilkinson, ed. 2012. *Tausret: Forgotten Queen and Pharaoh of Egypt* (Oxford University Press).
14. Rexine Hummel and Pearce Paul Creasman, “A Curious Assemblage of Mud Vessels,” *Bulletin de liaison de Céramique Égyptienne* 25: in press.

About the Authors

Dr. Pearce Paul Creasman has been conducting archaeological research in Egypt for more than a decade. Since 2009 he has been at the University of Arizona, where he serves in several capacities, including Director of the Egyptian Expedition, Curator of the Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research, Assistant Research Professor of Dendrochronology, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, and Associate Editor of the peer-reviewed Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections.

Rebecca Caroli, Tori Finlayson and Bethany Beckett are graduate students who participated in the 2014 season, and made significant contributions both in the field and to this report.

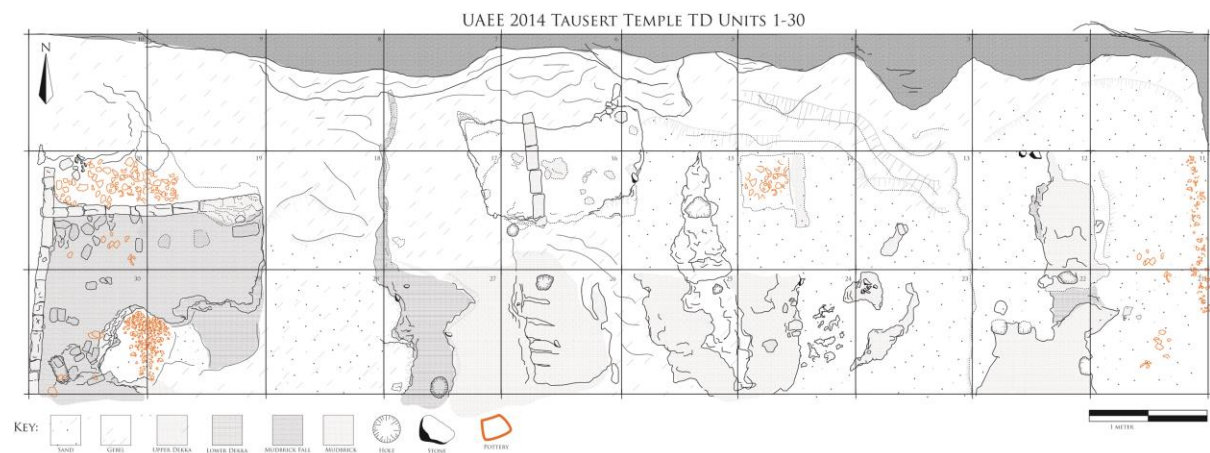


Plate I. The distribution of the artifacts found in association with Features 1, 2, and 3.



Plate II. The 2014 field team.

NEFERTITI'S LEFT EYE: AN ENIGMA

By Stephanie Denkowicz

Displayed currently in the Neues Museum in Berlin,¹ the bust of Queen Nefertiti is one of the masterpieces of ancient Egypt that is recognized instantly worldwide. Since its discovery by Ludwig Borchardt on December 6, 1912 during excavations at Amarna, the ancient city of Akhetaten, the bust and its subject have mesmerized the general public and have been the source of extensive analysis and debate by Egyptologists and art historians. Among the numerous questions which have puzzled them since the bust's discovery are: what was its purpose, and why is the left eye missing? To begin to answer these questions, it is necessary to look closely at the location and circumstances surrounding the discovery of the bust.

THE DISCOVERY: THUTMOSE'S WORKSHOP COMPLEX

The famous bust was found in the workshop complex of Thutmose, Chief of Works and sculptor to King Akhenaten² (Fig. 1). A unique feature of the complex is that it is the only compound in Amarna that contained a large villa as well as a workshop. The bust of Nefertiti was discovered in a small storeroom directly off the villa's columned main hall, along with more than fifty other images and models of the royal family made of plaster and stone, including a badly damaged but completed limestone bust of Akhenaten. The room, measuring 2.25 x 5.7 m (7.5 x 19 ft), originally had two doors: one to the main hall and another leading to the courtyard where the family's water well was located. The door leading to the courtyard was subsequently walled up. Dorothea Arnold posits that the door must have been sealed shortly before the villa's occupants abandoned Amarna, for their access to the well, bakery and stables would have been hindered greatly by the blocking of the doorway.³ No tools, molds or remains of sculpting material were found in the storage area.

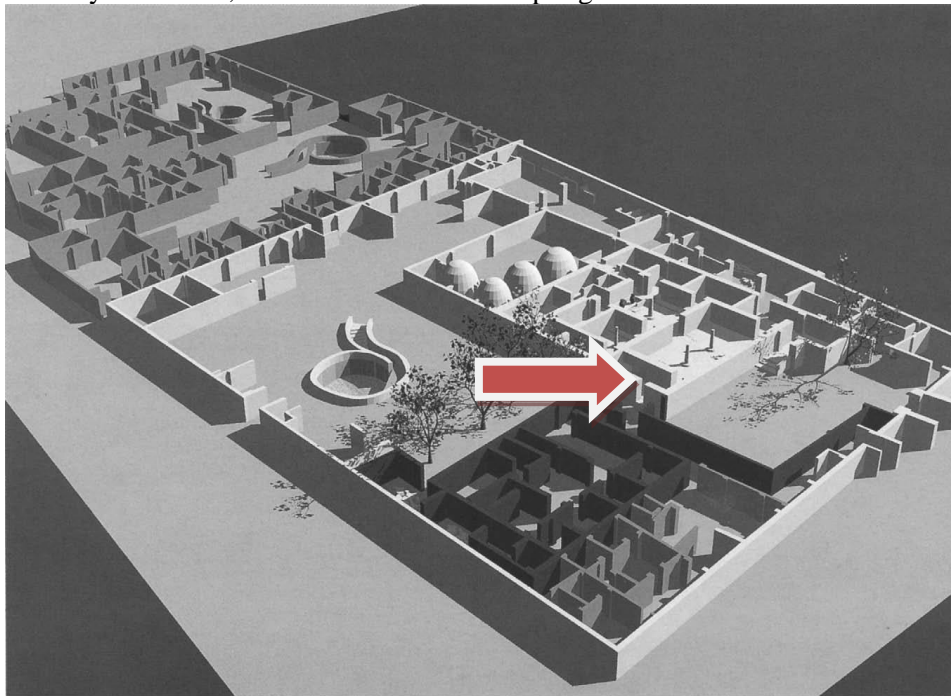


Fig. 1. Ground floor of Thutmose's complex. The arrow indicates where the bust of Nefertiti was found. Reconstruction by Barry Girsh. Image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

When Amarna was abandoned, probably sometime early in the reign of Tutankhamun,⁴ the inhabitants took with them only those objects they needed and that were important to their lives in their new homes. Only small numbers of textiles, metals, and wooden furniture were found at the complex. Few metal tools were discovered. Clay molds and a few unfinished sculptured works were found outside the storage room. These types of finds are consistent with a site that underwent “negative selection”; that is, only objects important and useful to the people abandoning the complex were taken while unnecessary objects were left behind.⁵

Based on these facts, it appears that the craftsmen removed their tools and personal items from the workshop and villa, and intentionally placed select models and unfinished works in the small room for storage prior to leaving the city. It is unlikely that they were simply forgotten.

SCULPTOR’S MODEL OR FINISHED WORK?

Nefertiti’s bust is arguably the most beautiful work of ancient Egyptian art yet discovered (Fig. 2). The bust has a limestone core covered in layers of gypsum plaster. The work is finely painted except for the eye sockets and the sides of the shoulders. The piece depicts the queen wearing a blue, flat-topped crown encircled by a multicolored band with a yellow uraeus. On her elongated neck she wears a multicolored collar depicting beads, mandrake fruits, flower petals and leaves. Two streamers hang from the back of the neck suggesting a ribbon or other light material. The right eye is inlaid with rock crystal and has a pupil made of black colored wax.⁶

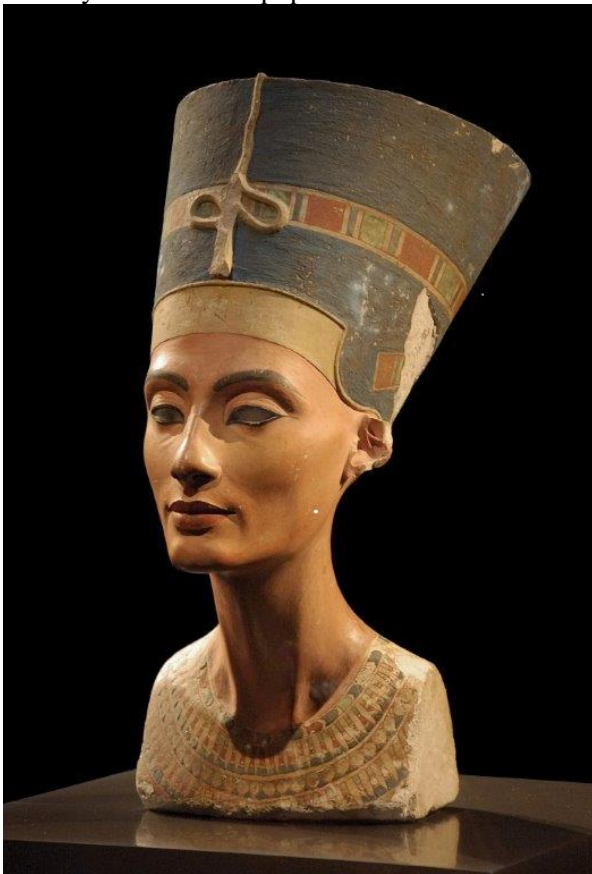


Fig. 2. Bust of Nefertiti.

On discovering the exquisite bust, Borchardt wrote in his diary: “Life-sized painted bust of the queen, 47 cm high. . . . Colours as if just applied. Work absolutely excellent. No use describing it, have to see it. . . . Only the ears and a little bit from the r. side of the wig [*sic*] damaged.”⁷ In addition

to the chips missing from the ears and crown noted by Borchardt, the raised portion of the uraeus was broken off and the inlay for the left eye was missing. Considering the fragility of the material from which it is made, it is surprising that the bust did not suffer further damage.

The absence of the left eye has resulted in much speculation. Various theories have been postulated for its absence. One early theory suggested that Nefertiti was partially blind. This theory has been refuted on the basis of other depictions of the queen which show her with both eyes and because it does not explain the black “guidelines” riming the left eye, as well as the absence of iconography typically associated with blindness.⁸ In addition, a more romantic theory exists that Thutmose, as the jilted lover of Nefertiti, intentionally left the eye socket empty in revenge for rejecting him.⁹

A less intriguing but more plausible theory for the absence of the left eye is that it was never inserted in the bust because the bust served as a sculptor’s model and therefore completion was unnecessary. This explanation was stated firmly by Borchardt in his first publication on the bust (which did not occur until 1923, over ten years after its discovery).

As regards the purpose of the bust, it is not really necessary to say anything. It was found in the chamber in which the head sculptor Thutmes [*sic*] stored many of his models. Its design shows that it was not created as a separately made piece from a larger statue; the left eye socket, for which the inlay (which should have been made as a mirror image of the right eye) never needed to be made, the work being unnecessary, is left empty; in short everything clearly indicates that the piece is a model, which was to be worked from within the workshop, which was busily occupied with figures of the family of Amenophis IV. It was either created by the master himself or he received it from another artist to serve as a model.¹⁰

In addition to the reasons given in the preceding quote, Borchardt based his conclusions on the fact that the left eye was never found during his excavations in spite of the immediate search of the area after the bust’s discovery. “The debris, including what had already been removed, was immediately searched, *partly sieved*.”¹¹ Although some ear fragments were found, the inlay was never discovered even though Borchardt offered a large reward to any workman who found it.

The sculptor’s model theory is still the most widely accepted explanation for the missing eye. Dorothea Arnold maintains that the empty eye socket illustrated the method used by a sculptor to prepare hollows in stone for insertion of an inlay.¹² In further support of this position, Karen Foster noted that “[b]y leaving the painted guidelines in Nefertiti’s left eye, Thutmose could show exactly how to achieve an outstanding ocular integration. The subtle contouring of the white limestone inlay foundation was a crucial element in the visual and conceptual effectiveness of the crystal and disc.”¹³

CT scans conducted on the bust in 2009 revealed extensive information regarding the construction of the statue including the thickness of the stucco layers on the face and ears, and the existence of an inner core. In discussing the right and left eyes of the bust, the authors of the study concluded, “[t]he left eye seemed to have never been filled with an inlay and contained no lens or pupil. . . .”¹⁴ In support of this statement, however, they do not cite their own work but cite Dorothea Arnold’s research instead.

Not all Egyptologists and art historians agree with the sculptor’s model theory. Many maintain that the bust was completed and that the left eye was lost in antiquity.¹⁵ Although Borchardt did search actively for the missing eye inlay, it is possible that it was overlooked, particularly if it were in part of the debris that was removed before the bust was discovered. The debris was “*partly sieved*”, so it is certainly possible that it was there but simply not found. Nefertiti’s bust is such a compelling and beautifully made piece that it is difficult to consider it as simply a model to be used by the craftsmen in Thutmose’s workshop to create other works.

As previously noted, among the finds in the storage room was a brightly painted, life-sized bust of Akhenaten. The limestone bust was broken into five pieces and the face severely damaged. Akhenaten’s bust was a completed piece as evidenced by the application of gold to the crown and to

the mandrake fruits on the collar. Friederike Seyfried suggests that the more lavishly decorated bust of Akhenaten went through several destructive processes before being discovered in 1912.¹⁶ Careful chisel marks on the fruit and crown indicate that Thutmose's craftsmen may have removed the valuable gold from the bust before depositing it in the storeroom. Only later, during the *damnatio memoriae* conducted by Horemheb, did his agents return to Amarna and destroy works of the heretic king and his family, including the bust of Akhenaten which reflects clearly violent hacking and battering, especially to the face—very different from the carefully chiseled removal of the gold inlay.¹⁷ By that time, perhaps the Nefertiti bust was covered more fully by mud and sand, thereby escaping the damage that was done to Akhenaten's bust. This theory is supported by the location where the queen's bust was found, which was at a lower level than Akhenaten's.¹⁸

Assuming that both busts were completed statues, what was their purpose? Seyfried suggests they may have been cult statues that were revered in the private villas of the Amarna elite.¹⁹ Akhenaten promoted the cult of the royal family strongly, and this cultic activity was prominent especially among the Amarna families. Cult images of the royal family were depicted on stelae and as statues displayed in the garden shrines of the elite villas, and many of these statues were well made.²⁰

It is probable that Thutmose, Chief of Works and sculptor to the king, had a garden shrine in his villa dedicated to his king and queen, just as did other elite citizens of Amarna. In addition, it is plausible that he created especially exquisite works of art to honor his royal patrons in such a garden shrine. After the downfall of Akhenaten and the return to the former religion, it was no longer politically correct for Thutmose to continue his cultic worship of the royal couple. Understandably, it would be difficult for an artist to destroy his own masterpieces, so why not store them carefully in a secured room? These are speculations on this author's part. However, as David O'Connor recently said, "Almost everything anyone says about ancient Egypt is speculative."²¹

CONCLUSION

There is no definitive answer to the question of why the bust of Nefertiti is missing its left eye, nor do we know the actual purpose of the bust. It is likely that this enigma will never be solved. Perhaps the investigations of the bust currently being conducted by the Rathgen Research Laboratories in Germany will provide us with the answer.

NOTES

1. Berlin, ÄM 21300.
2. Identification of the complex as belonging to Thutmose is based on the discovery of an ivory horse blinker in a pit in the courtyard of the complex with the inscription, "praised with the perfect god, The Chief of Works, the Sculptor: Thutmose", Arnold, 41 citing Rolf Krauss, "Der Bildhauer Thutmose in Amarna," *Jahrbuch Preussischer Kulturbesitz* 20 (1983): 119-32. Friederike Seyfried, however, notes that no other inscriptional evidence exists to support this assumption so, although the attribution of the complex to Thutmose is plausible, it is not without doubt. Seyfried, 176.
3. Arnold, 46. See also Seyfried, 177.
4. Evidence exists for the use of the workshop and the occupancy of the city itself beyond the death of Akhenaten. A finger ring with the name of Tutankhamun and a wine jar label referring to his first regnal year indicate that the complex was still occupied during Tutankhamun's early reign. Seyfried, 176.
5. Arnold, 43-46; Seyfried, 176-177.
6. Huppertz, et al., 236.
7. Seyfried, 181.
8. Foster, 90.
9. Ibid.
10. Seyfried, 181 citing Ludwig Borchardt, "Porträts der Königin Nofretete aus den Grabungen 1912/13 – descriptions and comments by Ludwig Borchardt" in *Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Orientgesellschaft in Tell el-Amarna*, WDOG 44, 31 and 37.
11. Ibid; emphasis added.

12. Arnold, 67.
13. Foster, 91.
14. Huppertz, et. al, 233-40; 236.
15. Email communication with N. Reeves 9 November 2014; Reeves, 24; Seyfried, 183-84.
16. Seyfried, 181-183.
17. Ibid.
18. Seyfried, 185.
19. Stevens, 95.
20. Lecture given by Dr. David O'Connor on October 27, 2014 to the American Research Center in Egypt, New York Chapter.

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