



Necropolis of Is Pirixeddus

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ Egyptian-style High Reliefs

One of the most interesting aspects of the necropolis of Sant'Antioco is without a doubt the finding of burial chambers with important architectural decorations. On two different occasions, 34 years apart, two high-relief works of full-sized full figures were found. The first of the two great finds was removed from the wall on which it was sculpted and taken to Cagliari to be restored. It was then placed on show at the old National Archaeological Museum which are now the storerooms. The second high-relief work was left *in situ*, on the central pillar of the hypogeum and is the focal point of the tomb, that can be seen from the external landing to chamber no. 7, used for a single burial from the last decades of the 5th century B.C. (fig. 1).

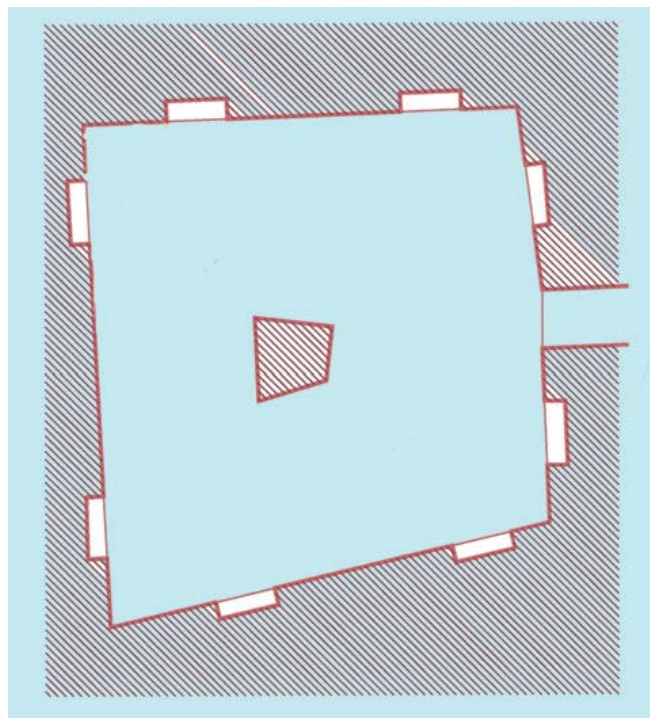


Fig. 1 - Plan of the burial chamber of tomb n.7 (from Bernardini 2010, table I, 1).

The anthropomorphic figure is sculpted onto the central pillar of the burial chamber and faces the threshold to the room (fig. 2).





Fig. 2 - The Egyptian style high relief of tomb n.7 (from Bernardini 2010, table I, 2).

The sculpture, facing forwards, is a male person with a beard, natural height, with his left leg forward, his left arm bent on this chest and his right arm along the side of his body. He is wearing a *klaft* and a skirt; it is a typical iconographic model of the Punic world, clearly of Egyptian style, well known to sculptors, bronze and stone masons of the Punic era.

The relief is distinguished by the excellent preservation of colour and the accuracy of the work, craftsman's expertise that was also characteristic of the example found in 1968. The

colours preserved are mainly red and black, cleverly combined to trace some of the figure's details: the black was used to paint the Egyptian headdress, the so-called *klaft* (fig. 4), the beard and moustache, the curl hanging on the chest from the end of the beard and the small vase painted just under the right wrist, perhaps a balm container. The hair, ears, lips and nipples of the character are coloured in red as are the short lines that encircle the upper arms and wrists, probably bracelets, his short skirt and the scroll held in the fist of his right hand.

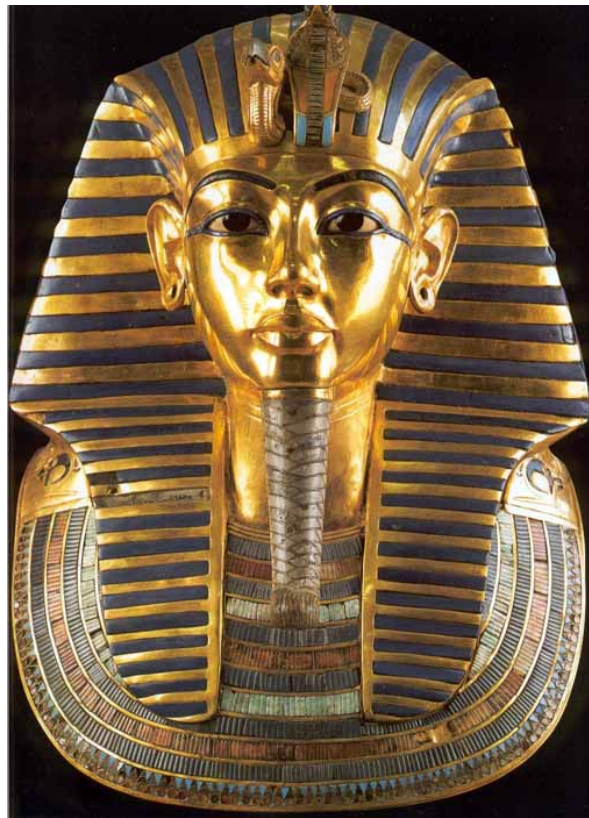


Fig. 3 - Funerary mask of Tutankhamen: the typical Pharaonic headdress with *klaft* is clear (from <http://www.lasalle.es/santanderapuntes/arte/egipto/escultura/klaft.htm>).

The figure stands on an irregular rectangular base. It is not simple or immediately possible to identify iconography like these. In this figure, it is perhaps possible to identify the Phoenician god *Baal Addir* (or *Baal Hammon*), the Lord of life beyond the tomb and fertility, but also it may be allusive and symbolic image of the deceased person himself and in this case, the red colour may allude to his rebirth; the roll held by the figure and the stool on

which he sits could refer to the special authority held by the deceased, a prestige that can be understood by the overall quality of the tomb. With regard to the previous finding of 1968 (fig. 4) some experts thought that the image was of a genie or a cthonius demon appointed to protect the deceased during their trip to the other side.



Fig. 4 - The restored high relief found in Sant'Antioco in 1968 (from Tronchetti 1989, p.10, fig. 3)



■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Cinzia Olinas

■ Bibliographic abbreviations

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- BERNARDINI 2007 P. BERNARDINI, *Memorie d'Egitto. Un sepolcro punico da Sulky*, in G. M. DELLA FINA (a cura di), *Etruschi, Greci, Fenici e Cartaginesi nel Mediterraneo Centrale. Atti del XIV Congresso Internazionale di studi sulla storia e l'archeologia dell'Etruria*, (Annali della fondazione per il Museo "Claudio Faina", XIV), Orvieto 2007, pp.137-60.
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