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Egyptian Temples in Nubia during the Middle and the New Kingdom

Middle Kingdom Temples

Our knowledge about the cult buildings erected for the worship of Egyptian deities south of the First Cataract before the 18th Dynasty is extremely limited. We have to presume that small temples existed in most, if not all, of the fortresses that were built in Lower Nubia and in the area of the Second Cataract. This will have begun in the reign of Senusret I and continued to be practiced, especially under the reign of Senusret III (VOGEL 2004; HIRSCH 2004). As in Egypt, these Middle Kingdom temples were most probably of modest size and built mainly out of mud-brick, which explains why most of them were not identified with any certainty during earlier excavations.

At Buhen, a medium sized mud-brick temple of the 12th Dynasty (probably already erected by Senusret I) is well attested archaeologically in the north-western part of the fortress (EMERY ET AL. 1979, 11, 84–87, pl. 34; SMITH 1976, 76–78). It consisted mainly of a forecourt, a hypostyle hall with wooden columns on stone foundations, two small transverse rooms and a main sanctuary flanked by two smaller side-rooms in the rear part. No wall decoration or sculpture has been found within the building, but the inscriptional evidence from Buhen clearly shows that the god Horus as ‘Horus, Lord of Buhen’, had been the main deity there since Senusret I (SMITH 1976). It is therefore highly probable that the Middle Kingdom temple was dedicated to him, as was the case with the so-called south temple of Buhen, built in the 18th Dynasty, which partly covered the older structure.

The god Horus undoubtedly played a major role when the Egyptians began to undertake the religious appropriation of the region south of the First Cataract, along with its military occupation in the 12th Dynasty. The origins of the falcon deity Horus lay at Hierakonpolis in Upper Egypt, one of the first centres of the emerging Egyptian state and its sacred kingship in the later 4th millennium BC. Since Horus was intrinsically tied to the Egyptian concepts of sovereignty, royal power and its legitimation, he was especially suitable to substantiate Egyptian demands on a foreign land like Nubia. The Egyptians expressed their claims by denoting Horus as ‘Lord of Nubia’ (*nb t3-sti*) and by installing him as the main local deity at their major sites in Nubia: ‘Horus, Lord of Quban’ at the fortress of Quban in northern Lower Nubia, ‘Horus, Lord of Aniba’ at the fortress of Aniba in southern Lower Nubia, and ‘Horus, Lord of Buhen’ at the Second Cataract.¹

¹ For Egyptian cults in Nubia in general – but mainly focusing on the New Kingdom – see SÄVE-SÖDERBERGH 1941, 200–205; KORMYSHEVA 1996; TÖRÖK 2009, 209–262.

Apart from Horus, the deities of Elephantine and the area of the First Cataract, namely Khnum, Satet and Anuket, were of importance in the newly established Egyptian cult topography of Lower Nubia. As the divine triad of the frontier region between Egypt and Nubia, where Egyptians and Nubians had met and had lived together since earliest times, their cults were undoubtedly regarded as appropriate for Nubia itself. Especially at Kumma, a fortress at the Second Cataract south of Buhen, we have evidence for the institutional worship of Khnum, Satet and Anuket in the Middle Kingdom in the form of rock inscriptions of various priests (VOGEL 2004, 113).

Another deity who was worshipped by the Egyptians in the region of the Second Cataract already during the Middle Kingdom was Dedwen.² He was regarded as 'Foremost of Nubia' and a Nubian origin has long been suspected, but more recently it has been proposed that Dedwen was a genuine Egyptian god assigned to Nubian territory as its divine sovereign (MORENZ 2011, 72, note 92; THISSEN 2013, 499–501). As in Egypt itself, there is also evidence for a royal statue cult in some of the Egyptian fortresses at the Second Cataract: statues of Senusret III have been found at Semna and at Uronarti, and the text of the so-called Semna-Stelae of the same pharaoh, in combination with the archaeological report, implies that in both cases a statue representing the king in *heb-sed* garb and a stela had been set up in a small cult building, which should probably be interpreted within the Egyptian concept of a royal *Hut-ka* (SEIDLMEYER 2000).

The cult for Senusret III was not restricted to his lifetime, but is attested at Buhen for the 13th Dynasty and the Second Intermediate Period, where at the same time Senusret I is also known as cult recipient.³ In both cases this posthumous worship might be connected with the historical achievements of both kings in subjugating Lower Nubia. The cult of Senusret III was restored and further developed by the pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty in Nubia.

New Kingdom Temples: Historical Overview and Location

Immediately following the (re-)conquering of Nubia in the early 18th Dynasty, the Egyptians started to set up a new religious topography for the land south of the First Cataract.⁴ Along with the military conquest of Nubia, cults for Egyptian deities were now installed from the First Cataract in the north to as far south as the Gebel

² See LEITZ 2002, 578–579, references 20–21, 30, 40.

³ SMITH 1976, 91–92; EL-ENANY 2003; 2004.

⁴ For the following, see HEIN 1991; KORMYSHEVA 1996; ULLMANN 2007; 2009; TÖRÖK 2009, 209–262.

Barkal at the Fourth Cataract. In Lower Nubia cults that had already been established in the Middle Kingdom were revived and augmented by new ones, and in Upper Nubia Egyptian cults were implanted likewise.

Compared to the situation in the Middle Kingdom, this was a much more profound religious appropriation of Nubia, on a geographical scale as well as on a conceptual level. As a result, Nubia was firmly tied to the Egyptian mainland not just militarily, administratively and economically, but also through religion and state-ideology.

The most visible remains of this religious take-over of Nubia undoubtedly were the temples for Egyptian deities, erected and run by the Egyptian authorities on Nubian territory. As far as our present knowledge is able to ascertain, the architecture, decoration programs, and ritual performances at these temples were predominantly Egyptian in character. As in Egypt, ritual landscapes emerged in New Kingdom Nubia with cult buildings that were interrelated to each other and to cults in Egypt proper in manifold ways (topographically, architecturally, theologically, ritually) and at various territorial levels (locational, regional, national).

There is archaeological evidence for about 50 cult buildings for Egyptian deities dating to the New Kingdom at 30 different sites from Debod in the north to the Jebel Barkal in the south (see the table at the end of the article). Of course, the number of temples in New Kingdom Nubia must have originally been considerably higher. Notably, cult buildings within the settlement areas of Lower Nubia might not have shown up in the early archaeological records before the flooding of the area due to the dams that were built at Aswan in the last century.

In the very early 18th Dynasty when the Middle Kingdom fortresses in Lower Nubia and the area of the Second Cataract were reoccupied by the Egyptians, the temples there were rebuilt or erected anew (see e.g. Buhen and Uronarti). Slightly later cult buildings were most probably embedded within the first fortified towns in Upper Nubia founded by the Egyptians (like at Sai and Kerma/Dukki Gel). During the reigns of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, when Egyptian control over all of Nubia had become consolidated, there was very extensive building activity at numerous sites. In some cases, old mud-brick structures were replaced or supplemented by stone temples (see e.g. Aniba, Buhen, Semna, Kumma (?), Sai, Kerma Dukki Gel), but we also see temples at locations where no earlier cult buildings are known, like at Amada (Fig. 1), Ellesiya, Jebel Doshā and maybe also at Jebel Barkal, although the archaeological evidence there is still dubious. Some of the new cult buildings are not located within a town or a fortress anymore, but are to be found at some distance from the nearest settlement (e.g. Ellesiya, Ibrim and Jebel Doshā). These installations – in all cases rock-cut temples (see below) – did not serve the basic religious/cultic needs of a community of settlers, but they added further theological and ritual layers to the Nubian territory and local ritual landscapes began to emerge at certain places with numerous interrelated cult buildings (e.g. around Aniba with the town temple and Ellesiya to the north and Ibrim to the south).

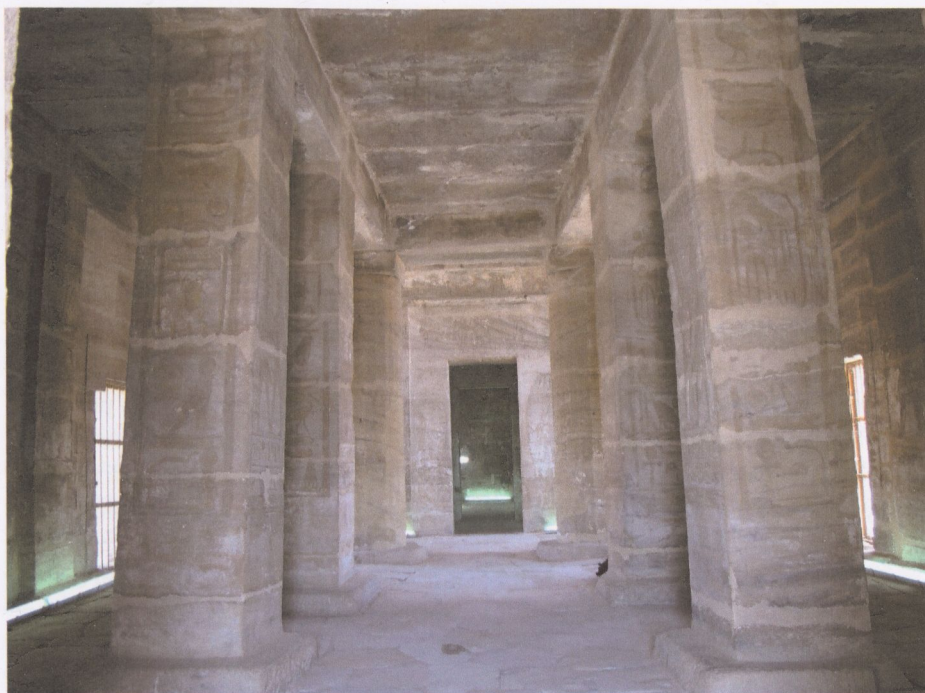


Fig. 1: The pillared hall in the temple of Amada (Photo: M. ULLMANN).

Various criteria for the location of temples have to be taken into account that fall into two categories: natural factors, e.g. geological formations suitable for rock-cut temples, the chance to quarry stones nearby, and easy accessibility; and factors that might be summarized as human, e.g. the presence of a settlement, the desire to establish a religious-ideological layer of Egyptian dominance at especially important places (like e.g. Dukki Gel, close to the former capital of Kerma and at the place of a Nubian ceremonial centre), or the notion of sacredness at certain spots, often connected with specific geographical characteristics (like at the Jebel Barkal, where the Egyptians recognized the southern place of the origin of their supreme deity Amun-Ra).

In the time of Amenhotep III we observe the installation of a new temple site at Wadi es-Sebua in Lower Nubia, probably because of the importance of the place as a starting point for desert trade routes, but the hub of his building activity lay in Upper Nubia north of the Third Cataract. The region there had been of strategic and economic importance since the early 18th Dynasty and under Amenhotep III this led to the foundation of a temple site early in his reign at a place nowadays called Soleb (Fig. 2). After several construction stages, the temple there was the largest Egyptian cult building in Nubia up to that time. It marks a significant date in the development of the Egyptian cults in Nubia because of the prime importance of the cult of the



Fig. 2: The temple of Soleb (Photo: M. ULLMANN).

divine king as 'Nebmaatra, Lord of Nubia' within the temple's theology (Fig. 3). About 20 km northward at Sedeinga, another smaller temple was erected, which was theologically closely connected to the temple at Soleb. About 150 years later Ramesses II would refer back to this concept in his own temple building activity in Nubia.

During the reign of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten more temple construction took place in Nubia than previously known. Apart from making modifications to the decorative programmes of older temples (e.g. at Wadi es-Sebua), more recent archaeological investigations have shown that he must have ordered the erection of a whole series of new temples for the god Aten in Upper Nubia, at places like Sesibi, Kerma/Dukki Gel, Kawa (?) and at the Jebel Barkal.

In the aftermath of the Amarna Period Tutankhamun started restoration work at various sites in Nubia. At Faras, not far north of the Second Cataract, he added a new temple to much older cult installations, and at Kawa in Upper Nubia another temple was built or, at least decorated, by him. Under Haremhab we mainly have evidence from a new rock-cut temple at Abu Oda, very close to Abu Simbel on the other side of the Nile, where later Ramesses II would found a new cult site by integrating his predecessor's temple into its ritual landscape.



Fig. 3: The god Neb-maat-ra in the temple of Soleb (Photo: M. ULLMANN).

The building activity of Sety I in the early 19th Dynasty consisted mainly of further restoration work at various Nubian sites in order to eliminate the modifications of the Amarna Period, which also included the addition of new elements in some cases (e.g. at Jebel Barkal). At Amara, between the Second and the Third Cataract, he founded a new temple whose construction was continued under his son Ramesses II. The temple at Beit el-Wali in Lower Nubia might also date back to Sety I, but was decorated solely by Ramesses II.

The reign of Ramesses II saw unprecedented building activity, especially in Lower Nubia where a series of rock-cut temples partly augmented older ritual landscapes, as at Wadi es-Sebua and Derr, but also implemented new ones, as at Gerf Hussein and Abu Simbel (for details see below under ‘Theology and Cult’). Because of their exceptionally good state of preservation in the 19th century, these Lower Nubian rock-cut temples have sometimes overshadowed the huge amount of work done during the 67 years of Ramesses II’s rule over Egypt and Nubia at various sites from Beit el-Wali in the north to the Jebel Barkal in the south (see the table).

After Ramesses II only very little building activity is archaeologically attested at temples in Nubia (Sety II, Ramesses III). But there is evidence for regular cult activity at most sites at least until the end of the 20th Dynasty.

During most of the New Kingdom the numerous temples erected for Egyptian deities and for the royal cult in Lower and Upper Nubia were not only centres of religious worship and ritual activity for the Egyptian settlers and for gradually more

and more Egyptianized Nubians, but also in many cases hubs of administrative and economic activity, very similar to the situation in Egypt itself.⁵

Architecture of New Kingdom Temples in Nubia

Two different types of temples, each with two similar subtypes, can be distinguished based on form and layout (see the table). The actual number of rooms and their size varies considerably within types 1.1 and 2.1:⁶

1. Free standing temple
 - 1.1 Multi-chambered temple with axial alignment (Fig. 4)
 - 1.2 Temple with only one or few rooms of mostly small size (Fig. 5)
2. Rock temple (speos and hemispeos) (HEIN 1991, 113–114)
 - 2.1 Multi-chambered temple with axial alignment (Fig. 6)
 - 2.2 Temple with only one or few rooms of mostly small size (Fig. 7)

The free standing temples (type 1) are mostly to be found within settlements and fortresses; their main purpose was to serve the religious needs of their communities. Furthermore especially the town temples, as state institutions and their personnel had an important function within the administration of Nubia and its economy. The subtype 1.2 is to be found in particular within fortresses in the first half of the 18th Dynasty, where the cramped confines often led to individualized and ad hoc solutions in the layout of the cult buildings. At Quban and Amada small peripteral temples were found some distance from the settlements. In analogy to the situation in Egypt, they have to be seen not as self-contained institutions with a daily cult, but as being closely linked in function to another temple nearby. According to location and layout, they served as so-called way stations during processions with the cult image/s of the main temple.

Multi-chambered temples with axial alignment became increasingly widespread in the second half of the 18th Dynasty and in the 19th Dynasty, particularly in towns in Upper Nubia.

The first small-sized rock temples (type 2.2) were created under Hatshepsut and Thutmose III around Aniba in Lower Nubia (Ellesiya and Ibrim) and at Jebel Dosha between the Second and the Third Cataract, i.e. at the same time as in Egypt itself. As already stated above, the small cult installations of the type 2.2, which often only comprised one or two rooms of modest size, were functionally different from the free standing town temples, since they did not serve as primary religious institutions for

⁵ For the administration and the economy of Nubia during the New Kingdom and the role of the temples therein, see MÜLLER 2013 and MORKOT 2013.

⁶ For a typology especially for Amun temples in Nubia, see ROCHELEAU 2008.

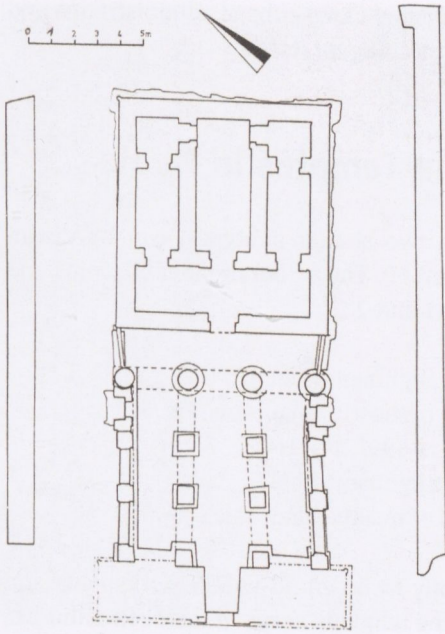


Fig. 4: The temple of Thutmose III, Amenhotep II and Thutmose IV at Amada (based on HEIN 1991, pl. 8).

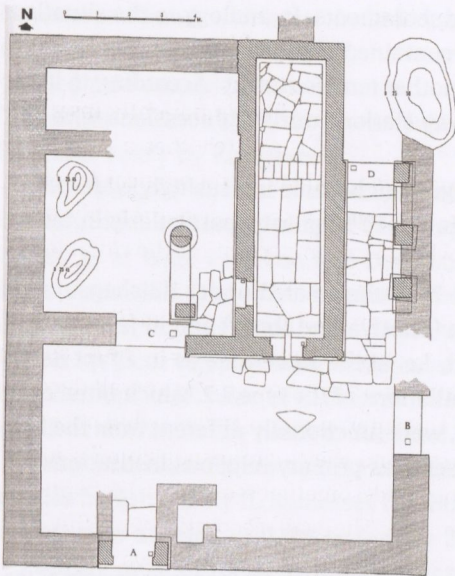


Fig. 5: The temple of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III at Semna (CAMINOS 1998, pl. 3).

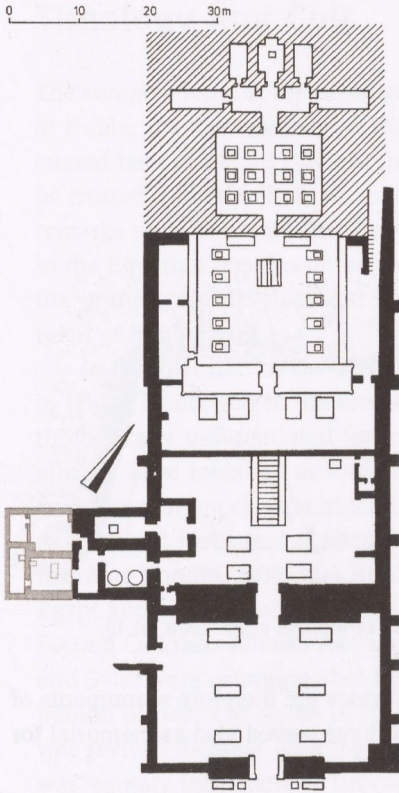


Fig. 6: The hemispeos of Ramesses II at Wadi es-Sebua (based on HEIN 1991, pl. 7).

a specific community. They were self-contained temples with permanently installed cult statues in the rear part, but in most cases it is doubtful whether a daily cult took place within them. They functioned on a more abstract theological level by adding religious meaning to their location, and were visited most probably on a regular basis on certain festival occasions, which were important for the ritual landscape in which they were embedded.

The one-room rock temples (often designated as rock shrines) at Ibrim (Ibrim I–IV) and at Faras (Faras III) are often regarded as private monuments of the viceroys who were responsible for their installation and who also show up in the wall decoration (e.g. HEIN 1991, 113). But in my opinion this interpretation is somewhat misleading. The viceroys acted on behalf of their king, and they were responsible for all of the state initiated building activity in Nubia and sometimes also left inscriptions and images of themselves in the larger temples. The wall decoration and the cult statues at the rear of the so-called rock shrines predominantly attest various gods and goddesses (with reference to the local main deities) together with the royal cult, and they document the fulfilment of the duties of the viceroys and other officials

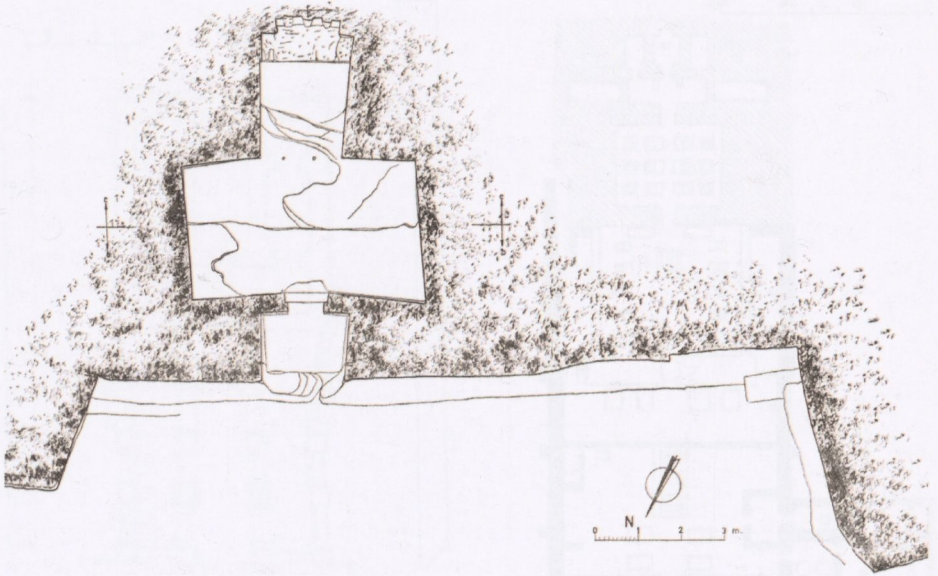


Fig. 7: The hemispeos of Thutmose III at Ellesiya (based on EL-ACHIRIE ET AL. 1968, pl. II).

on behalf of the king. First and foremost, these shrines are therefore monuments of the official state cult, and only secondarily might have served also as memorial for the viceroys.

Under Amenhotep III, a first multi-chambered hemispeos with axial alignment (type 2.1.) was built at Wadi es-Sebua in Lower Egypt. Apart from the courts at the front, the rooms are quite small, but on a functional level the concept of a freestanding town temple was undoubtedly adopted. Also the speos of Haremhab at Abu Oda is, albeit modest in size, in regard to layout and function closer to type 2.1. The first hemispeos of Ramesses II at Beit el-Wali, which might have been founded already under Sety I, is of medium size too, but its rooms correspond functionally those of free standing multi-chambered temples. With the chronologically subsequent great speos of Abu Simbel, the concept of a large freestanding, multi-chambered temple with axial alignment was for the first time transposed to a speos which mainly functioned as a so-called barque procession temple. The small temple at Abu Simbel was built at the same time and follows the same layout, albeit on a much smaller scale. The hemispeoi of Derr, Wadi es-Sebua and Gerf Hussein all correspond to this same concept in layout and function.

Altogether the rock temples clearly show an evolution towards a more complex layout, connected with a functional broadening, especially in the time of Ramesses II.

Theology and Cult

The complex topic of the theological concepts which underlay the Egyptian temples in Nubia, the cults performed there and the rituals enacted in them, cannot be discussed here in-depth. One also has to bear in mind that each of the temples has to be treated individually in order to understand all its various aspects. The following remarks shall therefore first trace some major trends as to the main cult recipients in the Egyptian temples of the New Kingdom in Nubia, and secondly will deal with the grand-scale development of the ritual landscape of Lower Nubia during the reign of Ramesses II.

In the first half of the 18th Dynasty the main cult recipient within the temples in Lower Nubia and in the area of the Second Cataract was the god Horus with his three locally differentiated forms as Horus of Quban, Aniba and Buhen, who had already been installed as lords over their respective territories in the 12th Dynasty (see above in the chapter about the Middle Kingdom temples).⁷ In addition, the cult of Hathor at Faras and at Mirgissa might already date back to the Middle Kingdom. Likewise Khnum, Satet and Anuket, the divine triad of the frontier region between Egypt and Nubia, were integrated into the cult topography of Lower Nubia and the Second Cataract. Khnum was again the main deity in the temple at Kumma; Anuket and Satet were worshipped at Buhen; and Satet played a major role as female companion of Horus of Aniba in that region. At Semna the cult of Dedwen (see above) was revived together with that of Senusret III as 'Lord of Semna', whose veneration was equally important at Uronarti and at Mirgissa, in both cases together with a cult for the god Montu. Very much as in Egypt itself, the royal cult directed toward divine aspects of the living king formed an important part of the concept of several temples in Lower and Upper Nubia. This is especially well proven since the time of Thutmose III (SCHADE-BUSCH 1997) who seems to have formed together with Horus of Aniba and Satet the divine triad of the region of Aniba. This concept of a combined cult of the king and the locally most important deities was probably transferred to the speos at Jebel Doshā in Upper Nubia, albeit presumably with another local variant of the god Horus, who might be identical with 'Horus, bull, lord of Nubia' (variant: 'Horus, bull, lord of Nubia, who is in the midst of Thebes' [*Hrw k3 nb T3-Stj hr.j-jb W3s.t*]).⁸ This form of the god Horus is attested within the wall deco-

⁷ For the following, see the references in footnotes 1 and 4.

⁸ The group of three seated statues at the rear wall of the speos at Jebel Doshā was utterly destroyed. The identity of the main cult recipients at that place depends therefore mainly on the only fragmentarily preserved wall decoration and on several stelae nearby and on comparison with the more or less contemporaneous speoi at Ellesiya and Ibrim. The most likely hypothesis in my opinion is a triad consisting of Thutmose III in the center, flanked by Satet to the right and by a form of Horus (probably Horus *k3 nb T3-Stj hr.j-jb W3s.t*) to the left. But recently Davies has stated that based upon the outline of the headdress the left figure should be identified as Amun-Ra (DAVIES

ration of the speos at Jebel Dosha, and in several inscriptions at Sai, which is only about 35 km to the north, as well as in Lower Nubia in the temples at Ellesiya and Amada (in the later one with reference to Thutmose IV). The unusual name form of this Horus deity resembles the Horus name of Thutmose III and might therefore hint at a special link between this form of Horus and Thutmose III.⁹ The strong connection between the king and the god Horus, which reaches back to the formation of the Egyptian state in the late 4th millennium BC (see above), in which the pharaoh was the living Horus upon earth, was the ideological basis upon which the royal cult in Nubia rested at that time. The incorporation of the king into the main cult recipients of a temple was visually illustrated by statue groups, which displayed the king enthroned together with the main deity/ies of the cult place. This was especially common within rock temples where statue groups with the king usually are to be found at the rear part of the innermost sanctuary. First attested under Hatshepsut and Thutmose III at Ibrim, Ellesiya and Jebel Dosha, this feature became particularly important during the reign of Ramesses II in all of his rock temples in Lower Nubia.

In Upper Nubia Amun-Ra, throughout Egypt the most important deity during the New Kingdom, was the main cult recipient at most of the newly founded temples since the early 18th Dynasty, and this cult policy was continued in the latter half of the 18th Dynasty. This is particularly visible with the huge temple of Amenhotep III at Soleb, dedicated to Amun-Ra and the divine king, and likewise in the 19th Dynasty. Theologically speaking, the most important cult place of Amun-Ra in Nubia was at the Jebel Barkal, where Thutmose III had founded a fortress. The Egyptian settlement there was called Napata, and the local form of the god Amun-Ra was therefore designated as Amun(-Ra) of Napata. The cult site at the Jebel Barkal was closely linked to the main temple of Amun-Ra at Karnak in Upper Egypt. The Jebel Barkal was seen as the mythical place of origin of the great god Amun-Ra.¹⁰ In Napatan and Meroitic times the importance of this place for the state cult of the Kushite rulers rested upon this New Kingdom legacy.

In Lower Nubia the cult of Amun-Ra gradually became more significant during the 18th Dynasty: in the region of Aniba there was a local variant of Amun venerated as 'Lord of the Island', and it is notable that at newly founded cult sites Amun-Ra was installed as the main deity, as he was under Amenhotep III at Wadi es-Sebua as 'Lord of the Ways'.

At Amada an important development took place in the later reign of Thutmose III: in the newly founded temple there Ra-Horakhty and Amun-Ra were installed together as the main cult recipients (Fig. 8). This was the first step towards an exten-

2016, 25–26). In comparison with Ellesiya one might also consider the possibility that originally a form of Horus was represented, which was only later, probably under Sety I, transformed to Amun-Ra.

⁹ See now also THILL 2016, 294–297, who suggests to recognize in Horus *k3 nb T3-Stj* the deified Thutmose III.

¹⁰ KENDALL 2002; 2008; 2013.



Fig. 8: Thutmose III officiating before Ra and Amenhotep II before Amun-Ra in the temple of Amada (Photo: M. ULLMANN).

sive dominance of the gods of the so-called state-triad (Amun-Ra, Ra-Horakhty and Ptah), who played a major role in the Egyptian theology of the later 18th Dynasty and in the 19th Dynasty, within the cult topography of Lower Nubia during the reign of Ramesses II (see below).

The royal cult experienced a significant change during the reign of Amenhotep III with the creation of a divine manifestation of the king called 'Nebmaatra, Lord of Nubia' who was, besides Amun-Ra, the main deity at Soleb (PAMMINGER 1993; BICKEL 2013). The designation 'Lord of Nubia' (*nb T3-Stj*) had been known since the Middle Kingdom for the god Horus (see above), and was now used to denote the religious supremacy of the divine king over Nubia. A specific iconography was developed for 'Nebmaatra, Lord of Nubia' (anthropomorphic, with crescent and disc upon a base; Fig. 3), and his cult was installed also at Sedeinga, together with the cult of the queen Tiye; he was also present at the temple in Sesibi and in rock stelae at Jebel Dasha.

The religious changes of the Amarna Period in the reign of Akhenaten influenced the Egyptian cults in Nubia the same way as they did in Egypt: inscriptions and presentations of deities – in particular of the god Amun-Ra – within the temples were erased/modified, their cults – probably at least in some cases – changed to

that of the now sole god Aten. But it is largely unknown to what extent this was done. The extensive building activity of Akhenaten, especially in Upper Nubia (see above), points to a systematic reshaping of the cult topography of the southern Nubian territory in favour of the god Aten. In the aftermath of the Amarna Period, the cult of Aten was not continued, but the old cult recipients were reinstalled and most of the temples in Upper Nubia built especially for Aten seem to have been rededicated to Amun-Ra.

Tutankhamun renewed the royal cult policy of Amenhotep III by dedicating a new temple at Faras not only to Amun-Ra (and maybe Mut), but at the same time also to a divine manifestation of himself called 'Nebkheperura in the midst of *Shꜥtp-nꜥr.w*' of whom also priests are attested.

During Ramesses II's rule the religious and cultic appropriation of Nubia by the Egyptians reached its climax. Due to his exceptionally long reign of 67 years, temple building activity in Egypt and Nubia alike was more long-lasting than it was under almost all other pharaohs. The cult policy that he pursued in Nubia was in many respects a continuation of that of his predecessors, in particular of Thutmose III and Amenhotep III, as well in terms of the deities worshipped as the royal cult. He enlarged many already existing cult sites by restoring old temples or adding new parts to them, but also by augmenting them with completely new buildings, as he did, e.g., at Wadi es-Sebua. The main focus of his building activity was in Lower Nubia, where several new temples were erected, sometimes at places where no earlier Egyptian cult buildings are known. The temple at Aksha, which might have already been founded by his father Sety I, was dedicated to Amun-Ra, Ra-Horakhty and the divine Ramesses as 'living image in front of Nubia' (*hntj ꜥnh.w tp Tꜥ-Stj*).

Of special importance was the restructuring of the ritual landscape of Lower Nubia by the series of rock temples installed by Ramesses II from Beit el-Wali in the north to Abu Simbel in the south, with Gerf Hussein, Wadi es-Sebua and Derr in between (ULLMANN 2013a). These newly established and mostly large rock-cut temples (type 2.1) show a clear preference of the gods Ra-Horakhty and Amun-Ra, supplemented by Ptah. These three gods together with the cult of the divine king were the determining factors in the reshaping of the ritual landscape of Lower Nubia, which did not replace the ancient religious structure of the region built up mainly in the 18th Dynasty, but rather augmented it by a new systematically planned layer.

Since the middle of the 18th Dynasty the gods Ra-Horakhty, Amun-Ra and Ptah had become the most important gods in Egypt and were venerated all over the country.¹¹ The Egyptian theologians of this time had linked the gods together – reflected in their modern designation as the state-triad. According to then contemporary theology, these three gods had created the world with its present order and thus ultimately everything in existence. The linking up of the new temples of Ramesses II in

¹¹ For the so-called state-triad and the theological conception behind it, see ASSMANN 1983, 222–226; HORNING 2011, 233–234 and LUNDSTRÖM 1999, 322–351.

Lower Nubia with the gods of the state-triad was therefore especially well-suited to integrate the Nubian territory into the Egyptian religious cosmos. Moreover, these three gods in particular were of outstanding importance for the Egyptian royal ideology. Their theology and cult therefore formed an ideal background for the cult of the divine Ramesses.

Ramesses II started his building program in the northernmost part of Lower Nubia with a small scale rock temple at Beit el-Wali, which was very much in the earlier tradition of the 18th Dynasty and of that of his father Sety I, and then he set out for a more comprehensive plan. In this new scheme the ritual ensemble at Abu Simbel, which was planned already very early in the reign of Ramesses II, plays a major role. In my opinion the great speos at Abu Simbel was modelled after the example of the contemporary royal temples at Western Thebes, which is to say that the ritual landscape of Western Thebes functioned as a kind of prototype for the cult complex at Abu Simbel (ULLMANN 2013b). At Abu Simbel two basic elements of the West-Theban ritual landscape – a royal temple for the cult of the divine king and a cult place for the goddess Hathor – were established together as the so-called great and small speos. A similar notion might have already been implemented by Amenhotep III with the ritual landscape of Soleb – Sedeinga in Upper Nubia (see also BICKEL 2013). The transfer of the West-Theban ritual complex, which was sanctified by a long tradition and which played a very important role within the ideology of kingship in the New Kingdom, to Abu Simbel was probably seen as an excellent means of integrating Nubia still more effectively into the Egyptian religious system and especially into the royal cult.

At Abu Simbel, with the inclusion of Abu Oda, shortly before the Second Cataract, which marks the passage to Upper Nubia, a new ritual landscape was thus created by Ramesses II that on the one hand referred to Thebes, the most important cult place of that time in Egypt with its huge temple complex for Amun-Ra, king of the gods, and on the other hand combined the three most important gods of Egypt: Amun-Ra, Ra-Horakhty and Ptah including the divine Ramesses II (ULLMANN 2011). Thus, shortly before the southern border of Lower Nubia a ritual ensemble was established which united in itself the most important aspects of Egyptian theology at that time and of Egyptian ritual performance in order to create in Nubia a ritually and architecturally impressive setting for Egyptian state rituals.

Following Abu Simbel, a temple was erected at Derr, about 84 km to the north of Abu Simbel. The decoration and designation of this temple – it is called *m pr r'* 'belonging to the temple of Ra' – both show that it was connected with the main cult place of Ra-Horakhty at Heliopolis. Then, about 56 km to the north at Wadi es-Sebua, a temple was built which was connected to the main temple precinct of Amun-Ra at Thebes (it is called *m pr Jmn* 'belonging to the temple of Amun'). And finally, about 51 km further to the north at Gerf Hussein, a temple was erected which was connected to the main temple precinct of Ptah at Memphis (it is called *m pr Pth* 'belonging to the temple of Ptah').



Fig. 9: The barque of the divine Ramesses II in the south chapel of the great speos at Abu Simbel (Photo: M. ULLMANN).

Thus the three Nubian regions at Derr, Wadi es-Sebua and Gerf Hussein, which are located between the two final points Beit el-Wali in the north and Abu Simbel in the south, were each connected with one of the three gods of the state-triad, which means that they were linked up with Egypt systematically on a theological and ritual level. The many similarities between these new rock temples and in particular between the ones at Derr, Wadi es-Sebua and Gerf Hussein, show from my point of view that this reshaping of the ritual landscape of Lower Nubia was done according to a comprehensive schema, at the latest since the planning of the temple at Derr: all the temples are rock-cut sanctuaries, which means that they share a common religious significance as regards ideas of creation and regeneration; the three later temples at Derr, Wadi es-Sebua and Gerf Hussein are very close in their architectural layout; in each temple the cult of the divine king plays an important role; the royal barque in the temples at Derr, Wadi es-Sebua and Gerf Hussein refers to the one invented for the great temple at Abu Simbel, which draws an analogy between the divine king and Ra-Horakhty; moreover, references to the other previously built sanctuaries of Ramesses II in Lower Nubia can be found in the decoration of the temples.

Whether this wide-ranging ritual landscape of northern Nubia was only a notional construct of some Egyptian priests of the time of Ramesses II, or was also

reflected in some ritual reality, as for example a procession with the barque of the divine Ramesses II between his temples at Abu Simbel (Fig. 9), Derr, Wadi es-Sebua, Gerf Hussein and maybe even Beit el-Wali, cannot be answered anymore.

Tab. 1: Table of New Kingdom temples in Nubia arranged topographically from north to south (based on archaeological evidence).

Site: Location	Layout of Temple	Date	Main Cult Recipient/s	Actual Whereabouts
Debod	only two blocks in secondary use found; probably type 1	Sety II	unknown	unknown
Beit el-Wali	hemispeos, type 2.1	Rameses II, years 1–2	Amun-Ra, Ptah (?), Rameses II	1961–63 relocated to New-Kalabsha
Gerf Hussein	hemispeos, type 2.1	Rameses II, probably after year 44	Ptah, Ptah-Tatenen, Hathor, Rameses II	submerged, some parts relocated to New-Kalabsha and the Nubian Museum/Aswan
Quban ¹² / I: cult building(s) within the fortress?	only few remains of columns and other stone blocks; probably type 1	unknown ¹³	unknown, probably Horus of Quban	submerged
Quban / II: in front of the south-east corner of the fortress	layout uncertain, type 1	Rameses II (unclear whether Rameses II founded the temple or enlarged/restored it)	unknown	submerged
Quban / III: within the settlement area south of the fortress ¹⁴	type 1.1	Thutmose III (as well as the 19 th Dynasty?)	Horus of Quban	submerged
Quban / IV: at the mouth of the Wadi Allaqi, around 1 km south of the fortress	type 1.2 (so-called way station)	Amenhotep III (front part of the temple; whether he was also responsible for the rear part is not certain)	Wepwawet and/or Horus of Quban?	submerged
Wadi es-Sebua / I	hemispeos, type 2.1	Rameses II, 1 st half of the fifth decade of his reign	Amun-Ra, Ra-Horakhty, Rameses II	largely relocated 4 km to the west in 1964

Wadi es-Sebua / II: about 150–200 m south of temple I	hemispeos, type 2.1	Amenhotep III, Akhenaten, Ramesses II	first phase: Amun; second phase: divine Amenhotep III?; third phase: Amun ¹⁵	submerged, paintings in the sanctuary removed in 1964 and brought to the Egyptian Museum, Cairo
Amada / I	type 1.1	Thutmose III, Amenhotep II, Thutmose IV	Ra-Horakhty, Amun-Ra	relocated 2.8 km to the west in 1964/65
Amada / II: between temple I and the Nile	type 1.2 (so-called way station)	Sety I ¹⁶	probably Ra-Horakhty and Amun-Ra	submerged
Deir¹⁷	hemispeos, type 2.1	Ramesses II, late in the second decade of his reign until at the latest year 34	Ra-Horakhty, Amun-Ra, Ramesses II, Ptah	largely relocated to the west bank at New-Amada in 1964
Ellesiya	hemispeos, type 2.2	Thutmose III, year 51	Horus of Aniba, Satet (probably substituted by Amun-Ra under Ramesses II), Thutmose III	largely removed in 1965 and later installed within the Museo Egizio in Torino

12 The assumption of a late Middle Kingdom temple (Amenemhat III) for Amun and/or Wepwawet at Quban cannot be verified.

13 There is inscriptional evidence for a priest at Quban in the time of Ahmose, but no archaeological evidence for a temple of this date.

14 The blocks found at Dakke, c. 2.5 km to the north of Quban on the west bank with the names of Thutmose III, Sety I and Merenptah most probably originate from this cult building, but on the other hand a New Kingdom temple for Horus of Quban at Dakke itself cannot be excluded completely. These blocks (or at least some of them) are nowadays kept at New Wadi es-Sebua.

15 For the different decoration phases of this temple and a possible interpretation, see ULLMANN 2013c.

16 An earlier dating of this cult building to the reigns of Amenhotep III or Akhenaten has been discussed in the literature, but the arguments are not conclusive. The available evidence points to Sety I as the founder of the way station.

17 Inscriptional evidence indicates another temple for Ra north of the temple of Ramesses II.

Tab. 1 (continued)

Site: Location	Layout of Temple	Date	Main Cult Recipient/s	Actual Whereabouts
Aniba	type 1.1	several kings of the 18 th Dynasty, esp. Thutmose III and in the 19 th Dynasty Rameses II	Horus of Aniba	submerged, several blocks are now kept in the Egyptian Museum, Leipzig
Ibrim / I	speos, type 2.2	Amenhotep II, by the viceroy Usersatet	Horus of Aniba, Satet, Amenhotep II	largely removed in 1964/65 and later installed within the Nubian Museum in Aswan
Ibrim / II: directly south of speos I	speos, type 2.2	Hatshepsut/ Thutmose III ¹⁸	Horus of Aniba, Thutmose III, Satet, Hatshepsut	removed? ¹⁹
Ibrim / III: directly south of speos II	speos, type 2.2	Rameses II, by the viceroy Setau (between year 38 and c. year 60)	Horus of Aniba, Hathor of Faras, Rameses II	removed?
Ibrim / IV: directly south of speos III	speos, type 2.2	Thutmose III, by the viceroy Nehi	Horus of Aniba, Satet, Thutmose III	removed?
Abu Simbel / I: so-called small speos	speos, type 2.1	Rameses II, early years until about the mid third decade	Hathor of Faras, Nefertari, Rameses II	1964–68 relocated c. 180 m to the west
Abu Simbel / I: so-called great speos, about 150 m south of speos I	speos, type 2.1	Rameses II, early years until about the middle of the third decade	Ra-Horakhty, Amun-Ra, Rameses II, Ptah	1964–68 relocated c. 180 m to the west
Abu Oda ²⁰	speos, type 2.1	Horemhab	Thoth, Amun-Ra	removed (in parts?) ²¹ in 1964/65; two blocks are nowadays kept in the Nubian Museum at Aswan

<p>Faras²² / I: about 1 km north-east of the so-called Hathor rock, within the settlement</p>	<p>type 1.1²³</p> <p>Tutankhamun</p>	<p>Tutankhamun, Amun-Ra, Mut (?)</p>	<p>submerged, several blocks in the Sudan National Museum at Khartoum</p>
<p>Faras / II: at the so-called Hathor rock</p>	<p>layout uncertain, type 1</p> <p>mostly early 18th Dynasty, from Amenhotep I (?) to Thutmose III; Tutankhamun</p>	<p>Hathor of Faras, probably Isis and Senusret III</p>	<p>submerged, blocks in the Sudan National Museum at Khartoum</p>
<p>Faras / III: at the so-called Hathor rock</p>	<p>speos, type 2.2</p> <p>Rameses II, by the viceroy Setau</p>	<p>Rameses II, Hathor of Faras</p>	<p>submerged, one block in the Sudan National Museum at Khartoum</p>
<p>Aksha (Serra-West)</p>	<p>type 1.1</p> <p>Rameses II²⁴</p>	<p>Rameses II, Amun-Ra, Ra-Horakhty</p>	<p>submerged, partly preserved in the Sudan National Museum at Khartoum; some blocks in the Museum at La Plata, Argentina</p>

18 Decoration unfinished; probably made by one of the viceroys, like the other speoi at Ibrim.

19 I do not know how many of the four speoi of Ibrim were removed in 1964/65. Apart from the one which is now kept at Aswan, the others or at least one or two of them shall be installed at New Wadi es-Sebua.

20 For a more recent publication about the temple at Abu Oda, see SIDRO 2006; for the question of the barque depicted at Abu Oda and for the cult recipients, see also ULLMANN 2013b, 509–510, note 29.

21 It is unclear to what extent the temple was removed. Apart from the two blocks at Aswan, several others shall be kept at New Wadi es-Sebua.

22 365 inscribed blocks from the Thutmoside Period discovered in late secondary use at Faras belong to the so-called south temple in Buhen, about 150 inscribed blocks of Rameses II came from the temple at Aksha (KARKOWSKI 1981).

23 A small series of blocks consisting of architraves which display the viceroy Huy in veneration of the cartouches of Tutankhamun and door-jambes may well belong to magazines within the area of this temple and not, as sometimes speculated, to a chapel of Huy (compare a similar situation nearby at Aksha with blocks from doorways of temple magazines showing the viceroy Heqanakht).

24 In the magazines south-west of the temple building there were five brick rooms with stone doorways displaying the cartouches of Sety I and mentioning various gods. The foundation of the temple might therefore well date back to Sety I. The before mentioned blocks showing the viceroy Heqanakht were found nearby.

Tab. 1 (continued)

Site: Location	Layout of Temple	Date	Main Cult Recipient/s	Actual Whereabouts
Buhen / I: so-called north temple in the northern part of the outer fortress	type 1.1	Ahmosé, Amenhotep II	first: Horus of Buhen; later (starting with Amenhotep II): probably Hathor, Min-Amun, Isis	submerged, three blocks in the Sudan National Museum at Khartoum
Buhen / II: so-called south temple within the inner fortress ²⁶	type 1.2	Hatshepsut, Thutmose III (forecourt)	Horus of Buhen, Anuket, Satet	relocated to the Sudan National Museum at Khartoum
Mirgissa ²⁷ / I: so-called Hathor temple in the north-western part of the fortress	type 1.2	Hatshepsut / Thutmose III, Amenhotep III	Hathor of Mirgissa	submerged
Mirgissa / II: very close to temple I ²⁸	type 1.2	Amenhotep III (?), Ramesses I (?)	Hathor of Mirgissa, Montu of Mirgissa, Senusret III	submerged
Askut: east of the Middle Kingdom Fortress ²⁹	type 1	Thutmose III?	unknown	submerged
Uronarti: ³⁰ directly north and outside of the main fortress	type 1.2	Amenhotep I, Thutmose III, Amenhotep II	Senusret III, Montu	in situ
Semma / I: ³¹ within the fortress	type 1.2	Hatshepsut, Thutmose III	Dedwen, Senusret III, Amun-Ra	relocated to the Sudan National Museum at Khartoum
Semma / II: ²² some metres south of temple I	type 1	Thutmose I, Thutmose II	Dedwen, Senusret III (?)	submerged

Kumma: in the north-western part of the fortress	type 1.2	Thutmose II (?), Hatshepsut, Thutmose III, Amenhotep II	Khnum / Khnum-Ra, Senusret III	largely relocated to the Sudan National Museum at Khartoum
Amara-West: in the north-eastern part of the town	type 1.1	Sety I, Ramesses II ³³	Amun-Ra	in situ
Sai:³⁴ so-called temple A within the area of the New Kingdom town	type 1.2	Thutmose III, Amenhotep II, Amenhotep III	Amun-Ra	in situ
Sedeinga³⁵	probably type 1.1	Amenhotep III	Tiye, Hathor (?), Amun-Re, Nebmaatra	in situ

25 It is not clear whether during the reign of Ahmose an already existing cult building of the very late Second Intermediate Period was renewed or whether a completely new one was erected.

26 Under the north-western part of this temple, remains of the temple of Horus of Buhen from the Middle Kingdom were found.

27 Temples I and II might very well belong to one and the same cult complex, with temple II as the main cult building and temple I as a more informal area for private worship of Hathor (see the numerous votive offerings found there) (KEMP 1995, 27–29).

28 The foundation of this temple had originally been linked with Senusret III, but VERCOUTTER (1970, 189–192) explicitly stated that no cult building for the 12th and 13th Dynasty was found at Mirgissa.

29 A predecessor of this temple probably did exist in the Middle Kingdom, maybe for a deity in crocodile form (BADAWY 1964, 52–53; VOGEL 2004, 142).

30 The small temple of the 18th Dynasty replaced a cult building of Senusret III, built under his reign for his own statue cult (SEIDLMEYER 2000).

31 As at Uronarti Senusret III most probably had a chapel built for his own statue cult at Semna. The statue, depicting Senusret III in *heb-sed* garb like at Uronarti, was reinstalled in temple I in the 18th Dynasty (SEIDLMEYER 2000).

32 Only some inscribed blocks and traces of brick walls give evidence to this temple, which was substituted by temple I.

33 Work in the temple is proven for several kings of the late 19th and 20th Dynasty, until Ramesses IX.

34 Two statues of Ahmose and Amenhotep I in *heb-sed* garb found at Sai make the existence of a cult building there at the latest starting with Amenhotep I probable, but no direct archaeological evidence for it has come up yet (BUDKA 2015, 67–69). For the two statues see also Gabolde 2012, 118–120. For temple A and its different construction phases see AZIM / CARLOTTI 2012.

35 For the latest archaeological work at the temple there, see RILLY 2015.

Tab. 1 (continued)

Site: Location	Layout of Temple	Date	Main Cult Recipient/s	Actual Whereabouts
Jebel Doshā	speos, type 2.2	Thutmose III	Horus? (later replaced by Amun-Ra?), Thutmose III, Satet? ³⁶	in situ
Soleb	type 1.1	Amenhotep III, Akhenaten	Amun-Ra, Nebmaatra	in situ
Sesibi / I	type 1.2	Akhenaten, Sety I	first: Aten, later: ?	in situ
Sesibi / II: ³⁷ a few metres south of temple I	type 1.1	Amenhotep IV, Sety I, Ramesses II	first: Aten, (also Nebmaatra); later: Amun-Ra	in situ
Kerma / Dukki Gel / I: ³⁸ main temple	type 1.1	Thutmose I, ³⁹ Hatshepsut, Thutmose III, Thutmose IV	Amun-Ra	in situ
Kerma / Dukki Gel / II: west of temple I	type 1.1	Thutmose I, Hatshepsut	Amun-Ra	in situ
Kerma / Dukki Gel / III: east of temple I	type 1.1	Thutmose I, Hatshepsut, Thutmose IV	unknown	in situ
Kerma / Dukki Gel / IV: replacing temple I	type 1.1	Akhenaten; Sety I, Ramesses II, Ramesses III	first: Aten; later: Amun-Ra (?)	in situ
Kerma / Dukki Gel / V: replacing temple III	type 1.1	Akhenaten; ?	first: Aten; later: probably Amun-Ra?	in situ
Tabo (Argo Island) ⁴⁰	type 1	Amenhotep II, Thutmose IV, Amenhotep III, Ramesses II	Amun-Ra	in situ

Kawa: ⁴¹ so-called temple A	type 1.1	Tutankhamun, Taharqa	Amun-Ra	in situ
Jebel Barkal / I: ⁴² temple B 300 (sub or first)	type 1.1	Ramesses II	female deity/ies (‘Eye of Ra’ esp. Hathor)?	in situ
Jebel Barkal / II: temple B 1100	type 1.2	Horemhab (?)	female deity/ies (‘Eye of Horus’ esp. Weret-Hekau)?	in situ
Jebel Barkal / III: temple B 600 (first)	type 1.2	Thutmose IV	royal cult	in situ

36 The identity of the three completely damaged statues at the rear part of the chapel, which undoubtedly indicate the main cult recipients, is very much uncertain (see text above). The suggestion brought forth here is based on comparison with the speoi at Ellesiya and Ibrim II and IV and on the presence of Horus within the relief decoration at Jebel Doshā, as well as on evidence for Satet in several of the rock stelae nearby, which date to the reigns of Amenhotep III and Sety I (DAVIES 2004; 2015; 2017). DAVIES 2016, 25 suggests the presence of Amun-Ra already under the reign of Thutmose III.

37 The platform on which this temple was built in the early years of Amenhotep IV (before he changed his name to Akhenaten) contains unfinished drums of columns from an earlier building, which might have been an immediate predecessor of temple II (SPENCE ET AL. 2009; 2011; SPENCE/ROSE 2014).

38 The Egyptian temples of the New Kingdom at Dukki Gel were built at the site of a ceremonial centre of the Kingdom of Kerma with numerous large buildings displaying a distinctly African architecture. The information given here about the Egyptian temples and their complex building history is largely based on VALBELLE 2008; 2014; BONNET 2008; 2012, and BONNET/VALBELLE 2005. The building history of the main temple in the centre and the one of the east temple extends into Napatan and Meroitic times.

39 The building history of the temples before Thutmose IV, who replaced the mud-brick constructions with sandstone, is still difficult to reconstruct.

40 About 160 blocks from a New Kingdom temple were found in secondary use in the temple of Taharqa at Tabo. The New Kingdom temple was probably at the same spot as this later building (BONNET 2011).

41 The Egyptian toponym for Kawa points to the existence of a settlement that was already extant in the time of Akhenaten; this makes the temple slightly earlier than the one of Tutankhamun which was probably dedicated to Aten.

42 The building history of the New Kingdom temples at Jebel Barkal is still insufficiently understood. A first temple might have already been built by Thutmose III or Thutmose IV, but the evidence is scarce and the exact spot of such an earlier cult building has not been identified yet. The information given here is largely based on KENDALL 2002; 2008; 2009; KENDALL/WOLF 2011 (see also http://www.jebelbarkal.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=52&Itemid=41 [last seen 08. 08. 2016]). Most of the New Kingdom temples at Gebel Barkal were reused/rebuilt/enlarged in Napatan and Meroitic times.

Tab. 1 (continued)

Site: Location	Layout of Temple	Date	Main Cult Recipient/s	Actual Whereabouts
Jebel Barkal / IV: temple B 500 (sub, nucleus, first)	type 1.1	Akhenaten, Horemhab (?), Sety I, Ramesses II	first: Aten; later Amun-Ra	in situ

The information given here for the Egyptian temples of northern Nubia relies mainly on the habilitation thesis of the author (2007), entitled: *Architecture and Iconographical Program of the Egyptian Temples of the New Kingdom in Nubia – A Research into Morphology and Evolution of the Sacred Landscape of Ancient Nubia. Part I: Northern Nubia, from Beit el-Wali to Abu Oda*, which is currently being prepared for publication. The material for the Egyptian temples from Faras in the north to Jebel Barkal in the south has been collected for a second part of the project, but has not been analysed and interpreted in depth yet. The results of recent fieldwork in Sudan at various sites with New Kingdom temples (esp. Sai, Sedeinga, Sesibi, Kerma/Dukki Gel, Jebel Barkal) have been taken into account as far as possible, i.e. as published until 2016. A still very valuable, but in parts outdated, overview of the New Kingdom temples in Nubia is presented by HEIN 1991 where most of the references for the temples listed above can be found. The references mentioned in the footnotes here have been kept to a minimum.

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