ROYAL TOMBS OF THE THIRD INTERMEDIATE AND LATE PERIODS: SOME CONSIDERATIONS

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Introduction

After the end of Ramesside period, the Valley of the Kings was no longer utilized for royal burials. The kings of the XXIst Dynasty began to build a new type of tomb in their new residence at Tanis. This new tomb type, which appears to have been built until the end of the Late period, is characterized particularly by its location within the precinct of a main temple. The main assumption on the placing of royal tombs within a temple precinct has been that there was a desire to protect them from tomb robbers, who at this time were very active. However, the motivation of this change does not seem to have been only for the maintenance of security: The royal tombs and the tombs of high officials of this period usually were built within the temple enclosures, despite the fact that other private tombs were built in isolated places. Therefore, we still need to consider some other reasons why royal tombs of the Third Intermediate and Late periods were located within the temple precinct.

Stadelmann treats this new burial type the most thoroughly. While he argues that the placing of the royal tombs in the temple precinct was determined by a desire to protect them, he points out that this practice derives from the tombs of the Lower Egyptian Kings in the Predynastic and Early Dynastic eras in Buto or Sais. This suggests conformity with current concepts of archaic royal burial rites. Leahy has offered a radically different explanation. On the one hand he suggests that the motivation may be explained by both the need for security and increasingly close relationship between man and god. On the other hand he maintained that the change in royal burials reflects a Libyan material culture.

The main problems here can be described as follows. Stadelmann hoped to explain the origins of the tomb form but in the end had to admit that it appeared
to arise from nowhere. Leahy explains the new burials by postulating characteristics of the material culture of a people about whom nothing is known, and who can have any shape Leahy might give it.

In this paper, I speculate on the distinctive character of the location of the royal tombs in the Third Intermediate and Late periods as follows:

i) The security of burial, as has already been suggested, is the main reason the royal tombs are within the temple precinct.

ii) The placement of the royal burial within temple precinct seems not only physical, but also psychological. The location seems to demonstrate the strong connection between the royal burial and the deity of the main temple itself. In this period, the Osirian cult was integrated with the primary deity of the temple throughout Egypt, so that the placement of the royal burial within the temple precinct may be explained as a reflection of this phenomenon. By being buried near the deity, the deceased could have united with or have been protected by the main god of the temple. It may have been the privilege of the king, other royal family members and high officials during the Third Intermediate and Late periods.

Royal Necropolis at Tanis

The royal cemetery at Tanis contained a group of six tombs: the burials of kings Psusennes, Osorkon II, Amenemope and Shoshenq III, in addition to a lesser co-regent king named Shoshenq-Hekakheperre (II?) and a number of royal families and high officials. The effectiveness of locating the royal cemetery in the temple precinct as a means of security is revealed by the wealth of spectacular funerary equipment from these tombs. Apart from amulets and jewelry of gold, there are the superb silver coffins of Psusennes and Shoshenq-Hekakheperre; the latter with a remarkable falcon-headed mask. Within the coffins were separate golden masks. In the tomb chambers, there were highly decorative vessels in gold and silver in addition to more mundane items such as shabtis, stone vases and weapons. The main decorations of the walls of the tomb chambers are scenes from solar and Osirian mythological cycles. These scenes are the mixtures of that which was traditional for royal tombs in the New Kingdom from "Book of that which is in the Netherworld," "Book of the
The necropolis is located in the southwest corner of the great enclosure wall, which had been an ordinary cemetery of the poor inhabitants toward the end of the Ramesside Period. The tomb structure consists of limestone and granite, reusing older stonework throughout. The dimensions of this tomb complex are 50m by 60m. In the tomb of Psusennes, beside the twin chambers for the king and queen, there is an ante-hall with side chambers eventually occupied by the other Tanite royalty and grandees, which is almost a collective burial. These tombs are sunk below ground level and there were no remains of the superstructure when P. Montet excavated there. However, Stadelmann speculated that there were superstructures over the royal tombs at Tanis. First, the massive size of the roofing of the infrastructure appeared to be designed to support some structure. Second, said Stadelmann, without any above-ground building, adding new burials would require continual re-digging to determine the location of old burials. In contrast, Kitchen mentions that "the brick work foundation east of the tomb may have belonged to a funerary chapel of the king; but his cult may have been integrated with that of the main temple of Amun."

Recent reexamination by a French Mission led by Phillip Brissaud has changed our picture of the royal necropolis at Tanis. It has also shown how intensively this area is being examined, since a previously unknown tomb has been discovered. According to Brissaud, the royal necropolis seems to have been destroyed when Osorkon II appropriated an earlier monument in order to make it into his own tomb. A group of shabtis belonging to Osorkon II was also uncovered by the reexamination. He suggested that during the first half of the XXIIInd Dynasty or slightly earlier, various installations were constructed around the royal tombs: large spaces were crossed by mud brick walls, with paving made of a sort of mosaic of broken mudbricks. Both the paving and the walls were covered by layers of ash. These structures rest directly on the gezirah and over the burials from earlier cemeteries. The core of the XXIst Dynasty cemetery seemed to adjoin a sandy spur, sloping steeply down to the southwest. Brissaud mentions that Shoshenq III constructed his own tomb at the level of roofs of existing royal tombs, and leveled the area by filling the south-western corner of the temple precinct, using sand and various types of soil. On this surface, Sheshonq III built an enormous structure of unbaked mudbricks
(measuring almost 100m east-west) surrounding the complex of royal tombs, which he had no hesitation in rearranging internally. Brissaud concluded that the tombs of several missing pharaohs must have disappeared in the course of the alterations made to the funerary complex. As for the superstructure of the royal tombs at Tanis, there is no sufficient evidence to prove the existence of the superstructure. In fact, the brick walls of the XXIIInd Dynasty existed on roofs of the royal tomb complex, but knowing what they correspond to is difficult. However, a libation table of Psusennes\(^{15}\) indicates that the king’s posthumous funerary cult actually took place. According to its inscription, Psusennes himself conversed simultaneously with the two deities, Amun-Re-Horakhti-Atum and Ptah-Sokar-Osiris, on whom his own afterlife depended: they were particularly venerated from the end of the Ramesside and throughout the Third Intermediate periods.\(^{16}\) French excavators believe that the libation table originally came from the superstructure of the royal tomb, but it is hard to prove the presence of such a structure in light of the current condition of the site.

**The royal tombs at Sais described by Herodotus and those at Mendes**

Herodotus described the situation and appearance of the royal tombs of the XXVI Dynasty at Sais in his second book of History:

“The people of Sais buried within the temple precinct all kings who were natives of their province. The tomb of Amasis is farther from the sanctuary than the tomb of Apries and his ancestors, yet it is also within the temple court; it is a great colonnade of stone, richly adorned, the pillars of which are wrought in the form of palm trees. In this colonnade are two portals, and the place where the coffin lies is within their doors.\(^{17}\)”

Today it is hard to recognize any traces from the royal tomb and the whole temple precinct at Sais. Based on his observations and the descriptions of Herodotus, Champollion made a reconstruction of the sanctuary of Neith, which has always been regarded as basic and correct information so far. Contrary to the report of Herodotus, Champollion described the tomb of Amasis as located to the right of the Temple of Neith and symmetrical with the tomb structure of Psametik to the left. Therefore, Stadelmann assumed that they didn’t lie symmetrically but rather in one line or like the tomb at Tanis as complex
together. The temple complex at Sais contained not only the shrine of Neith, but also that of another Saite major deity, Osiris-Hemag, which contains the tomb of Osiris.\(^\text{(18)}\) The burial of the kings of the 26th Dynasty within the temple complex may be explained in relation to the cult of Osiris-Hemag there.

Recently, an expedition from the University of Toronto, directed by Donald Redford, uncovered the site of the royal necropolis of the XXIX Dynasty at Mendes.\(^\text{(19)}\) The Toronto excavations have clarified its architectural context and yielded several hundred fragments of limestone reliefs, including scenes from the "Book of that which is in the Netherworld," khekher frieze patterns and the name of a little-known king of the XXIX Dynasty, Neferites I. A sarcophagus still remains at this site. The expedition concluded that the sarcophagus belonged to king Neferites I; The fragments of limestone reliefs are from the tomb-chapel of the tomb of Neferites I which might have been destroyed during the Persian invasion in 343 B.C. It was probably not the only royal funerary monument in this area.

This new discovery contributes to a clearer idea of the form of the royal tombs in the Late period as described by Herodotus. The royal necropolis at Mendes is also located, as Herodotus described for Sais, within the temple precinct, and the royal tombs were covered by brick or stone chapels. Herodotus mentioned that the royal tomb “is also within the temple court; it is a great colonnade of stone, richly adorned, the pillars of which are wrought in the form of palm trees”. This description seems quite consistent with the tomb of Neferites I of the XXIX Dynasty. Further investigation will contribute to a more accurate description of the royal tomb of the Late period.

**Royal tombs at Medinet Habu**

*The Tomb of Harsiese*\(^\text{(20)}\)

The tomb of Theban king Harsiese, probably a son of the Tanite king Shoshenq-Hekakheperre,\(^\text{(21)}\) is located within the temple of Medinet Habu in Thebes. More specifically, his tomb is situated just outside the enclosure wall of the small temple of Amun called "Holiest of Places," which at this time was greatly revered because it was identified with the "mound of Djeme".\(^\text{(22)}\) According to Hölscher, any remains of the tomb’s superstructure had disappeared by the Ptolemaic period, but a single stone bearing the name of
Harsiese, reused in an uninscribed gate in the enclosure wall, may come from his tomb.\(^{(23)}\) Further, the priestly title of contemporary documents refers to the name of the tomb chapel of Harsiese as “The House of Harsiese”.\(^{(24)}\) This evidence may indicate that there was a superstructure over the burial chamber. The subterranean structure itself consists of a small burial chamber, an antechamber, and a shallow passage accessing the burial. The walls of the subterranean structure are sandstone that derived for the most part from the destroyed buildings of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu\(^{(25)}\). Harsiese was interred at the bottom of a granite sarcophagus which had been taken from the tomb of Ramesses II’s sister, Henumire, and supplied with a lid which bore the head of a falcon, just as did the coffins of his father, Shoshenq-Hekakheperre at Tanis. Usurpation was thus practiced here just as in the royal tombs at Tanis. Fazzini speculates that since Sokar or Sokar-Osiris could be falcon headed or falcon shaped, these falcon headed coffins and sarcophagi were intended to link their owners with that important funerary deity\(^{(26)}\). The striking similarity of this funerary material with that of the royal burials at Tanis may indicate the same character of burial custom. The burial of Theban king Harsiese may reflect the same royal burial custom both, physically and psychologically in this period practiced also in the Northern realm of the kingdom.

**Tomb-chapels of the Divine Adoratresses of Amun\(^{(27)}\)**

The tomb-chapels of the divine adoratresses of Amun\(^{(28)}\) at Medinet Habu are the best-preserved remains among the tombs within the temple precinct. These are the tomb-chapels of the divine adoratresses of Amun of the XXV and XXVI Dynasties and a queen of the XXVI Dynasty.

The tomb-chapels inside the great temple enclosure, facing to the small temple of Amun, Mound of Djeme, but standing side by side along the processional way to the Mortuary temple of Ramesses III.\(^{(29)}\) The surviving chapels are built of stone and exhibit the same imitation of temple architecture noted previously in this class of building. The main components of the chapels are a pylon entrance, an open forecourt and a vaulted sanctuary, below which lay the burial chamber in a shallow pit. Stadelmann\(^{(30)}\) assumed that superstructures of similar types must have covered the burial chambers of the XXI and XXII Dynasty kings at Tanis and those of the XXVI Dynasty at Sais. However, on the basis of the discussion above it is not likely that the same type of superstructure
covered all of these royal tombs.

The four chapels belong to Kushite and Saite divine adoratresses, Shepenwepet I, Amenirdis I, Nitocris, Shepenwepet II, and Ankhnes-Neferibre, along with Queen Mehetenusekhet. They are all connected by doorways and arranged chronologically from east to west. Each chapel has a shallow pit under the cult room, but the bodies and funerary equipment of the adoratresses were not found. Perhaps the burials were plundered in the Ptolemaic period, during which some of the sarcophagi from these chapels were removed for reuse. Two rock-cut pits at Deir el-Medina contained the sarcophagi of Nitocris and Ankhnes-Neferibre.\(^{31}\)

The superstructures of the chapels of Shepenwepet I and that of Ankhnes-Neferibre have almost totally disappeared.\(^{32}\) In the chapels of Amenirdis, Shepenwepet II, Nitocris and Mekhetenusekhet, the superstructure is built of stone with elaborate relief decoration, which shows the owner in religious scenes. The main decoration\(^{33}\) of these chapels primarily shows the scenes of a divine adoratress performing offerings or funerary rites to various deities as well as to the deceased divine adoratresses. Especially interesting are the scenes of consecrating “choice cuts” and of performing “foundation rituals”, activities once reserved mainly for kings, which were usually represented in their mortuary temples. Further, old funerary texts such as Pyramid texts and appeals to the living for invocation offerings are used. The chapels of Shepenwepet II, Nitocris and Mekhetenusekhet, which have unusual forms resulting from addition, are also decorated with scenes similar to those in the tomb chapel of Amenirdis.

Let us now consider the location of the tombs of Harsiese and the divine adoratresses at Medinet Habu. As stated above, they are located near the small temple of Amun, which at this time was worshiped as the Mound of Djeme, the tomb or cenotaph for primordial forms of Amun and Osiris. From the literary name “The Genuine Mound of the West,” this holy place probably conveys the notion that the original creation and the rebirth of the dead in the Theban necropolis were linked. Inscriptions from the XXIst Dynasty reveal that every ten days the image of Amun of Opet was brought across the Nile to visit this temple. Through offerings to the divine ancestors and a union between the reigning god and his predecessors, new power came to both the god and the king. There were no depictions of these rituals at Medinet Habu, but related scenes are preserved at Karnak in the Lake Edifice of Taharqa.\(^{34}\) As Goyon has
explained, the Lake Edifice was a specialized cult place used for a ritual complementing the rites at Djeme and performed upon Amun’s return from the West Bank.\(^{(35)}\) It celebrated the reunification of Amun demiurge with the elements of his creative power and the mystical union of Amun with various forms of the sun-god and with Osiris, and Amun’s rebirth as a Sun. At the cenotaph of Osiris at Djeme, Amun can be reborn as Re. Therefore, at this time, the mound of Djeme was an important site for resurrection beliefs.

A number of Osiris figures were uncovered in Medinet Habu.\(^{(36)}\) This might reflect the votive cult practice in this place. Furthermore, a basin of the High Steward Akhamenru, found in Medinet Habu, reveals the significance of the cults of the mound of Djeme in association with the tomb-chapels of divine adoratresses of Amun.\(^{(37)}\) This basin depicts Akhamenru adoring the names of Amenirdis and Shepenwepet II, and receiving purifying and revivifying libations before cartouches reading “Osiris-who-dwells-in-the-Mound-of-Djeme” and “Osiris living in the West”.

Therefore, the location of the royal tomb of Harsiese and the tomb-chapels of the divine adoratresses of Amun at Medinet Habu might relate to funerary beliefs pertaining to the mound of Djeme. Here, greater security in death may not be the only reason for placing the tomb within the temple precinct. Burial near the tomb of Osiris or the primordial form of Amun may mean a unification with their cycle of the universe.

**Conclusion and Implications**

The preceding discussion defines some distinctive characteristics of Royal tombs in the Third Intermediate and Late periods. The isolated necropolis of previous Egyptian history is abandoned in favor of interment within temple precincts. The physical motivation may be desire for security in death stimulated by the tomb robberies of the late Ramesside period.

However, the placement of the burial within the temple precinct seems not only physical but also psychological. The royal tomb within a temple precinct seems to demonstrate a strong connection between the royal burial and the deity of the main temple. The royal burials in Medinet Habu particularly exemplify this phenomena. The tomb of Theban king Harsiese, which is almost contemporary to the royal tombs in Tanis, is located within the temple precinct,
and shows almost the same burial features as that of Tanis. The tomb is located in the vicinity of the small temple of Amun, which, being venerated as "the mound of Djeme", was identified with Amun and Osiris as well. I propose that the burial of Harsiese was integrated with that of Amun, the divine ruler of Thebes. Through his burial near the mound of Djeme, Harsiese could have united with the deities there. The tomb chapels of the divine adoratresses of Amun were also located near the small temple of Amun. Their location can be explained in the same way as the location of the tomb of Harsiese.

During the Third Intermediate and the Late periods, the Osirian emphasis was expanded at the great temple of Amun in Karnak. As mentioned above, the Lake Edifice of Taharqa is regarded as a substitute cult place for the rites of the mound of Djeme, thereby eliminating the need for a large procession back and forth across the Nile. Another Osirian-related monument in Karnak, the chapel of Osiris Heqa-Djet (ruler of eternity), is one of the first of the small chapel temples of Osiris built at Karnak in the Third Intermediate and Late periods. Traunecker suggests that the Osiris Heqa-Djet might have had the same function as Taharqa's Lake Edifice. Furthermore, other small temples of Isis and Osiris located with the Heqa-Djet chapel are considered to be associated with the "great mound of the god Wese (Thebes)", which is identified as a tomb of Osiris in the Karnak temple. Osirian-related cults within the temple precinct also can be seen outside of Thebes. In Sais there exists the tomb of Osiris in the shrine of Osiris-Hemag, which is an integral part of the temple of Neith, the main god of the city. Saite kings of the XXVI dynasty were buried in tombs in the same area within the temple enclosure wall. However, there is little to be seen of these monuments in Sais today. I speculate that the royal tomb at Tanis may also have had the same funerary practice, in which Amun and Osiris promised the deceased king with eternal life.

Temple burials are also attested from the tombs of other royal family members and high officials in this period, who probably benefited from the same custom as did the king. In Leontopolis, the seat of the XXIIIrd Dynasty, Queen Kama, the wife of Osorkon II, and other royal family members were buried in tombs within the temple precinct. A document tells us that a temple for Osiris and a chapel for the wife of Osorkon (Kama) were built in Leontopolis under the reign of Osorkon II. In Memphis, the crown prince, the High priest of Ptah, Sheshonq D and Takelot D, and other High priests and Great chief of Ma were buried within the precinct of the temple of Ptah. Notably the tomb of
Sheshonq, son of Osorkon II, is very similar to the royal tombs in Tanis. Recent excavations at Heracleopolis by a Spanish expedition have revealed the tombs of a number of royal family members in the Third Intermediate period in the temple area. At Giza, some important priests of the XXVI Dynasty were buried inside the structure of the temple of Isis, which has a connection to the cult of long-dead kings at Giza and to Osiris, the lord of Rosetau. At the Ramesseum in Thebes, some high officials and high priests were buried within the temple precinct. This evidence indicates that the motivation for royal burials within a temple precinct is based on more than reasons of security. Although it is still not clear that all these burials are connected with the Osirian cult of the main temple, they suggest a strong connection between the funerary cult and the divine cult during the Third Intermediate and Late periods. By being buried in proximity to the deities, the kings and other persons of high status probably were, by consensus, privileged to integrate with the divine cult of the main temple. I suggest that this practice probably was the main motivation of the burial within temple precinct during the Third Intermediate and Late periods.

Notes

(1) I would like to acknowledge Professor Betsy M. Bryan for her assistance and encouragement. This paper was revised version of a term paper originally written for the course “Seminar in Egyptian Art and Archaeology: Theban monuments of 25th Dynasty” given by Professor Betsy M. Bryan at the Johns Hopkins University in the fall semester of 1995.


(3) Ibid., 122. Stadelmann speculates that the form of the chapel of Buto, a chapel with vault-like roof surrounded with palm tree, which is commonly depicted in Egyptian tombs, represents a shrine or palace tomb of Lower Egypt. Recently, M. Bietak used this type of chapel to reconstruct the tombs of high officials located near the palace of 13th Dynasty in Tell el-Dab’a. See, M. Bietak, Avaris: The Capital of the Hyksos, London, 1996, 23. Fig. 19.


(6) NRT I, pls. XXXIII-IV.

(7) NRT I, fig. 16 and pl. XXXVII.

(8) NRT I, pl. XXV.

(9) NRT I, pl. XXXVI; NRT II, pl. XXXII.3.


(11) The detail of the sequence of the collective burial is discussed by Aidan Dodson. See, A. Dodson, Canopic Equipment of the Kings of Egypt, London and New York, 1994, 78-97.
Stadelmann, op.cit., 117, Stadelmann’s speculation is based on the description of the royal tombs by Herodotus that there were massive funerary chapels covered the burial of the kings at Sais. 13 K.A. Kitchen, The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt, Warminster, 1986, 268.

(14) Brissaud, op.cit., 7-43.

(15) M. Thirion, “La Table d’Offerandes de Psusennes I”, Cahiers de Tanis 1, 115-120.


(17) Herodotus, Book II, 169 (Heinemann 1920 edition)


(20) U. Hölscher, Excavation of Medinet Habu V, Post-Ramesside Remains, Chicago, 1954, 8-10, pls. 8-10.

(21) Kitchen assumes that Shoshenq Hekakheperre is almost certainly to be identified with Shosenq II, the High Priest of Amun and lesser king, son of Osorkon I and father of Harsiese.

(22) The tomb or cenotaph for primordial forms of Amun and where Osiris was also at Home. With it developed rituals, theoretically conducted every ten days, linking Amun of Karnak and Amun of Luxor, to their divine ancestors and their renewing powers. Cf. C. Traunecker et al., La chapelle d’Achoris à Karnak, vol. 2, Paris, 115-42.

(23) Hölscher, op.cit., 8, n.34.


(28) The “divine adoratress” was regulary a princess of the royal house and served as a divine wife of Amun and theoretically never married to king. They excercised in the Theban theocratic state, to a certain degree as a successors to the king, a kingly and princely power.

(29) Eigner assumes that the location of the tomb-chapels are associated with the processional way of the feast of Valley to the mortuary temple of Ramesess III. See, D. Eigner, Die Monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit in der Thebanischen Nekropole, Wien, 1984, 100.


(32) The superstructure of Shepenwepet I was built of mudbrick and the structure of Ankhnes-neferibre was probably reused later.

(33) PM II, 2, 476-80.


(35) Ibid., 80-86.


(39) Kitchen, op.cit., 351.


