



FOREIGN POTTERY AT THE SITE OF TAUSRET'S TEMPLE OF MILLIONS OF YEARS

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The site of the “temple of millions of years” of the Nineteenth Dynasty’s last ruler, the female pharaoh Tausret, has proven exceptionally informative during its re-excavation by the University of Arizona Egyptian Expedition (2004 to present). Although evidence of temple adornment is scant, it now appears more likely than not that the temple structure was complete and that at least the “holy of holies” (sanctuary) was ritually active.¹

Little of value was believed to remain at the site, which William Flinders Petrie dug selectively during the 1890s.² However, re-excavation has yielded reams of data. This manuscript presents a selection of this data that demonstrates interconnections between Egypt and its neighbors, as well as Thebes and other regions of Egypt, as evidenced by ceramic remains recovered from the site.³

The area of the concession, as a whole, has what now appears to be at least three distinct use loci/periods: the New Kingdom temple, a series of later (probably Twenty-Fifth or Twenty-Sixth Dynasty) tombs with small courtyards/chapels in the western scarp, and a recently discovered series of small caves in the northern scarp that seem to have served as both storage areas and burial places at various times from the Eighteenth Dynasty onward. Furthermore, the surface and uppermost stratum of the site are littered with Late Roman/Byzantine sherds,⁴ which are not discussed here.

THE NEW KINGDOM TEMPLE

By far the most common imports for any portion or period that appear anywhere on the site are Canaanite amphorae, brought from the Levant most likely carrying olive or pistachio oil, resins, honey, or wine. Dozens of amphorae are evidenced, as is at least one juglet.⁵ Many of these fragments derive from stratum II, the New Kingdom layer associated with the temple. Probably also from stratum II, but discovered in a “disturbed area,” were two fragments, each representing a different Mycenaean stirrup jar.

These would have held medicinal herbs and fragrant ointments.⁶ Finds in stratum II are thought to represent elements of the ritual associated with foundation deposits, with fragments of foreign pottery being deliberately included with the trench fill.⁷

Excavation of this layer also revealed evidence of Egypt’s own domestic wine trade. Amphorae of Marl D and F—Delta clays—were recovered, several with hieratic labels indicating details of the wine they once contained.⁸ Several pieces of Oasis ware were found, representing multiple amphorae and at least two amphoriskoi. These vessels, brought to the Nile from the Dakhleh Oasis and others of the Western Desert, most likely also contained fine wine.⁹

WESTERN SCARP (LATER TOMBS WITH COURTYARDS /CHAPELS)

Foreign pottery also appears from later contexts on the temple site (stratum I and surface). It is evident that a number of tombs (three or more) and associated structures overlay portions of the northwestern corner of Tausret’s temple. At least one of these features was robbed in antiquity (and likely twice more in the past century), resulting its contents being distributed in the area.

Probably associated with the tombs are dozens of shoulder, rim, handle, and body sherds from “Phoenician” amphorae manufactured in the Levant during the Saite-Persian period remain. Also found in the area was a single sherd (base) of an Aegean-made amphora dating to the same period. Unfortunately, this sherd was found very near the surface; while it was probably thrown out of a tomb in the course of one of the robberies, its original context cannot be confirmed.

Fragments of common Phoenician storage jars, resembling in form and fabric those of Twenty-Seventh Dynasty date found next door at the temple of Merenptah, were recovered from the northwest quadrant and southwest corner at Tausret’s site.¹⁰ Two unique, but stylistically Nubian, adjoining sherds of a bowl were discovered on the northwest side of the temple in the same stratum

(Figure 1). Only one possible parallel has yet been identified for this bowl, which has a brown silt fabric with a black core; slip covers inner and outer surfaces and further decorated with incised triangles; red-slip triangles alternate with those painted white.¹¹

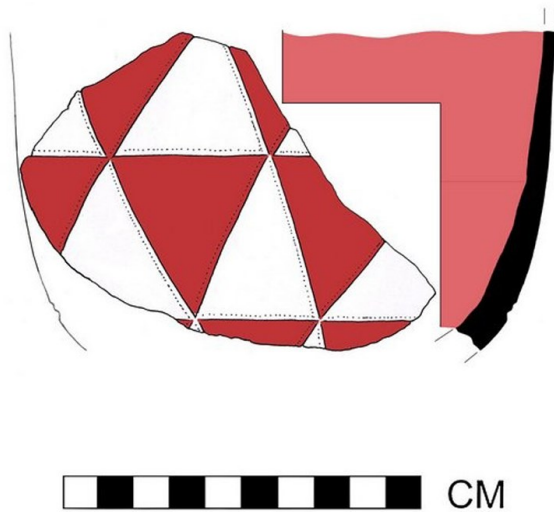


Figure 1: Bowl from northwest corner of temple, probably associated with later burials (L. Pinch-Brock)

NORTHERN SCARP (CAVES WITH BURIALS AND COURTYARDS/CHAPELS)

To date, the earliest identifiable use for this part of the site occurred in the New Kingdom, perhaps as early as the Eighteenth Dynasty, presumably after Amenhotep III had this area cut from the gebel and cleared. In the late Nineteenth or Twentieth Dynasty, the area in front of the caves appears to have been used as a dump site for red rimmed bowls, beer jars, and other such vessels often associated with temple ritual. Later uses (still in the New

Kingdom?) resulted in a series of mud floors with mud-brick superstructures and at least one of the cave burials being bricked shut. Though looted, probably in antiquity, the remnants of one distinct cave burial included several fragments of two additional small Mycenaean stirrup jars (Figure 2), imported from mainland Greece or Cyprus. Numerous fragments of Canaanite amphorae (base, handle and body sherds) are also associated with these features. Much more work is needed to understand these newly discovered features and the material culture associated with them.

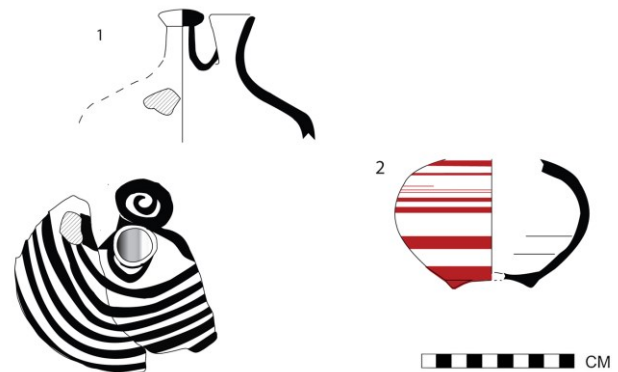


Figure 2: Mycenaean stirrup jar fragments from the northern scarp (R. Hummel)

The foreign pottery discovered at the site of Tausret’s temple demonstrates the wide range of interconnections (whether direct or indirect) at the heart of the Egyptian empire from the New Kingdom through the Late Period and beyond. These finds generally conform to known interactions and trade routes of their respective periods, but a few finds defy explanation at present. It is hoped that future analyses will provide additional data regarding the specific origin of these wares and that additional excavation will lead to a better understanding of how they came to be deposited at the site.

NOTES

¹ Pearce Paul Creasman, “Excavations at Pharaoh-Queen Tausret’s Temple of Millions of Years: 2012 Season,” *Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities* 39, in press; P.P. Creasman, “The Tausert Temple Project: 2013 Season and Other Notes,” *The Ostrakon: Journal of the Egyptian Study Society* 24 (Fall, 2013), in press.
² Very briefly investigated by W. M. Flinders Petrie in the 1890’s (*Six Temples At Thebes* [London: Bernard Quaritch, 1897], 13–16); more thoroughly by the University of Arizona Egyptian Expedition, e.g., Richard H. Wilkinson (ed.) *The Temple of Tausret: The University of Arizona*

Egyptian Expedition Tausret Temple Project, 2004–2011 (Tucson: University of Arizona Egyptian Expedition, 2011).
³ For a much more detailed account of all of the pottery from the Tausret site (through 2010), see Rexine Hummel, “Pottery,” in Richard H. Wilkinson (ed.), *The Temple of Tausret* (Tucson: University of Arizona Egyptian Expedition, 2011), 72–120; It should be noted that the ceramic remains discussed here are thought to be representative of the corpus recovered from the site. While all foreign sherds are recorded, not every such sherd recovered has yet been evaluated by a specialist.

⁴ Primarily consisting of Late Roman VII amphorae that were manufactured in northern Egypt and exported to locations in the East Mediterranean as well as to Egyptian sites. A rim of a North African amphora was also recovered and has a parallel in the existing literature (see Michel Bonifay "Observations préliminaires sur les amphores africaines de l'oasis de Bahariya," *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 8 [2007], fig. 4.25n). A few sherds of Egyptian A ware shallow bowls were found: manufactured in the area of Aswan and imported to Thebes.

⁵ For this pottery type, see Hummel, 102–103.

⁶ Hummel, 104.

⁷ Hummel, 106–107.

⁸ Hummel, 100–102.

⁹ Hummel, 103.

¹⁰ Hummel, 77.

¹¹ Hummel, 78; the possible parallel was from the foundation deposits of Amenhotep II's temple of millions of years (Petrie, *Six Temples at Thebes* [London: Bernard Quaritch, 1897] 6, pl 13).