

5 COLOSSI

Several quartzite colossi of Ramesses II also adorned the façade of the sanctuary. Now in pieces, they depict the king standing, with his daughters-wives Bentanat and Meritamun, as well as Maathornefrura, the daughter of the Hittite King.

6 THE SANCTUARY AREA

The heart of the temple is now mostly destroyed, displaying a chaos of granite fragments of blocks, stelae and obelisks, from which emerge two column bases of King Siamun.

7 THE SACRED LAKE OF AMUN AND KHONSU TEMPLE AREA

In the northern part of the precinct, a sacred lake was built during the Late Period with quantities of decorated limestone blocks from earlier dismantled monuments. West of it, several temples were successively built for the Moon-god Khonsu, son of Amun and Mut, the latest one erected under Nectanebo I (30th Dynasty). It was later completely destroyed and its location is now symbolized by a storage space of uninscribed limestone blocks.

8 OSORKON II'S COLUMNS

In the eastern part of the precinct, between the wall of Psusennes I and the enclosures of the 26th and 30th Dynasty, lay a cluster of fragments of granite palm columns, with Osorkon II's cartouches recarved on those of Ramesses II. The original purpose of this ensemble remains unknown.

9 HORUS TEMPLE

A temple for Horus of Mesen, a regional warrior deity, local equivalent of Montu the defender of Thebes, was built under the first Ptolemies in the south-east part of the sacred area. It is now reduced to its foundations.

10 MUT TEMPLE

South-west of Amun's enclosure, another precinct was dedicated to his wife the goddess Mut. Built during the 21st Dynasty, her temple and enclosure wall were rebuilt several times until the Ptolemaic period. A limestone double well is visible in the south-east part, near a sacred basin that has never been finished and is now reburied for conservation reasons. Visitors can also admire a reused double statue of Ramesses II and the goddess Sekhmet.

SOME CHRONOLOGICAL LANDMARKS...

3rd Intermediate Period		Late Period	
21st Dynasty	1069 / 943 BC	26th Dynasty	664 / 526 BC
22nd-23rd Dynasties	943 / 716 BC	30th Dynasty	380 / 342 BC
25th Dynasty	743 / 655 BC	Ptolemaic Period	332 / 30 BC
		Roman Period	30 BC / 395 AD

TANIS RE-DISCOVERED

Identified from the beginning of the 18th century as the ruins of Tanis mentioned several times in the Bible, Sâh was visited in 1798 by the scholars of the Napoleonic Expedition and for the first time described in detail. Some limited excavations during the first half of the 19th century provided a few important statues, such as the large granite sphinx now in the Louvre Museum. One owes to Auguste Mariette, the founder of the Egyptian antiquities administration, the first major excavation of the Amun temple (1860-1864). There he found quantities of magnificent statues and reliefs that were later transported to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

The British archaeologist William Flinders Petrie also undertook excavations in Sâh in 1884. From 1929 onwards, a French mission under the direction of Pierre Montet systematically explored the precincts of Amun and Mut in the long term. History will mainly recall his extraordinary discovery, between 1939 and 1946, of the tombs of kings and princes of the 21st and 22nd Dynasties. The intact burials contained rich treasures (stone sarcophagi, silver coffins, gold masks, jewellery and crockery, etc.) that can be admired in the Cairo Museum.

Since 1965, Montet's work is continued by the *Mission française des fouilles de Tanis*. The French team devotes its activities to the methodical re-examination of the areas explored in the past, to the excavation of new sectors, to the global study of the site (geophysical, ceramological, geomorphological surveys) and to the scientific and patrimonial valorization of the discovered remains (epigraphy, architecture, topography, protection and conservation).



Great sphinx from Tanis in the Louvre Museum.
© S. Connor



Laying colossus of Ramesses II in 1863.
© A. de Banville, Min. Culture, MAP/Dist. RmnGP.

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The precinct of Amun seen from the East. © MFFT / S. Charrier 2016.



A MAJOR CITY IN THE HISTORY OF ANCIENT EGYPT IN THE FIRST MILLENNIUM BC:

TANIS
(TELL SAN EL-HAGAR, SHARQEYA)

A NEW CAPITAL CITY

At the end of the New Kingdom (16th century BC), Egypt has entered a period of division. To the North, some twenty kilometers from Piramesse (*Qantir*), the ancient residence and harbour of the Ramesses kings, the rulers of the 21st Dynasty built a new capital city, Tanis, and its harbour. Their power did not extend beyond Lower Egypt. To the south, the powerful High Priests of Amun were controlling Upper Egypt from the ancient city of Thebes (today's Luxor).

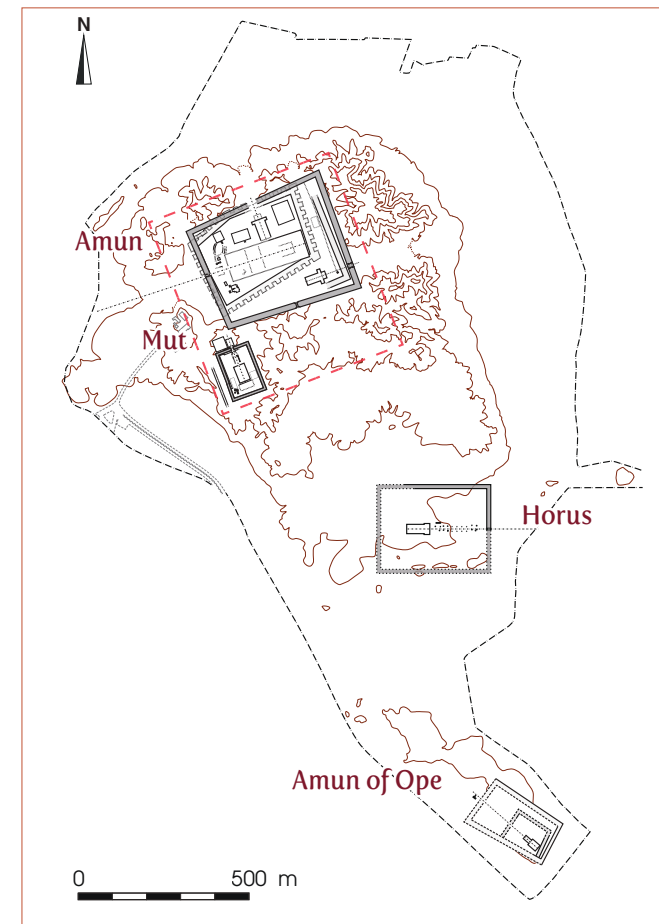
Dedicated to the Theban triad — Amun, Mut and Khonsu — the main temples of this “Thebes of the North” stood, as in Karnak, inside two great sacred areas in the northern part of the city, while a sanctuary for Amun of Opet, mirroring the temple of Luxor, was located at the southern end. Later on, the cult of Horus, a major deity of the Eastern Nile Delta, also developed in Tanis. The religious precincts were surrounded by an extensive settlement (more than 200 ha), whose ruins, eroded by millennia of rains and winds, form the high hills visible today.

The temples were severely destroyed in Late antiquity. Mostly built of limestone, the superstructures were exploited for making lime. What is left is only some of the granite and quartzite monuments — obelisks, statues, colossi, columns, stelae, blocks, etc. — from which only a small part remains *in situ*, leaving little chance for a reconstruction.

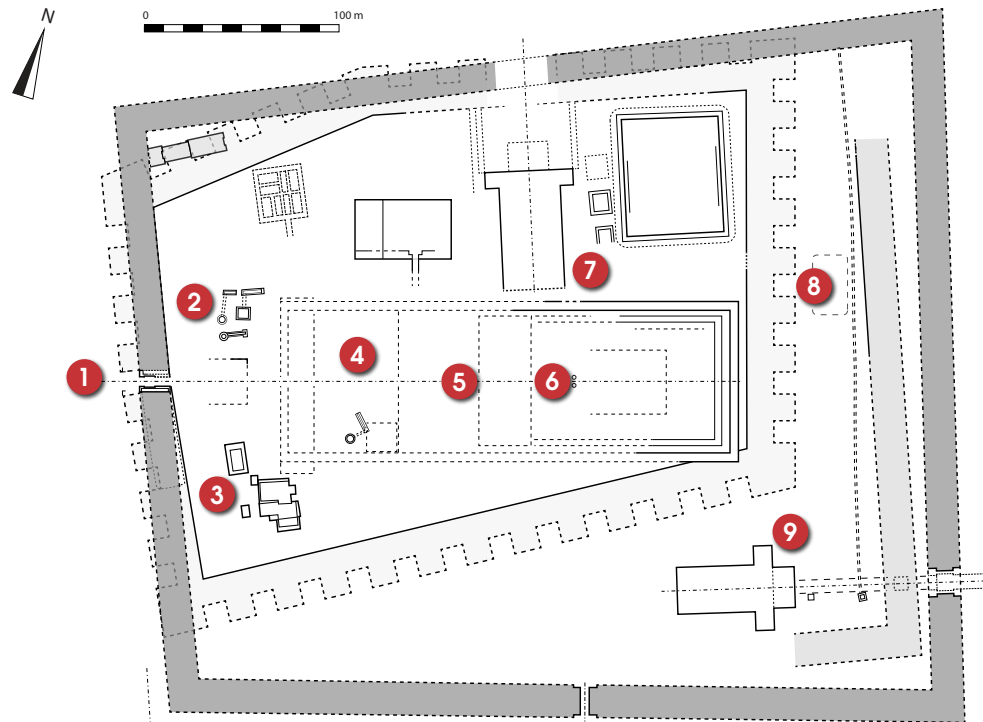
These stray fragments have given to the ruins, as well as to the neighbouring town, their modern name : Sâh el-Hagar, “Tanis-the-stones”. If many of them bear inscriptions that date from before the founding of the city, this is because they were brought here from Piramesse, whose abandoned buildings served as stone quarries for construction during the Third Intermediate Period.

One owes to King Psusennes I the first monumental development of the Amun temple, inside a massive mudbrick enclosure, heavily bastionned as a fortress. He had his tomb installed within it, soon followed by his heirs of the 21st and 22nd Dynasties, who also rebuilt

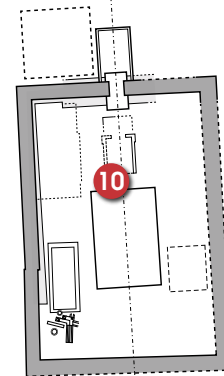
the temples. From the 26th Dynasty onwards (7th century BC), the seat of power moved to Saïs, in the Western Nile Delta. However, Tanis remained an important metropolis, and its sanctuaries were rebuilt and embellished several times until the Ptolemaic period (4th-1st century BC).



Map of the site of Tanis. © MFFT 2017.



Map of the sacred areas of Amun and Mut. © MFFT 2017.



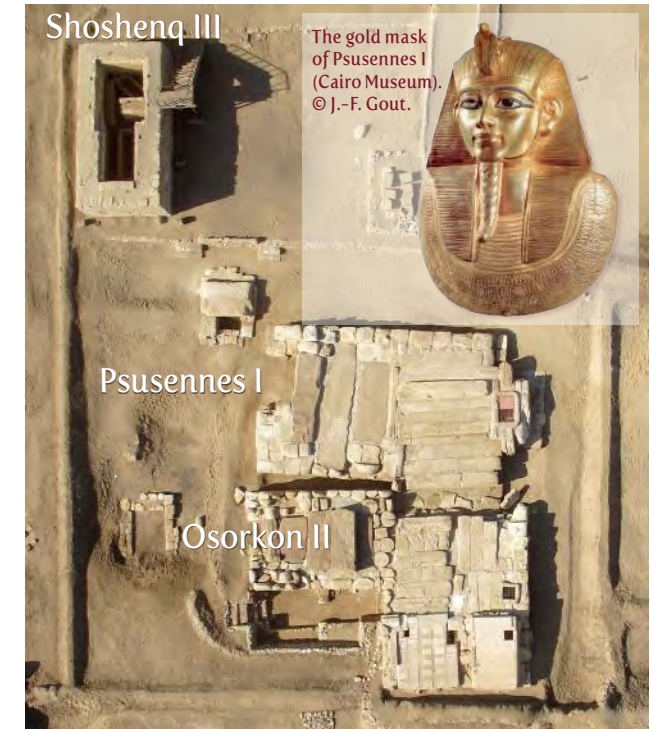
1 GATE OF SHOSHENQ III

Around 800 BC (Shoshenq III, 22nd Dynasty), a new monumental gateway was built in the mudbrick enclosure wall of Psusennes I, reusing many older monuments, mostly of granite: fragments of obelisks and colossi of Ramesses II, blocks of Kheops and Shoshenq I. The façade was adorned with stone statues of Ramesses II, some of which, originally made for earlier kings, had already been reused in Piramesse.

2 RITUAL WELLS

Four limestone wells were used for water rituals in the temple of Amun. Three of them, built North of the forecourt, date from the Late Period. The fourth one, within the first courtyard, is earlier (probably Shoshenq III).

The monumental gateway, before its excavation. From photos of W. Fl. Petrie in 1884. © Archives Lucy Gura, EES.



The royal necropolis © MFFT / S. Charrier 2016.

3 ROYAL NECROPOLIS

Pharaohs of the 21st and 22nd Dynasties had their tombs built in the south-western part of the precinct of Amun. Some of the stone sarcophagi discovered are displayed near the site entrance. The main tombs belong to Kings Psusennes I, Osorkon II and Shoshenq III, but also include other important burials.

- **The tomb of Psusennes I** has two granite vaults where P. Montet discovered the rich burials of the king and his successor Amenemope. These are the only intact royal tombs of Ancient Egypt known to us, beside the tomb of Tutankhamun. Kings Siamun, Psusennes II (21st Dynasty) and Shoshenq II (22nd Dynasty) were also buried in the limestone antechamber. Two additional rooms were built for members of the entourage of Psusennes I (General Undebaunded and Prince Ankhefenmut).
- **The tomb of Osorkon II** (22nd Dynasty), whose massive sarcophagus can be seen in the granite vault, also hosted his father, King Takelot I, and his son, Prince Hornakht, high priest of Amun.
- Built with many limestone blocks reused from private tombs of the 21st Dynasty (some still visible in the masonry outside), **the tomb of Shoshenq III**, contains his and Shoshenq IV's granite sarcophagi. The burial chamber is decorated with excerpts of the Book of the Afterworld.

4 OBELISKS

Tanis is one of the rare sites with so many obelisks. Brought from Piramesse, some were re-erected as-is, in front of the monumental façades of the Amun temple, others were cut to be reused as construction blocks.