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THEBES: ORIGINS OF A RITUAL LANDSCAPE

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Ancient Thebes, with its dozens of temples and several necropoleis, is undoubtedly one of the most important sacred areas of ancient Egypt. Primarily during the New Kingdom, a ritual landscape developed with a complex architectural and ritual structure. A multitude of cult buildings were linked together theologically in manifold ways. Festival processions regularly underscored the underlying religious ideas and presented them to a broader public.

The term “ritual landscape” — in German, *Kultlandschaft* — was originally coined to describe clusters of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age monuments in southern England, in particular the ceremonial monuments around Stonehenge and Avebury (Bradley 2001).¹ Generally, it designates a landscape, the physiognomy and function of which are determined by religiously motivated activities (Brunotte 2002), a phenomenon that becomes manifest especially in accumulations of cult sites. With regard to ancient Egypt, particular stress may be laid upon the linking up of monuments into a kind of ritual network.

Some reflections on a reconstruction of the origins and early development of the Theban ritual landscape are presented in the following contribution. I concentrate on the analysis and the interpretation of the archaeological remains of the landscape, that is, the anthropogenic aspects, whereas the natural components — for example, the extent to which natural factors contributed to the location of a sacred site — are not dealt with.²

The starting point must be the earliest building history of the Karnak temple, which can be traced back to the first half of the Eleventh Dynasty. A statue of Niuserra, which Legrain found in the cachette at Karnak in 1904 (Bothmer 1974),³ is the only indirect clue to the existence of a temple in the area of Karnak dating from the Old Kingdom. But the original location of the statue cannot be verified, nor does one know to which god the temple in which it was placed was dedicated. Bothmer assumed that the statue had belonged to an unknown temple of Amun from the Old Kingdom (Bothmer 1974, 169–70), but this suggestion has not yet been confirmed.⁴ The gods mentioned in texts from the Theban area dating to the late Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period rather suggest that a temple existed for Montu, the foremost deity of the Theban nome at that time (Werner 1985, chapters 1 and 2; Saleh 1977, 24 [TT 186, Ihy]; Clère and Vandier 1948; and Schenkel 1965). However, no such installation for Montu dating to the Old Kingdom or the First Intermediate Period has yet been found in the area of Karnak (Werner, op. cit.).

The oldest reference to a temple of Amun comes from the fragmentary stela of an *jmj-rꜥ ḥm-ntr* named *Rḥwj* (fig. 2.1). Petrie found the object in tomb B 33 in the Antef cemetery in western Thebes (Petrie 1909, 17, pl. X).⁵ The relevant passage of the text reads as follows:

jw wdꜥ.n(=j) pr Jmn rnp.wt ꜥsn.t (n.t) ḥtm rḥs r dj.t ꜥ m wp.t-rꜥ nb n wdḥwꜥw r mnj m wp-rnp.t nb

I supplied the house of Amun (in) years of scarcity of shutting off the slaughter, in order to provide the altar tables at each opening of the month and to endow (them) at each opening of the year.

¹ During recent years this term, or variations of it, became widely popular in describing religious phenomena around the world; see, for example, Steinsapir 1998 on ritual space and its relationship to the landscape in Roman Syria; Bauer 1998 on the sacred landscape of the Inca; Smith and Brookes 2001 with contributions by several authors related to landscape and ritual space in different cultures; and Gutschow 2003 with papers dealing with various aspects of the sacredness of Himalayan landscapes. In Egyptological literature the term has played no significant role until now.

² As a basic reference to issues of landscape, places, and monuments, see Tilley 1994. I owe this reference to Kees van der Spek, Australian National University.

³ The upper part of the statue is now kept in New York at the Rochester Museum, no. 42.54; the lower part is in the Cairo Museum, CG 42003.

⁴ For the much-disputed question of the existence of a temple of Amun at Karnak as early as the Old Kingdom, see the opposing opinions of Daumas 1967 and Wildung 1969, as well as Barguet 1962, 2–3.

⁵ Today it is part of the collection of the Manchester Museum, no. 5052. See also Clère and Vandier 1948, § 7, and Schenkel 1965, no. 18.

There is no date preserved in the text, however the archaeological context, the phraseology, and paleography leave no doubt about its Eleventh Dynasty origin, in all probability before the reign of Mentuhotep II. In particular, the detailed offering formula, *ḥtp dj njswt ḥtp (dj n) Jnpw*, points to an date early in the Eleventh Dynasty.⁶ Thus this text proves that a temple of Amun existed in Thebes from the reign of Mentuhotep II, at the latest.

The god Amun is mentioned together with Montu, Ra, and Hathor in a relief fragment which is kept in the Museo Egizio in Turin (Vandier 1964).⁷ Its exact origin is not known. It may have belonged to the decoration of a temple in the Theban area, but could also have been part of a tomb.⁸ The text emphasizes the legitimation of the ruling king by his actions in favor of the above-mentioned gods. Based on the paleography of the inscription, Schenkel proposes a date in the early Eleventh Dynasty, that is, during the reign of Antef I or Antef II (Schenkel 1978, 46–47 [doc. 14]). Recently, Ludwig Morenz has suggested a slightly later date for the relief fragment, during the time of Antef II or Antef III (Morenz 2003, 113). More evidence for the god Amun dated to the reign of Antef III can be found on a stela from Thebes, on which the man's name *Jmn-m-ḥꜣ.t* appears (Clère and Vandier 1948, § 22; Schenkel 1965, no. 77).⁹

The oldest architectural fragment from the Karnak temple is an eight-sided sandstone column of Antef II (fig. 2.2) (Zimmer 1987). It was found in 1985 in a reused context in the eastern area of the so-called Couloir de la Jeunesse, resting on the lowest course of a mudbrick wall which dates to before the New Kingdom, scarcely 1 m below the contemporary floor level. It is preserved up to a height of 1.48 m, with the lower part broken away. The diameter of the shaft at the top is 0.30 m, gradually increasing toward the bottom. One of the eight facets of the column is decorated with a vertical line of text, inscribed in a long cartouche and crowned with a *šn*-ring:

Jmn-R^c nb p.t šhm tꜣ jwn Wꜣs.t-nḥt ḥsj(=f) mrj=f Ḥrw njswt-bjt sꜣ R^c Jnj-jtj=f^c ꜣ nḥt msj Nfrw jrj.n=f m mn-w=f n ntr pn [...]

(Monument in favor of)¹⁰ Amun-Ra, lord of heaven, (by) the mighty of the land, pillar of Victorious Thebes,¹¹ (his) praised one, his beloved one, the (protecting) Horus,¹² king of Upper and Lower Egypt, son of Ra Antef the great one, the victorious one, born of *Nfrw*, which he made as his monument on behalf of this god [...]

Thus this text informs us that Antef II erected a building for Amun-Ra,¹³ which certainly was located not far from the spot where the column was found. Similar to the situation in the Satet temple at Elephantine, where fragments of several almost identical columns of Antef II and Antef III have been found (Kaiser et al. 1993, 145–52, pls. 28–29), the column from Karnak was probably part of a portico in front of a modest temple structure.

No finds from the reign of Antef III are known from Karnak.

Only a few objects from Karnak can be assigned to Nebhepetra Mentuhotep II. In no instance does the provenance provide any information about the original placing:

- A granite offering table (Habachi 1963, 32–33, fig. 12),¹⁴ on which Mentuhotep II is described as “beloved of the lord of Abydos,” an epithet that may refer to Khentiamentiu, who is also mentioned in the decoration of the *kꜣ*-chapel of Mentuhotep II at Abydos. The object was found at Karnak, but the exact findspot is unknown.
- A large offering table of red granite, 4.50 m broad × 1.50 m wide × 0.75 m high (Habachi 1963, 33–35, fig. 13, pl. 9).¹⁵ Habachi found many fragments of this object in the magazine south of the first court at Karnak and proposed a reconstruction that shows four basins with inscriptions situated between them and along the sides of the object itself. On the vertical sides of the table, Nile

⁶ Schenkel (1965, 29) categorized this under his “texts without a dynasty reference after Dynasty 6” and noted that it is probably the oldest text from Thebes in this category. A few years later he proposed a date either in the time of Antef III or of Mentuhotep II (Schenkel 1974, 281). Barguet (1962, 2) thought the stela originated before the reign of Antef II.

⁷ Turin Suppl. 1310. See also Franke 1990, 126–27, and Morenz 2003, 112–14.

⁸ Morenz (2003, 114) proposes an origin from a temple at Karnak, but this remains most doubtful.

⁹ New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 14.2.6.

¹⁰ For the understanding of the dedication formula as a perfective relative form of the verb *jrj* referring to the object which bears the text, see Grallert 2001, especially pp. 34–42 and 240–41 (inscription of Antef II from Karnak).

¹¹ See Franke 1990, 124–25, and Darnell 1995, 62 n. 82.

¹² For the reading of the sign “falcon with spread wings and *šn*-ring” as “protecting Horus,” see Ullmann 2005, 166–72.

¹³ Morenz (2003, 114–17) proposes to read “(Montu-)Ra, the secret one” instead of “Amun-Ra” in the beginning of the text, but his argumentation is far from convincing; for a detailed rejection, see Ullmann 2005.

¹⁴ Cairo Museum, CG 23007.

¹⁵ The base was reinscribed as a stela in the time of Ramesses II.

gods and representatives of several nomes are depicted. The royal titulary dates this offering table to the third part of the reign of Mentuhotep II; here the king is beloved of “all the gods of Thebes.”

- A lintel of red granite, 2.29 m broad × 1.08 m high × 0.39 m deep (Habachi 1963, 35–26, fig. 14, pl. 10a).¹⁶ It was found built into a wall of reused blocks in the northeastern part of the Amun temple at Karnak, between the east gate of the temenos wall and the eastern temple of Ramesses II (PM 2², 209). The lintel shows Mentuhotep II sitting on a throne between Seth and Nekhbet on one side and Horus and Wadjet on the other. In combination with the depiction of the *sm3-t3wj* emblem on the side of the throne, the scene provides a clear reference to the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt. The king is identified by his prenomen in its latest form, which was in use in the third part of his reign. The date of the lintel is much disputed. It has been assigned to one of the successors of Mentuhotep II (Bothmer 1979, 22, fig. 14), but other scholars have dated it to Ramesside times (Wildung 1984, 61)¹⁷ or have suggested a reworking after the Amarna period (Gabolde 1998a, 112). In her work about the development of relief sculptural schools of the late Eleventh Dynasty, however, Rita Freed has argued convincingly in favor of an origin near the end of the reign of Mentuhotep II (Freed 1984, 51–55).¹⁸ Especially noteworthy are the similarities to a scene on the north outer wall of the sanctuary in the temple of Mentuhotep II at Deir el-Bahari (Arnold 1974b, pl. 10).
- A sandstone fragment with the cartouche of Mentuhotep II, found in the Cour de la cachette among blocks of Amenophis I (PM 2², 135).¹⁹
- An inscribed fragment found inside the third pylon (PM 2², 73), which should be dated to the reign of Mentuhotep II by its style of writing (Schenkel 1965, no. 340). The inscription reads as follows: [...] *r nhh prj h3* [...].

From Seankhkara Mentuhotep III only the lower part of a kneeling calcite statue is attested. It was found in the northern court of Thutmose III behind the sixth pylon (PM 2², 93).²⁰

There are no finds of Mentuhotep IV from Karnak.

No architectural objects from Karnak can be assigned to Amenemhat I with certainty. What we do have from his reign consists mainly of:

- A red granite pedestal found in the temple of Ptah, which is surely not its original position, 1.27 m wide × 0.92 m broad × 0.60 m high (PM 2², 200 [23]; Legrain 1902, 102; and Mariette-Bey 1875, 41–42, pl. 8e).²¹ On its upper surface are grooves for a naos with a two-sided door. It bears a dedication formula of Amenemhet I on behalf of “Amun-Ra, lord of the thrones of the two lands.” To judge from the text, the naos, which once stood on the top of the pedestal, held a statue of the god Amun-Ra, presumably designed originally for the temple of Amun at Karnak.
- A red granite statue group found near the so-called Middle Kingdom court in the second small room south of passage XXIV, 0.75 m high × 0.87 m broad (PM 2², 107; and Seidel 1996, 65–67, doc. 31, pl. 22a–b).²² Only the lower part of the object is preserved. Inscribed with the name of Amenemhet I, the dyad depicts the king seated beside a deity, who is probably to be identified as Amun. The figure of Amun was presumably destroyed during the Amarna period.
- A so-called statue-pillar in red granite found in the northern corridor of the center of the Amun temple can possibly be attributed to Amenemhet I (or, alternatively, to Senwosret I): 1.58 m high (without the base) × 0.82 m broad (PM 2², 103 [307]; and Seidel 1996, 67–68, pl. 23a–c). The

¹⁶ Luxor Museum, no. 22.

¹⁷ Vandier (1954, 862 n. 4) has stated that the lintel probably belonged to a chapel dedicated later to the memory of the king. His assumption seems to be based on the provenance of the piece, whereas Wildung argues on iconographical and stylistical grounds.

¹⁸ Habachi (1963, 36) dated the object into the reign of Mentuhotep II, as well.

¹⁹ Cairo Museum, T.R. 25.10.17.11.

²⁰ Cairo Museum, CG 42006.

²¹ Mariette and Porter and Moss, followed by Seidel (1996, 66 n. 106), wrongly describe the object as an offering table. The material is red granite, not black granodiorite as stated by Gabolde 1998a, 113.

²² The statue group which Hirsch (1994, 139) lists as her number 4 among the objects of Amenemhat I from Karnak is identical with the group dealt with here (her number 2); compare Seidel 1996, 66, n. 106. Berman (1985, 55–56) also assumed that fragments of two statue groups existed.

king, Montu, and Hathor are each depicted twice in very high carved relief standing around a massive pillar. The same type of statue is known from the reign of Thutmose III, who probably erected it in the *Akh-menu*,²³ and in fact the statue-pillar noted here is commonly attributed to Thutmose III. However, based on the similarity to an object of the same type from the temple of Montu at Armant, which is dated by an inscription to Amenemhet I, and on stylistic differences with the example of Thutmose III from Karnak, Matthias Seidel, in his work on royal statue groups, assigns the object from the northern corridor at Karnak to Amenemhet I (or alternatively to Senwosret I). This very exceptional type of statuary could have been erected in the court of a temple, probably close to the so-called Middle Kingdom court. It is possible that the depiction of Montu and Hathor may be understood as a reference to the integration of the cult of these deities into the Karnak temple at the very beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty.²⁴

The archaeological situation in the area of the so-called Middle Kingdom court has been investigated in recent years, in particular by Luc Gabolde (Gabolde 1995; 1998b; Gabolde et al. 1999). Based on the latest work carried out there by the Centre franco-egyptien at the beginning of 1998, our present knowledge can be summarized as follows (Gabolde et al. 1999):²⁵

In the western part of the Middle Kingdom court, directly to the east of the Hatshepsut rooms, the remains of a platform approximately 10 × 10 m in size are to be found (fig. 2.3). The platform is made up of two — originally probably three — courses of sandstone blocks and contains some reused sandstone and limestone material. Based on its position beneath the westernmost of the four granite thresholds of Senwosret I in the Middle Kingdom court, this platform must be dated earlier than the temple built there by Senwosret I. The sandstone used in the platform belongs to the same characteristic type used for the column of Antef II. This kind of material was also employed by Mentuhotep II in his temple at Deir el-Bahari, and it was used in the first small temple at Medinet Habu as well. This platform must be part of the foundation of a building built prior to the Amun-Ra temple of Senwosret I at Karnak. The reused material shows clearly that the building erected upon the platform was not the first structure there.

Two sandstone column bases are included in the reused material (Gabolde et al. 1999, 44–45). The traces upon their surface prove that eight-sided columns with a diameter of 0.57 m were erected upon them. For the lower shaft of the column of Antef II, a maximum diameter of 0.40 m can be reconstructed; thus no relation can be established between the reused column bases and the building activity of Antef II at Karnak. The excavators state, however, that these column bases resemble the columns in the temple of Mentuhotep II at Deir el-Bahari with regard to material, type, and size. Based upon the alleged higher quality of the workmanship, they propose a date in the very late Eleventh Dynasty.

A decorated limestone block was also found in the same platform (Gabolde et al. 1999, 40–44). It is a fragment of a scene where the king is being suckled by a goddess in the presence of another deity. The middle part of the body of the god standing behind the young king is preserved. The hieroglyphic remains on his belt are probably to be read as Atum. Similar depictions are known from the *k3*-chapel of Mentuhotep II at Dendera (Habachi 1963, 25–26, fig. 8) and from a pillar of Senwosret I found at Karnak (Gabolde et al. 1999, 40, fig. 10). The high quality of the relief and the iconographic detail of the god's name written on the belt have led the excavators to propose a date during the reign of Amenemhet I or Senwosret I. This would mean that the platform on which stood the building predating the Senwosret I temple could only have been erected under Amenemhet I, at the earliest, or in the first years of the reign of Senwosret I, at the latest. The accuracy of this assessment cannot be confirmed until at least one photograph of the relief has been published.

²³ British Museum, EA 363.

²⁴ Compare, for example, the Chapelle blanche of Senwosret I, where Montu is shown four times in prominent scenes (Lacau and Chevrier 1956, 171–75). Whether two foundation plaques of Amenemhat I, in whose very similar inscriptions the king is “beloved of Montu, Lord of Thebes,” are to be connected with a building activity of this king at the east bank of Thebes remains very doubtful; one plaque is kept in Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum, no. 17567 (Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum 1913, 212), the other one is now in New York at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 30.8.247 (Weinstein 1973, 70). These plaques and their inscriptions are very similar to those found

in the Deir el-Bahari temple of Mentuhotep II (Arnold 1974a, 75) and another plaque of Mentuhotep III, which might also come from western Thebes (Arnold 1991, 16–17, fig. 20). They might derive from a royal funerary monument erected by Amenemhet I in western Thebes early in his reign in the tradition of the Deir el-Bahari temple (Arnold 1991). The Horus name *Wḥm-msw.t* used in the inscriptions does not necessarily point to a date late in the reign of Amenemhat I; compare Berman 1985, 3–10.

²⁵ In this article some earlier assumptions (Gabolde 1998b) are revised in light of the latest fieldwork carried out in the western part of the so-called Middle Kingdom court.

By adding the information gained from considering other temples of the Eleventh Dynasty — in particular those of Mentuhotep II at Abydos (Habachi 1963, 17–19, figs. 2–3), Dendera (Habachi 1963, 19–28, figs. 4–8, pls. 4–8; and O'Connor 1999), Tod (Habachi 1963, 36–37; Arnold 1975; and Desroches-Noblecourt and Leblanc 1984), and Elephantine (Habachi 1963, 40–43, figs. 18–19, pls. 12–13; and Kaiser et al. 1993: 145–52) — to the Karnak objects dating from the Eleventh to the very early Twelfth Dynasty, together with their archaeological context, the following — *nolens volens* — hypothetical conclusions regarding the earliest building phases of the Amun temple at Karnak can be drawn:

- During the reign of Antef II, at the latest, a temple with a two-columned(?) portico for the worship of Amun-Ra was erected at Karnak. In all probability this building was situated on the spot where the platform made of sandstone blocks was later erected, that is to say, in the western part of the so-called Middle Kingdom court; it can be assumed that it was not bigger than 10 × 10 m, and probably rather smaller.
- During the later years of his reign, Mentuhotep II either ordered this temple to be extended or had it built anew. The red granite lintel might originate from one of the doorways in the main axis.²⁶ In my opinion, the sandstone column bases which were reused in the platform should be assigned to Mentuhotep II as well. Like the other buildings of Mentuhotep II just mentioned, presumably the temple at Karnak was still relatively small in size and did not exceed the 10 × 10 m area of the later platform. At best, the Amun temple of the late Eleventh Dynasty is to be reconstructed as a modest mudbrick building with doorways and columns made of stone and embellished with relief-decorated stone panelling, at least in the rear. The temple probably comprised a courtyard and/or a portico, followed by a small hypostyle hall, a room for the offerings, and the sanctuary. The two offering tables with the name of Mentuhotep II found at Karnak presumably belonged to this temple.
- Considering his building activity at Abydos and Dendera, one can suggest that Mentuhotep II also erected a *k3*-chapel within the area of the Amun temple at Karnak, with the cult focused upon a statue of the king. Thus, in addition to the ritual activity at the temple of Mentuhotep II at Deir el-Bahari, which was celebrated in its latest form as the joint cult of Amun-Ra and the king (Arnold 1974b, 30–33), a structure assigned to the royal cult could very well have been integrated into the Amun temple on the east bank, similar to the situation in later times.

From the later years of the reign of Mentuhotep II onward, certain conclusions can be drawn concerning the different functional elements of the Amun temple at Karnak, largely based on the decoration of the Mentuhotep II temple at Deir el-Bahari. On the southern outer wall of the sanctuary of this temple (fig. 2.4), which was subsequently incorporated into the hypostyle hall during the third part of the reign of Mentuhotep II (Arnold 1974a, 41–44, 63–67), a journey of the king in a bark is depicted (Arnold 1974b, 33, pls. 22–23). On the basis of the accompanying inscription this must be understood as a ritual journey on behalf of “Amun, lord of the thrones of the two lands.” The boat does not display the iconography of the divine bark of Amun as it is known from the New Kingdom, but rather looks like a traditional papyrus boat. Instead of the naos for the cult statue of the god, an empty baldachin is found on the bark. The ithyphallic Amun is depicted several times beneath a similar dais in the decoration of the sanctuary at Deir el-Bahari (Arnold 1974b, pls. 11, 30), while in the *k3*-chapel of Mentuhotep II at Dendera, the king is shown sitting enthroned under it (Habachi 1963, 24, fig. 7). The king in his role as a steersman is depicted grossly oversized, making him the focus of the whole scene. The empty throne behind the king, the *k3*-standard represented above it, the designation of the king as “foremost of the *k3*s of all the living,” and his “appearance upon the throne of Horus” are all elements that commemorate royal renewal rituals celebrated in the context of this ritual journey. Thus the festival procession known in the New Kingdom as the Beautiful Festival of the Valley comes into appearance for the first time in the Deir el-Bahari temple of Mentuhotep II. During this festival, a statue of Amun-Ra was transported from his temple at Karnak to the royal temples on the west bank in order to incorporate the divine rulers into the regular renewal of the god.²⁷

²⁶ The lintel of the first gate of the temple of Mentuhotep II at Tod has almost the same width — 2.28 m compared with 2.29 m — but it is not as tall as the object from Karnak; compare above and Arnold 1975, 176.

²⁷ Compare Erhart Graefe 1986, cols. 187–88 (“Talfest”); the basic work is still Schott 1953; for the royal cult in the “Houses of Millions of Years” at western Thebes, see Ullmann 2002.

The inscription above the prow of the bark may probably be completed as *[Wts].t-nfr.t*, the designation of the bark of Amun on the stela Louvre C 200 (Vernus 1987), which dates either to the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty or to the very late Eleventh Dynasty.²⁸ In the inscription on this stela the owner says:

jw rmn.n(=j) nb ntr.w m wjʒ=f Wts-nfrw phr=f wʒ.wt mr.t.n=f m hʒb.w=f tpj.w šmw

(I) carried upon my shoulders the lord of the gods in his bark *Wts-nfrw*, while he circumambulated the roads he desired during his feasts of summer.

Jean-Marie Kruchten has demonstrated that the epithet *nb ntr.w* explicitly designates the bark statue of Amun (Kruchten 1991), that is, the statue of the god who, during the New Kingdom, resided inside the bark sanctuary of the Karnak temple and who was transported out of the temenos during the great festivals to visit other temples on the east and west banks of Thebes. Hence, at a date which cannot be fixed exactly but which cannot have been later than some decades after Mentuhotep II, we are presented for the first time with evidence of the specific form of Amun in which he resided in his bark.

Among the graffiti that were incised into the rocks at Deir el-Bahari above the temple of Mentuhotep II beginning with the late Eleventh Dynasty and ranging in date down to the end of the Twelfth Dynasty, one reads as follows (Winlock 1947, 77–90, pl. 40 [1]):

wʿb Nfr-ʒbd rdj.t jʒw n Jmn sn tʒ n nb ntr.w m hʒb.w=f tpj.w šmw wbn=f hrw n hntj r jn.t Nb-hp.t-Rʿ jn wʿb Jmn Nfr-ʒbd

The *wab*-priest *Nfr-ʒbd*: Giving praise to Amun, kissing the earth for the lord of the gods during his feasts of summer when he appears (on) the day of crossing the river to the valley of *Nb-hp.t-Rʿ* by the *wab*-priest of Amun *Nfr-ʒbd*.

The establishment of this procession of the god Amun to the Theban west bank, which can be dated to the third part of the reign of Mentuhotep II on the basis of the building history of his temple at Deir el-Bahari, must have entailed a functional enlargement for the temple of Amun at Karnak: in addition to the daily ritual focused upon a permanently installed cult statue of the god in the rear part of the building, a festival ritual appeared that was concentrated on the divine bark with its portable cult image.²⁹ Sometime later, the specific designation *nb ntr.w* was introduced for this cult image. At Deir el-Bahari, within the depiction of the ritual journey, the god is still designated as “Amun, lord of the thrones of the two lands.” Inside the temple at Karnak, a repository for the divine bark, which was certainly still rather small in size, had to be created. Unfortunately, the archaeological remains of this period at Karnak do not allow conclusions about the possible function of one of the rooms there as a bark sanctuary. The situation in the temple at Deir el-Bahari, however, shows that specific architectural forms for the new ritual demands came into existence only later, because the sanctuary there functioned as a shrine for the statues of both Amun-Ra and the king, as a room for the offerings, and probably as a bark chapel as well (Arnold 1974b, 30–34).

In the temple of Senwosret I at Karnak (fig. 2.5), a ritual journey of the king in the presence of the ithyphallic Amun was depicted in the southern part of the portico (Gabolde 1998a, 49–51, 159–62, pls. 9–10). Only the upper part of the scene remains, but this corresponds well with the lower part of the bark scene at Deir el-Bahari, as Luc Gabolde has shown. This leads to the conclusion that the same ritual journey is depicted in both cases, the precursor of the Theban festival of the valley that Mentuhotep II had newly introduced. The first archaeological evidence of a bark shrine also dates to the reign of Senwosret I. The structures built later in the reign of Mentuhotep II and probably Amenemhet I also date to the early Middle Kingdom.

The newly built temple of Amun, which Senwosret I erected at Karnak from year 10 of his reign onward, has recently been reconstructed by Luc Gabolde (Gabolde 1998a). This temple of Senwosret I was undoubtedly the first monumental structure built for Amun-Ra at Karnak. The new building was situated on the site of the so-called Middle Kingdom court and contained within it the space on which the earlier structures of the Eleventh Dynasty and the very early Twelfth Dynasty had been erected. It covered an area of almost 40 × 40 m,³⁰ roughly

²⁸ Vernus (1987, 166) proposes a date at the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty. After a review of stelae of the late Eleventh Dynasty through the early Twelfth Dynasty, I would also not exclude a date toward the end of the Eleventh Dynasty. For a recent discussion of the problems of the dating of objects from this period based on palaeographic and epigraphic distinctions, see Spänel 1996; compare also Freed 1996.

²⁹ For the distinction between a permanently installed cult statue of Amun and a processional cult image of the god, see Kruchten 1989, 245–67.

³⁰ For this and the following, see Gabolde 1998a, in particular pp. 163–65 and the reconstructed plan of the temple on pl. 1; compare also pl. 38.

sixteen times larger than the earlier temple, for which the 10 × 10 m platform of sandstone blocks had served as a foundation. The new temple was more than 6 m high and it was made out of limestone, with four doorways of red granite on the west–east axis (fig. 2.6). In front of the western façade stood a portico about 3 m deep, with a row of twelve so-called Osiride pillars of the king. This westernmost part of the building was dismantled during the reign of Hatshepsut, to be incorporated afterward in her own suite of rooms. Behind the wall of the temple façade there was a large courtyard with a single row of pillars along each side. Three successive rooms continued along the west–east axis, but only the thresholds of red granite have been preserved; the side chambers to the north and south can no longer be reconstructed.

A large pedestal of calcite, which was arranged by Chevrier in 1948 to the east of the last granite threshold after it had been found broken in several pieces some meters to the south (Chevrier 1949, 12–13, pl. 10; Pillet 1923, 155–57; Barguet 1962, 154), carried a shrine measuring 2.10 m × 2.15 m in size (Gabolde 1995, 255, n. 5), to judge from the grooves on its upper surface. The fragmentary inscription indicates that Senwosret I erected this pedestal on behalf of “Amun-Ra, lord of the thrones of the two lands”; thus it can be concluded that the naos on this pedestal housed the cult statue of Amun-Ra in the temple of Senwosret I. The staircase leading to the pedestal, however, has been reconstructed as about 3 m long (Gabolde 1995), so that the installation of the pedestal at the end of the west–east axis of the Senwosret I temple, as it was assumed by Chevrier, is impossible, because the steps would cross over the threshold leading into the room (Gabolde 1995).³¹ Luc Gabolde, who discussed this problem some years ago, proposed that the pedestal originally rested in a room directly to the north of the last axial chamber and was oriented north–south, not east–west (Gabolde 1995, 255, fig. 3). Such an arrangement could have found its analogy in the reign of Thutmose III in the *Akh-menu*, where there is a north–south oriented sanctuary at the rear of the building with a pedestal of quartzite of comparable size designated for a shrine of the cult statue of Amun-Ra (Gabolde 1995, 254–55).³²

This cogent suggestion provides the first — albeit indirectly achieved — archaeological reference to the integration of two different ritual axes within the architectural structure of the Amun temple at Karnak: a west–east axis, which, on the basis of the situation known from the New Kingdom, is to be connected on a functional level to the cult of the divine bark of Amun-Ra as *nb ntr.w*, and a north–south axis with a sanctuary at the rear for a permanently installed cult statue of Amun-Ra. One may ask whether this cult image, hidden in the rear part of the temple, was already connected to the aspect of Amun-Ra as a primeval creator god.³³

This last consideration brings us to the other side of the Nile, to Medinet Habu. On excavating the temple of the Eighteenth Dynasty at Medinet Habu, Hölscher discovered the scanty remains of a structure (fig. 2.7) which lay partly under the pillared ambulatory of Hatshepsut and partly to the east in front of it (Hölscher 1939, 4–7, 16–17, 47, pls. 1–2, figs. 1, 2, 5, 16, 41). It was a small building with dimensions of about 8.00 × 7.20 m and oriented with its façade facing east. Hölscher found parts of the three lowest courses of sandstone blocks and a fragment of a cavetto cornice which he ascribed to the same building. The sandstone very much resembles the material used in the temple of Mentuhotep II at Deir el-Bahari, which itself is the same material as that used for the column of Antef II at Karnak and for the platform in the western part of the Middle Kingdom court there. Setting marks on the upper surface of the platform blocks indicate a ground plan with three small chambers at the rear, situated behind a transverse room. This small temple probably stood in the center of a court enclosed by mudbrick walls. This kind of ground plan with three small chambers at the rear is characteristic of structures built by Seankhkara Mentuhotep III, for example, his temple at Tod (Arnold 1975, 180–84, fig. 3) and the one erected at the top of the Thoth hill in the northern part of the Theban necropolis (Vörös 1997; Vörös and Pudleiner 1997a, 1997b, 1998).

With regard to its architectural structure and building material, therefore, this first temple at Medinet Habu may very well belong to the late Eleventh Dynasty. The present-day structure, erected during the reign of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III on the same site and with the same cult axis, was looked upon as a primeval mound, where Amun-Ra — respectively *Jmn-*jp.t**, whose divine image visited the site every ten days — was reborn after the mystical encounter with his own primeval forms and the creator gods of the ogdoad.³⁴ There is no proof that the

³¹ Compare also Lauffray 1980, 25–26, fig. 9.

³² Room XXXII, within the so-called Botanical Garden in the north-east of the building; for the pedestal there, see Barguet 1962, 200–01; Lauffray 1969, 201–06, fig. 9.

³³ For this aspect of Amun-Ra in connection with the complex of the Botanical Garden in the *Akh-menu*, see Beaux 1990; Ullmann 2002, 82; and Laboury in this volume.

³⁴ The basic reference for the rites at the sacred mound of Djeme is still Sethe 1929; for a recent account of the decade festival, see Cooney 2000, especially pp. 34–37 and nn. 129–30, where the relevant literature is listed. In fact, the ritual performed during the decade festival is not known before the Twenty-first Dynasty, but there are some references to the decade festival from the New Kingdom; compare Cooney 2000, 35 n. 130. One of the dedication texts of

rites connected with the decade festival had a precursor in the Middle Kingdom, but the possibility that the earlier temple at Medinet Habu already had a comparable ritual function should at least be taken into consideration.

The bark shrine of Senwosret I mentioned above, consisting mainly of two monolithic blocks of limestone, was discovered built into the Ninth Pylon at the south axis of the Karnak temple in 1979 (Traunecker 1982). Two fragments found reused for a chapel attached to the Seventh Pylon may also belong to the same building (Gabolde 1998a, 121). According to its ground plan (fig. 2.8) and decoration, this structure can be regarded as the prototype of the later well-known typical bark shrine in the function of a way station.³⁵ The external measurements of the building are 4.40 m long \times 3.20 m wide; internally it measures about 4 \times 2 m. A window measuring 60 \times 80 cm was placed in the middle of each long side. The shorter sides could both be closed off by double-leaved doors. The doorjambs are inscribed with dedication formulae of Senwosret I on behalf of Amun-Ra concerning a *sh-ntr*. The small structure displays a decoration scheme which is to be found in expanded form in all the later bark chapels. In the interior upper register, the bark of Amun is shown with the king censuring or libating in front of it. The bark has been destroyed almost completely, and only its outline can be traced. On the basis of the internal measurements of the chapel, Claude Traunecker proposed a length of 2.5 to 3.0 m and a width of 50 to 60 cm for the actual bark of Amun during the reign of Senwosret I.

At the base of the north wall, an inscription of a high functionary named Ahmose bears witness to the functioning of the building toward the end of the Seventeenth Dynasty or at the beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty. According to the damage typical of the Amarna period, which can be found in the decoration of the shrine, it remained in use until the time of Akhenaton. Afterward, the chapel was not restored but its blocks were incorporated into the Ninth Pylon during the reign of Horemhab.

It is not possible to verify definitely the original location of this first archaeologically attested bark shrine for the divine bark of Amun at Karnak. However, the fact that its two large monolithic walls — damaged in the Amarna period — were found inside the Ninth Pylon provides an important clue for its position along the south axis of the Karnak temple.³⁶ The dismantling of the shrine took place no earlier than the reign of Horemhab and may have been necessary because the shrine impeded the erection of the Ninth Pylon. In contrast, the placement of the bark chapel along the west–east axis seems to be problematic because the only conceivable location there is in the forecourt of the Senwosret I temple. In such a position, however, it would have been dismantled along with a number of other structures not later than the reign of Amenhotep III and would have in all probability been reused inside the third pylon, such as, for example, the Chapelle blanche of Senwosret I.

Many additional objects belonging to the Amun temple of Senwosret I have been found along the south axis of the Karnak temple, but for the most part there are no references to their original location. One has to be especially careful in regard to the finds buried in the Cour de la cachette (Gabolde 1998a, 72–78); an original location in this area has too often been wrongly assumed.

The bark shrine just mentioned, however, which, on the basis of its architecture and its decoration served as a temporary station for the bark of Amun when the god left his temple in procession, is an important indication for the existence of a north–south processional axis at Karnak from the reign of Senwosret I onward.³⁷

One more object dating to Senwosret I found along the south axis of the Karnak temple may very well have been erected there originally. A naos of black granite (fig. 2.9) was excavated in 1922 a little to the south of the western tower of the Seventh Pylon (Pillet 1923; Daressy 1927; Barguet 1962, 267–68).³⁸ It was embedded in the floor of a building dated to the Coptic period. The external measurements of the naos are 1.75 m in height \times 0.77 m in width \times 0.93 m in depth. Both lateral sides are decorated on the exterior with four scenes in two registers; all the scenes display the king standing in front of Amun-Ra. In only two instances is an offering scene

Thutmose III in the bark chapel at Medinet Habu already describes the temple as being *hr jz.t mt.t n.t jmnt.t* (Urk. IV, 882). Perhaps a connection can also be established between Medinet Habu, the decade festival, and a ritual for royal *k3*-statues in barks, which is known from blocks belonging to Theban temples of Thutmose II and Tutankhamun. This ritual took place every ten days and was related to the solar cycle; see Gabolde 1989. For the temple of Tutankhamun, compare also Ullmann 2002, 185–97.

³⁵ For a recent discussion of this type of bark shrine, see Eder 2002, 43–53.

³⁶ Traunecker suggests an original position to the south of the Seventh Pylon (Traunecker 1982, 124).

³⁷ The latest excavations of Charles van Siclen at Karnak between the Eighth and the Ninth Pylon seem to corroborate this assumption, insofar as mudbrick structures dating into the Middle Kingdom were discovered (pers. comm., Charles van Siclen). Only a few meters to the north of the western tower of the Ninth Pylon Charles van Siclen found a mudbrick platform that, according to him, served as the foundation for the bark shrine of Senwosret I. Betsy Bryan first drew my attention to the current work of Charles van Siclen at Karnak during the conference in London; see *Postscriptum* below.

³⁸ Today it is kept in the Cairo Museum; compare also Wildung 1984, 62, figs. 55–56.

depicted, while in the six remaining cases Amun bestows life upon the king. Figures and inscriptions of Amun-Ra were damaged in the Amarna period and were later renewed; in one case the god Onuris was inserted instead of Amun. In every scene on this naos Amun is oriented toward the rear wall and the king is the one who looks to the front. Originally, Senwosret I probably bore the epithet *ntr nfr* in every scene. The doorjambs are inscribed exclusively with the titulary of the king, who is “beloved of Amun-Ra, lord of the throne of the two lands.” Since there is no dedication formula, one may conclude that the naos was not intended to house a statue of Amun but one of Senwosret I. Viewed from outside, the king wears the red crown only on the right side of the naos and the white crown exclusively on the left side, an arrangement that points to an orientation of the naos with its front toward the east. A location at the western side of a north–south processional way would therefore be the most probable. This inference corresponds extremely well with the provenance of the naos, namely, to the south of the western tower of the Seventh Pylon.

If one accepts the naos and the bark shrine of Senwosret I as indicators of a north–south processional axis at Karnak, then the question arises as to the goal of the procession of the bark of Amun at this time. To judge from the situation in the New Kingdom, the most likely destination would have been a precursor of the temple at Luxor, but no such building dating back to the early Middle Kingdom has been identified there. Some vague architectural indications of building activity are in evidence in this area in the Thirteenth Dynasty: two architrave blocks of red granite inscribed with the name of Sobekhotep II³⁹ were found in front of the middle entrance to the southern portico in the solar court of Amenhotep III (PM 2², 338).⁴⁰ Furthermore, fragments of twenty-sided sandstone columns, which cannot be chronologically fixed, were reused in the building of Amenhotep III (Borchardt 1896, 122). Borchardt described traces of an earlier ground plan in the southern portico, but this remains doubtful (Borchardt 1896, 123). Based on the reference to the Luxor temple in the incense list of Ineni (*Urk.* IV, 71), a temple must have existed there prior to the structure erected by Hatshepsut. As long as the building history of the temple at Luxor remains incompletely investigated, a cult place to the south of Karnak in the early Middle Kingdom may only be taken into consideration hypothetically.

The clearest evidence for the existence of a temple in the area of the later temple at Luxor are the references to a north–south processional axis at Karnak, which occur for the first time during the reign of Senwosret I. Furthermore, one should not forget that at this time a small temple did exist on the west bank at Medinet Habu, lying exactly opposite the site of the later Luxor temple. If the earlier temple at Medinet Habu already functioned as a primeval mound of Amun-Ra, then it could have enhanced the emergence of a cult place directly opposite on the east bank.

There is even the possibility that the specific Amun of the Luxor temple is first attested as early as Senwosret I. In the Cour de la cachette, fragments of a wall of the Amun temple of Senwosret I (fig. 2.10) have been found (Maarouf and Zimmer 1993, 227–37, figs. 3–4), which Luc Gabolde assigned to the northern part of the west wall of the pillared court (Gabolde 1998a, 85–88, pls. 26–27). The scene on these fragments depicts the introduction of the king into the temple, which is designated as the *hw.t-ʿ3.t* of “Amun, lord of the throne of the two lands.” In this context, this phrase undoubtedly denotes the Amun temple of Senwosret I. The god who introduces the king is Amun-Ra-Kamutef and in the inscription placed on the left jamb of the small niche in the right part of the scene the king is described as “beloved of *Jmn-Rʿ hntj jp.wt=f*.” Considering the fact that the Luxor temple is called *Jp.t-rsj.t*, or just *jp.t*, and that sometimes the plural *jp.wt* is also used, this may indeed represent the first textual reference to a cult place of Amun south of Karnak.

In the treatment of the monuments of Mentuhotep II above, I mention the possibility that this king integrated a *k3*-chapel destined for the cult of a statue of the divine ruler into the Amun temple at Karnak. In connection with the first large-scale expansion of the Karnak temple in the reign of Senwosret I, several indications suggest that elements of the royal cult were of great importance within the structure of the temple. In the first place, the sculptural decoration of the western façade of the Amun temple is significant in this respect: twelve so-called Osiride pillars of monumental size stood in front of the building, each statue grasping two large *ankh*-signs (Gabolde 1998a, 23–25, 63–70, pls. 19–24). In the inscriptions on the lateral sides of the pillars, the *sed*-festival of the king is mentioned; the same holds true for the pillars in the adjacent eastern court (Gabolde 1998a, 88–110, pls. 25, 28–37). Thus the predominant theme at the entrance of the temple of Amun is the king, imbued with life by the

³⁹ Who is now labeled Sobekhotep I by Ryholt 1997, 336.

⁴⁰ Grébaut found the two fragments in 1889 (Grébaut 1889/1890, 335–36). A few years later Daressy and Borchardt both gave a very

short description and mentioned the exact provenance (Daressy 1893, 57; Borchardt 1896, 122). Nothing is known about the present whereabouts of the fragments.

gods — especially Amun in this context — and the regular renewal of his sovereignty in the ritual of the *sed*-festival. Also connected to this subject matter is the ritual journey, probably during the feast of the valley, depicted in the southern part of the portico as mentioned above.

The Chapelle blanche was certainly constructed before the western façade of the temple as a kind of festival kiosk (Lacau and Chevrier 1956; Kees 1958; Strauss-Seeber 1994; and Gabolde 1998a, 121). Here the newly crowned king — respectively his statue — appeared together with a statue of Amun-Ra to be presented to the public within the ritual reenactment of coronation ceremonies and the *sed*-festival.

The naos of black granite which was found along the south axis probably housed a statue of Senwosret I, as implied by its decoration; whether only temporarily, for a procession, or permanently cannot be said. The wall niche within the context of the introduction scene described above could also, according to its decoration, have housed a statue of the king, albeit a very small one.

The participation of the king at the offerings for the bark of Amun-Ra is proved by the depiction of the king sitting in front of the offering table in the scenes on the walls of the bark chapel of Senwosret I extracted from the Ninth Pylon.

In the early Eighteenth Dynasty, during the reign of Amenhotep I, the temple of Amun, which dated mainly back to Senwosret I, was greatly expanded to the west. According to the reconstruction of Catherine Graindorge, a very ambitious building program was realized in several phases (Graindorge and Martinez 1989; idem 1999; Graindorge 2002). Its basic elements were a bark chapel flanked by two lateral walls in the middle of a spacious court located to the west of the Senwosret I temple as well as groups of chapels of three different sizes at the north and south sides of the court and also in two rows connecting the lateral walls of the bark chapel with the north and south sides of the court, which, based on their decoration program, had a function within the royal cult. On the lateral walls of these chapels, offerings are displayed in front of the king, in some cases followed by the royal *k3* sitting at the offering table.

Altogether, the architectural and decorative program of the Amenhotep I buildings at Karnak document a very close ritual connection between the cult for Amun-Ra and the royal cult, both within the daily ritual and within the festival rituals. This aspect should not be looked upon as a new development that took place in the reign of Amenhotep I (Graindorge 2002, 88), but rather as an integral part of the Amun temple at Karnak, which came into existence during the reign of Senwosret I at the latest, and which may very well have been there in a rudimentary form from the time of Mentuhotep II onward. The close coexistence of the cult of Amun and the royal cult contributed to the architectural form of the temple and to the rituals performed there.

The parallel celebration of divine and royal cult also explains the fact that, beginning with Sobekhotep IV in the Thirteenth Dynasty, followed by Ahmose, Thutmose III, Tutankhamun, Aye, and Seti I, monuments for the royal cult designated as “Houses of Millions of Years” were integrated into the area of the Amun temple at Karnak (Ullmann 2002). The animating factor for this development lay in the new theological conception that determined the latest building phase of the temple of Mentuhotep II at Deir el-Bahari, characterized by a close ritual association between Amun-Ra and the king, going so far as a temporary identity of both. The cult of Amun-Ra and the royal cult at Deir el-Bahari were not conceivable without the connection to the temple of Amun at Karnak.⁴¹ Thus, deliberately planned sacred areas emerged, related to each other by means of architecture and ritual, and which displayed their full function only in coexistence.

The origin and the characteristic imprint of the Theban ritual landscape, which is attested primarily for the era of the New Kingdom, goes back to the late Eleventh Dynasty, motivated by the political and legitimizing efforts of the rulers of the Eleventh Dynasty. In the reign of Senwosret I this theological conception was realized and expanded in the architecture and cult of the temple of Amun at Karnak, in the following ways:

- in the integration of two ritual axes in the temple: west–east, assigned to the cult of the divine bark of Amun, and north–south, designated for the permanently installed cult statue of Amun;
- in the close linking of the divine cult and the royal cult;
- in the origin of the north–south processional way at Karnak.

⁴¹ We know, for example, that in the Twelfth Dynasty the priests acting in the cult of Amun at Deir el-Bahari came from Karnak (Arnold 1974a, 92–94).

POSTSCRIPTUM

After the completion of this article, three important new contributions to the study of the earliest remains of the Karnak temple complex were published:

Guillame Charloux, Jean-François Jet, and Emmanuel Lanoe. “Nouveaux vestiges des sanctuaires du moyen empire à Karnak: Les fouilles récentes des cours du VI^e pylone.” *Bulletin de la Société français d'égyptologie* 160 (2004): 26–46.

Laurence Cotellet-Michel. “Présentation préliminaire des blocs de la chapelle de Sésostriis I^{er} découverte dans la IX^e pylone de Karnak.” *Cahiers de Karnak* 11 (2003): 339–54.

Charles C. van Siclen III. “La cour de IX^e pylone à Karnak.” *Bulletin de la Société français d'égyptologie* 163 (2005): 27–46.



Figure 2.1. Stela Manchester Museum No. 5052 (after Petrie 1909, pl. 10 [B 33])



Figure 2.2. Column of Antef II (photography courtesy Staatliches Museum Ägyptischer Kunst München, D. Wildung)



Figure 2.3. So-called Court of the Middle Kingdom. Early Platform in Foreground, Three Eastern Thresholds of Senwosret I and Socle of Calcite in Middle (after Lauffray 1979, fig. 103)

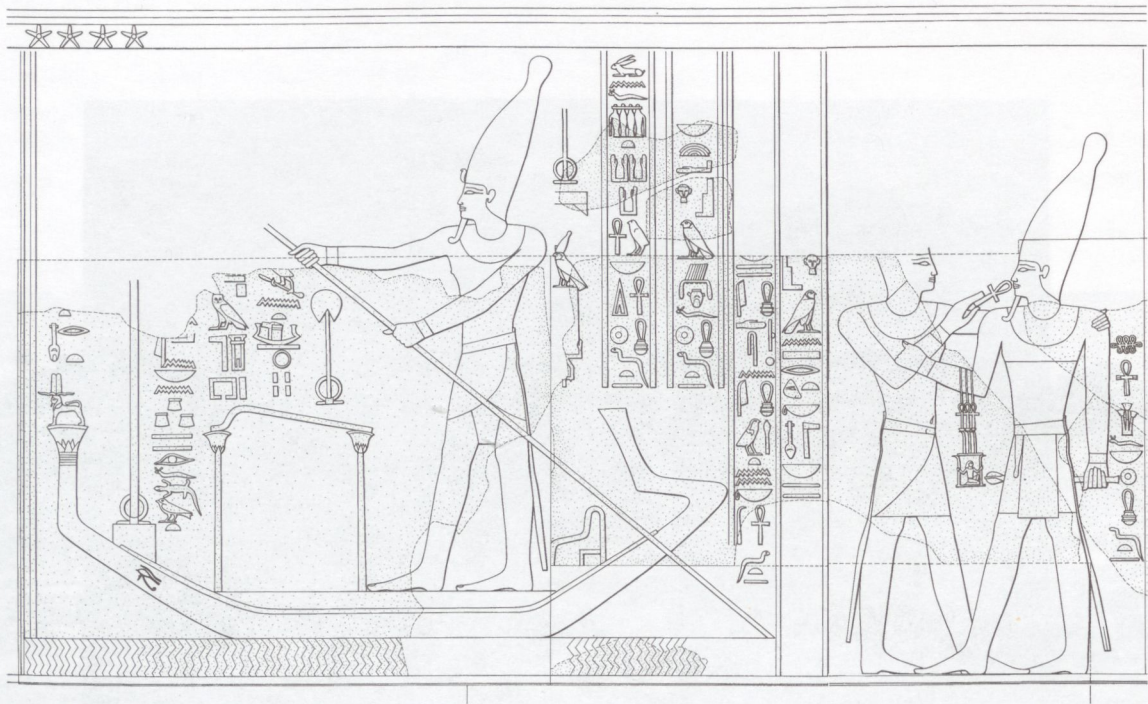


Figure 2.4. Bark Journey of King. Temple of Mentuhotep II at Deir el-Bahari, Southern Outer Wall of Sanctuary (after Arnold 1974b, pl. 22)



Figure 2.5. Bark Journey of King. Temple of Senwosret I at Karnak, Southern Part of Portico (after Gabolde 1998a, pl. 9)

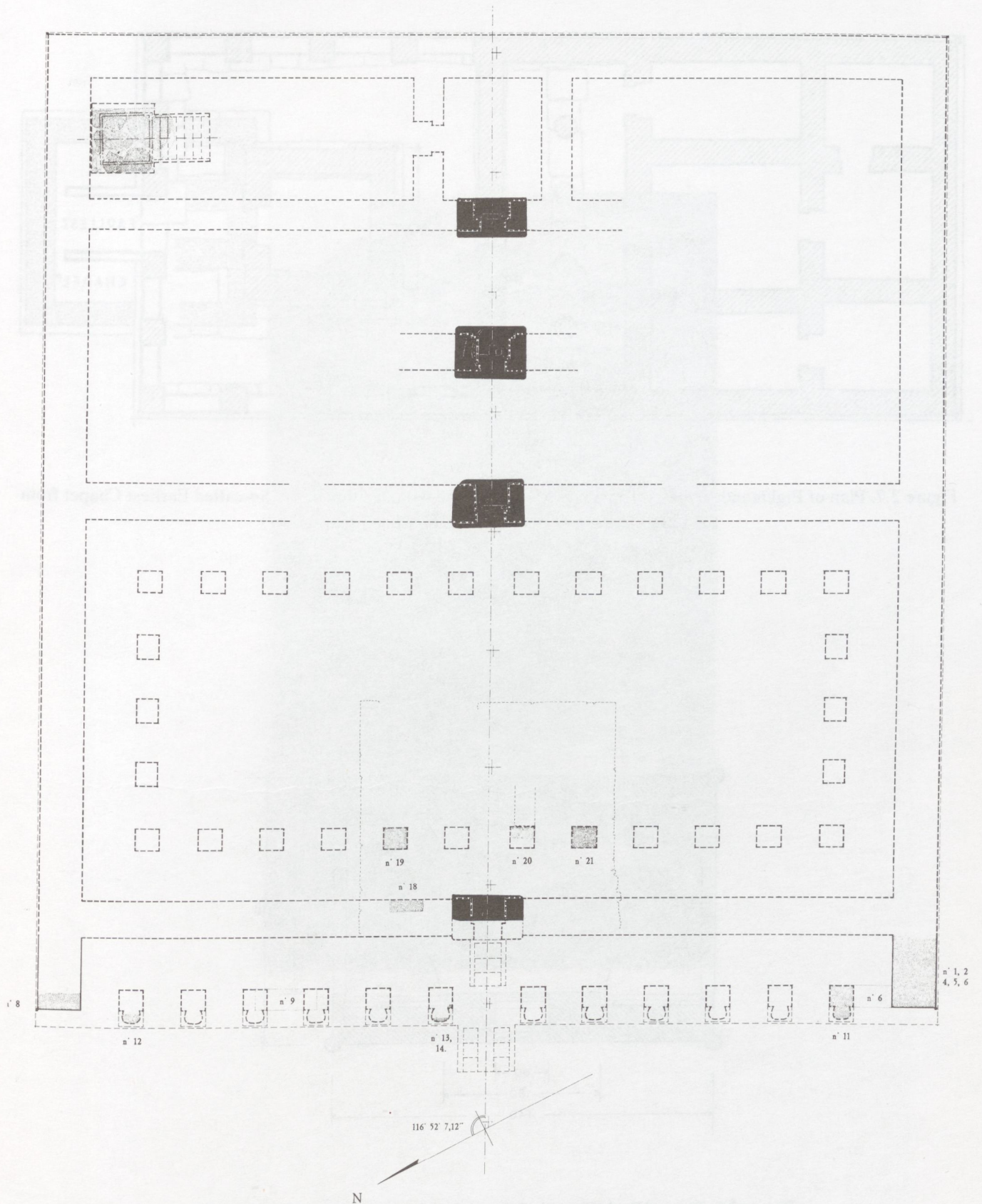


Figure 2.6. Reconstruction of Plan of Senwosret I Temple, Karnak (after Gabolde 1998a, pl. 1)

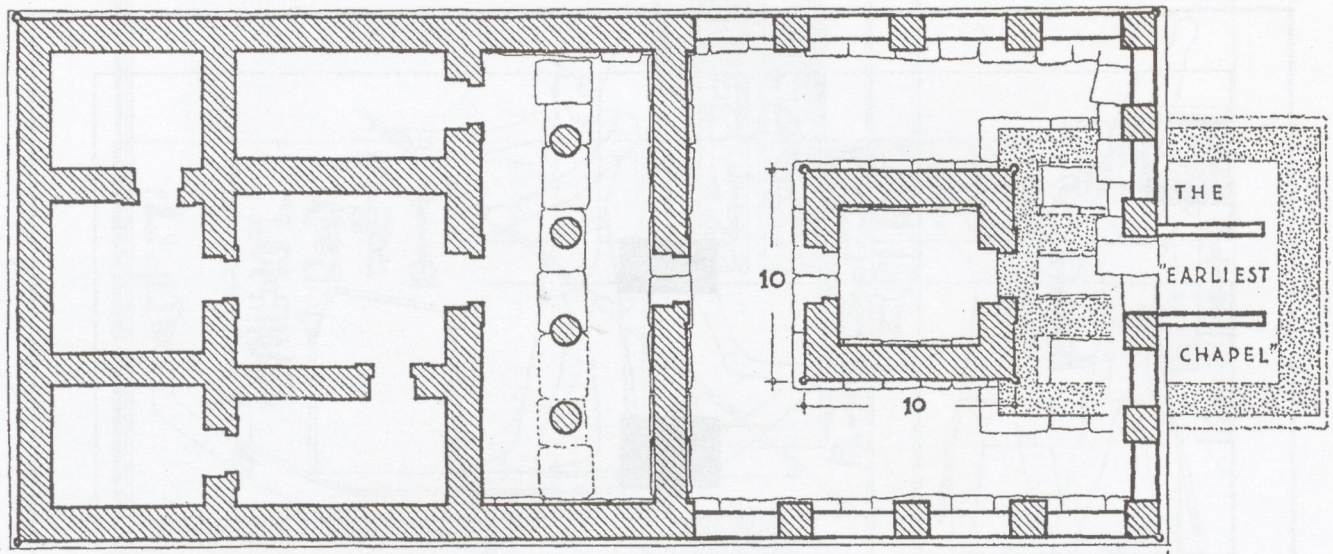


Figure 2.7. Plan of Eighteenth Dynasty Temple at Medinet Habu with Position of the So-called Earliest Chapel from the Late Eleventh Dynasty (after Hölscher 1939, fig. 41)

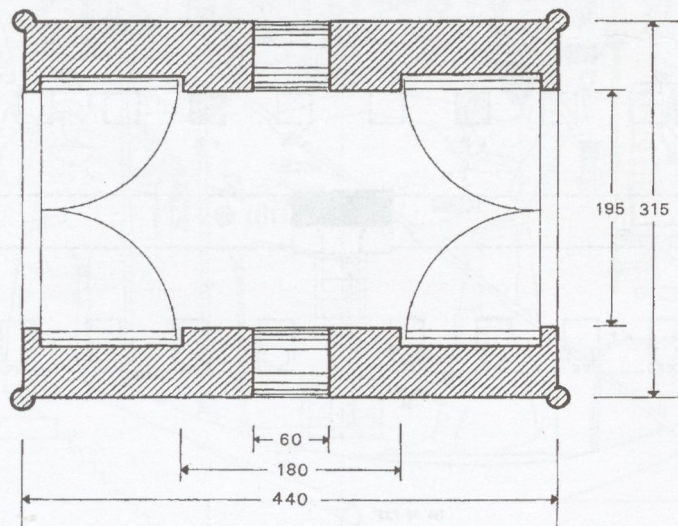


Figure 2.8. Plan of Bark Chapel of Senwosret I (after Traunecker 1982, fig. 1)

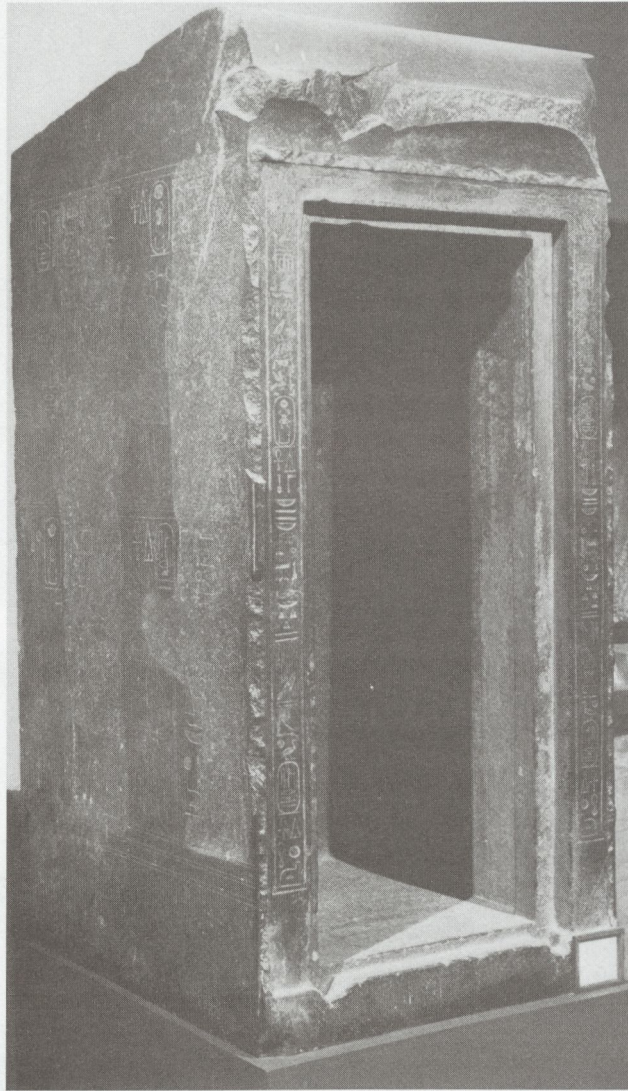


Figure 2.9. Naos of Senwosret I (after Wildung 1984, fig. 55)



Figure 2.10. Wall Fragment of the Temple Senwosret I at Karnak (photograph courtesy Staatliches Museum Ägyptischer Kunst München, D. Wildung)

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