

Original article

THE NBWY THE CITY OF OUADJET ^(a) AT BENI-SWEIF

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Abstract

This research addresses a study for Nbwy site (its recent location is Belifia village in the south of Beni Suef), it forms a part of the 20th nome of Upper Egypt. The oldest discoveries in this site back to the Middle Kingdom, where remains of a temple were found, which may have been the beginning of worship of goddess Ouadjet in the site. The site has been mentioned in many sources without mentioning its exact location until the discovery of monuments in the site and it nearby sites allowed to specify the location of the site and its importance. Ouadjet was worshipped as the mistress of Nbwy beside Hershef. The most important priest of Ouadjet in Nbwy was PA xa s who was one of the leaders of Ptolemaic army. His main title was priest of Ouadjet the mistress of Nbwy. In Arab sources the site was mentioned as a part of the city of Ehnasya

Keywords: Nbwy, Beni Suef, Habachi, PA xAa.s, Abydos

1. Introduction

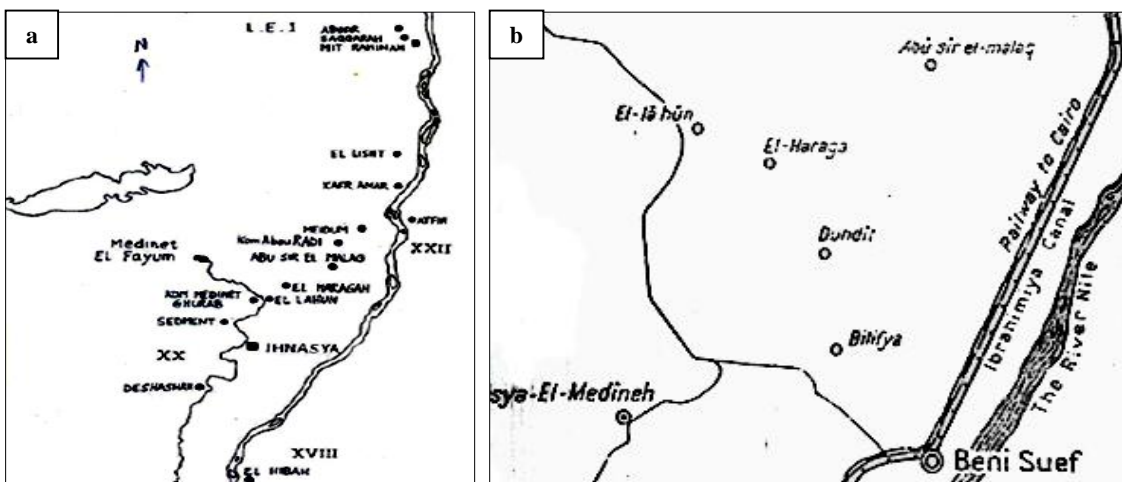
1.1. The site

The site of Nbwy [1][2][3][4][5][6], modern Bilifia village, is located to the South East of Beni-Sweif Governorate about 7 km. to the East of Beni-Sweif-El Fayoum road (31.03 E, 29.07 N, the area of A, A2-dialects), map (1-a), and 12 km. from Ehnasya El Medina "Heracleopolis Magna". It is bordered with the village of Zalata to the North, the village of Bani-Bekhit to its South, while on its Eastern side situated the village of El-Dawalta, and to the East the village of Baha.). The site of Nbwy was obscure among the villages and cities in Egypt until the excavations in 1937^(b), where M. Ramzy mentioned its certain location [7]. According to the excavations, Nbwy was a part of the 20th nome of Upper Egypt, which capital was Ehnasya El-Medina, map (1-b) [8]. The

site of Nbwy was mentioned by many Egyptologists before the modern excavations as follow: * Gauthier read it twice, the first "Nbwy" and the second "Nbwt". He suggested that was the link between the 6th and 7th nome of Upper Egypt [9]. * Budge mentions Nbwy, but he did not know its exact location [10]. * Brugsch mentions the city in his dictionary and said it was near *tp ihw* "Atfih"[11], he stated that the site of *Pr W3dyt* was a holy place for the 19th nome of Lower Egypt "Tell-el Faraeen" to the East of Delta"[11]. * Gardiner pointed out that the name *Pr W3dyt* that was mentioned in the Wilbour Papyrus and "Nbwy"[8], have the same site. He confirmed that the name *Pr W3dyt* referred to both a temple and the site Heracleopolis Nome [12]. * The name **Pr**

W3dyt was also inscribed on an altar, which is preserved in the Egyptian Museum. It belongs to king "Chechanq I" from the 22nd dynasty and was found at Ehnasya el-Medina [13]. * De Meulenaere suggested that the site of *Nbwy* was at Abydos after discovering the statue of *hm W3dyt* there [14]. * Some other Egyptologists said it was in Atfih or Thebes [15][16]. Berlin's dictionary read it "*t3 Nbiwy*" and mentioned it as a holy place without fixing its site [17]. Other studies mentioned it near Memphis [18] or in Heracleopolis Magna [18]. * The site of *Nbwy* was mentioned in the most of the

lists dating to the Greek and Roman periods, as the temple of Edfou [19][20], Dendera temple[21] and Abydos temple [22][11]. The importance of the site not only appeared by the pieces which were discovered there, but also by the temple of the goddess *W3dyt*, which lies now in the center of the city {Project Nr.14}. The measurements of the ruins of temple are: 23 m from the South, 18m from the East and there aren't any traces of these stones towards the North, whereas one can remark some of them under the village's houses, figs. (1 a, b, c, d) ^(c).



Map (1) **a** the location of *Nbwy* according to ancient Egyptian lists of towns and Nome, **b** the modern site of *Nbwy* 'Bilifia' North East of Ehnasya el-Medina

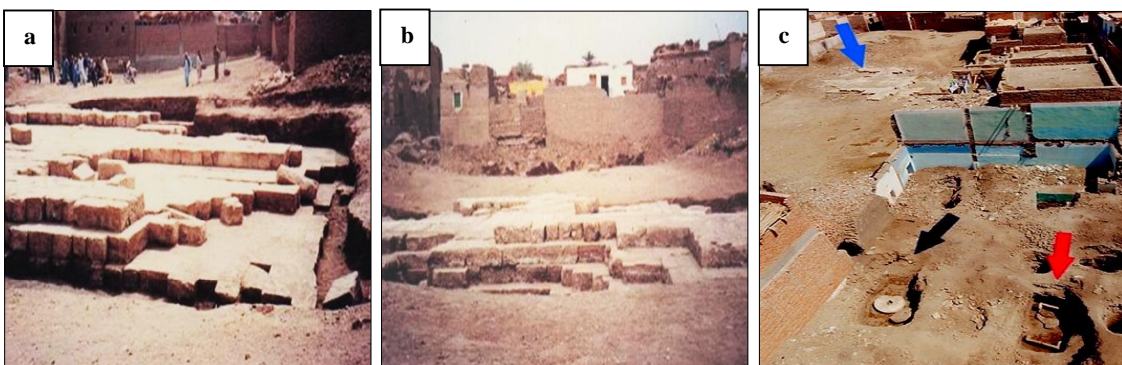


Figure (1) **a** the East side of the temple of Ouadjet, mistress of *Nbwy* (Bilifia), **b**, the West side of the temple of Ouadjet, mistress of *Nbwy*, **c** special view of the new excavation (see the red and dark blue arrows) (after Ahmed Galal in *Nbwy-Belifia*, 2011), which lied in the North East of the temple of Ouadjet (blue arrow).

2. The sign *Nbwy* along eras

2.1. From the middle kingdom



Nbw3w

This form was read on the statue of "Snefru" which is preserved in the Egyptian Museum from the 12th or 13th

dynasty [23][24][25]. Hanning added this site to his dictionary without mentioning its location [26].

2.2. From the new kingdom



Nbywy

This figure was written in the shrine of Amon, in the temple of king

Seti I in Abydos area [27][22][9][1], (PL.V)



Nbyw

This form was written in the shrines of Horus and Osiris, in the

temple of Seti I in Abydos [27][22][9][1], (Pl. V)



Nbyw

This form of the 19th Dynasty was mentioned in Leiden Papyrus [18]



Nbyt

This form was mentioned on a fragment of a limestone stele discovered in *Nbwy* itself, (Pl. 4-B),

from the reign of king Ramses II, where there is a formula of: *W3dyt nbt Nbyt* [28].



Nbyt

This form was written in the Wilbur Papyrus from the 20th Dynasty [9][29]



Nbwt

This form was mentioned on a fragment of a limestone stele discovered

in *Nbwy* itself and dating to the New Kingdom [1].



Nbyt

This form appeared on many pieces dated to the New Kingdom [9] [30]

2.3. From the third intermediate period



Nbyt

This form was mentioned in the Berlin Papyrus from the 22nd Dynasty [31]



Nbt

This form was found on the wall of the tomb of "P3- di 'št3rit" belonging

to the 26th Dynasty from Baharia Oasis [32].



Nbyt

This form was written in the papyrus of Brooklyn Museum Nr. 47, 218, 50 [33][1]



Nbt

This form was found on the statue of *Imn-ir-di-Ist* [1].

2.4. From the late period



Nbw

This form was found on an uncompleted statue belonging to the

king "Nectanebo II"[33] (Egyptian Museum, pl. (1).



Nbt

This form was found in the lower part of a shrine discovered at

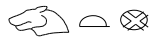



Tell-Basta which dated to the reign of king Nectanebo II. It is preserved in

the Egyptian museum, it was erected for the king with the formula: *mry*










W3dyt nbt Nbt [33][34][35], pl. (2).

2.5. From the Greek and Roman periods

2.5.1. EdfU temple [36]

	<i>Nbt</i>
	<i>Nbwyt</i>
	<i>Nbwy</i>
	<i>Nbwyt</i>

2.5.2. Dendara temple of where Hathor was the mistress of *Nbwy*.

	<i>Nbwy</i> [37]
	<i>Nbwy</i> [37]
	<i>Nby</i> [38]
	<i>Nbywy</i> [39]
	<i>Nbwy</i> [40]
	<i>Nbwy</i> [40]
	<i>Nbwy</i> [28]
	<i>Nbwy</i> [29]
	<i>Nbywy</i> [40]

2.5.3. Temple of Philae

	<i>Nby</i> [41][29]
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In the Greek texts it was written: Boutos/Boutws[42] and in Roman texts

was written Boutos Tou Meuphitou [29][43][23].

2.6. *Nbwy* in Coptic texts

Nbwy was mentioned in the Coptic texts with two names anebi [9][29] and pout [29][43] From The biography of Apa Didyme of Tarschebi Arian, the governor of Athribis asked Heraclides, the soldier, who was originally from Naoui, in

the nome of Henis [44], to bring him the Christians of his city. No other site had such a name which sounds like *Nbwy* and which is actually named like this in the vicinity of Ehnasya El-Medina.

2.7. *Nbwy* in Arabic sources

Nbwy was called "Elnawea" during the reign of Caliph Abd El-Latif;

it was a part of Elbhnasa Nome. This "Elnawea" land was 1731 acres and its

tax: 9500 dinars [45]. Mohamed Ramzy mentioned *Nbwy* in his dictionary about Egyptian towns, ancient sites in Beni-Sweif Governorate. The site was also mentioned in three Arab sources: **Kawaneen Ibn Mamaty*, **Touhfet El-Ershad*, which considered the site as one of the villages of Abu Sir El-Malaq **El-Touhfet El-Souneih*, which mentioned that site as one of El-Bahna villages [7]. It is necessary to explain the meaning of the name of *Nbwy* which is called now Bilifia. This

name was mentioned in the Coptic texts as: pelhpe, perhpe, which was derived from the ancient Egyptian inscription: *pr.rpy.t* that means the house of goddess. Through comparison between the phonetic of Hieroglyphic and Coptic writing, it will be as follow: B.lifa // pelhpe = perhpe // *pr -rpy.t* // =Bilifia. To compare with similar names, it will be: B.hina., [46] Bahniya =like the way of spelling B.lifa // = Bilifya

3. The most important discoveries from *Nbwy*

1- An uncompleted statue in grey granite for king Nectanebo II, H. 40.cm and thickness 57 cm , Cairo Museum No. 89076 [1][14]. (Egyptian Museum). The last part of the inscriptions at the base of the statue, can be read as follows: *Nht hr hb mry W3dyt nbt Nbwy*, "Nectanebo beloved of *W3dyt* mistress of *Nbwy*", pl. (1). 2- A fragment of limestone stele contained remains of two letters "sn", which were parts of the name of king Senusert (?) Who was one of the three kings with this name in the 12th Dynasty (a name that was held by three kings in the 12th Dynasty). This remain is the most ancient example found in the site and it proved that *Nbwy* and its temple were erected in the Middle Kingdom. L. Habachi suggested that this temple was built by Senusert I or Senusert II [1], but I think it's from the reign of Senusert III who was very active in this site, whereas was found a granite statue for him. The king wearing a crown of Lower Egypt, upon the statue's hand there are two cartouches: the first one contained the name "*h3c k3w Rc*", the second one contained the famous name "Senusert", pl. (2-a)^(d). 3- A fragment of a limestone stele contained a remain of a scene with goddess Hathor, L. 103cm, thickness 22cm. In front of the goddess there are four vertical lines of hieroglyphic, *di --- snb nb Wsr m3ct Rc stp n Rc t nbt Nbyt --- nbw* [1] "giving --- and health, Ramses II, mistress of *Nbyt* ", pl. (2b). 4- A fragment of limestone drawing contained a name of *Nbwt*, H.55cm, W.42 and

thickness 18cm, with three vertical lines of hieroglyphics: the first and the third mentioned the name of *Nbwt*, while the second line contained the name of god Atom. Under these writing, there is a scene of a man holding a censer, pl.(2-c). 5-Capital of columns from Roman Period^(e), pl. (2-d). 6-Pottery pot with black decorations, broken from its bottom, H.15 cm, Beni-Sweif registers number 1358, Scale 1: 6 cm, pl. (3-a). 7-Pottery pot, apple-shaped, partly broken at its bottom, with a little mouth and narrow neck H.36 cm, Beni-Sweif register number 1359, pl. (3-b). 8- Storage of red pottery with four handles, which contained many cracks in its body, H. 60 cm, diem. of its mouth 11 cm, Beni-Sweif registers number 1357, Scale 1: 6 cm, pl. (3-c). 9 - Pottery pots ball-shaped, with a wide mouth and two handles, the first one H.20cm and its diem 50 cm, the second one H.23cm and its diem 55cm, Beni-Sweif registers number 1360 Scale 1: 6 cm, pl. (3d,e). 10- A lamb of red pottery with plant decorations, L.9 cm and its wide from the middle 8 cm, Beni-Sweif registers number 5/1361. 11-Pottery cover, H. 4cm, mouth's Diem 18cm, Beni-Sweif registers number 1362. 12-Terra-Cotta bird-shape pot from its head and legs are broken away, L.7 cm and H.6 cm, Beni-Sweif, registers number 1363. 13-Pottery pot in the shape of ball with a wide mouth and circles decorations, H.10cm, body's diem 45 cm and mouth's diem10 cm, Beni-Sweif registers number 1364.

14- Pottery pot, many pieces from its body and neck are broken away, H. 10cm, body's diem 37cm and mouth's diem 8cm, Beni-Sweif registers number 1365. **15-** Uncompleted pottery pot with circle decorations on its body, H.15 cm, mouth's diem 15 and base's diem 6 cm. Beni-Sweif registers number 1366. **16-** Pottery ball-shaped pot, with two handles, H. 6cm, body's diem 22cm and mouth's diem 5cm, Beni-Sweif registers number 1367. **17-** Terra-Cotta pot in Isis and Horus shape with blurred unclear details and cracks, H.15cm and wide from its middle 7.5cm. Beni-Sweif registers number 1368. **18-** A dish from basalt stone, partly broken at its mouth, body's diem 30 cm and mouth's diem 9 cm .Beni-Sweif registers number 1369. **19-** A dish of red pottery, body's diem

26cm and mouth's diem 8 cm, Beni-Sweif registers number 1370. **20-** An amphora with circle decorations at its basis, partly broken at its neck and the two hands are now missing, H.70 cm and body's diem 85 cm. Beni-Sweif registers number 1371. **21-** A piece of basalt, maybe used for the floor reused after that to support a door. Beni-Sweif registers number 16/1372. **22-** A fragment of satiate stone piece with relief in the shape of a cartouche of king Senusert, Beni-Sweif registers number 1374; preserved in Beni-Sweif Museum Nr.774. **23-** From the excavations under the house of Abd El-Hamid Ahmed Metoualy in the middle of the village were discovered many fragments of Islamic pottery decorated with some Arabic letters [47].



Plate (1) inscription from a statue of king Nectanebo II, Cairo Museum J.E.Nr.89076.

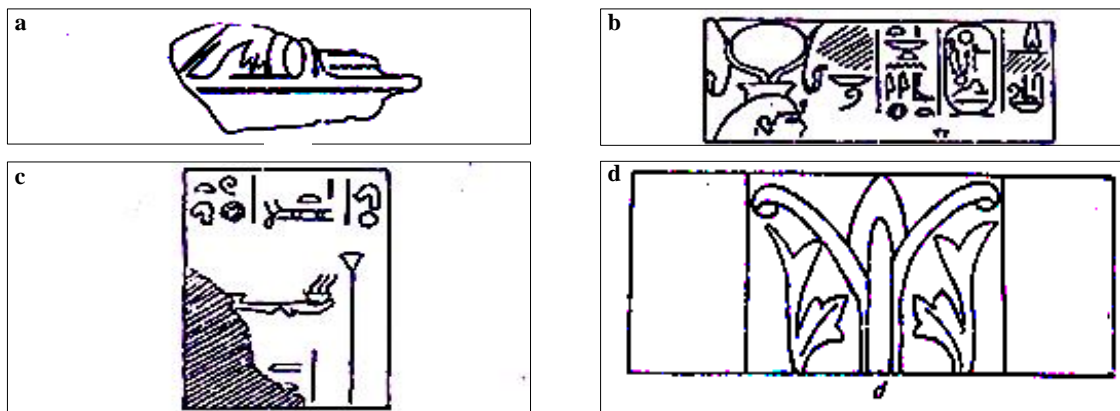


Plate (2) details of objects discovered in Nbwy in 1957 showing **a** Remain of limestone stele containing parts of a cartouche for king Senusert (maybe the third one), **b** Remain of a drawing for goddess Hathor, **c** Remain of draw contained the name Nbwt and three lines of hieroglyphs , **d** Capital of Roman column.

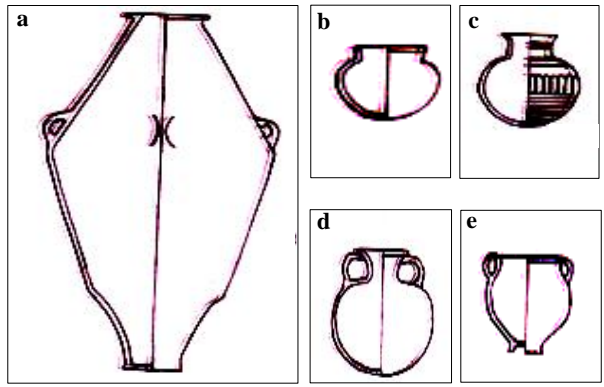
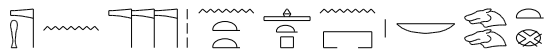


Plate (3 a, b, c, d, e) five different pottery pot styles discovered in Nbwy in 1957

There are some other monuments excavated apart from the site of *Nbwy*, however, their owners held titles of the priesthood of the goddess Ouadjet as: **1-** The sarcophagus and statue [48][49][50] of the command of kingdom navy and *hm W3dyt P3 h3c.s* from Abu Sir El-Malaq and Saqqara, pl.s. (4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11) & figs. (2, 3, 4, 5). (This sarcophagus and its lid weight twelve tons, registered in Beni-Sweif register under no. 469, dating to the Ptolemaic period, it lays now in Meidum area, fig. (2). It was one of the funerary furniture of the tomb of *P3 h3c.s* in which it was stolen and sold to many museums

such as Abuert antiquities group in Paris [51], Leiden Museum [52]. **2-** The priest of Heracleopolis Magna "*Imn-ir-di-Ist*" from the Saite Period, who was also priest of Hershef, Osiris and Hathor which were all worshipped in the temple of *Nbwy*, his birth place was Heracleopolis Magna. These titles were written on his statue in Cairo Museum [33]. **3-** The Oushabti for "*W3h ib R*" who was the priest of Goddess *W3dyt*, mistress of *Nbwy* [53]. **4-** A stele from Memphis, from the reign of king Darius I, which contained the title of "*hm Nbwy*" [54].

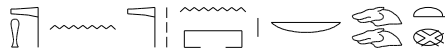
Titles of: *P3 h3c.s*:



hm ntr n ntrw ntt htp n pr nbt Nbwy

Priest of all Gods who are in temple of mistress of *Nbwy*, pl. (11) & fig. (4)

The second figure on the sarcophagus is the following one.



hm ntr n ntrw n pr nbt Nbwy

Priest of all gods in the temple of mistress of *Nbwy*, pl. (11) & fig. (4)

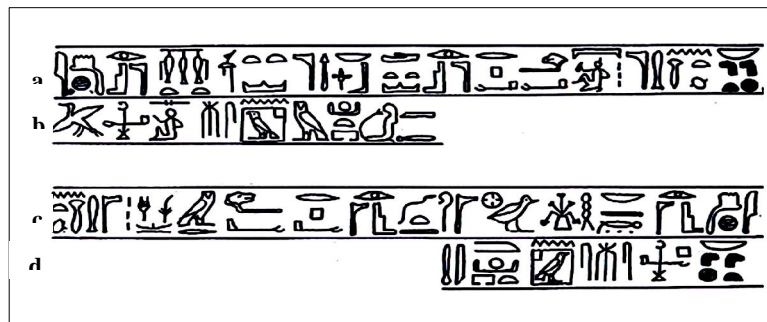


Plate (4) inscription from the upper part of the face of sarcophagus of "*P3 h3c.s*" Abu Sir El-Malaq 1973.

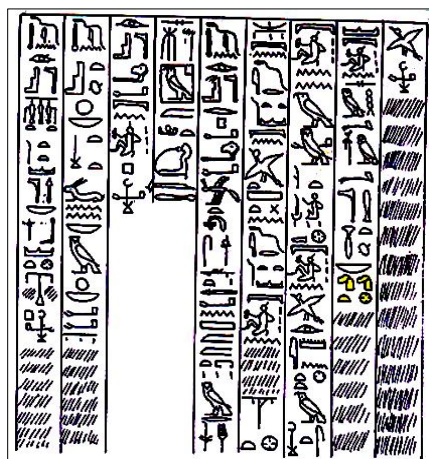


Plate (5) inscription from the right side of the sarcophagus of (*P3 h3c.s*).



Plate (6) inscription from the left side of the sarcophagus of (*P3 h3c.s*).

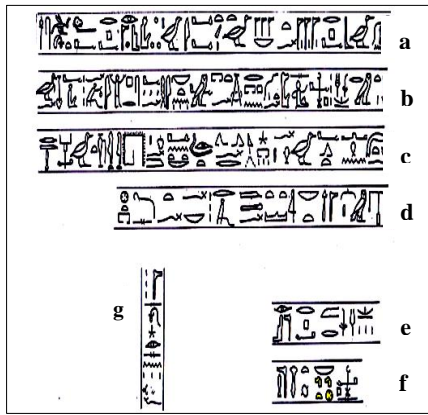


Plate (7) inscription of the sarcophagus of (P3 h3c.s)

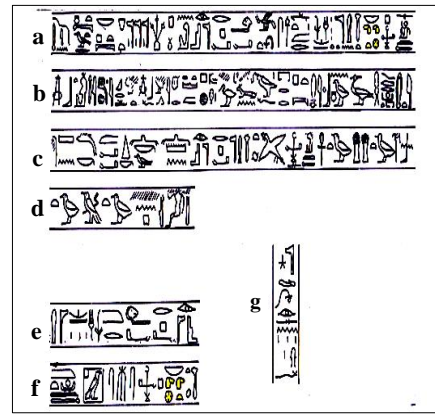


Plate (8) inscription from the left side of the sarcophagus of (P3 h3c.s)

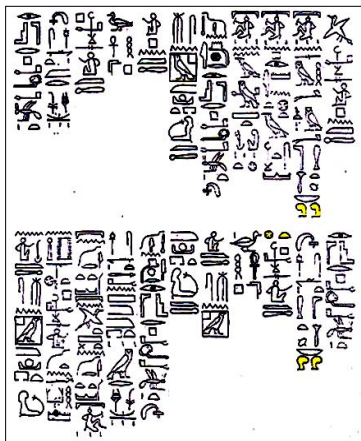


Plate (9) details of inscriptions on the sarcophagus of (P3 h3c.s)

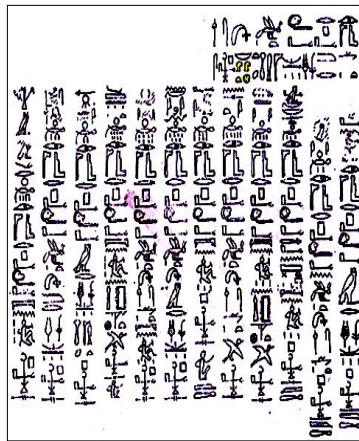


Plate (10) details of inscriptions in the right side of the sarcophagus of (P3 h3c.s)



Plate (11) a the 2nd line of inscriptions on the lid of the sarcophagus, (P3 h3c.s). b the 5th line of inscriptions on the lid of the sarcophagus (P3 h3c.s)



Figure (2) the diorite sarcophagus of "P3 h3c.s" (after Abu Sir el-Malaq, 1973).

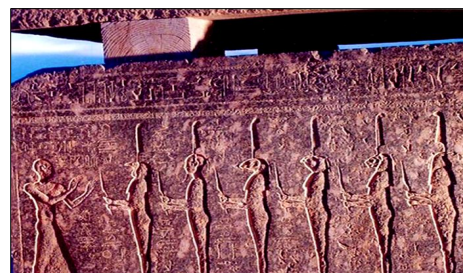


Figure (3) "P3 h3c.s" in front of Souls (Chapter 125 book of the dead)



Figure (4) inscriptions on the lid of the sarcophagus of "P3 h3c.s" especially the name of Nbwy at the beginning of the second line.



Figure (5) "P3 h3c.s" in front of Souls (Chapter 125 book of the dead)

4. Conclusion

According to the new excavations the site of *Nbwy* (modern *Bilifia*) represented one of the cult centers of goddess *Ouadjet* in Middle Egypt, from the Middle Kingdom till the Coptic era. The name of the site had different sounds (*Nbwy*, *Nbiwy*, *Nbt*, *Nbw*). The temple (*Pr W3dyt*) was dedicated to the goddess *Ouadjet* and other gods (*Hathor*, *Osiris*, *Atom* and *Hershef*). *Ouadjet* was worshipped in other sites of Upper Egypt as mistress of *Nbwy* especially during her ceremonies^(f)

Endnotes

- (a) *Ouadjet* was worshipped in many sites all over Egypt; her main cult centre was *Buto* which was the capital of the 9th nome of Lower Egypt. She was known for the first time on ivory labels from *Naqada*, her name became one from the favorite Egyptian names and titles like *Hm WADyt* which is written in the necropolis of *Om El-Gaab* and continued in during Old Kingdom, and the king *Ouadjet* from the 1st Dynasty.
- (b) In 1937 *Ali Hassan* the mayor of *Belifia*, sent a letter to *Fayoum* inspectorate (Nr. 5/3/3501 in 25/3/1937) mention that a Pharaonic tomb was discovered by chance. The excavations of inspector *Nageeb Farag* proofed that the tomb returned to the late period. *L. Habachi*, op. cit,
- (c) The Egyptian government issued decrees Nr.852 {Project Nr.14} in 1957 and Nr.129 in 2001 which considered the land of *Nbwy* {*Bilifia*} as an archaeological site.
- (d) In 1991 *Mr. Adel Desouqy Mohamed* was send a report to *Beni-Sweif* Inspectorate mentioned that a big fragment from *Granite* statue was discovered during the works in the bases of the old mosque of *Meidum* village.
- (e) Objects from number 1 to 5 were discovered in 1954 by inspector of *Fayoum/Nageeb Farag*.
- (f) According to *Papyrus Berlin* no.3055, *Ouadjet* was the mistress of *Nbwy* during this ceremony. *A. Moret*, op.cit, p.1ff.

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