

## Ritual Landscape in Nubia during the New Kingdom

### The Example of Miam / Aniba

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#### ABSTRACT

The religious appropriation of Nubia by the Egyptians in the New Kingdom (ca. 1550–1070 BCE) was displayed foremost by establishing dozens of temples for the cult of Egyptian deities and the sacred king in the middle Nile Valley. As in Egypt, ritual landscapes emerged on Nubian territory with cult buildings that were interrelated to each other in manifold ways (topographically, architecturally, theologically, ritually) and at various territorial levels (microcosm, macrocosm). The article aims at demonstrating the way in which this was done by examining as an example the ritual landscape which emerged around the fortified town at Miam/Aniba in Dyn. 18, incorporating the rock temple at Ellesiya to the north and the small *speoi* at Ibrim to the south.

**KEYWORDS:** *ritual landscape – Egyptians in Nubia – Egyptian temple – Aniba – Ibrim – Ellesiya*

Immediately following the (re-)conquering of Nubia in early Dyn. 18, the Egyptians started to set up a new religious topography for the land south of the 1st cataract.<sup>1</sup> Along with the military conquest of Nubia, cults for Egyptian deities were installed from the 1st cataract in the north as far south as the Gebel Barkal at the 4th cataract. In Lower Nubia, cults which 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, in geographical scale as well as on a mental level. As a result, Nubia became firmly tied to the Egyptian mainland not just under military, administrative, and economic aspects, but also by religion and state-ideology. The most visible remains of this religious take-over of Nubia undoubtedly were the temples for Egyptian deities, which were erected and run by the Egyptian authorities on Nubian territory. 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 Gebel Barkal in the south. Of course, the number of

<sup>1</sup> For this and the following introductory remarks, see Hein, *Ramessidische Bautätigkeit*; Kormysheva, “Kulte der ägyptischen Götter;” Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 157–283; Ullmann, “Architektur und Dekorationsprogramm;” idem, “Überlegungen zur kultischen Strukturierung Nubiens;” idem, “Egyptian Temples in Nubia;” Zibelius-Chen, “Nubien wird ägyptische Kolonie.”

temples in New Kingdom Nubia must have been originally 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 built in the last century at Aswan. As far as our present knowledge goes, these temples were, as to architecture, decoration program, and ritual performances, 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). In the following, I would like to demonstrate the way in which this was done by having a close look at the ritual landscape that emerged around the town of Aniba (Egyptian Miam) in Dyn. 18, incorporating not only the temple within the fortified town, but also the rock temple at Ellesiya about 6 km to the north and the small rock shrines at Ibrim about 3 km to the south.<sup>2</sup>

Miam was located in a small fertile basin at the western side of the Nile, about 230 km south of the traditional border zone of Egypt at the 1st cataract.<sup>3</sup> The Egyptian toponym *Mj<sup>c</sup>m* not only designated the settlement of the same name, but extended to a wider area to the north and south, enclosing Ellesiya, Ibrim, Toshka, and the islands Ibrim and el-Râs.<sup>4</sup> Already Senwosret I had established an Egyptian fortress at Miam in the early Middle Kingdom at about 1950 BCE.<sup>5</sup> At the beginning of Dyn. 18, at about 1550 BCE, after the re-conquering of Lower Nubia by the Egyptians, the old fortress was revived and enlarged to a fortified settlement of about 200 to 400 square meters. Miam became an important center of the Egyptian administration in Lower Nubia from early Dyn. 18 till late Dyn. 20.<sup>6</sup> Nearby the town was a huge necropolis with Egyptian style burials.<sup>7</sup> The Egyptian officials, priests, the military, and their families living at Miam were buried there. There is also evidence for Nubian C-Group people living nearby, particularly in the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period, but in a process of rapid acculturation during Dyn. 18, the material culture of the C-Group was more and more dominated by the Egyptian culture.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup> A comprehensive treatment of the New Kingdom cult installations at Aniba, Ibrim, and Ellesiya is not within the scope of this article (for this see Ullmann, "Architektur und Dekorationsprogramm"). The focus here lies on the emergence and the character of the ritual landscape that was established by the Egyptians in the region of Aniba during the New Kingdom.

<sup>3</sup> Säve-Söderbergh, *Ägypten und Nubien*, 83; Steindorff, *Aniba I*, 17–19; Trigger, *History and Settlement*, 34.

<sup>4</sup> Steindorff, *Aniba I*, 21; Zibelius, *Afrikanische Orts- und Völkernamen*, 120–122.

<sup>5</sup> For the history of Miam and its archaeological remains in general, see Hein, *Ramessidische Bautätigkeit*, 27–29; PM VII, 75–81; Säve-Söderbergh, *Ägypten und Nubien*, passim; Säve-Söderbergh, "Aniba;" Steindorff, *Aniba I+II*; Trigger, *History and Settlement*, 109, 152–153; Vogel, *Ägyptische Festungen*, 219–222; Weigall, *Report of the Antiquities of Lower Nubia*, 115–119.

<sup>6</sup> Müller, *Verwaltung Nubiens*.

<sup>7</sup> Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 36–247; for a list of cemeteries around Aniba, see Trigger, *History and Settlement*, 180–181.

<sup>8</sup> Spiekermann, *Aniba*; Steindorff, *Aniba I*.

The religious center of Miam must have been the temple in the northwestern corner of the fortified town, which was excavated by German Expeditions under Georg Steindorff in the earlier 20th century.<sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately, the temple site was so destroyed that only a heap of rubbish with numerous sandstone clips and some blocks, fragments of columns and stelae remained. The only *in situ* remains were a massive mudbrick building, interpreted as the northern pylon of the temple and a mudbrick wall seen as the northern temple wall.<sup>10</sup> No reconstruction of the temple layout was possible, but in order to give an impression of the presumed size of the building, the ground plan of the temple of Ramesses III at Karnak was integrated into the plan of the town.<sup>11</sup> This led to much confusion by some colleagues, who took this Theban temple plan as actually being the one of the Horus temple at Miam!<sup>12</sup>

According to the priestly titles attested predominantly in the tombs at Miam, but also in graffiti within the wider area, a temple for Horus of Miam must have existed there from early Dyn. 18 onwards until late Dyn. 20.<sup>13</sup> Most probably a small mudbrick temple erected under the first kings of Dyn. 18 was substituted by a larger sandstone temple under the reigns of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. The latter is indicated by some inscribed cartouche fragments from the temple and some objects belonging to a foundation deposit.<sup>14</sup> Inscribed fragments attest to construction, or at least to decoration work, under the later kings of Dyn. 18,<sup>15</sup> as well as by Ramesses II in Dyn. 19.<sup>16</sup> Activity within the temple during Dyn. 20 is attested by a fragment, probably from a stela, with the name of Ramesses IV,<sup>17</sup> by the installation of a royal statue during the reign of Ramesses VI (see below), by a column fragment with the name of Ramesses X (which was probably only added secondarily),<sup>18</sup> and by the priesthood documented from the first half of Dyn. 18 until late in Dyn. 20.<sup>19</sup> At least in later Dyn. 18 and in Ramesside times this temple must have been of medium size and economically well-equipped. This is proven by the quite differentiated and numerous priesthood attached to the temple at this time.<sup>20</sup>

The layout and the decoration program of the temple can not be reconstructed anymore, but, based upon the decorated fragments and stelae from the temple area and the information gained by the tombs nearby, some conclusions can be drawn as to the deities venerated at Miam. The local main deity was undoubtedly "Horus, Lord of Miam." The god

9 PM VII, 81; Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 19–29, pls. 7–14, sheet 8 with fig. 16.

10 Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 19.

11 Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 19, sheet 8 with fig. 16.

12 E.g., Badawy, *Architecture III*, 276.

13 Müller, *Verwaltung Nubiens*, 213–220; Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 253.

14 Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 21 (no. 5), 22 (no. 14 [pl. 8, 8]), no. 23 [pl. 10, 21]), 23 (no. 26 [pl. 10, 24]), 29 with pl. 14.

15 Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 22 (no. 13 [pl. 9, 16]), no. 11 [pl. 8, 14]); Weigall, *Report of the Antiquities of Lower Nubia*, 116.

16 Hein, *Ramessidische Bautätigkeit*, 27–28; Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 21 (no. 4 [pl. 7, 3a+b]), no. 6 [pl. 7, 4a+b]), 23 (no. 32 [pl. 10, 30]), no. 33 [pl. 10, 31a]).

17 Hein, *Ramessidische Bautätigkeit*, 28–29; KRI VI, 63; Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 24 (no. 41 [pl. 11, 38]).

18 Hein, *Ramessidische Bautätigkeit*, 29; KRI VI, 679; Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 21 (no. 3).

19 See footnote 13.

20 See footnote 13.

Horus had already been installed as the supreme local deity by the Egyptians in early Dyn. 12, when the first Egyptian settlement had been founded at the place.<sup>21</sup> The origins of the falcon deity Horus lay at Hierakonpolis in Upper Egypt, one of the first centers of the emerging Egyptian state and its sacred kingship in the later fourth millennium BCE. Since Horus was intrinsically tied to the Egyptian concepts of sovereignty, royal power, and its legitimization, he was especially suitable to corroborate the Egyptian demands on a foreign land like Nubia. The Egyptians expressed their claims by denoting Horus as “Lord of Nubia” (*nb T3 Stj*) and by installing him as the main local deity at their major sites already in Middle Kingdom Nubia: “Horus, Lord of Baki/Quban” at the fortress of Baki/Quban in northern Lower Nubia, “Horus, Lord of Miam/Aniba” at the fortress of Miam/Aniba in southern Lower Nubia, and “Horus, Lord of Buhen” at the 2nd cataract.



Fig. 7.1 Fragment of a stela with the depiction of the cult barque for Horus of Miam (Steindorff, *Aniba II*, pl. 12, 49).

A stela found in the temple area attests a portable cult barque for Horus of Miam (fig. 7.1).<sup>22</sup> Thus, we have indirect evidence for a cult statue of Horus of Miam used during festival processions, and a huge sandstone socle from the temple area might have been used as the resting place of the barque inside the temple.<sup>23</sup>

The ram-headed standard besides the Horus barque on the stela (fig. 7.1) indicates that along with Horus, Lord of Miam, the god Amun-Ra received a cult within the temple at Miam. Amun-Ra is attested on a wall relief from the temple dating in mid Dyn. 18<sup>24</sup> and on several stelae from the temple area.<sup>25</sup> We also know about male and female cult personnel of Amun at Miam.<sup>26</sup> A close connection in the cult of these two deities at Miam is also indicated by the iconography of a statue of a divine manifestation of Ramesses VI, which was dedicated to the temple by Pennut, deputy viceroy at Miam at the time of Ramesses

<sup>21</sup> Steindorff, *Aniba I*, 21–22. For the various Lower Nubian Horus gods in general, see Kormysheva, “Kulte der ägyptischen Götter,” 139–141; Säve-Söderbergh, *Ägypten und Nubien*, 201–202; Török, *Between Two Worlds*, 212. In LGG V some references for the Lower Nubian Horus gods can be found under their respective entries, but these are by no way extensive. For the various Horus gods in Nubia during Dyn. 18, see also Kormysheva, “Der Gott Horus.”

<sup>22</sup> Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 26 (no. 51 [pl. 12, 49]).

<sup>23</sup> Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 19, 29 (pl. 13, 58).

<sup>24</sup> Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 22 (no. 13 [pl. 9, 16]). The name of the king and of Amun was erased—probably during the Amarna period—and later restored.

<sup>25</sup> Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 24 (no. 41 [pl. 11, 38]); for this stela, see also KRI VI, 63; Hein, *Ramessidische Bautätigkeit*, 28–29; Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 24 (no. 43 [pl. 11, 40]), 26 (no. 48 [pl. 12, 46]), 27 (no. 55 [pl. 13, 53]).

<sup>26</sup> Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 248 (no. 18), 253.

VI. The statue, depicted in his tomb at Miam, shows the divine manifestation of the king holding two standards.<sup>27</sup> One with falcon head and sun disk represents Horus, the other one with ram head and sun disk Amun-Ra. Thus, the supreme deity of all of Egypt at that time, Amun-Ra, King of Gods, seems to have been venerated alongside the supreme local deity Horus, Lord of Miam, in the temple at Miam.

In addition to the nationwide deity Amun-Ra, King of Gods, there also existed a special local form called “Amun-Ra, Lord of the Island” (*Jmn-R<sup>c</sup> nb p3 jw*), resp. “Amun-Ra in the midst of the island of Miam” (*Jmn-R<sup>c</sup> hrj-jb p3 jw n Mj<sup>c</sup>m*) at Miam.<sup>28</sup> These epithets most probably refer to one of the two big Nile islands, Ibrim and el-Râs by their modern names, directly to the north of Miam. At one of them, maybe Ibrim, which was closer to the town, a cult place for this special form of Amun-Ra seems to have been located. But since—at least to my knowledge—there were no archaeological investigations of the islands, we don’t have any proof for this.

We know of several female deities, mostly by stelae and priestly titles, who were venerated alongside with Horus at Miam. First of all, Isis as “the Great One,” “Mother of Gods,” “Lady of the Sky,” “Mistress of Both Lands,” without any cult topographical specification.<sup>29</sup> Besides Isis, Hathor as “Lady of Elephantine” received a cult at Miam.<sup>30</sup> The evidence from Ellesiya and Ibrim shows that also “Satet, Lady of Elephantine,” who together with Khnum and Anuket formed the divine triad of the traditional border zone of Egypt at the first cataract, played an important role at Miam (see below).

Werethekau, Renenutet, Ptah, and Thot, “Lord of Hermopolis, who is in the midst of *Jmn [hrj-jb]*”<sup>31</sup> are each attested once on stelae found within the area of the main temple at Aniba.<sup>32</sup>

Also the royal cult was integrated in the temple at Miam. We have already seen that in later Dyn. 20 the statue of a divine manifestation of Ramesses VI was set up in the temple during the reign of this king.<sup>33</sup> This divine manifestation was called “Ramesses VI, son of Amun, who is a beloved one like Horus, Lord of Miam” (*p3 twt n (R<sup>c</sup>-msj-sw Jmn-hr-hpš=f ntr-hq3-Jwnw) s3 Jmn mrw.tj mj Hr<sup>w</sup> nb Mj<sup>c</sup>m*). Thus the cult of the divine king was put in close connection to the supreme local deity.

27 Steindorff, *Aniba II*, pl. 102. For further information about the tomb and the statue endowment, see below with footnote 33.

28 Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 26 (no. 48 [pl. 12, 46]), 27 (no. 55 [pl. 13, 53]).

29 Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 23 (no. 34 [pl. 10, 31b]), 24 (no. 43 [pl. 11, 40]), 26 (no. 48 [pl. 12, 46]), no. 49 [pl. 12, 47]). For a priest of Isis (*hm-ntr n Js.t*), see Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 247 (no. 27).

30 A priest of Hathor, Lady of Elephantine (*hm-ntr n Hw.t-Hrw nb(.t) 3bw*) is attested in a tomb of late Dyn. 20 at Aniba; see Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 248 (no. 17). For a possible, but in no way certain, depiction of Hathor in the main temple of the town, see Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 22 (no. 19 [pl. 9, 17]).

31 The toponym refers to the area at the Gebel Adḏa, slightly south of Abu Simbel, but at the east side of the Nile.

32 Steindorff, *Aniba II*, 23 (no. 34 [pl. 10, 31b]), 24–25 (no. 44a [pl. 11, 42]), 26 (no. 48 [pl. 12, 46]), 27 (no. 55 [pl. 13, 53]).

33 For the tomb of Pennut in general, see Hein, *Ramessidische Bautätigkeit*, 29 with some further literature; PM VII, 76–77. For the statue endowment, see Fitzenreiter, “Statuenstiftung und religiöses Stiftungswesen,” Helck, *Materialien II*, 295–297; Helck, “Die Stiftung des PN-NWT,” KRI VI, 350–352; Steindorff, *Aniba II*, pl. 101.

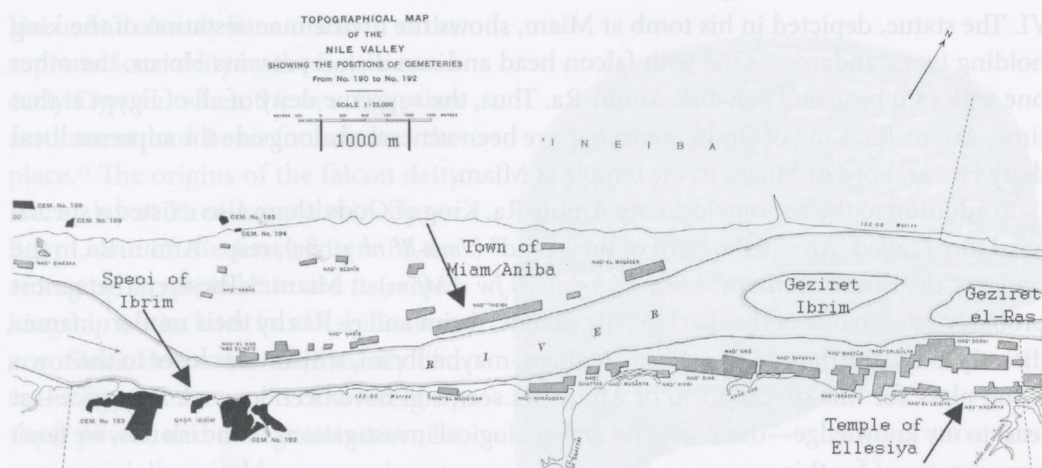


Fig. 7.2 Map of the region of Aniba (based on Emery and Kirwan, *Wadi es Sebua and Adindan II*, pls. 64–65).

A rock stela north of Miam, at Tonqala, attests the dedication of a statue of a divine manifestation of Ramesses II named “Ramesses II, who is a beloved one like Horus” (*p3 twt n (R<sup>c</sup>-msj-sw mrj-Jmn) mrw.tj mj Ḥrw*).<sup>34</sup> Since the stela shows Ramesses II offering before Horus, Lord of Miam, there can be no doubt that the statue was housed in the temple at Miam. And it is surely not by chance but to express a certain continuity within the royal cult that the name form of the divine manifestation of Ramesses VI was modeled after the older one of Ramesses II.

At about the same time, when most probably the town temple of Horus, Lord of Miam, was enlarged or rebuilt in stone during the reigns of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, the ritual landscape of Miam was extended by a small *speos* cut into the southern lower part of a huge and tall rock, at a place later called Ibrim, located at the eastern side of the Nile, about 3 km to the south of the town of Miam (fig. 7.2).<sup>35</sup>

34 PM VII, 90; Weigall, *Report of the Antiquities of Lower Nubia*, 113, pl. 64, 7; KRI III, 102; Hein, *Ramessidische Bautätigkeit*, 26; Helck, “Die Statue des *St3w* aus Wadi es-Sebua,” 105–106; Habachi, “Setau, the Famous Viceroy of Ramses II,” 130.

35 There is some confusion in the literature about the exact location of the town of Miam/Aniba in relation to the *speoi* at Ibrim. The description of Miam/Aniba as opposite of Ibrim relates to the Nubian village Ibrim, but not to the *speoi* of the New Kingdom, which are farther south. In most cases it is said that Ibrim lies to the south of Miam/Aniba, but sometimes it is described as being to the north of Aniba. A thorough research in the earlier literature (late 19th century, first half of 20th century) about the region brought up the following results: First, the names of some of the Nubian villages, which lay close to the remains of the ancient town of Miam, changed over time. Second, the rising of the old dam at Aswan between 1929 and 1933 led to the migration of entire villages to higher ground nearby. In the case of Aniba this meant that the village of the 1960s was situated 6 km farther south than the old village of Aniba, where Weigall had seen the remains of the ancient fortified town of Miam in 1906 and where Steindorff had conducted excavations at the town site and the cemeteries nearby from 1912–1914 and again in 1930/31. This fact is not always considered or explained in the literature. E.g. the map in Caminos, *Shrines*, pl. 2 shows under the name of Aniba the Nubian village of

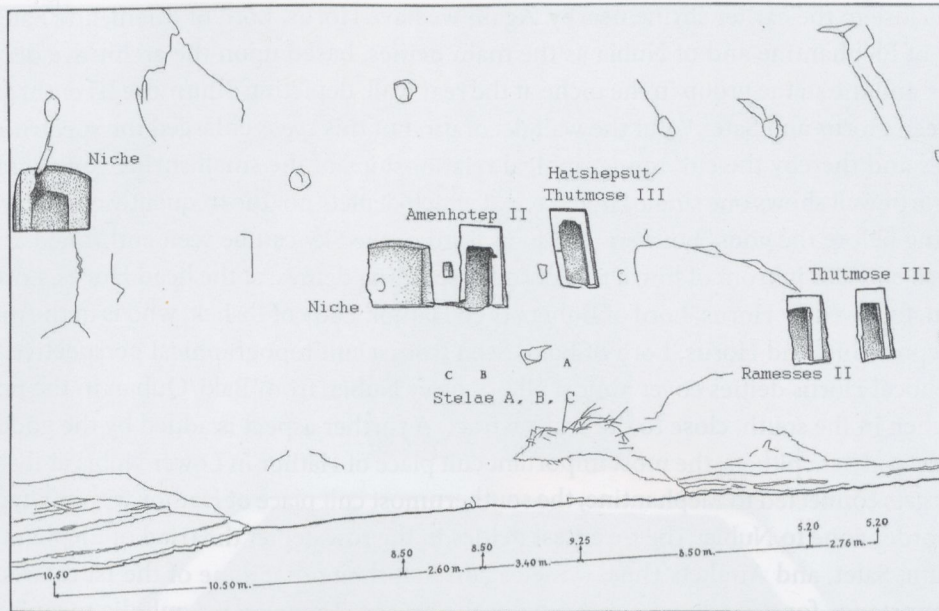


Fig. 7.3 Plan indicating the position of the *speoi* at the west side of the middle rock of Ibrim (based on Caminos, *Shrines*, pl. 5).

The *speos* was oriented westwards towards the Nile and lay several meters above the water level (fig. 7.3).<sup>36</sup> It consisted of only a single room, 3.27 m deep, between 2.08 and 2.34 m wide, and 1.96 m high. Due to unknown reasons the wall decoration of the *speos* was never completed, but inscriptions at the entrance and the rear wall attest its date into the joint reign of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. The name of Hatshepsut was later removed. The architrave at the entrance depicts Horus, Lord of Miam, and Satet, Lady of Elephantine, giving life towards Thutmose and Hatshepsut, respectively.<sup>37</sup> The same constellation appears inside in the statue group at the rear wall:<sup>38</sup> to the north Horus, Lord of Miam, and Thutmose III, to the south Hatshepsut (her statue was later chiselled out) and Satet, Lady of Elephantine, who is also designated as Lady of Nubia (*nb.t T3-Stj*). Since the statue group at the rear end of the cult axis undoubtedly indicated the cult receivers in the small temple, we may conclude that the supreme local deity Horus, Lord of Miam, and Satet as Lady of Elephantine and of Nubia were the main deities here. They were supplemented by the two reigning sovereigns of Egypt, who thus became integrated in the local pantheon. This interpretation is confirmed by the decoration of the architrave mentioned before.

A few years later, during the sole reign of Thutmose III, a second *speos* was cut into the rock at Ibrim, about 11 m to the south of the first *speos*.<sup>39</sup> In this case, the wall decoration attests that the viceroy of Kush, that is, the highest official of the Egyptian state in Nubia, named Nehi, was responsible for it. The size of the small room and its general layout is

the 1960s, whereas the ancient Miam/Aniba had been situated farther north, slightly to the east of Naga el-Tahûna.

<sup>36</sup> Caminos, *Shrines*, 50–58 (shrine no. 3).

<sup>37</sup> Caminos, *Shrines*, 50–51, pl. 18, fig. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Caminos, *Shrines*, 56–58, pl. 21–22.

<sup>39</sup> Caminos, *Shrines*, 35–43, pls. 7–11 (shrine no. 1).

quite close to the earlier shrine nearby. Again we have Horus, Lord of Miam, and Satet as Lady of Elephantine and of Nubia as the main deities, based upon the architrave decoration,<sup>40</sup> and the statue group in the niche at the rear wall, depicting Thutmose III enthroned between Horus and Satet.<sup>41</sup> But the wall decoration of this *speos* enlarged the spectrum of deities and thereby the cult topographical relationships of the small shrine considerably. The north wall shows one single large scene,<sup>42</sup> which depicts not the frequently encountered 'offering before the gods,' but here Amun as Lord of the Sky can be seen enthroned at the eastern end and in front of him a row of seven standing deities: at the head Horus, Lord of Miam, followed by Horus, Lord of Buhen, then Hathor, Lady of Ibshek, who is in the midst of Elephantine, and Horus, Lord of Baki. Seen from a cult topographical perspective, the three local Horus deities cover almost all of Lower Nubia, from Baki/Quban in the north to Buhen in the south, close to the 2nd cataract. A further aspect is added by the goddess Hathor and her epithets: the most important cult place of Hathor in Lower Nubia at Ibshek/Faras gets connected to Elephantine, the southernmost cult place of Hathor within Egypt at the border zone to Nubia. The three last deities in the row depict the triad of Elephantine: Khnum, Satet, and Anuket. Thus, we see again that the border zone of the 1st cataract is of importance for the religious meaning of the *speos*.<sup>43</sup> The overall symbolic meaning of this scene might be characterized as putting the supreme local deity Horus of Miam into a religious network spanning from the area of the 1st cataract in the north to the 2nd cataract in the south, and at the same time relating this network to Amun, Lord of the Sky, as the supreme cosmic deity of all of Egypt.

Parallel to this scene, the decoration of the south wall has to be understood.<sup>44</sup> Here, we see the enthroned sovereign upon earth, Thutmose III, who receives adoration by his viceroy as the highest representative of the Egyptian administration of Nubia, followed by people carrying the products of Nubia towards the king. The message is clear: As Amun rules within the religious realm over Nubia, Thutmose III rules over Nubia in a political and economic way.

Behind the king, two deities are depicted which are closely connected to the important cult place of Coptos in Upper Egypt: Isis, the Great, Lady of Coptos, and Min, Lord of Coptos.

Some time later, in the reign of Amenhotep II, the viceroy Usersatet had a third small *speos* cut into the rock at Ibrim (fig. 7.4).<sup>45</sup> It is now kept in the Nubian Museum at Aswan. The general layout of this shrine was quite similar to the one of Thutmose III. The local Horus of Miam and Satet of Elephantine again were the main deities. But in this case a cultic connection to Hierakonpolis/Nekhen, the very ancient place of origin of the god

<sup>40</sup> Caminos, *Shrines*, 35, pl. 7.

<sup>41</sup> Caminos, *Shrines*, 42–43, pl. 11.

<sup>42</sup> Caminos, *Shrines*, 37–39, pl. 9.

<sup>43</sup> For the divine triad of the 1st cataract region in Egyptian Temples of the Middle and New Kingdom in Nubia, see the remarks in Ullmann, "Egyptian Temples in Nubia," 510, 519 with footnote 8.

<sup>44</sup> Caminos, *Shrines*, 39–42, pl. 10.

<sup>45</sup> Caminos, *Shrines*, 59–75, pls. 23–35 (shrine no. 4).





Fig. 7.4 *Speos* of Usersatet from the time of Amenhotep II in the Nubian Museum, Aswan (photo by Martina Ullmann).

Horus, was introduced by depicting Horus of Nekhen, Lord of Upper Egypt, supplemented by the goddess Nekhbet who is also associated with Nekhen.<sup>46</sup>

More than 150 years later, in the time of Ramesses II, the rock at Ibrim still was of religious significance. The viceroy Setau had a fourth *speos* added, very close to the one of Thutmose III (see fig. 7.3).<sup>47</sup> Size and ground plan follow the earlier examples, but here much more emphasis is laid upon the king, who is shown being enthroned on both side walls with the viceroy, his wife, and members of the viceregal administration of Nubia standing in front of him. Horus of Miam still is the main male deity of the *speos*, being shown enthroned together with the divine king in the niche at the rear wall, but his female counterpart is not Satet of Elephantine anymore, but Hathor of Ibshek/Faras.<sup>48</sup> We may interpret this as a shift away from the Egyptian–Nubian border zone to the main Lower Nubian cult place of Hathor. The particular importance of Hathor within the royal ideology and cult, which is very prominent in several of the Nubian temples of Ramesses II (esp. at Gerf Hussein, Abu Simbel, Faras), may have prompted this change.

Apart from the statues in the niche, no deities are depicted in this *speos*. Ramesses II as part of the local pantheon on one side and as ruler over the Egyptian province Nubia on the other one is in the center of this small cult installation. The embedding of the *speos* into

<sup>46</sup> Caminos, *Shrines*, 62–65, pl. 27.

<sup>47</sup> Caminos, *Shrines*, 44–49, pls. 12–16 (shrine no. 2).

<sup>48</sup> Caminos, *Shrines*, 49, pl. 16.

a larger religious network like in Dyn. 18 seems—at least in this specific example—not to be of importance anymore.

Let me add a general remark concerning the four *speoi* in the rock of Ibrim: These single-chambered small rock temples are often regarded as private monuments of the viceroys, who were responsible for their installation and who also show up in the wall decoration.<sup>49</sup> But in my opinion this interpretation is somewhat misleading. The viceroys acted on behalf of their king, they were responsible for all the state-initiated building activity in Nubia, and sometimes also left inscriptions and images of themselves in the larger temples. The cult statues at the rear of the rock shrines in question always attest the local main deities together with the royal cult, and the wall decoration documents the fulfillment of the duties of the viceroys and other officials towards the king. In Dyn. 18 it also has a profoundly religious dimension by embedding the shrine into a larger religious network. First and foremost these shrines are therefore monuments of the official state cult and only secondarily they also might have served as memorials for the viceroys.

The primary role of the local main deity Horus of Miam within all four *speoi* makes it highly probable that his main temple within the town of Miam, about 3 km to the north, was the most important point of reference for these small cult buildings. Thus, the *speoi* give evidence for an enlargement of the religious topography of Miam towards the east side of the Nile, starting with Hatsheput and Thutmose III (see fig. 7.2). The choice of the location might have been determined by natural factors: The *speoi* were all located in the middle one of three huge, tall rocks, which clearly dominated the Nile valley in this area. Because of these specific natural characteristics, a special sacred meaning was assigned to the rocks, which made them an ideal location for installing cult places.

The theological significance of rock-cut temples in Egypt in general was determined by the religious concept of a *dw w'cb*, that is, a sacred/religiously pure mountain.<sup>50</sup> Several examples in Egypt and Nubia exist that show the transfer of this concept to mountains or rocks with outstanding natural features. Certain mythical qualities were assigned by the Egyptians to these places. They were seen as primeval dwelling places of the creator god. Therefore, a special regenerative power belonged to cult installations inside these rocks. The rituals enacted within the rock temples made use of this creative power in order to keep the cosmos going.

Since there is no evidence for a daily cult or for priests attached exclusively to the *speoi* at Ibrim, and by also taking into account the topography, which made access to the cult installations quite difficult during some periods of the year, most probably these *speoi* were only visited during certain local festivals for Horus of Miam.

Soon after the installation of the first two *speoi* at Ibrim, towards the very end of the reign of Thutmose III, another enlargement of the ritual landscape of Miam took place. Again a location was chosen at the eastern side of the Nile, but this time about 6 km to the north of the town of Miam, close to the modern village of Ellesiya (see fig. 7.2). And again the new temple was hewn into the rock, but this was a bit more ambitious project than the

49 E.g., Hein, *Ramessidische Bautätigkeit*, 113.

50 For the toponym *dw w'cb*, see the listing of the records and the interpretation at Thiem, *Speos von Gebel es-Silsileh*, 23–24 with footnote 78; for the meaning, see also Gundlach, “Mentuhotep IV. und Min,” 107–114; Shirun-Grumach, *Offenbarung, Orakel und Königsnovelle*, 32–37; Adrom, “Der Gipfel der Frömmigkeit,” 13–16.

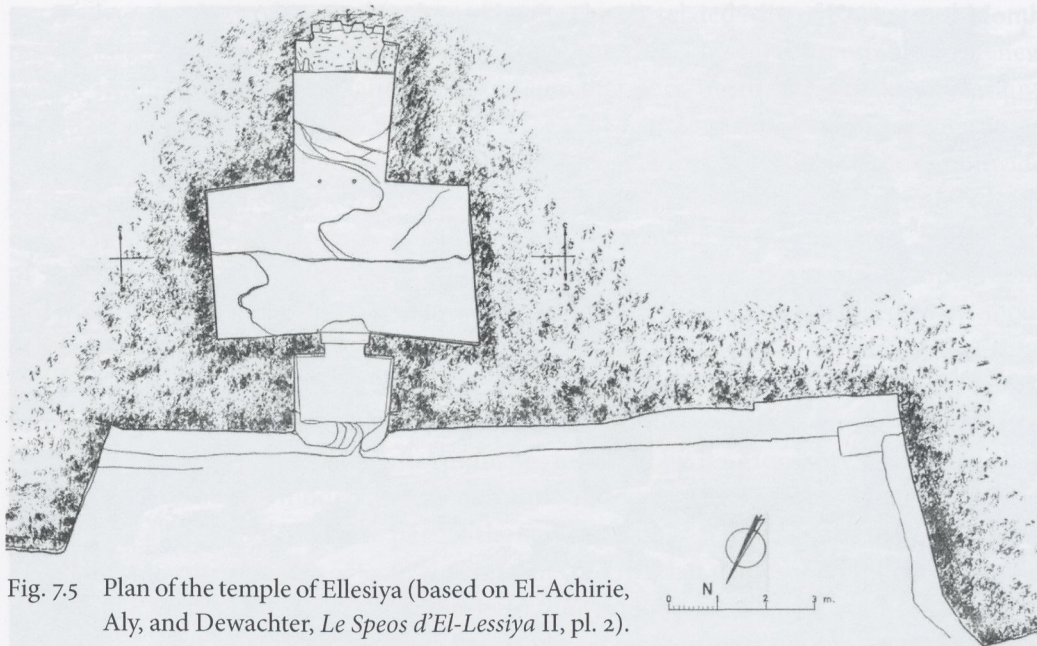


Fig. 7.5 Plan of the temple of Ellesiya (based on El-Achirie, Aly, and Dewachter, *Le Speos d'El-Lessiya II*, pl. 2).

very small *speoi* at Ibrim.<sup>51</sup> Two rock stelae of Thutmose III that are flanking the entrance provide a date for the building in year 51 of his reign.<sup>52</sup> Some parts of the temple decoration, which were destroyed during the Amarna period, were restored in the later half of the reign of Ramesses II by his viceroy Setau, who left a rock stela at the façade<sup>53</sup> and two graffiti in the sanctuary.<sup>54</sup> The temple consists of an entrance, a very small antechamber, a square room (5.45 m wide and 3.3 m deep), and the small sanctuary with a niche at the rear wall for three enthroned statues, all arranged along an east–west axis (fig. 7.5). In front of the rock-cut rooms was a quite large courtyard (16.8 m wide and up to 5 m deep in the south). Holes in the wall above the entrance indicate that a wooden roof covered parts of it (fig. 7.6).

In 1965, the temple of Ellesiya was removed from its original location due to the flooding of the area caused by the High Dam project in Aswan and given to Italy as gratification for the work and the funds provided by Italy for the UNESCO Campaign for Safeguarding the Nubian Monuments. In 1970, it was re-erected in the Museo Egizio in Torino.<sup>55</sup>

The wall decoration, but also the images and texts on the stelae at the entrance, attest that the local Horus, Lord of Miam, was the main deity of the temple, supplemented by the nationwide supreme god Amun. The statue group at the rear wall of the sanctuary, displayed—by its position at the end of the cult axis of the temple, by the neighboring

<sup>51</sup> Curto, *Lo speos di Ellesija*; idem, *Il tempio di Ellesija*; Desroches-Noblecourt, *Le Speos d'El-Lessiya I*; El-Achirie, Aly, and Dewachter, *Le Speos d'El-Lessiya II*; Gundlach "Der Felstempel Thutmosis' III. bei Ellesija;" Hein, *Ramessidische Bautätigkeit*, 26–27; Konrad, "Der Hemispeos von Ellesija;" PM VII, 90–91.

<sup>52</sup> For the two stelae, see Klug, *Königliche Stelen*, 169–176, and Laskowski, "Thutmose III," 214–215.

<sup>53</sup> Curto, *Il tempio di Ellesija*, 58; KRI III, 102, 9–15; PM VII, 91 (c).

<sup>54</sup> Curto, *Il tempio di Ellesija*, 74–75; KRI III, 103, 4–5.

<sup>55</sup> Curto, *Lo speos di Ellesija*; idem, *Il tempio di Ellesija*.

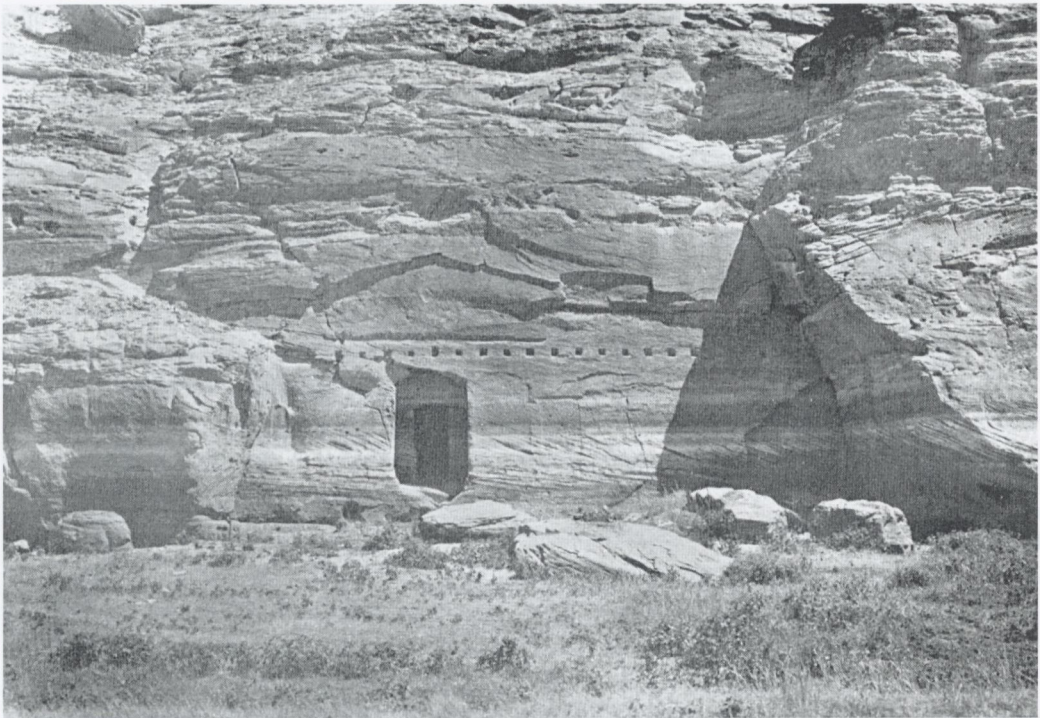


Fig. 7.6 The temple of Ellesiya at its original location with the courtyard and the entrance (Desroches-Noblecourt, *Le Speos d'El-Lessiya* I, pl. 5).

offering bearers, and by the remains of the huge altar in front of it—the main deities of the temple.<sup>56</sup> The problem is that it was utterly destroyed and that parts of it were reworked in Ramesside times. After these modifications, the triad displayed the enthroned king Thutmose III in the center, flanked by Horus of Miam to the south and Amun to the north. These identifications are attested by the inscriptions. But strangely enough the figure of Horus has definitely female forms. Thus, based upon the appearance of Satet within the wall decoration and at the southern stela of Thutmose from the entrance, where in most cases Satet clearly matches Horus of Miam, it was—in my opinion, rightfully—suggested, that originally Satet was shown to the right of the king and that Horus had the position to his left.<sup>57</sup> This arrangement would also be in agreement with the situation in the *speoi* of Dyn. 18 at Ibrim (see above).

The theological conception of the temple at Ellesiya as it was designed under Thutmose III combined—in my opinion—two different layers of meaning or religious relationships. One we might call the Amun layer. It connected the new temple to the Egyptwide import-

<sup>56</sup> Curto, *Il tempio di Ellesija*, 66; idem, *Lo speos di Ellesija*, 87, pl. 20; Desroches-Noblecourt, *Le Speos d'El-Lessiya* I, 19–20, pl. 36; El-Achirie, Aly, and Dewachter, *Le Speos d'El-Lessiya* II, pl. 39.

<sup>57</sup> See Curto, *Il tempio di Ellesija*, 39 with footnote 18 and 66; also Klug, *Königliche Stelen*, 175. For different opinions which can not be discussed within the scope of this article, see Gundlach “Der Felstempel Thutmosis’ III. bei Ellesija,” 76 with footnote 34; Konrad, “Der Hemispeos von Ellesija,” 241–242 with footnote 87; Laboury, *La statuaire Thoutmosis III*, 98–99; Seidel, *Die königlichen Statuengruppen*, 158–159.

ant Theban theology of Amun<sup>58</sup> (enlarged by the closely related Min of Koptos and Month of Armant<sup>59</sup>). The other one is the Horus of Miam layer.<sup>60</sup> It served to establish the new temple within the local ritual landscape of Miam; therefore, the local supreme god became the main deity, with Satet as the main goddess of the Egyptian–Nubian border zone as his female counterpart. The joined veneration of the local Horus of Miam and the nationwide Amun is characteristic for the ritual landscape of Miam on the whole. We have already observed it within the town temple at Aniba and in some of the shrines at Ibrim. At the time of Thutmose III, the embedding of the temple at Ellesiya within the local cult topography was more important than the transregional Amun layer, but this had changed when about 200 years later under Ramesses II restoration work was done in the temple. At that time the importance in the temples of Lower Nubia had clearly shifted from the local Nubian forms of Egyptian deities towards the so-called state gods of Egypt, who were venerated throughout the country, first of all Amun-Ra, followed by Ra-Horakhty, and Ptah. Thus, one took the chance to modernize the decoration program at Ellesiya by emphasizing the role of Amun, who now became part of the statue group at the end of the cult axis.

A quite amazing number of local Nubian cults of Egyptian deities was embedded within the modest temple at Ellesiya. In addition to the two long-established cults for Horus of Baki/Quban and Horus of Buhen, we find evidence for “Horus, Bull, Lord of Nubia, who is in the midst of Thebes” (Horus *k3 nb T3-Stj hrj-jb W3s.t*).<sup>61</sup> This most probably was the local variant of the god Horus at Sai, an island in Upper Nubia between the 2nd and 3rd cataracts, where the Egyptians had established an important fortified town in very early Dyn. 18.<sup>62</sup> 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. Furthermore, the divine Senwosret III and Dedwen, Foremost of Nubia, who were venerated together particularly at the fortress of Semna in the region of the 2nd cataract, and Hathor as Lady of Ibshek/Faras are part of the decoration program.<sup>63</sup>

The selection of cults shows that a number of different criteria was relevant: religious importance, location (that is, establishing a religious network for the new temple at Ellesiya that covered important cult sites in Lower and Upper Nubia alike), and, last but not least,

<sup>58</sup> For scenes with Amun(-Ra) within the wall decoration of the temple, see El-Achirie, Aly, and Dewachter, *Le Speos d'El-Lessiya* II, pls. 15, 20, 33.

<sup>59</sup> El-Achirie, Aly, and Dewachter, *Le Speos d'El-Lessiya* II, pls. 16–17.

<sup>60</sup> For scenes with Horus of Miam within the wall decoration of the temple, see El-Achirie, Aly, and Dewachter, *Le Speos d'El-Lessiya* II, pls. 10, 27, 30, 32, 36.

<sup>61</sup> El-Achirie, Aly, and Dewachter, *Le Speos d'El-Lessiya* II, pls. 11, 25, 35.

<sup>62</sup> For evidence for this variant of Horus at the island of Sai, see Vercoutter, “New Egyptian Texts,” 71–81; idem, “La XVIIIe dynastie à Sai,” 7–38; and lately also Thill, “Sai et Aniba,” 294–297, who suggests to recognize in Horus *k3 nb T3-Stj* the deified Thutmose III. Most recently Gabolde, “Perception of Royal and Divine Powers,” 98–100, has been arguing for interpreting the numerous Horus of Nubia and particularly the Horus *k3 nb T3-Stj* as divine representatives of the king in Nubia.

<sup>63</sup> El-Achirie, Aly, and Dewachter, *Le Speos d'El-Lessiya* II, pls. 22–24. Dedwen probably is not of Nubian origin but, according to the evidence, a genuine (Upper) Egyptian god assigned to Nubian territory as its divine sovereign.

we observe a clear connection with the building activity under Thutmose III in Nubia.<sup>64</sup> As already seen at Ibrim, the Egyptian–Nubian border zone at the 1st cataract was another important reference point at Ellesiya, which was displayed by incorporating the divine triad of Elephantine, Satet, Khnum, and Anuket, within the decoration program.<sup>65</sup>

As to the actual cult taking place at Ellesiya, we can get some information from the northern stela of Thutmose III at the entrance. The text fragments attest the establishment of an offering foundation for the temple, which would have been the economic basis for a regular offering cult within the temple.<sup>66</sup> When we look for the ritual reality behind the sacred landscape of Miam, which was created notably in the first half of Dyn. 18, we also find evidence at Ellesiya. In the courtyard and at the entrance (see fig. 7.6), several rock stelae and numerous graffiti were placed, which date to the 2nd half of Dyn. 18 and Ramesside times.<sup>67</sup> About 50 graffiti are known, but not all of them have been published. The persons mentioned there are officials of the local Egyptian administration; some of them were engaged within the cult of Horus of Aniba as *hm-ntr* and lecture priests or in the one of Amun (as second prophet). Two graffiti which are located within the *speos* (square room and sanctuary) attest a *wab* priest and a first prophet of Horus of Miam.<sup>68</sup> Most probably these graffiti document visits to the temple at Ellesiya during local festivals of Horus of Miam. At these occasions, people who participated within the local rituals by virtue of their offices held at the town of Miam would visit the cult installations around Miam that were related to the cults at the main town temple. Unfortunately, there is no information about the nature of the festivals and whether cult statues of the various gods were carried in public processions from the main temple to the peripheral cult buildings, as we know it well from numerous cult places in Egypt.

As to the function of the small rock shrines at Ibrim and the rock temple at Ellesiya we might summarize that they were, at least in parts, functionally different from the free-standing town temple at Miam. They are self-contained mini-temples with permanently installed cult statues in the rear part, but in most cases it is doubtful whether a daily cult took place in them. They were not determined to serve as place of worship for a specific local community, which lived nearby, but were theologically and ritually attached to the town temple at Miam, the primary religious institution for the region. Additional theological and ritual layers were adjoined to the Nubian territory around Miam by these small rock temples. Thus, one might say that they functioned on a more abstract theological level by adding religious meaning to their location and by enlarging and enriching the ritual landscape of Miam.

<sup>64</sup> Of special importance in this context is the temple building activity of Thutmose III at Quban, Buhen, Semna, Sai, and at Jebel Doshā (about 35 km to the south of Sai). The *speos* at Jebel Doshā displays many similarities in its architectural layout and decoration program, and probably therefore also in theology and cult, with the *speos* at Ellesiya; see Davies, "Recording Jebel Doshā," idem, "Recording Egyptian Rock-Inscriptions," 59–65; compare also the remarks in Ullmann, "Egyptian Temples in Nubia," 519 with footnote 8.

<sup>65</sup> El-Achirie, Aly, and Dewachter, *Le Speos d'El-Lessiya* II, pls. 12, 14, 29, 34.

<sup>66</sup> Klug, *Königliche Stelen*, 169–171.

<sup>67</sup> Curto, *Il tempio di Ellesija*, 47 (drawing), 80, 82–86; idem, I, 91–104; Desroches-Noblecourt, *Le Speos d'El-Lessiya* I, 5; Müller, *Verwaltung Nubiens*, 411–413 (no. 28).

<sup>68</sup> Curto, *Lo speos di Ellesija*, 89–90.

The rock temples or *speoi* around Miam should in my opinion be regarded as evidence for the increasing efforts of the Egyptian state, starting with the reigns of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, to gain control over the Nubian territory by means of religion. Surely not by chance do we observe in these rock temples a very close connection between the cult for the gods and the royal cult. The incorporation of the king into the main cult recipients of these temples was visually illustrated by statue groups, which displayed the king enthroned together with the main deities of the cult place. Thus, the king became integrated in the local pantheon and his sovereignty over the Nubian territory was enhanced to a sacred sphere.

Miam as one of the most important centers of the Egyptian administration of Lower Nubia provides an excellent example for this religious appropriation of Nubia by the Egyptian state in the 1st half of Dyn. 18.

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