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Newly Discovered Mummy Portraits from the Necropolis of Ancient Philadelphia – Fayum*

BASEM GEHAD, LORELEI H. CORCORAN, MAHMOUD IBRAHIM, AHMED HAMMAD, MOHAMED SAMAH, ABD ALLAH ABDO, OMAR FEKRY**

ABSTRACT

Throughout six scientific and systematic excavations season the Egyptian mission working at ancient Philadelphia necropolis, was able to identify the zones of different phases of occupation in the necropolis from the 3rd century BC to the 4th cent CE. Among the main research question of the excavation project was the contextualization of the mummy portrait that were found during the nineteenth century at the site, well known as the mummy portraits from Er-Rubayyât or Philadelphia mummy portraits. The last two seasons revealed a unique and complete mummy portrait as well as other fragments of mummy portraits from some well excavated context and features, this portrait could enable us to understand the original context of mummy portrait in different museum from the same site and to answer many questions regarding the mummy portrait dating.

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Keywords: Mummy portrait, Fayoum, ancient Philadelphia, Ptolemaic and roman period, burial customs.

RÉSUMÉ

Au cours de six saisons de fouilles, la mission égyptienne travaillant dans l'ancienne nécropole de Philadelphie a pu identifier les zones des différentes phases d'occupation de la nécropole, du IIIe siècle av. J.-C. au IVe siècle de notre ère. La question principale à laquelle devait tenter de répondre le projet de fouilles était celle de la contextualisation des portraits de momies découverts au XIXe siècle sur le site, connus sous le nom de portraits de momies d'Er-Rubayyât ou portraits de Philadelphie. Les deux dernières saisons ont révélé un portrait de momie unique et complet, ainsi que d'autres fragments de portraits de momie provenant d'un contexte et présentant des caractéristiques bien documentés. Ce portrait pourrait nous permettre de comprendre le contexte original des portraits de momies dans différents musées du même site et de répondre à de nombreuses questions concernant la datation des portraits de momies.

Mots-clés : portraits de momies, Fayoûm, ancienne Philadelphia, époque ptolémaïque et romaine, coutumes funéraires.

This article addresses questions of date and provenience with respect to the mummy portraits said to have been found at the Fayum site of Er-Rubayyât, the necropolis adjacent to the ancient Ptolemaic and Roman village known as Philadelphia (Fig. 1).[1] The precise contexts and the dates of these portraits have been debated due to the poorly documented circumstances of their discovery in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The most important discoveries of the most recent seasons of the Egyptian mission at the necropolis of Philadelphia have been fragments of mummy portraits, as well as a complete mummy portrait. These finds, unearthed as part of scientific excavation, have been documented with regard to their precise provenience within the tomb structures preserved at the site. The results of the mission will serve to confirm the dating of the "Er-Rubayyât" portraits to the Roman period and authenticate Er-Rubayyât/Philadelphia as the find site of portraits attributed to this location as well as others that presently have no documented provenience.

Under the aegis of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, the Egyptian mission at the necropolis of ancient Philadelphia, working since 2016 and still at work there, has conducted six successful seasons. By its sixth season in 2020, the mission accomplished a full topographic survey of the 400 acre necropolis that is split into a northern and a southern sector by the

1 Schubert 2007.

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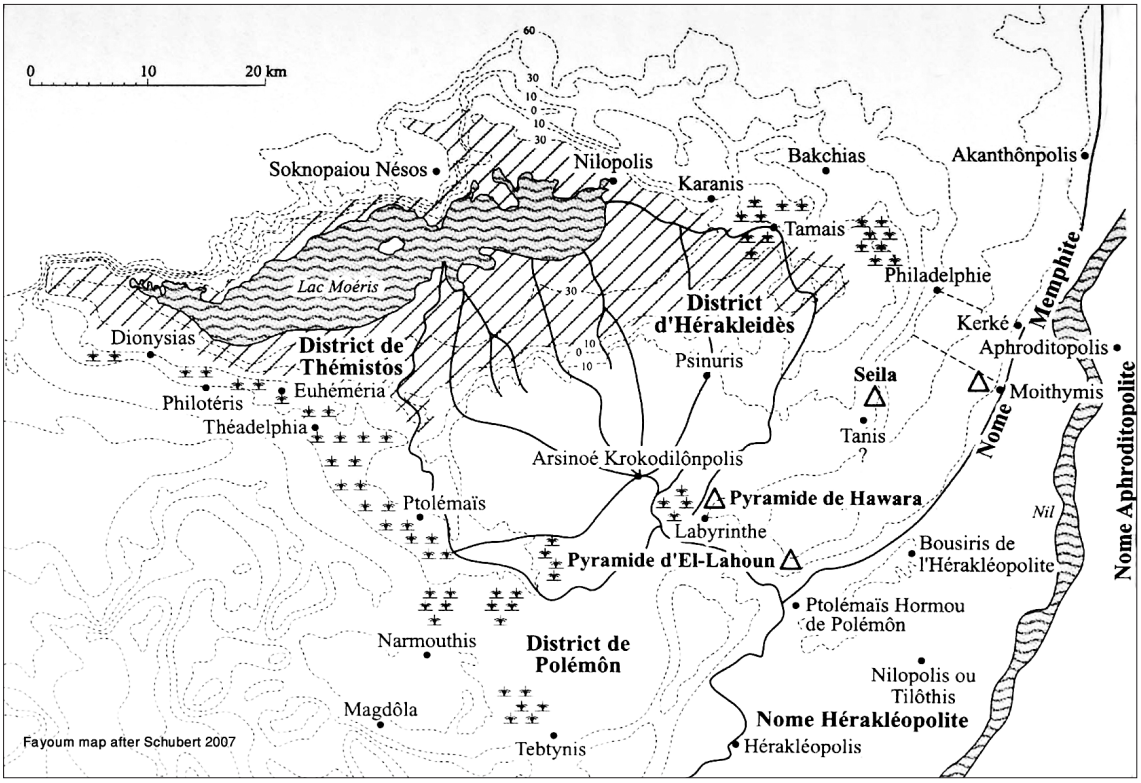


Fig. 1. Map of Fayoum archaeological site (after Shubert 2007).

modern road leading to Kerke (or Girza-Giza), an ancient port for Philadelphia.[2] The various phases of use from the early Ptolemaic period at the far southeast of the necropolis and its extension toward the late Ptolemaic and the early Roman phases of the necropolis were tested, excavated, identified, recorded, documented and studied.

"Er-Rubayyât" has been an important find spot for the so-called Fayum portraits or mummy portraits, since the acquisition in the late nineteenth century by Theodor Graf of a collection of portraits purported to have come from the site. T. Graf was a collector and a dealer, born in Engarda, Austria, in March 1840. Many important antiquities passed through his hands before he died in 1903 in Vienna.[3] In 1887 he purchased, through an agent in Cairo, a group of mummy portraits.[4] In the following years, a large number of them (almost ninety) were exhibited throughout Europe and the USA. According to him, the portraits as well as some mummy labels were recovered by bedouins and salt miners working at a place called Er-Rubayyât[5] in the northeastern part of the Fayum, a site later identified as the burial ground for the ancient inhabitants of the Ptolemaic

2 Gehad et al. 2020.

3 Bierbrier 1997.

4 Thompson 1982.

5 Er-Rubayyât later proved to be the necropolis of ancient Philadelphia, named after the nearest modern village to the site known as Er-Rubayyât, see also: Talbert et al. 2000, pl. 75 E2 (Philadelpheia); Baines, Málek, pp. 14, 27, 121 (Kom el-Kharaba el-Kebir/Philadelphia).

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and Roman village of Philadelphia.[6] Unfortunately, a large portion of Theodor Graf's collection was sold by his heirs in 1930 and the portraits are now widely distributed throughout the world.

1. DATING ISSUES

A catalogue of mummy portraits from Graf's collection was published by George Ebers in 1893. G. Ebers described the technique used for the paintings, provided information about the context they came from, and proposed dates for the portraits. Although most now agree that the introduction of mummy portraits dates to the first century CE, Ebers dated some of the Graf portraits to the Ptolemaic Period. One detail that influenced Ebers' earlier dating of some examples was that one of Graf's portraits had an inscription in Aramaic written in black ink on the back of the panel. Ebers believed that the paleography of the text, translated as the name, "Ba'al, helps", could date the panel to between 450 and 300 BCE. He nevertheless concluded that the wood and its inscription might have been much older than the portrait which he eventually dated to the second to 1st centuries BCE.[7]

Most of the portraits attributed to Er-Rubayyât/Philadelphia are painted in tempera on lime or cedar wood. Radiocarbon (C^{14}) dating of the wood used for the panels has also provided some discrepancies in dating the portraits. In the recent case of a "Mummy Portrait of a Man", originally from the collection of Theodor Graf and now at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection (inv. 79.AP.142), a date on the grounds of its style to 220–250 CE has been proposed. A radiocarbon date of the wood of the panel, however, places it in the second to first centuries BCE (196–55 BCE),[8] thus reviving the question of whether the wood would have been kept and used for almost two-hundred years or whether the criteria on which the stylistic dating is based ought to be re-examined.

It should be noted that the papyri of the Zenon archive, which dates to the late 3rd century BCE and comes from Philadelphia, describes the tradition of painting using the encaustic (wax-based) technique used to create many of the mummy portraits. The dating debate is further complicated when we take into consideration some information in the memoranda of the Zenon archives. Artists in some of these memoranda are identified as encaustic painters.[9] Other memoranda provide lists of painting materials as well as binders to be used by those artists including beeswax to be brought from Bosuris, nowadays Abusir el-Malaq in Beni Suef[10]. These details also might reopen the discussion concerning the dating of the mummy portraits and whether any of these portraits could be dated to the Ptolemaic period.

The finds of the Egyptian mission at the cemetery of Philadelphia (below) will help to resolve the issue of the dating of the portraits. These finds include objects found *in situ* with

6 https://www.trismegistos.org/place/1760, accessed 25 August 2021.
7 Ebers 1893, pp. 51–52.
8 http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/8643/attributed-to-the-brooklyn-painter-mummy-portrait-of-a-bearded-man-romano-egyptian-ad-220-250, accessed 25 August 2021.
9 See P.Cair. Zen. IV 59763.
10 https://www.trismegistos.org/place/471

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the portraits—pottery, papyri and a Hadrianic coin—that confirm the Roman dating of the portraits from Graf's collection and of other mummy portraits found earlier at the site in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

2. QUESTIONS SURROUNDING THE CONTEXTS OF THE FIND SITES OF THE MUMMY PORTRAITS

Daniel Marie Fouquet, a French physician who was born in March 1850 and died in Cairo in 1914[11], was hired by Gaston Maspero to investigate the royal mummies, as a result of which he published a series of notes. In March 1887, D.M. Fouquet took a trip to the Fayum site, from where he returned with a collection of mummy portraits and mummy labels.

As part of his work at Lahun and Gurob in 1889–1990, the British archaeologist William Matthew Flinders Petrie surface surveyed the Ptolemaic Fayum around the Arsinoite nome. He identified a hill north east of Fayum and far west to Gurob as he visited the site as Kom no. 3, the place from where the famous Vienna collection had been taken a few years before.[12]

W.M.F. Petrie located the cemetery behind the town on the hill near the site, a description that fits exactly with the topography of Philadelphia. He also highlighted the fact that the modern name for the cemetery, Er-Rubayyât, was that of the nearest modern village which had provided a convenient reference for the archaeological *kom*. W.M.F. Petrie estimated the width of the cemetery to be a quarter of a mile, implying that the width of the cemetery from the west (at the edge of the settlement) to the east was almost 400 m. It seems that, at that time, some of the subterranean built catacombs had been left exposed after robberies. W.M.F. Petrie described rock-cut chambers with *loculi*, one chamber having *loculi* with ridged roofs. He also described a circular catacomb with eight *loculi*.[13]

In 1889, the same year that the Graf collection was presented in Berlin, an Austrian engineer, Paul Stadler, visited the find site of the portraits. Aside from returning with a few more mummy portraits, P. Stadler stated that he had located the site of the "opened tombs from whence Herr Graf's portraits were brought"[14] and drew a map of the site (see Fig. 2), where he indicated the location of the discovery at the eastern side of where the desert edge started, near the modern village of Er-Rubayyât.[15] This is indeed where the necropolis is located, to the east of a massive ancient ruin. He described the tombs as being of "great variety and form", not rock-cut but rather built up of limestone without the use of cement or unfired bricks.[16] Stadler also drew sections and plans of what was visible of the tombs during his visit to the site.

11 Bierbrier 2012.
12 Petrie 1891, p. 31.
13 Petrie 1891, p. 31.
14 Ebers 1893, p. 16.
15 Gehad et al. 2020.
16 Ebers 1893, fn. to p. 16.

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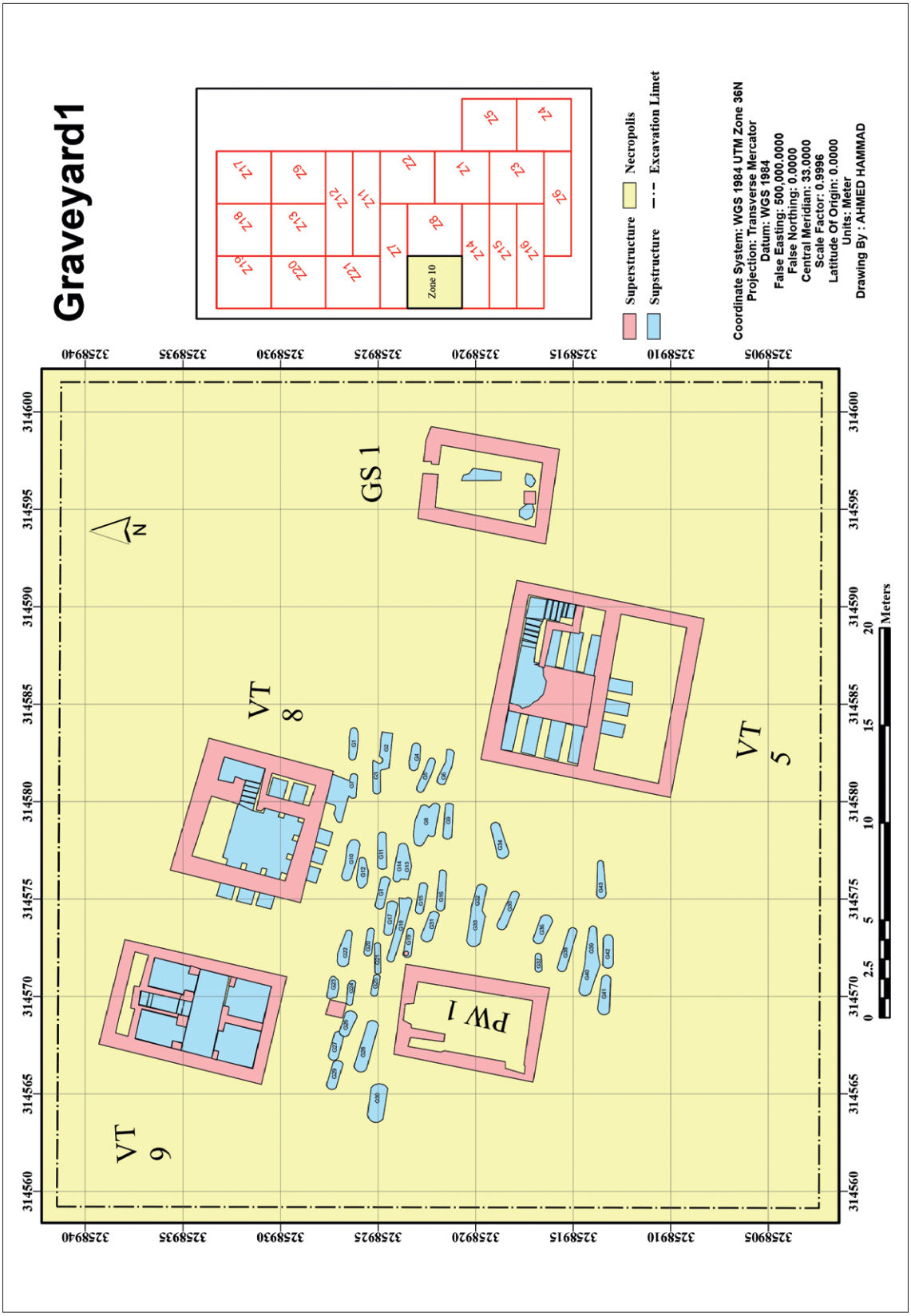


Fig. 2. Excavation map for excavated area in Zone ten to the west of the necropolis, indicating the excavated super and superstructures of the mud brick catacombs and the Grave yard one (by A. Hammad).

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Ebers remarked in response that these "mausolea" had no precedent in Egypt and that they most closely resembled rock-cut shelf tombs, such as one might find in Palestine or Phoenicia.[17]

The last recorded archaeological work at the necropolis of Philadelphia, prior to that of the Egyptian mission, was in the winter season of 1900–1901 conducted by Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt. They were inspired by the work of W.M.F. Petrie at Gurob, where important papyri were recovered from the cartonnage of mummies[18], as well as their own successful trials at Tebtunis (modern Umm el-Baragat). Beginning in December 1900, B.P. Grenfell and A.S. Hunt undertook a three-month excavation season at different Fayum sites.

They had begun their investigations six years earlier, and now with this season they reinvestigated some of those sites previously excavated, including Kom Aushim (Karanis) and the Ptolemaic necropolis at Dimeh or Soknopaiou Nesos to the north of the Fayum lake. Continuing to the south-west, they found crocodile mummies with some demotic papyrus rolls. From their excavation report,[19] we know that they arrived at the site they refer to as Er-Rubayyât for the second time to start their excavation on the 14th of February 1901,[20] searching in vain for cartonnage that might yield papyri. On walking around the site, they too were able to identify both the Ptolemaic and Roman necropolis, the Ptolemaic necropolis lying to the east of the Roman one. B.P. Grenfell and A.S. Hunt then transferred their work to a site known as Tanis (modern Menshenshah), located to the south, where they successfully discovered cartonnage mummies made with papyri. They then returned to Er-Rubayyât where they located some mummy portraits and confirmed the inextricable relationship between the cemetery, commonly referred to as Er-Rubayyât, and the town of Philadelphia, both of which should henceforth simply be referred to generally as Philadelphia.[21]

Records in the EES archive helped Morris Bierbrier to identify two portraits, found together in the same tomb, from Grenfell and Hunt's season at "Er-Rubayyât". One mummy portrait (Hunt no. 106), catalogued with other finds from the season of 1900–1901, can be identified as Edinburgh inv. 70 (Parlasca no. 619).[22] Another is the mummy portrait at the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, inv. 1902.4 (Parlasca no. 621). Both appear in the EES archive from the excavations of B.P. Grenfell and A.S. Hunt at "Er-Rubayyât", having the excavation numbers R158 and R157[23] in their report. A third portrait from the same season, now in Dublin (inv. E72:79), is poorly preserved.[24] The mummy portrait finds of B.P. Grenfell and A.S. Hunt are of great importance because they provide a preliminary typology and the state of art of these mummy portraits (being the only portraits from Philadelphia or "Er-Rubayyât" proven to be from there), although there was no clear record or documentation about the exact shape of the hypogea or the tomb in which these portraits were found by them.

17 Ebers 1893, pp. 18–19.
18 Petrie 1891, p. 28.
19 Grenfell et al. 1901.
20 Grenfell 1900.
21 Davoli 1997.
22 Bierbrier 1997, p. 16.
23 Bierbrier 1997, p. 17.
24 Bierbrier 1997, p. 17.

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The work of the Egyptian mission at the cemetery of Philadelphia has provided an archeological record of the tombs and documented the physical contexts of the finds of mummy portraits at the site. In addition the work of the mission produced information about the architectural types of the tombs where these portraits were found.

3. THE CONTEXT OF THE RECENTLY DISCOVERED MUMMY PORTRAITS FROM PHILADELPHIA

Work by the Egyptian mission at the ancient Philadelphia necropolis began with an archaeological survey. During excavations that were conducted over six seasons at the site, the vast space of the necropolis was subdivided into numbered zones of interest with well-known UTM coordinates and, by turn, these zones were subdivided into alphabetically-named excavation areas. In summary, both the northern and the southern sectors of the necropolis (that stretches from north to south to the east of the settlement) were divided into twenty-one zones.

As a result of excavating these areas, the team was able to produce a classification and typology of the excavated and recorded tombs. The burials and tombs of Philadelphia could be generally described as: a) graves with shallow depth for one or two burials either with wooden or pottery coffins; b) burial shafts leading to one or more burial chambers; c) rock-cut, staircase tombs leading to a burial chamber or loculi; or d) mudbrick or masonry stone-built, vaulted tombs or catacombs with *loculi*.

The early Ptolemaic phase of the necropolis is located at the far east and southeast of the necropolis. As one moves west and nearer to the settlement, the phasing tends to go towards the late Ptolemaic and early Roman period.

The first mummy portrait fragment (object number 2019-019) found by the Egyptian mission was discovered in 2019, while excavating in one of the squares in the masonry-built catacomb number Vt3. Most of the pottery that was found inside this catacomb was late Ptolemaic, indicating either a secondary deposit of the fragment or more probably the continuity of the use of the same catacomb into the early Roman period.

In March 2020, during the fifth season, excavations resulted in the uncovering of a mudbrick-built catacomb with ten *loculi* oriented toward the south, west and east walls of the barrel-vaulted space. The catacomb was given the designation Vt5. It was excavated to the floor level (Fig. 3). It could be described as a mud brick catacomb, with an entrance with flanked staircase running from the south east corner and sloping westwards from the northeast corner towards the substructure of the catacomb. The lower part is a vaulted room covered with a barrel vault and contains ten *loculi*, four *loculi* to the west, three to the south and three to the east. During cleaning of this mudbrick catacomb, fragments of mummy portraits (object numbers 2020-244-19 and 2020-246-01) were found. The fragments were in poor condition. Nevertheless, these were the first mummy portrait fragments to be found, presumably in—or close to—their original context, and that could enlighten for us the information about the specific typology of the tombs where these portraits came from. For this reason, a sixth season was planned to enlarge the area of the excavation toward the west and the north in order to

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Fig. 3. 3D model of the mudbrick catacomb Vt 5 (by B. Gehad).

establish the extent of this area, and to be able to have a more comprehensive view of this area with more opportunities for definitive dating.

Within this area that was excavated in the sixth season (see Fig. 4) a graveyard was found to the west of catacomb Vt5 housing forty-one graves that seem to represent a lower status burial, each containing a wrapped mummy[25]. In addition to this, two more catacombs (Vt8 and Vt9) were found to the north and to the northwest of Vt5. Among the objects from this gravesite was a coin minted at Alexandria (see Fig. 5), dating to the reign of the Roman emperor Hadrian (117–138 CE), depicting Amon Zeus on the recto and Isis breastfeeding Harpocrates on its verso. That coin could provide a *terminus post quem* for the gravesite. Among the intentional and non-intentional reasons for the coin's inclusion at the gravesite, one might consider that the coin was included for the sake of the image of *Isis lactans* on its verso side. A temple to Isis was a central part of religious life at Philadelphia and numerous young boys (and girls) depicted in mummy portraits from Er-Rubayyât wear gold amulets of Isis with her child that may reflect their dedication to the local cult of the goddess[26]. Amphorae and a papyrus fragment[27] of a receipt for agricultural seeds were also found, dated to the mid-2nd century CE).

Directly to the north of this graveyard and adjacent to it, the mudbrick-built, vaulted tomb Vt9 consists of a chamber cut through the living rock that was lined with a vaulted mudbrick tomb. The tomb measures almost 6 m from north to south and 6 m from east to west. The mudbrick walls were constructed of bricks that were, 25 cm × 11 cm × 7 cm. A staircase runs from the central part of the northern wall leading to an east-west corridor

25 Some of these graves where empty, while others contain different numbers of wrapped mummies, in some cases they could reach up to four mummies in one grave.

26 Trouchaud 2013, p. 4

27 The papyrus could be dates from the name of the emperor to Hadrian or Antoninus Pius.

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Fig. 4. Panorama view for the Grave yard one, catacombs number Vt5, Vt8 and Vt 9 (by M. Samah).



Fig. 5. Bronze coin from Hadrian period found at the adjacent wall between Vt9 and the GY (by M. Samah).

that splits the building into two halves: the northern part of the building and southern part of the building (Fig. 6). In each of these sectors two large *loculi* with barrel vaults were built.

Although it was previously plundered, the systematic excavation, sieving of the debris and recording enabled us to identify the number of individuals buried inside this catacomb: they were at least eleven individuals, seven of them being females, two males and two juveniles. The most significant find was the mummy portrait of a young woman (object excavation registration no. 20-2-Vt9-A/m-1) found on the floor of the corridor in front of *loculus* number 4 (Fig. 7). Below the portrait were found remains of the portrait owner's skull and part of the mummy wrapped in rhombic style wrapping. It is worth noting from the skull study that the portrait may represent the lady at the age of death.

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Fig. 6. Mudbrick catacomb number Vt 9 after excavation (by B.Gehad).



Fig. 7. The complete mummy portrait (number 20-2-Vt9-A/m-1) *in situ* at the moment of excavation at catacomb Vt 9 (by M. Samah).

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The long history of pillaging at the site and the fact that the mummy portraits found by the Egyptian team are fragmentary—even the fully preserved portrait must have originally belonged to a larger shroud—point to the difficulty of establishing a date and/or precise provenience for the portraits from the cemetery of Philadelphia. Nevertheless, as the first archaeological mission to the site since the early-20th century, the measured work of the Egyptian mission has presented new materials and evidence to contribute toward the dating and descriptions of the contextual burial sites for the famed portraits from Er-Rubayyât. Moreover, features of the newly discovered mummy portraits can also be used to build a database of criteria that can be used to potentially provide a provenience for portraits without find sites. It is anticipated that future seasons will reveal further evidence contributing to even more conclusive results.

4. DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PORTRAIT FINDS

4.1. Mummy portrait no. 20-2-Vt9-A/m-1[28] [FIGS 8, 9]

Object description: Portrait of a girl as a young woman.
Condition: Found in three pieces that can be assembled into a complete portrait.
Size: 26 cm H × 14 cm W × 2 mm thickness.
Provenience: mudbrick, vaulted catacomb tomb no. Vt9 in zone 10, area H.
Stylistic Dating: Late 2nd century CE
Materials: Tempera over a thin gesso layer that was laid over linen textile.

The painted, stuccoed linen ground of this portrait mimics the shape of a wooden, panel portrait. The subject of the painting is a young female, whose head, upper torso and hands are painted on a grey background. Two fragments of skull, found beneath the portrait, were studied and confirmed to be those of a young adult female between seventeen and twenty-two years of age, which reflects a mimetic resemblance between the painted portrait and the deceased.

The young girl projects a cheerful expression, her large, round, dark eyes look directly forward to engage the viewer. Her upper lip is created by a thin undulating line with an abrupt, inverted curve at each outer corner, giving the impression of the fold of flesh created by a smile while her full, lower lip is represented by an elongated oval, tilting upwards at each end. The upper part of her face is dominated by her large eyes that are rimmed beneath with dark lines (kohl?), fringed lashes, creased eyelids and feathered, gull-wing eyebrows that almost meet at the bridge of her nose. The use of pink with white highlights illuminates her flesh and tones of brown create modelling. Her eyes and forehead take up about 1/3 of the area of her face, while her other features fill the remaining space. Her nose is neither thin nor wide and, because her head is turned slightly to her left, shows more of her proper right nostril. A deft brown line delineates the outline of her face and a short brown upward-curving line just within the lower curve of the facial outline designates her full chin which is decidedly

28 Registered in Kom Oushim Magazine as object number 55.

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Fig. 8. The portrait number 20-2-Vt9-A/m-1 = inv. 55.

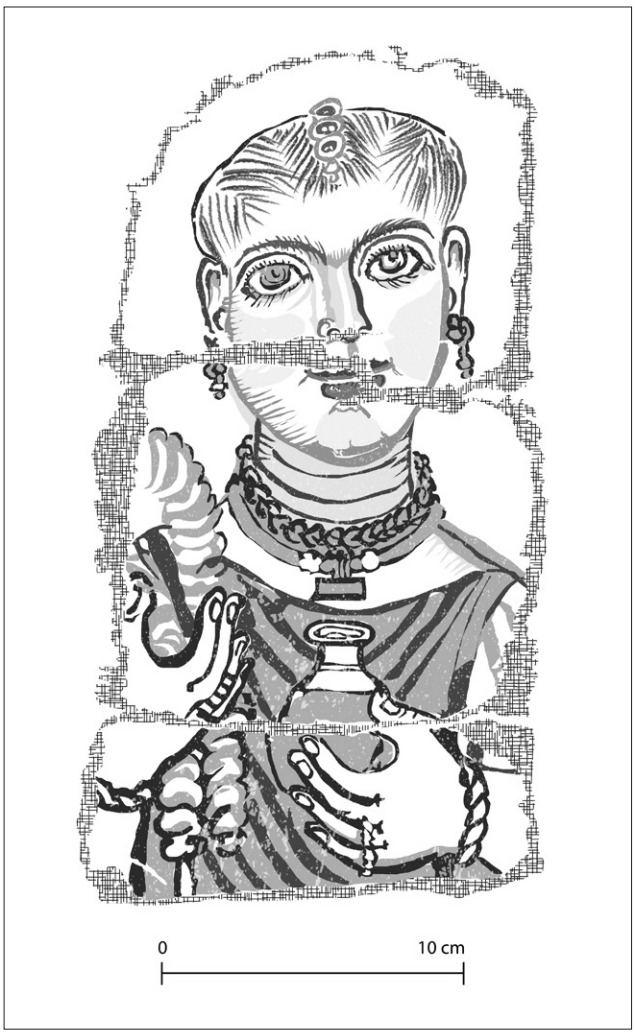


Fig. 9. Illustration of the mummy portrait number 20-2-Vt9-A/m-1 (by A. Abd el-Halim).

dimpled. Two parallel dark lines across the width of her neck indicate the creases commonly known as the "rings of Venus".

These features: wide, round eyes, full lower lip, somewhat chubby face and especially the pronounced, cleft chin can be seen in other portraits attributed to Philadelphia or identified as portraits from Er-Rubayyât. Two male portraits both painted on linen provide parallels: Melbourne inv. D 38/1970 (Parlasca IV/728), a portrait from the second Graf collection, and the second one in Athens, National Museum inv. ANE 1631 (Parlasca II/418) of unknown provenience (surely also Philadelphia). Both are dated, however, to the late 4th century CE by Klaus Parlasca and Hans G. Frenz who also describe the subjects as female, but both are surely young boys. A third parallel to the newly discovered portrait is in Uppsala, inv. B 514 (Parlasca II/661) also dated by K. Parlasca quite late (to the third-quarter of the fourth century). Another parallel portrait, dated to the mid-fourth century CE, can be found at the British Museum, EA 6339 (Parlasca II/629). This example is also painted on stuccoed linen. Originally part of the second Graf collection, it was given to the museum by Sir Robert Mond

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in 1931.[29] Of all the mummy portraits, however, the ones that bear the closest resemblance in terms of the treatment of the eyes and face are Parlasca's II/618-621, all listed as coming from "Er-Rubayyât" (either from the collection of T. Graf, D.M. Fouquet or the two well-preserved portraits found by B.P. Grenfell and A.S. Hunt, see above). Although K. Parlasca also dated these portraits to the end of the fourth century, the portraits of the young boys and one woman were probably all painted by the so-called Brooklyn Painter (after Brooklyn Museum 41.848; Parlasca II/618) whose *flourit* is now recognized to be the late Antonine or Severan period (late second to early 3rd centuries CE).[30]

Returning to the newly discovered portrait, we can examine the hairstyle for clues to its date. The young woman's hair is swept back from her forehead and separated into three segments by two distinct side parts. Her hair appears to have a light brown color overall, but individual strands are indicated with dark black lines that are arranged at each side, as if to converge in tight-fitting, overlapping braids. This Hellenistic style is referred to as the *melonenfrisur* because the severely drawn divisions of hair resemble the striations of the surface of a melon; the hair is finished in a bun at the back of the head. The central section of the woman's hair is pulled back tightly and held in position with a jeweled barrette (or "hair pendant") composed of six oval and square parts representing inlaid agate and carnelian stones. Two portraits from the Graf collection provide parallels for the use of such a hair ornament: one of gold in the same position as on this portrait can be seen on Berlin Ant. inv. 31161/32 (Parlasca II/305), dated to the mid-2nd century, and another on a complete portrait mummy, from Philadelphia (Berlin Ant. inv. 31161.42; Parlasca II/646), dated by K. Parlasca to the mid-4th century. A barrette can also be seen on a portrait from Hawara, dated to the late Hadrianic era (Petrie Museum, inv. UC 36215, Parlasca IV/704). It has recently been recognized, however, that the dating of mummy portraits by women's hairstyles is not as definitive as was once thought (among other difficulties is the comparison of two-dimensional and three-dimensional images). Moreover, the hairstyle depicted in this portrait might have a wide range of popularity with a number of variants. Nevertheless, the closest comparison to this hairstyle would be the *melonenfrisur* of the young Empress Fulvia Plautilla, dated to the late second to the beginning of the 3rd century CE.

In addition to the hairpin, the jewelry includes a pair of drop earrings: a small gold hoop at the lobe from which drops a vertical gold bar with a small white bead (pearl?) and a gold bead at the bottom; a perfect match to these earrings can be seen on the mummy portrait of a woman in the collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts, Inv. 25.2 (Parlasca I/226), dated to between 130 and 160 CE. Of the woman's two necklaces, both of which were popular styles among the portraits of youthful boys and girls, the upper is a thick, gold chain braided in a horizontally-oriented chevron (wheat pattern) design with a small, lunula (crescent-shaped) drop pendant. The lower necklace could be leather or braided cloth with a gold amulet case suspended from a loop with a whitish bead at each side of the loop. She wears a tubular, spiral gold bracelet on each wrist and a double ring of gold across the pinky and third finger of her proper left hand, it seems that the painter wanted also to indicate another ring on the ring finger of her proper right hand.

29 Walker, Bierbrier 1997, pp. 87–88.
30 Walker, Bierbrier 1997, p. 3.

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Clasped within her proper right hand is a floral wreath or garland of variegated red and pink rose(?) petals. It is worth noting that similar garlands made with real botanical materials were found associated within the same feature where the portrait was found in vaulted tomb Vt9 (Fig. 10), as well as a small jewelry made of ten rounded stones bound together with linen fiber from most probably similar to the hoop earrings of women at this period (Fig. 11). In her left hand, she holds a miniature flask, most probably an *unguentarium* or a bottle of scented oils, or possibly wine, as the liquid inside is represented as purple in color. Examples of such flasks in pottery as well as in glass were found in various features and *loculi* associated with burials throughout the recently excavated areas.

Although bright red is the most popular color for the tunics of women depicted in the mummy portraits, this young woman is dressed in a somewhat drab garment of reddish-brown. The (fringed?) neckline and folds of the tunic are indicated with darker shades of reddish-brown and olive brown highlights. A pseudo-clavus is indicated as a black, thick stripe descending from her proper left shoulder.

The date of the hairstyle, the date of the earrings and the style of the portrait suggest a date in the mid to late 2nd century CE for this portrait.



Fig. 10. Floral garlands made with real botanical materials found associated with the portrait number 20-2-Vt9-A/m-1 (by M. Samah).



Fig. 11. Small jewelry made of ten rounded stones bound together with linen fiber found associated with the mummy portrait 20-2-Vt9-A/m-1 (by M. Samah).

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4.2. Mummy portrait no. 2019-019 [FIGS 12, 13]

Object description: Small fragment of mummy portrait depicting the proper left eye.
Condition: Paint is flaked and worn. Proper right and left edges are straight; top and bottom edges are jagged and at a diagonal downward slope from left to right.
Size: 5 cm H × 3 cm W × 2 mm thickness.
Provenience: Masonry built catacomb number Vt3.
Stylistic Dating: mid to late 2nd century CE (Hadrianic to early Antonine).
Materials: Tempera over thin gesso layer that was laid over wood.

This fragment preserves the proper left eye, eyebrow and proper left line of the side of the nose of a gender non-descript, human face (possibly female). The colors used are limited to tan, brown, black and white. The flesh is a dark tan and all other features are painted in black, white and brown. The eyebrow is full and feathered, and a thick, dark line from the inner corner of the brow extends downward at a right angle to form the left profile of the nose (cf. Berlin inv. 13277; Parlasca, no. 286), a technique not often seen in mummy portraits which tends to render the nose naturalistically. The large, wide eye is outlined in black with thin, distinct and sparse lines indicating lashes. A black shadow under the left eye could represent kohl. A thin, black, curved line between the upper outline of the eye and the brow indicates the crease of the eyelid. The pupil is black, the iris is brown and the sclera is bright white. A short, greyish horizontal line at the top of the fragment that runs from the left edge to mid-point of the width might possibly indicate a forehead crease. The painting is characterized overall by the bold use of line.

4.3. Mummy portrait no. 2020-246-01 [FIGS 14, 15]

Object description: Fragment of a mummy portrait of a young woman.
Size: 13 cm H × 6 cm W × 7 mm D.
Provenience: Mud brick vaulted tomb catacomb number Vt5.
Condition: Paint is flaked and worn with wood grain exposed. Proper right edge is straight, all other edges are broken and jagged.
Stylistic Dating: mid to late 2nd century.
Materials: Tempera over thin gesso layer that was laid over wood.

This fragmentary portrait presents enough of the face to suggest that it was once one of the masterpieces of this genre. Although only the proper left eye is fully preserved, it is the eyes, with their elongated form and dark-rimmed lower lids that lend a sense of elegance and mystery to the face. The soulful gaze is exaggerated by the positioning of the iris and pupil at the top of the sclera just under the hooded, upper lid, and by enlarging the pupil, so that it almost fills the iris. The brows that curve gently upward from the inner corner of the eyes do not dominate the face but gracefully frame the eyes. Most of the color of the flesh is lost and therefore the white undercoating of gesso lends a ghostly pall to the skin and eliminates any trace of what would perhaps have been a delicately modelled, aquiline nose. At the top of the panel, above a high forehead, is a patch of dark hair (perhaps parted in the center).

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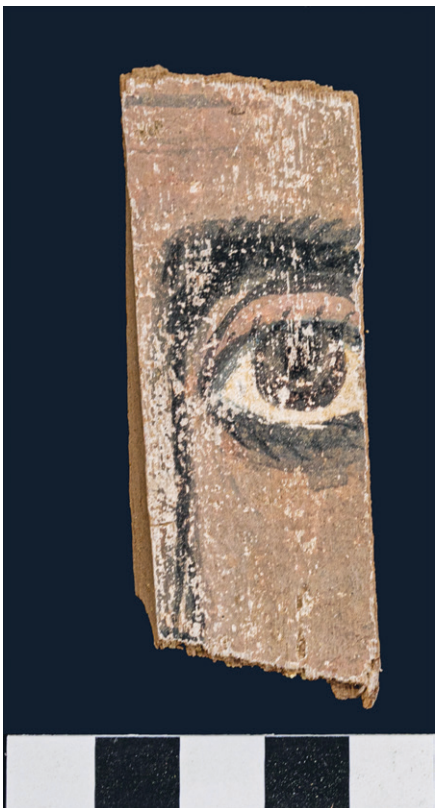


Fig. 12. The portrait fragment number 2019-019 = inv. 79.

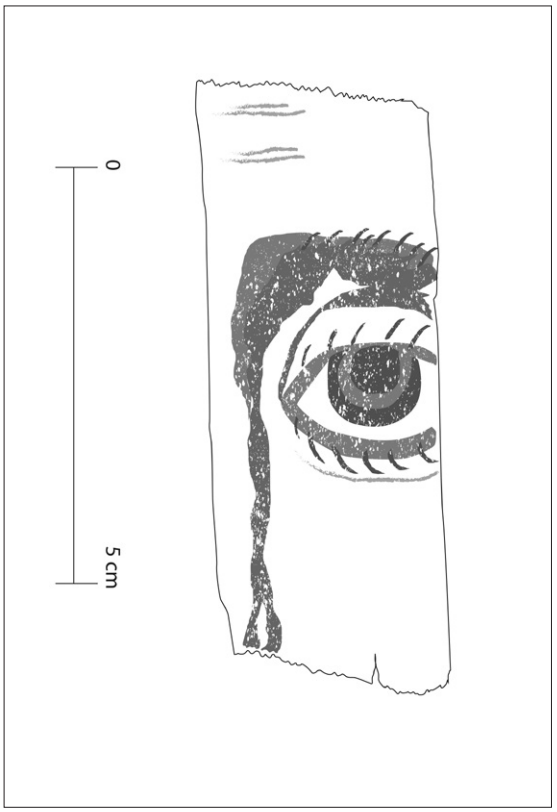


Fig. 13. Illustration of the mummy portrait fragment number 2019-019 = inv. 9 (by A. Abd el-Halim).



Fig. 14. Part of portrait number 2020-246-01 (by B. Gehad).



Fig. 15. Illustration of the mummy portrait number 2020-246-01 (by A. Abd el-Halim).

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4.4. Mummy portrait no. 2020-244-019 [FIGS 16, 17]

Object description: Fragment of a mummy portrait of a youth.
Size: 27 cm H × 10 cm W × 6 mm thickness.
Provenience: Mud brick vaulted tomb catacomb number Vt5.
Condition: Paint is flaked and worn with knotty wood grain exposed. Proper right edge is broken along a diagonal line sloping gently inward from bottom to top. Large loss of wood along bottom 2/3 of proper left side of panel with small section of straight edge preserved along proper left side that extends across from area that is level with the forehead to just across from center of proper right ear. This section of the left side then slopes diagonally inward toward top of portrait (with a small, semi-circular loss of wood in this section). This diagonally angled cut at each upper corner of the panel is typical of painted wood portrait panels usually associated with Hawara or Er-Rubayyât. The small, preserved sections of the top and bottom edges were cut straight across.
Stylistic Dating: mid to late 2nd century.
Materials: Tempera over a thin gesso layer that was laid over a thick-grained and knotty wood panel.

A generous section of the central portion of this painted panel is preserved and therefore presents the full-length of the image which depicts the face and upper torso of a youth, whose head is turned slightly to the proper right. Not enough of the paint survives, however, to definitively determine the sex of the individual but it is probably male judging from the extremely short hair and the braided black cord necklace usually worn by young boys. Nevertheless, the hair might have been pulled tightly backward and the wide eyes with spiky-fringed lids (see 20-2-Vt9-A/m-1) could indicate a female (see Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, E5.1981; Parlasca no. 717 and Private collection, Parlasca no. 691), as young women were also known to have worn dark cord necklaces. The paint unfortunately is not preserved well enough to determine what sort and what color of garment the youth is wearing. Young males wore white tunics, whereas young girls could wear white tunics but more commonly wore colored ones. The lower part of the proper left ear is also lost due to the break in the wood and therefore it cannot be determined if the subject wore earrings.

What is preserved of the badly eroded paint allows us to see the youth's short dark hair above a high forehead and also visible just in front of the proper left ear (the right ear is not preserved). The rather thin, dark brows curve gently upward to the outer corners of the eyes and then slope downward (only the edge of the outer corner of the proper right eye and brow are missing). The eyes are framed at both top and bottom lids with dark lashes, each one created by a single diagonal stroke of the brush. The upper lids are indicated with a thick, black line, but there is no shadow line along the lower lids. The roundness of the eyes is exaggerated by the small, dark pupil within an overly large dark iris positioned so that the sclera only barely shows at the bottom and sides of the eyes. The eyes taper towards the outer corners. The surface where the nose and lips would be is eroded, but some flakes of a darker red color on the pinkish flesh where the mouth should be hint at the lips. Beneath the lost lower face and neck area, there is a section of preserved paint depicting the lower neck and upper thorax and a line of black braided cording typical of necklaces on which were hung gold amulets or amulet cases (see above, no. 20-2-Vt9-A/m-1).

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Fig. 16. Part of portrait number 2020-244-019 (by M. Samah).



Fig. 17. Illustration of the mummy portrait number 2020-244-019 (by A. Abd el-Halim).

CONCLUSION

The recent Egyptian excavations at the necropolis of ancient Philadelphia have successfully identified various phases of the necropolis including both the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. Within the last season of excavation, the context of what is presumed to be the precise find spots of Theodor Graf's portrait collection was also identified. The area contains numerous mudbrick-built catacombs with barrel vaults and round-topped *loculi*. In and near these *loculi* were found fragments of mummy portraits and one complete portrait on stuccoed linen. This striking portrait can be dated not only from the artistic point of view, the jewelry and hair style depicted, and by comparison with other portraits dated to the same period, but also from the feature of its excavated context that could be objectively dated by the discovery of a Roman coin from the Hadrianic period (117–138 CE) to after the reign of Hadrian. This portrait, archeologically excavated from the necropolis of Philadelphia, can now be used for the re-contextualization of other portraits said to be from Philadelphia or the so-called Er-Rubayyât portraits.

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Finally, the discovery by the Egyptian team of this new portrait is not only important in its own right, but also for what its archeological context provides for the other mummy portraits from the Roman part of the necropolis, and in particular for the context and dating of those mummy portraits purported to have come from the Er-Rubayyât cemetery of ancient Philadelphia.

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