



## THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA, PURDUE UNIVERSITY TOMBOS EXPEDITION

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Combining archaeology and bioarchaeology, the University of California, Santa Barbara, Purdue University expedition to Tombos in Sudanese Nubia investigates the impacts and cultural entanglements of Egypt's New Kingdom Empire (c. 1500-1050 BC) and its aftermath in the Napatan Period through the emergence of the Nubian 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Located at the third cataract of the Nile, Tombos marks a geographic and political frontier thousands of years old, the gateway to the heartland of Nubian civilization. It also provides a rare example of a site that was established during the early New Kingdom and continued to thrive without break into the 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Excavation in 2010 and 2011 concentrated in the Napatan area of the pyramid cemetery (EO 91-25) and the adjacent tumulus cemetery (EO 91-118). Two New Kingdom pyramid complexes and two mud brick chapel tombs, one Ramesside and the other re-used in the Napatan period, were identified and fully or partially excavated. In addition, the underground complex of the Napatan period pyramid discovered in 2005 was completely excavated. As a salvage measure, the New Kingdom tomb partially excavated by Prof. Ali Osman and Dr. David Edwards in 1991 was cleared of dead animals and other debris and some original deposits were found in the very bottom of the shaft and in the unexcavated southern chamber of the three room underground complex. Finally, a total of eighteen tumuli were excavated, each with an east-west oriented shaft typically leading to a side chamber on the northern side containing one to three burials, several of which were found intact.

Major finds include objects from both the New Kingdom and Napatan Period. From the former, a remarkably finely carved *ushabti* made of greywacke/mudstone was still *in situ* within the mostly decayed remains of a finely decorated coffin next to the head of a nearly intact but poorly preserved skeleton. It names a Scribe and *Wab* priest named Ti - unusual but attested as the name for a man in the New Kingdom. Osman and Edwards had recovered illegible funerary cones from the tomb and its vicinity, but we were fortunate to find one with a clear stamp with the same name, Ti. This discovery establishes that a second tomb at

Tombos was equipped with cones, the only tombs in Sudanese Nubia to receive this special treatment (one tomb at Aniba in Lower Nubia also had cones). Other notable finds from this tomb include a blue painted pottery lid and sherds from a similar (or the same?) blue painted jar as that excavated by Edwards and Osman in 1991, the southernmost appearance of this distinctive type. About half way down the shaft of one of the newly discovered New Kingdom pyramids, we found the burial of a horse still *in situ*, although most likely representing a secondary use of the tomb, since scattered remains of looted burials and mud brick collapse, presumably from the superstructure were found beneath. A well-carved steatite scarab of Ramesside date showing the god Ptah and two bird deities on Djed pillars was associated, supporting a radiocarbon date that places the horse in the New Kingdom. The Tombos horse is one of only a handful excavated from private contexts in Nubia, some from the New Kingdom and some from the Napatan period.

Napatan period finds included a large greywacke/mudstone heart scarab from near the Napatan pyramid, finely carved and dedicated to the scribe Tuwy. It is of a similar design and quality to those from the 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty royal burials at el-Kurru. Various pieces of Egyptian-style jewelry were found in tumulus burials, including a simple but nicely executed Bat-Hathor amulet in glazed steatite, showing the face of the goddess above a lotus, still *in situ* having fallen through the chest of the deceased, who lay supine reflecting Egyptian influence but upon a bed in Nubian style. A remarkable group of faience amulets of Napatan date was found in another tumulus. Several of these were of a quality associated with the royal cemeteries, including a pair showing Isis suckling Horus, one figure of the goddess with the double crown and the other with horns and sun disk on an Uraeus crown. A particularly finely fashioned Pataikos had the figure of a winged goddess behind and a scarab on his head, along with a group of apotropaic glyphs and animals carved on the base. This tomb also yielded a number of smaller amulets, including a detailed Bes and a large scarab with an unusual design showing offering bearers on the base.

The 2010 and 2011 seasons helped to document the long

history of burial at Tombos, from the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty into the Ramesside Period and continuing through the Third Intermediate Period. The very fine quality *ushabti* from the Edwards and Osman tomb, along with evidence that the same tomb was decorated with funerary cones, reinforces the importance of the officials buried at Tombos during the New Kingdom. With the discovery of Napatan high quality amulets in the tumuli and the heart scarab found near a new elaborate pyramid complex, it is clear that Tombos retained its importance as an administrative center during the 25th Dynasty. Bioarchaeological analysis of the human remains points strongly towards continuity from the New Kingdom through the Napatan period of a biologically mixed population of Nubians

and Egyptians. Additionally, strontium isotope analysis indicates the presence of immigrants, presumably from Egypt, during the New Kingdom but not in the Napatan period. Our work also reveals a surprisingly complex mixture and juxtaposition of Egyptian and Nubian burial practice during the Napatan period. Within the Nubian style tumuli, burial was mostly extended, head to the west in Egyptian style, but often with evidence of beds continuing longstanding Nubian practices. Amulets dedicated to a range of Egyptian deities were found in both areas, as well as scarabs, a quintessentially Egyptian grave good. The combination of coffins, wrapping and beds represents a particularly interesting entanglement of Egyptian and Nubian cultural practices in both areas.



Figure 1: Napatan period amulets from a Tombos tumulus