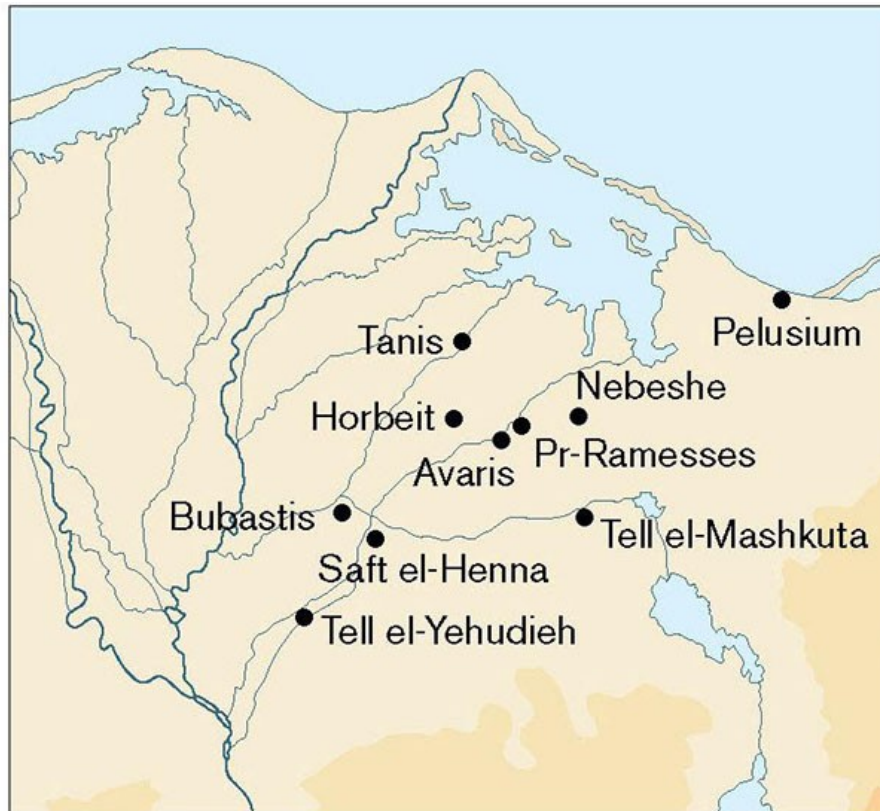


Cities of the Pelusiac Branch



The sites described in this section are principally those built on or near the ancient Pelusiac Branch of the Nile, which opened onto the Mediterranean near the city of Pelusium, and its minor offshoots, including modern waterways, which followed its course or run parallel to it (e.g. the Ismailiya Canal and the Bahr Muweis waterway). Also included here are the fortress-towns of the Wadi Tumilat. All of these settlements can be divided into one of two major types: towns and cities that were founded as ‘normal’ population centres and those that had their origins as fortified military camps. This division is especially important in the Eastern Delta since, despite occasional and sometimes very serious problems with incursions from Nubia and Libya in the south and west respectively, it was here that Egypt traditionally experienced immigration and, particularly from the Third Intermediate Period onwards, invasion.

‘The Waters of Ra’

Apart from the important city of Bubastis, relatively little is known about settlement in the Eastern Nile Delta before the New Kingdom. It is likely that, as in other parts of the Delta, major settlements were located on or near major branches of the Nile, and as the course of these branches fluctuated over millennia, so did the fortunes of the towns and cities originally built alongside them. The current Pelusiac branch of the Nile roughly corresponds to the most important ancient Nile channel of the Eastern Delta: ‘the Waters of Ra’. Part of the importance of settlements built on this channel was control of transport routes into northern Sinai and the Levant. Even as late as the New Kingdom, the Mediterranean coast was much further south than it is today, making both Pr-Ramesses and its predecessor Avaris important maritime as well as riverine ports.

Tell el-Yehudieh

There are several sites in Egypt that bear the name **Tell el-Yehudieh**, or a variant of it, and it suggests a connection with a Jewish presence in Egypt – Édouard Naville named the monograph that describes his work at the site in 1886–87 ‘The Mound of the Jew and the City of Onias’. The second part of the title refers to the building at Tell el-Yehudieh of a Jewish temple – one of the very few outside Jerusalem – by Onias, son of a similarly named high priest, after his flight from Jerusalem around 160 BC. Built by permission of Ptolemy VI, the temple at Tell el-Yehudieh was (along with Elephantine) one of the centres in Egypt associated with resident Jewish communities during the Ptolemaic Period.



The remains of Tell el-Yehudieh give little indication of the importance of this long-lived site in the southeastern Delta. Rutherford Picture Library.

However, Tell el-Yehudieh had an even longer association with immigrants from the Levant, since its earliest attested phase of occupation (investigated by Petrie in his excavations of 1905–6) comprised a large, fortified settlement with ramparts typical of Syro-Palestinian towns of the Middle Bronze Age. Graves excavated at the site have produced objects associated with the Hyksos, most notably black ceramic juglets with incised and white-filled decoration called ‘Tell el-Yehudieh Ware’, which are one of the most distinctive cultural artifacts of the Second Intermediate Period.

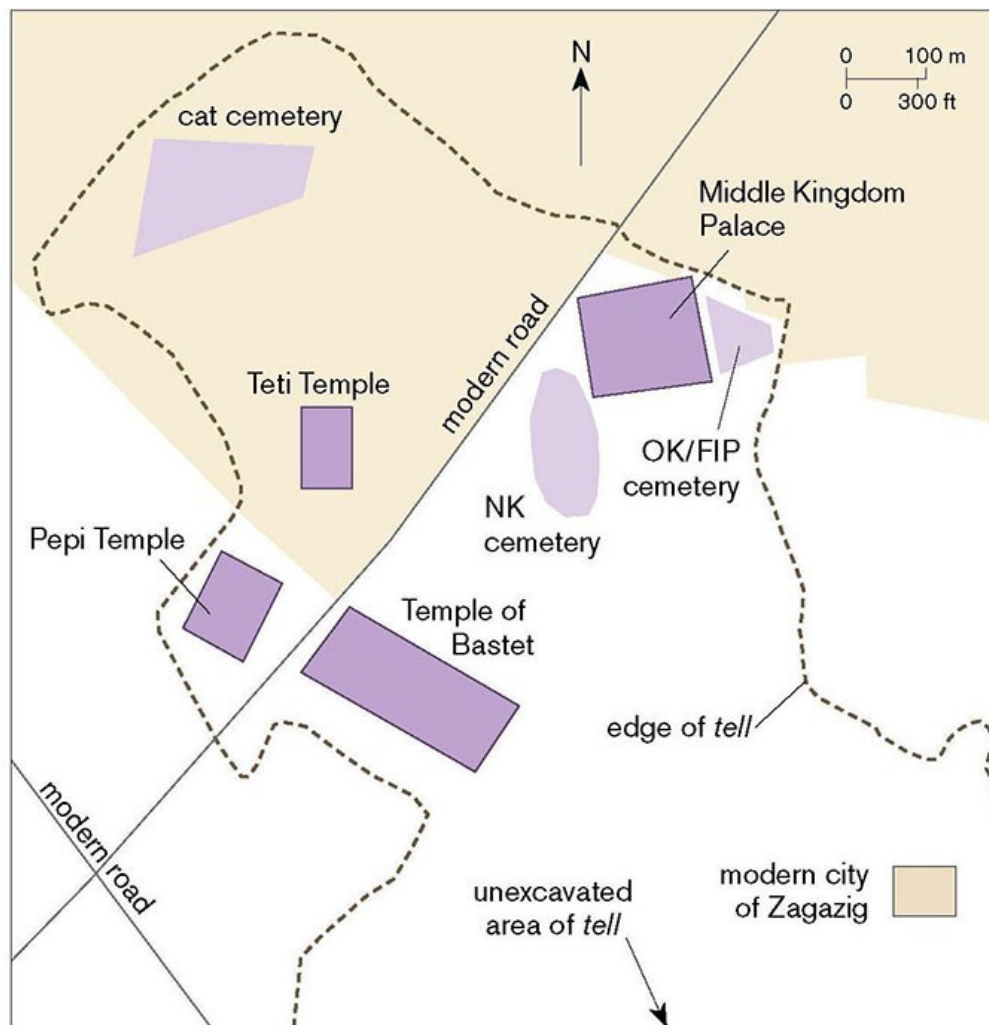
Despite its strategic location, Tell el-Yehudieh seems to have been largely ignored by New Kingdom rulers until the Ramesside Period. Archaeologically, this phase of the site’s history is best represented by the scant remains of a temple of Ramesses III, and the finds of polychrome faience tiles, which came from a palace belonging to the same king.

In the Classical Period the site was (like Tell Muqdam) known as **Leontopolis**, and in the 20th Dynasty, ‘House of Ra, north of Heliopolis’.

Saft el-Henna and Suwa

Saft el-Henna (ancient Per-Soped, Classical **Phacusa**) is best known for an enormous black granite *naos*-shrine dedicated to the god Soped-Nektanebo I, which was discovered by Édouard Naville in 1885 on a ruin-field of considerable extent (which also included a large collection of basalt blocks, probably from the Late Period temple). Since then, as at Horbeit, a modern village has expanded over the ancient site, leaving only a few small *tell*-mounds within the village and the fields around it. Although fragments of colossal Ramesside royal statuary can still be seen on these mounds, it is uncertain whether the town was of any real size before the 30th Dynasty.

The **main cemetery of Saft el-Henna** seems to have been on the nearby *gezira* of **Suwa**, a large sandy mound, which, although it has not been systematically excavated, has produced chambered mudbrick tombs mainly of the Late and Graeco-Roman Periods, but some as early as the New Kingdom.



Plan of Bubastis. Although much of the northern part of the site has been lost due to the expansion of the modern city of Zagazig, the site still retains the most impressive set of archaeological remains in the Delta covering the period from the Old Kingdom to the Late Period. Steven Snape.

Bubastis

Unlike the *tells* of Mendes and Tanis, the huge ruin-field of Bubastis is not conveniently isolated from major modern settlement, but is immediately adjacent to – and increasingly absorbed within – the city of Zagazig. This is a reflection of the long-term suitability of this particular spot for urban settlement owing to the stability of the Pelusiac branch of the Nile in this part of the Delta, and the site's strategic importance on the route from Memphis to Sinai, and beyond into the Levant. Today the site is referred to as Tell Basta, a name that, like the Classical Bubastis, is derived from its pharaonic name, Per-Bastet, 'House of [the lion/cat-goddess] Bastet'. It is a site remarkable not only for its size (today it occupies an area of c. 70 hectares, 172 acres) but also for the range in both date and type of its visible monuments, displaying a continuous history of occupation and importance from the Old Kingdom until the Third Intermediate Period. It is a site that has been sporadically excavated, perhaps most notably by Édouard Naville from 1887 to 1889.

Bubastis before the New Kingdom

Although we know little of its early history, Bubastis was clearly an important regional centre. Royal interest in the city during the Old Kingdom is attested by the presence of two *ka*-chapels built by kings Pepi I and Teti. Although these structures are relatively modest in scale and in materials used (some limestone elements within a mainly mudbrick structure) they are remarkable as rare examples of surviving Old Kingdom monuments outside the Memphite area, and were maintained in use long after their construction. Other evidence of the status of Bubastis in the late Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period is provided by a substantial cemetery including mudbrick *mastaba* tombs with elaborate stone elements.

Bubastis flourished in the Middle Kingdom. Although the temple from this period seems to have been swept away by later, more extensive building work, a colossal granite head of Amenemhat III found by Naville in his excavation of the temple area suggests important royal patronage of Bubastis. The most significant Middle Kingdom structure at Bubastis is a large palace complex, which covers an area of c. 120 by 90 m (394 by 295 ft), providing both a residential and administrative centre for the mayors of Bubastis and, perhaps, a residence for the king when he visited the city. Limestone reliefs found in association with this palace refer to a jubilee festival of Amenemhat III. The destruction of the palace by fire and its abandonment at the end of the Middle Kingdom might be related to the emergence of the Hyksos, and especially the expansion of Avaris as *the* urban centre in the Eastern Delta

during the Second Intermediate Period.



The extensive use of granite architectural elements in the Temple of Bastet is a clear indication of the importance of this cult and this city in the New Kingdom and Late Period. Rutherford Picture Library.

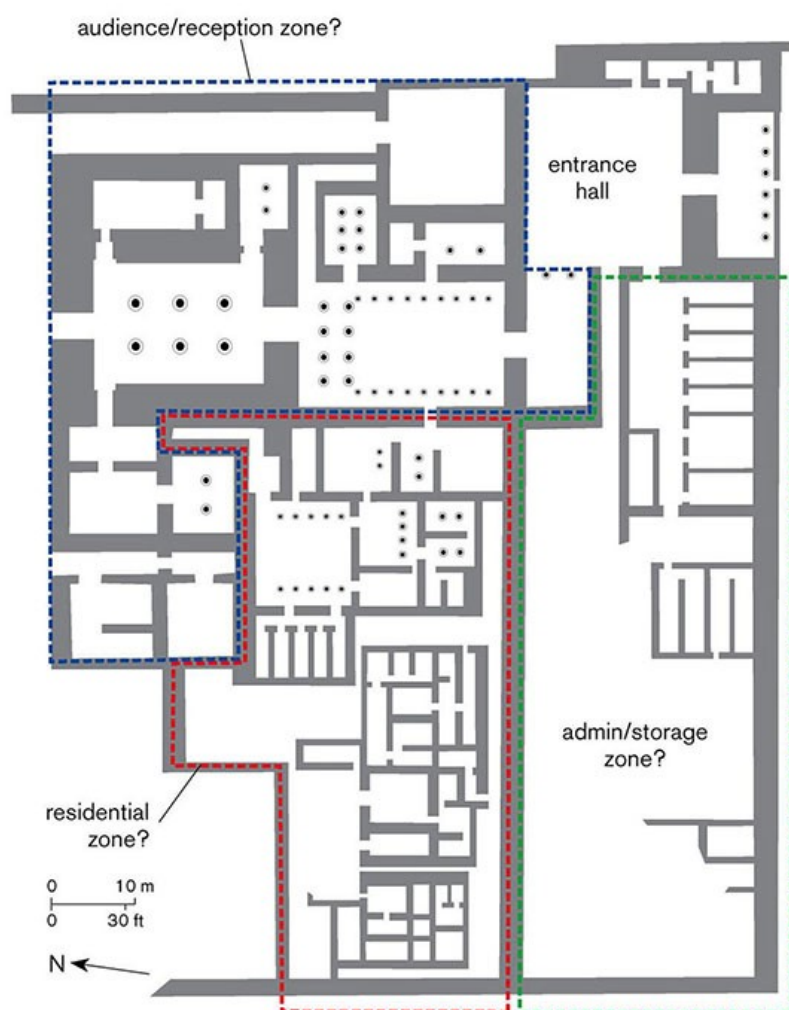


View looking southwest over the northern part of Tell Basta. In the foreground are the mudbrick walls of Old Kingdom tombs and beyond them the remains of the Middle Kingdom palace. Heidi Kontkanen.

New Kingdom Bubastis

There is little to suggest major expansion of Bubastis during the 18th Dynasty, though Amenhotep III built a small festival-chapel here. The extent to which Bubastis was patronized by Ramesside kings is not agreed by scholars, since many of the plentiful Ramesside monuments at Bubastis could have been reused from other sites, as is known to have been the case at Tanis. The most

impressive of these Ramesside monuments, which were used to embellish the monumental landscape of Bubastis, was an extraordinary colossal granite statue of Ramesses II's daughter Meritامن. This statue was not re-inscribed (as some were) with the names of individuals of the Third Intermediate Period, making it likely that Bubastis was the originally intended location for this statue, which, presumably, stood alongside one or more now-lost colossal statues of the king himself. The cemeteries at Bubastis during the Ramesside Period contained a number of large and elaborate tombs, which attest to an important local elite, including the Hori family, two of whose members served as Viceroys of Kush (Upper Nubia) during the 20th Dynasty.



Middle Kingdom palace plan. Steven Snape.

Bubastis in the Third Intermediate and Late Periods

Like Sais and Tanis, Bubastis was a Delta city that achieved its greatest level of national importance during the Third Intermediate Period. The settlement at and around the city of Libyan prisoners from the wars of the Ramesside Period created local dynasties of Libyan families who came to serve as a military elite in the Egyptian army at the end of the New Kingdom, and later became the dominant force, regionally and then nationally, when the New Kingdom collapsed. Manetho describes the 22nd Dynasty as 'Kings of Bubastis' and building works of these kings are still referred to by reference to their home city, such as the 'Bubastite Portal' at far away Karnak.

Unsurprisingly the temple enclosure, which dominated the centre of the city, was extended during the Third Intermediate Period thanks to the patronage of kings who wished to enhance their home town. It came to cover an area of 200 by 60 m (656 by 197 ft), with the eastern side of the enclosure containing buildings erected by Osorkon I and his grandson Osorkon II. The most impressive of these was constructed to celebrate the *sed*-festival of Osorkon II. Although most of this work was carried out using limestone, it still required substantial numbers of huge blocks of hard stones, especially red granite, which still litter the site. Behind the Osorkons' temple was an open courtyard, and the western side of the enclosure was the site of activity in the 30th Dynasty by Nectanebo II, especially the erection of a series of large monolithic *naos*-shrines, perhaps in a similar way to the arrangement in the Late Period temple at Mendes. The Late Period – specifically the 26th Dynasty – also saw the development of a necropolis for the burial of cats sacred to Bastet.

The description Herodotus provides of the city during the Late Period is not entirely different from the visible remains today, especially the fact that the city was made up of areas with different heights, so that the temple enclosure was lower than the surrounding districts – this is how the ruins appear today, with some surviving vestiges of the *tell* being substantially higher than the

main temple. As Naville put it,

lofty mounds, which are nothing but layers of decayed brick-houses which were always rebuilt on the same spot so that after centuries the ground was considerably raised. It is clear that one must have looked down on the stone buildings which had remained at the same level.



In 2008 – over 100 years after Naville’s work in the Third Intermediate Period temple at Bubastis – a team lead by Eva Lange began a fieldwork project to investigate the development of this part of the site. Courtesy Eva Lange.

Horbeit and Abu Yassin

Horbeit and Abu Yassin are two neighbouring villages, which, respectively, occupy the ancient city and nome-capital of Shednu (Classical Pharaethos) and the cemetery of its sacred bulls. In this bipartite arrangement they are somewhat similar to Saft el-Henna with its cemetery at neighbouring Suwa, or Kom Firin whose necropolis is at nearby Silvagou in the Western Delta. Fragments of the ancient city can be seen between the modern houses, including massive granite roofing blocks from a temple of Nectanebo II at Horbeit and five impressive granite sarcophagi from the bull-cemetery at Abu Yassin.

Avaris and Pr-Ramesses

Anyone strolling across the fields near the Eastern Delta village of Qantir will find little indication that they are walking over the remains of not one but two of the great cities of the pre-Classical world: the Second Intermediate Period Hyksos capital of **Avaris** (Hwt-Waret) and the Ramesside capital of **Pr-Ramesses** (more fully Pr-Ramesses-Mery-Imen-Aa-Nehtu – ‘The House of

Ramesses, Beloved of Amun, Great of Victories’).

Avaris

The city of Avaris has become well known through the excavations of Austrian archaeologist Manfred Bietak at the site of Tell ed-Daba. It was founded early in the 12th Dynasty by Amenemhat I, but it developed considerably in the late 12th Dynasty as a response to Egyptian interest in Sinai and the Levant, and immigration by ‘Asiatic’ groups from the east. Avaris served as a point of departure for Egyptian expeditions to the east, and was partly occupied by Asiatic ‘Expedition Leaders’. As an important trading centre, the city flourished, its population swelled – especially with Canaanite immigrants – and it developed its own palace complex. When the Middle Kingdom collapsed, these Canaanites, the ‘Hyksos’, were in a strong enough position to establish political control of the Eastern Delta and then, indeed, of a substantial proportion of the Nile Valley.

Herodotus Describes the Temple of Bubastis

... where there is a temple of Bubastis, which is well worth describing. Other temples may be larger, or have cost more to build, but none is a greater pleasure to look at. The site of the building is almost an island, for two canals have been led from the Nile and sweep round it, one on each side, as far as the entrance, where they stop short without meeting. Each canal is 100 feet wide and shaded with trees. The gateway is 60 feet high and is decorated with remarkable carved figures some 9 feet in height. The temple stands in the centre of the city, but the temple was allowed to remain in its original position, the result being that one can look down and get a fine view of it from all round. It is surrounded by a low wall with carved figures and within the enclosure stands a grove of very tall trees about the actual shrine which is large and contains the statue of the goddess. The whole enclosure is about a furlong square. The entrance to it is approached by a stone-paved road about 400 feet wide and about 2,000 feet long, running eastward through the market-place and joining the temple of Bubastis to the temple of Hermes. The road is lined on both sides with immense trees, so tall that they seem to touch the sky.

Herodotus II, 137–38

In the ensuing Second Intermediate Period, Avaris became one of the largest and richest towns in the Near East – archaeological evidence in the form of millions of sherds of imported pottery excavated at the site indicates its importance as a major trading centre. Its main god was the Levantine storm god Baal-Zephon, who was identified with the Egyptian god Seth; the connection between this deity and this part of the Eastern Delta was to become a long one. Late in the Hyksos Period, a massive citadel was built, probably in response to the danger posed by the Theban 17th Dynasty, whose primary aim was the destruction of Hyksos power (and, perhaps, presence) in Egypt.

The conquest of Avaris by Ahmose, founder of the 18th Dynasty, did not make it disappear. Initially, however, the town was abandoned, apart from the temple of Seth, which continued to operate until the Amarna Period. In the Thutmosid Period (most likely during the reigns of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III) the old Hyksos citadel and adjacent cemeteries were covered by a massive palace complex, 5¼ hectares (13 acres) in area, built on a series of tall platforms. The presence of Minoan-style frescoes in two of the new palaces suggests a connection with the Minoan court, leading some scholars to believe that this was, in part, a residence-palace built for a royal marriage between an Egyptian king and a Minoan princess.

However, there is also clear evidence that Avaris was also an important military base at this time and up to the reign of Amenhotep II (who agreed a peace treaty with the Near Eastern state of Mitanni). However, the changing situation in the Near East (especially the emergence of the Hittites as a major rival) may have acted as a stimulus to reactivate this important eastern base. Horemheb constructed a huge fortress at Avaris, but it was under his successors, the Ramessides, that this part of the Nile Delta was to become especially important.

The Foundation of Pr-Ramesses

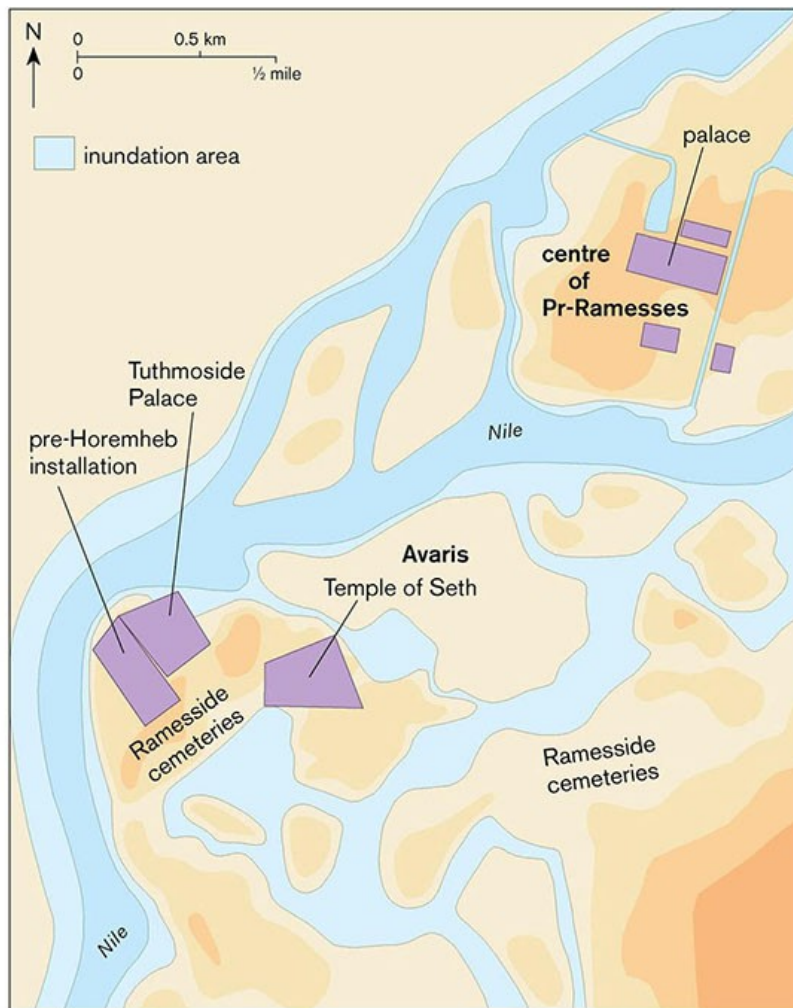
The existence of Pr-Ramesses – the Delta residence of Ramesside kings – was known from descriptions in ancient texts well before its physical discovery:

His Majesty has built for himself a Residence whose name is ‘Great of Victories’.

It lies between Syria and Egypt and is full of food and provisions.

It follows the model of Upper Egyptian Thebes and its duration is like that of Memphis.

This encomium raises a number of interesting points about Pr-Ramesses. Although it was, in essence, the personal creation of Ramesses II, it was not a barren site, like Amarna, but already had a previous national and international importance as Avaris, and also a personal connection to Ramesses, since the Eastern Delta was the home region of his family, and his father Seti I had already built a summer palace there. The strategic location of Pr-Ramesses, ‘*between Egypt and Syria*’, on the edge of the Eastern Delta, is stressed, at a time when Egyptian foreign affairs were dominated by Near Eastern issues (especially competition with the Hittites over Egypt’s Levantine empire) and a well-resourced (‘*full of food and provisions*’) military centre conveniently close to the action was desirable. But in two major respects the encomium above is incorrect – the city’s layout was definitely not based on that of Thebes, nor was it to have anything like the longevity of Memphis.



Plan of Pr-Ramesses and Avaris, based on a range of archaeological sources including both excavation and satellite imagery. Steven Snape.

The Search for Pr-Ramesses

More immediately important to the archaeologists who began to ponder the location of Pr-Ramesses in the late 19th century was its obvious size and importance, as well as its potential identification with 'Raamses' the Biblical city of Hebrew bondage. It was natural to assume that such a city would have left substantial remains. One of the first Eastern Delta candidates was Pelusium, although this turned out to be a major city whose archaeological attested importance only developed well after the New Kingdom. More promising was the great mound of Tanis (San el-Hagar), especially after the excavations there of French Egyptologist Pierre Montet in the 1930s produced monumental remains – statues, obelisks and stone blocks – many inscribed with the name of Ramesses II; these indeed proved to be monuments from Pr-Ramesses.

However, the appearance of glazed tiles from a New Kingdom palace at Qantir, and subsequent excavations there by Egyptian archaeologists Mahmoud Hamza and Labib Habachi, and more recently by German archaeologist Edgar Pusch, provided ultimately conclusive evidence that *this* was the location of Pr-Ramesses. The monumental remains of the Ramesside Period at Tanis had been transported there to embellish the new regional centre only once Pr-Ramesses had been abandoned – one of the most extreme examples (along with Alexandria) of expensive stone monuments being relocated wholesale to new locations.

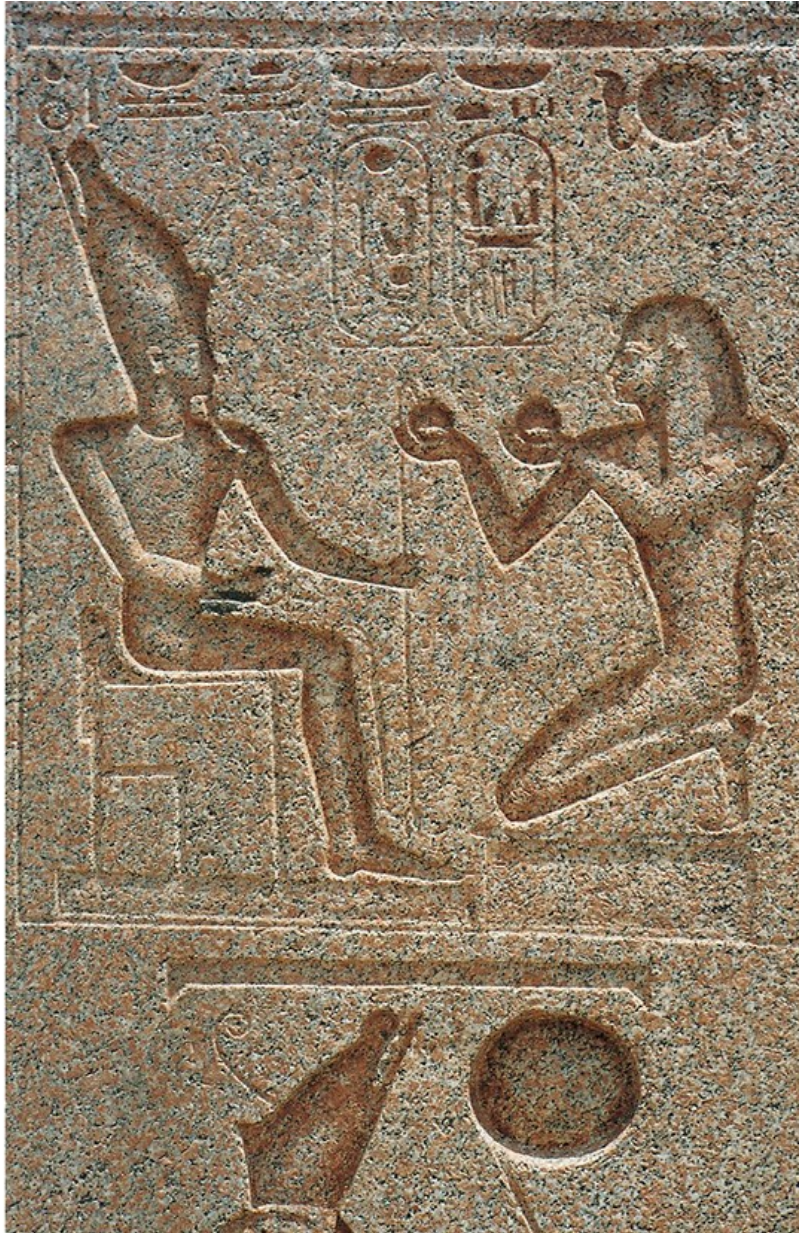
The Landscape of Pr-Ramesses

The identification of the Qantir locality with Pr-Ramesses was only gradually accepted, not least because its modern landscape, with its flat, level fields, gives little indication of how the Ramesside city appeared to its inhabitants. In 1250 BC, the local landscape consisted of a series of *geziras*, sandy mounds that became islands during the inundation. Pr-Ramesses was therefore a series of districts, located on these *geziras*, which would become physically separated from each other during the flood. Although invisible today, these *geziras*, and the individual Nile channels that flowed around them, have been detected and mapped by the German and Austrian archaeologists investigating Avaris and Pr-Ramesses.

The main city centre of Pr-Ramesses is under the modern village of Qantir. In the Ramesside Period this was the southern tip of a large *gezira* (G1) that was a permanent island in the river stream. The old town of Avaris was about a kilometre (2/3 mile) to the southwest of the main city centre of Pr-Ramesses, on two adjacent *geziras* (G5 and G6) to the east of the main Nile channel; these became separate islands during the inundation.



The only significant surface trace of the great city of Pr-Ramesses is these feet from a colossal seated statue of Ramesses II. Iri-en-achti.



Many of the inscribed and decorated stone blocks from the temples built by Ramesses II as the monumental core of Pr-Ramesses are now visible at Tanis, like this scene of Ramesses II offering to the god Atum. Steven Snape.

The eastern part of the centre of Pr-Ramesses was made up of a residential area containing houses and gardens of different sizes. This area remains to be explored in detail, but it is tempting to assume it has the same ‘mixed residential district’ character of Amarna.

The western part of the centre was very much a royal city. The main building here included a large temple for Amun-Ra-Harakhty-Atum (a composite deity with solar associations) and an even larger palace immediately to the south of the temple. South of the palace was a barracks area for elite chariot troops and a royal horse stud. Two narrow channels from the river led to two harbour basins, which served the central city.

As at other known royal cities – especially Thebes – the most important topographic features within Pr-Ramesses were its temples. Papyrus Anastasi II tells us that: ‘Its west is the House of Amun, its South the House of Seth, Astarte its East, Wadjet its North.’ However, how this configuration actually worked on the ground is not clear, since only the temple of Seth (near the old centre of Avaris) is known archaeologically. Indeed the main temple at Pr-Ramesses was massive and may or may not have included the monumental columned hall built to celebrate Ramesses’ 30-year *heb-sed* festival, elements of which (columns and obelisks) were later transported to Tanis.

It also included several examples of a monumental feature particularly favoured by Ramesses II – colossal statues of himself, or rather colossal statues representing divine aspects of himself, which were to be worshipped by the populace:

‘Ramesses Beloved-of-Amun’ is in it as god,

‘Montu-in-the-Two-Lands’ is [its] Herald,

‘Ra-of-the-Rulers’ is [its] Vizier, ‘Joy-of-Egypt, Beloved-of-Atum’ is [its] Mayor.

The End of Pr-Ramesses

Pr-Ramesses was the major urban centre in the Eastern Delta, and one of the most important in Egypt, for less than two centuries. This may seem a long time when contrasted with Amarna’s span, but is relatively short when compared with the millennia of constant building work at Memphis and Thebes. The problem at Pr-Ramesses – unlike at Thebes, but not unknown at Memphis – was its location on a Nile branch that was subject to substantial lateral movement. But, whereas the solution at Memphis was for the city to ‘follow’ the eastward-moving river over the centuries, at Pr-Ramesses the city was simply abandoned when its harbours became unusable. Instead the importance (along with the population and much of the monumental building fabric) of Pr-Ramesses moved downstream to the city of Tanis, which, by the end of the 20th Dynasty, had completely superseded it.



The importance of the archaeological remains being excavated at Qantir (Pr-Ramesses) and Tell ed-Daba (Avaris) is doubly astonishing given the flat, featureless fields under which they are buried. © Qantir-Pi-Ramesse, Edgar Pusch.

Tanis

Tanis is the Classical name for a site that is today called San el-Hagar (‘San of the Stone’); both names derive from the dynastic toponym Djanet. The *gezira* of San el-Hagar is the largest in Egypt, covering an area of 177 hectares (437 acres) and rising to a height of 32 m (105 ft) above the surrounding cultivation. Today the site has a rather barren appearance because problems of localized soil salinity have made this part of the Eastern Delta incapable of a level of agricultural production that would support a significant population, and therefore San el-Hagar does not suffer from problems of large-scale modern occupation in the same way as, for example, Alexandria or Bubastis. The size of the mound attracted the attentions of antiquities-diggers in the first half of the 19th century, and later of archaeologists. Auguste Mariette carried out the first major excavations at Tanis in 1860–64, followed by Petrie in 1883–84. Since 1929 the site has been excavated by various French teams, most notably by Pierre Montet and, since 1985, by Philippe Brissaud. Archaeological attention has been concentrated on the temple enclosure and its contents. The excavation of the non-monumental parts of the city of Tanis – the areas where most of its residents lived and worked – is a major task for future archaeologists.

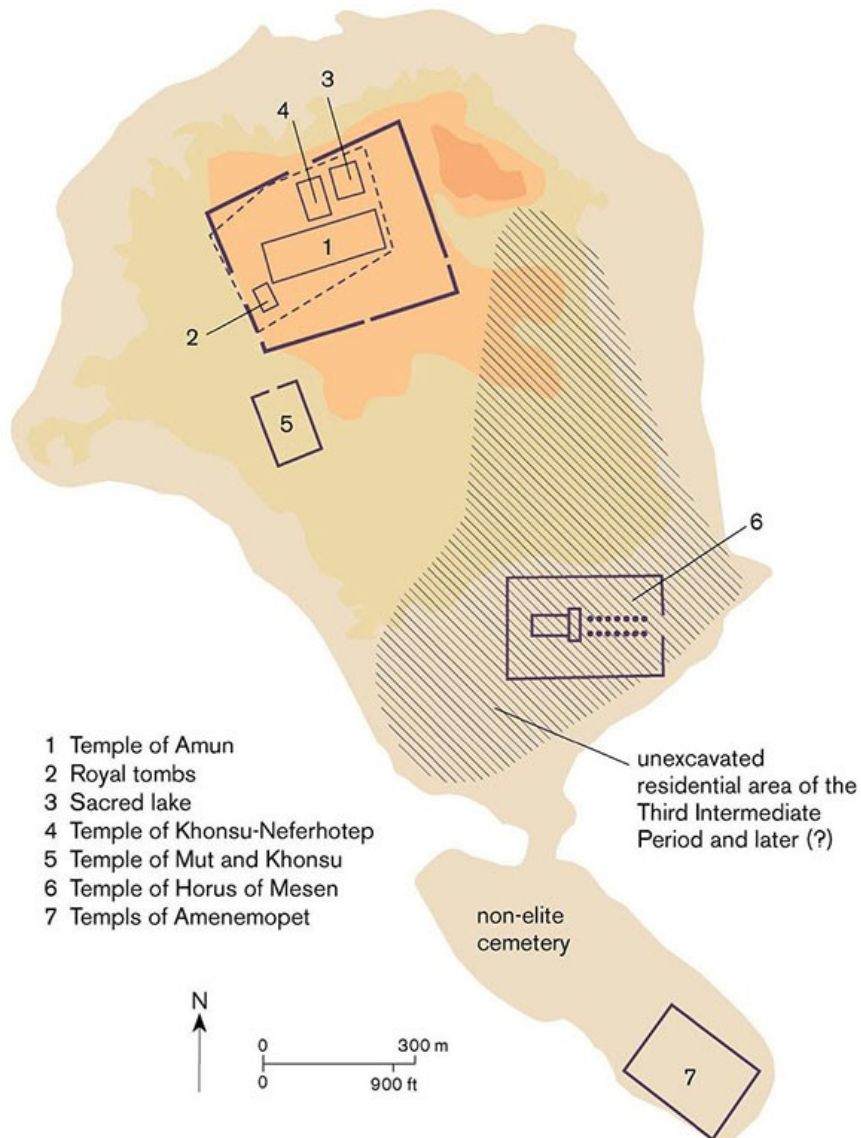
Wenamun Travels through Tanis

The *Tale of Wenamun* is a travel narrative that describes the adventures (and misadventures) of Wenamun, an official of the temple of Karnak at Thebes, who sets out to obtain timber from Byblos in Lebanon during the dying years of the New Kingdom. Although most scholars believe the story to be fictional, it is set in a convincing geographical and historical background, including the emergence of Smenendes as effective ruler of northern Egypt. Wenamun’s journey from Thebes naturally took him through the Eastern Delta and its emerging maritime and political centre, Tanis:

On the day of my arrival at Tanis, the place where Smenendes and Tantamun are, I gave them the despatches of Amun-Re, king of the gods....

I stayed until the fourth month of Summer in Tanis. Then Smendes and Tantamun sent me off with the ship's captain Mengebet and I went down upon the great sea....

Tanis is unknown before the 19th Dynasty and only came to prominence in the late Ramesside Period when it became a replacement for Pr-Ramesses, which, as we have seen, had become ineffective as a major commercial and administrative hub owing to movements of the Nile, which left it harbourless. The capital of the 14th Lower Egyptian Nome, Tanis came to particular prominence in the Third Intermediate Period as the seat of the rulers of the 21st and 22nd Dynasties. Unlike similar cities of the Delta – particularly Sais and Bubastis – Tanis did not attract the attention of Herodotus, although it continued to be patronized by kings of the Late and Ptolemaic Periods before being finally abandoned in the Roman Period.



Plan of Tanis, showing the extent of the tell, the location of the major temple enclosure (including the royal tombs) and possible extent of the main area of settlement. Steven Snape.

'Thebes of the North'

As a royal capital (albeit one of a rather restricted territory) that emerged after the collapse of the New Kingdom, Tanis needed to be shaped into an appropriate monumental setting. The overt aim of the kings of the 21st and 22nd Dynasties, for whom the old religious capital of Thebes was outside their control, was to present their Delta capital as a 'Thebes of the North'. This meant developing a monumental landscape at Tanis that paralleled the key aspects of the 'real' Thebes.

The first stage was to recreate the religious heart of Thebes, which consisted of a temple of Amun and associated temples for the other members of the Theban divine family, Mut and Khonsu. This need was satisfied by the building of Tanis' Northern Precinct, defined by a rectangular mudbrick enclosure wall 430 by 370 m (1,411 by 1,214 ft) in area and 15 m (49 ft) thick. An inner enclosure wall was built by Psusennes I in the 21st Dynasty with a later monumental gateway added by Shoshenq III during the 22nd Dynasty. The main temple within this precinct was the temple of Amun whose ground plan was an impressively large 220 by 72 m (722 by 236 ft) in area. As with most of the temple buildings at Tanis, a large proportion of the original limestone masonry of the Amun temple was later destroyed and/or burnt for lime, but the site is today marked by an impressive collection of mostly granite blocks and monoliths whose origins were undoubtedly temple buildings at Pr-Ramesses, or even earlier Middle Kingdom

monuments that had been requisitioned first for Pr-Ramesses and then later moved to Tanis. The scale of this relocation of monuments is staggering: for instance no fewer than 26 obelisks have been recovered from the Amun temple, all but one being inscribed for Ramesses II. A second major temple in the Northern Precinct, at a right-angled axis from the Amun temple, was dedicated to Khonsu.



The amount of colossal statuary and other large-scale monuments, such as obelisks, from the Ramesside Period found at Tanis give as much a sense of the once-impressive appearance of Pr-Ramesses (from where most of them came) as of that of Tanis itself. Universal Images Group/DeAgostini/Alamy.

The Southern Precinct is less well understood than the Northern Precinct. It contained one temple, which is conventionally referred to as the 'Temple of Anath' because of statue groups found there which show Ramesses II with (among others) the goddess Anath. However, the Third Intermediate and Late Period material from this site indicates that this was a temple for Mut and her son, Khonsu-the-Child, thus once again stressing parallels with the deities worshipped at Thebes.

Royal Tombs at Tanis

Archaeologically, Tanis is best known for its royal tombs. The practice of burying kings within temple enclosures in the Delta during the Third Intermediate and Late Periods, as noted at Sais and Mendes, began at Tanis. Because of its location, Tanis did not allow easy access to desert valleys that would provide a royal cemetery to parallel the Valley of the Kings at Thebes. Instead, royal tombs belonging to the kings at Tanis were constructed within the Northern Precinct, as a way of providing a burial that was beneficially close to the temple of Amun, hopefully secure from unwanted disturbance, and crucially above ground water (and the inundation) on a high part of the town-mound of Tanis. These modest structures mainly consisted of little more than single-room tombs constructed below ground level from reused blocks of granite and limestone, and had burial equipment that included second-hand Ramesside objects.

The cluster of six tombs was discovered by Pierre Montet in 1939 underneath the mudbrick remains of houses of the Late and Ptolemaic Periods, which had been built over the forgotten royal burials. Although the contents of these tombs fall far short of the expectations of rich royal burials as raised by the tomb of Tutankhamun, they were far more successful than those in the Valley of the Kings at preserving their contents intact until the 20th century.

The identity of some of the royal owners of these tombs is disputed, owing in part to the change of ownership and usurpation of these tombs during the Third Intermediate Period, but the burials seem to include some of the key figures of the 21st and 22nd Dynasties. Four of the tombs may have been constructed for Psusennes I, Amenemope, Osorkon III and Shoshenq III, while Shoshenq II and Takelot II were also buried there. Other claimed (or assumed) original occupants and later interlopers include Smendes, Siamun and Psusennes II of the 21st Dynasty, and Osorkon II, Takelot I, Shoshenq IV and V, and Pimay of the 22nd Dynasty.

Reuse of Monuments in the Delta

Tanis is the best example of a practice common in the Nile Delta, that of moving and reusing existing stone structures. This practice was not unique to the Delta, but the lack of available resources for stone quarrying there, when compared to the proximity of quarries of building stone for cities in the Valley, gave a particular impetus to reuse materials in northern Egypt.

The availability of hard stones such as granite was even more problematic. At the best of times, transporting large granite monoliths such as obelisks from the quarries at Aswan was a major undertaking, even if river travel meant that incremental distances were not as seriously onerous as they would be for overland travel. The 'best of times' included the Ramesside Period, when an efficient centralized bureaucracy operated in a politically stable country, providing the best opportunities for the founding of Pr-Ramesses. The Delta rulers of the Third Intermediate Period were faced with a less advantageous scenario: the economic resources they could draw on were significantly less than those of their New Kingdom predecessors, while access to key quarry sites in the Nile Valley – such as Aswan – was dependent on the goodwill of those southern rulers under whose political control these now came. In this situation, the reuse of what was available to hand became more a necessity than a cheap short-cut.

It is also the case that, of the four major cities with a large monumental component that needed to be created very quickly from essentially nothing, three were in the Delta. These were Alexandria, which drew on standing monuments from the Western Delta (especially Sais); Tanis, which used monuments from Pr-Ramesses; and Pr-Ramesses itself, which appears to have supplemented 'new-build' monuments with a set of Middle Kingdom structures of probably disparate origins.



The re-use of stone from earlier royal monuments is well illustrated by this wall, part of the gateway to the entrance to the Amun temple at Tanis, which contains blocks taken from buildings belonging to kings of the 19th to 22nd Dynasties. Steven Snape.

The nature and style of many monuments – bearing traditional images of an Egyptian king worshipping a traditional set of Egyptian gods, whether on statues, stelae, obelisks, columns or temple walls – meant that it was easy for them to be given a re-purposing that was no more extensive than a change of royal name to make them workable in their new context. Where necessary, additional tweaks in the form of the minor manipulation of divine names or images (such as Amun instead of Seth on the Osorkon column at Tanis) would make the monuments even more appropriate to their new context. It may be that the little-disguised antiquity of these monuments (many statues had the names of their new royal owners added alongside that of their original dedicatee, rather than replacing them) was actually embraced as a mechanism for stressing continuity with one's royal 'ancestors'.

The fourth city to be designed as a monumental arena from scratch was Amarna. Given the specifically 'new' nature of that city's monumental display and iconography – in terms both of the forms of monuments and the methods of portraying god and king within an urban setting – the reuse of existing monuments would not have been appropriate.

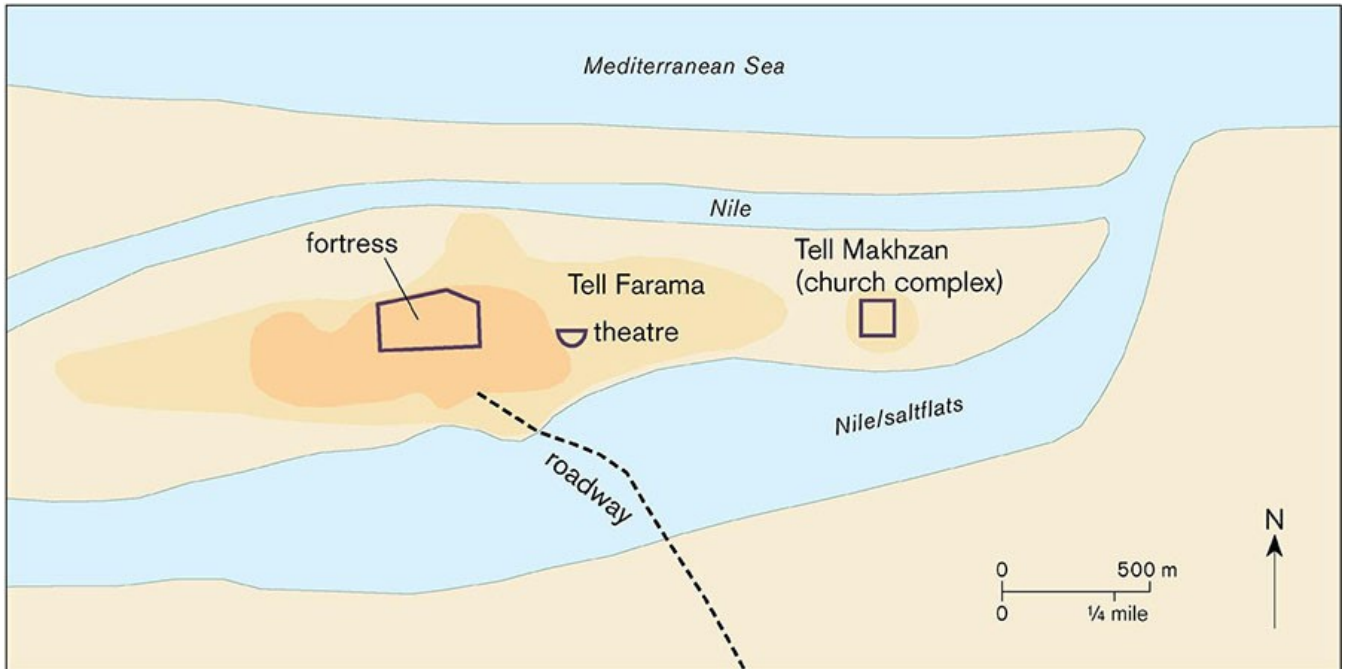
Nebeshe

In the 19th century, the *tell* of **Nebeshe** (ancient Imet or Per-Wadyt, Classical Bouto) was around 1,400 by 1,000 m (4,593 by 3,281 ft) in area. Owing to the extensive exploitation of the *tell* for *sebbakh*, and the expansion of the nearby modern town of el-Husseiniya, this enormous town-mound has almost completely disappeared. In 1886 Petrie was able to observe that the western part of the site was dominated by a mudbrick temple enclosure 180 by 160 m (591 by 525 ft), containing two temples, which can be attributed, on the basis of foundation-deposits in the smaller of the two temples, to Amasis of the 26th Dynasty. The central and

eastern parts of the mound have largely produced – during occasional excavations at the site – houses and cemeteries of the Late and Graeco-Roman Periods.

The earlier history of Nebeshe is problematic: traces of occupation as early as Nagada III have been found at the site, as has evidence of the Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period. It is likely that it benefited from royal patronage in the Ramesside Period (as indicated by a granite statue of the site's patron-goddess Wadjet dedicated by Ramesses II) although the reuse of Ramesside monuments, some of which were themselves re-inscribed Middle Kingdom royal statuary brought to Nebeshe from other Eastern Delta sites during the Late Period, cannot be discounted.

Pelusium



Plan of Pelusium (Tell Farama). The dynamic nature of the Mediterranean coastline, which interacted with the mouth of the Pelusiac branch of the Nile, made the landscape around the site one of constant change. Steven Snape.

On the mouth of the Pelusiac branch of the Nile, and giving that waterway its name, **Pelusium** controlled entry into the Nile Delta by water-borne traffic, giving the city a crucial strategic military and mercantile role.

The site, known as Tell Farama, is a substantial town-mound over 6 kilometres (3¾ miles) from east to west (including the suburban dependencies of Tell Makhzan and Kanais), despite pressure on the site from encroaching farmland. The name Pelusium survives in the name of the nearest modern settlement: the village of Balousa.

Pelusium was first excavated by Jean Clédat in 1910. The site and its environs were the subject of concentrated international archaeological attention in the 1990s when the building of the el-Salaam Canal – whose route runs immediately to the south of Tell Farama – threatened the survival of a number of sites in this area.

The date of its foundation is problematic, and depends on when this part of the Eastern Delta coastline was formed. Herodotus refers to the Persian army of Cambyses defeating Psammetichus III near Pelusium in 525 BC, but there is no archaeological evidence to suggest it existed as a major settlement as early as this and it was therefore not one of the 'Ways of Horus' fortresses. By the Graeco-Roman Period, Pelusium was essentially an island formed by the Pelusiac branch forking and then meeting again just before it entered the Mediterranean. At this time, it flourished as an important city of the Mediterranean world and enjoyed an appropriately Hellenistic/Roman civil infrastructure including baths, theatres and (possibly) a hippodrome. However, defence was always a concern and the most impressive remnant of the ancient city to be seen today is the 8-hectare (20-acre) Late Roman fortress, probably dating to the 6th century AD, whose red-brick walls are over 2 m (6½ ft) thick and have 36 towers and three heavily defended gates.



The role of Pelusium as the eastern gateway to Egypt from the Late Period onwards is reflected in the impressive heavily defended red-brick walls of the Roman fortress at the site. Blauepics Photography.

If you find an error please notify us in the comments. Thank you!