Original article

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

Gharib, Kh.
Asses. Prof. Egyptology dept., Faculty of Archaeology, Cairo Univ., Giza, Egypt

E-mail: khaled6820@hotmail.com

Received 4/1/2014
Accepted 10/5/2014

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 20\(^{th}\) 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 \((31.03\ E, 29.07\ N, \text{the area of A, A2-dialects)}, \text{map (1-a), and 12 km. from Ehnasya El Medina “Heracleopolis Magna”}. \) 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 20\(^{th}\) 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 6\(^{th}\) and 7\(^{th}\) 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 \(Pr\ Wdyt\) was a holy place for the 19\(^{th}\) nome of Lower Egypt "Tell-el Faraeen" to the East of Delta\([11]\). * Gardiner pointed out that the name \(Pr\ Wdyt\) that was mentioned in the Wilbour Papyrus and "Nbwy"\([8]\), have the same site. He confirmed that the name \(Pr\ Wdyt\) referred to both a temple and the site Heracleopolis Nome \([12]\). * The name Pr
Widyt 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 Widyt there [14]. * Some other Egyptologists said it was in Atfih or Thebes [15][16]. Berlin's dictionary read it "tNbiwy" 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 Widyt, 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

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

\[
\text{Nbywy}
\]

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)

\[
\text{Nbyw}
\]

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)

\[
\text{Nbyw}
\]

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

\[
\text{Nbyt}
\]

This form was mentioned on a fragment of a limestone stele discovered in Nbywy itself, (Pl. 4-B), from the reign of king Ramses II, where there is a formula of: Wådyt nbt Nbyt [28].

\[
\text{Nbyt}
\]

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

\[
\text{Nbwt}
\]

This form was mentioned on a fragment of a limestone stele discovered in Nbywy itself and dating to the New Kingdom [1].

\[
\text{Nbyt}
\]

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

2.3. From the third intermediate period

\[
\text{Nbyt}
\]

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

\[
\text{Nbt}
\]

This form was found on the wall of the tomb of "Pt- di Stfrt" belonging to the 26th Dynasty from Baharia Oasis [32].

\[
\text{Nbyt}
\]

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

\[
\text{Nbt}
\]

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

2.4. From the late period

\[
\text{Nbw}
\]

This form was found on an uncompleted statue belonging to the king "Nectanebo II"[33] (Egyptian Museum, pl. (1).

\[
\text{Nbt}
\]

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

2.5. From the Greek and Roman periods

2.5.1. EdfU temple [36]

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

2.5.3. Temple of Philae

2.6. Nbwy in Coptic texts

In the Greek texts it was written: Boutos/Boutws [42] and in Roman texts was written Boutos Tou Meuphitou [29][43][23].

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
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*, *Touhjet El-Ershad*, which considered the site as one of the villages of Abu Sir El-Malaq *El-Touhjet El-Souneih*, which mentioned that site as one of El-Bahnasa 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 // = Bilifia.

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: Nḥtḥr ḥḥmr mry Wḥdyt nḥt Nbwy, "Nectanebo beloved of Wḥdyt 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 "ḥṣ ḥḥmr 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. 103 cm, thickness 22 cm. In front of the goddess there are four vertical lines of hieroglyphic, di ---- snh nb Wsr mṣḥt ṭ Rc stp n Rc ṭ nḥt Nḥyt ---- nbw [1] "giving ---- and health, Ramses II, mistress of Nḥyt ", pl. (2b).

4- A fragment of limestone drawing contained a name of Nbwt, H. 55 cm, W. 42 and thickness 18 cm, 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[9], 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. 20 cm and its diem 50 cm, the second one H. 23 cm and its diem 55 cm, 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 1362.

11- Pottery pot in the shape of ball with a wide mouth and circles decorations, H. 10 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 of the command of kingdom navy and Hm Widyty Pš hrs.s from Abu Sir El-Malaq and Saqqara, pl. (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 PA xAa.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 Widyty, 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: Pš hrs.s:

\[
\text{Hm nTr n nTrw ntt Htp n pr nbt Nbwy}
\]

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.

\[
\text{Hm nTr n nTrw n pr nbt Nbwyt.}
\]

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 "Pš hrs.s" Abu Sir El-Malaq 1973.
Plate (7) inscription of the sarcophagus of (P3 hš₃₅ s₃₅₆₃). Plate (8) inscription from the left side of the sarcophagus of (P3 hš₃₅ s₃₅₆₃).

Plate (9) details of inscriptions on the sarcophagus of (P3 hš₃₅ s₃₅₆₃). Plate (10) details of inscriptions in the right side of the sarcophagus of (P3 hš₃₅ s₃₅₆₃).

Plate (11) a the 2nd line of inscriptions on the lid of the sarcophagus, (P3 hš₃₅ s₃₅₆₃), b the 5th line of inscriptions on the lid of the sarcophagus (P3 hš₃₅ s₃₅₆₃).

Figure (2) the diorite sarcophagus of "P₃ hš₃₅ s₃₅₆₃" (after Abu Sir el-Malaq, 1973).

Figure (3) "P₃ hš₃₅ s₃₅₆₃" in front of Souls (Chapter 125 book of the dead).

Figure (4) inscriptions on the lid of the sarcophagus of "P₃ hš₃₅ s₃₅₆₃" especially the name of Nbwy at the beginning of the second line.

Figure (5) "P₃ hš₃₅ s₃₅₆₃" 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, Nb). The temple (Pr WADyt) 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.

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.

References


[54] Chassinat, E., (1901). Textes provenant du serapeum de Memphis, RT 23, pp.76-91