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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS TO THE NORTH OF THE GREAT AMUN TEMPLE AT JEBEL BARKAL (SUDAN): PRELIMINARY RESULTS AND NEW PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract: *The paper presents preliminary results and discusses future perspectives on archaeological research in the area to the north of the Great Amun temple at Jebel Barkal (Napata) in connection to the most recent excavations of elite Meroitic structure B 1700. The field season of 2020 at B 1700 continued to bring to light a new monumental foundation platform of the cellular type constructed for a building which function and meaning remain a subject for debate. B 1700 followed the classic Meroitic square plan with rooms arranged around a central columned space, utility chambers on the ground floor, and official areas on the upper floor(s). Paper discusses general features of the exposed plan of B 1700, the process of its construction, recorded archaeological matrix, and finds. Special mention is made of the brick masonry, earlier occupation phase, later activities at the site, and the great pottery dump which was extensively used while filling the foundation platform. The author argues that elite building B 1700 was probably constructed at the time of king Natakamani (1 century AD) and did not continue functioning for more than, probably, one century. The study of B 1700 and its surrounding area has a considerable significance for reconstructing the history of the development of the temple and royal zone to the north of the temenos of the Great Amun temple at Jebel Barkal as well as provide new data on the actual nature of Napata as an economic and political center of Meroitic Kush.*

Keywords: Jebel Barkal, mud-brick architecture, archaeology, Meroitic period, Kush, Nile Valley, Amun, Natakamani, temple.

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Jebel Barkal (Gebel Barkal/el-Barkal/Berkel/Birkel) is a modern Arabic name of an isolated sandstone mountain about 104 m high situated downstream of the fourth Nile cataract to the west of modern-day town Karima, Sudan (approx. 320 km north-west of Khartoum) (fig. 1)¹. In antiquity, the mountain was considered a sacred place. Its characteristic feature – a high pinnacle of an unusual shape that resembles a human figure, a rearing cobra, or the white crown of the Upper Egypt – has been traditionally giving rise to intense theological speculation. Near Jebel Barkal, ancient settlement called Napata developed for about two thousand years. In the mid-15th century BC, the fourth Nile cataract and Napata in its vicinity downstream became the border territory of the Egyptian New Kingdom Empire.

From the 15th century BC until the Meroitic period (300 BC–300 AD), the area beneath Jebel Barkal cliff, the “Pure Mountain,” witnessed the development of one of the most important religious centers in the ancient Nile Valley. As in many other Nubian sites integrated into the

¹ Illustrations 2–3 and 5–8 are placed on the colour plate.

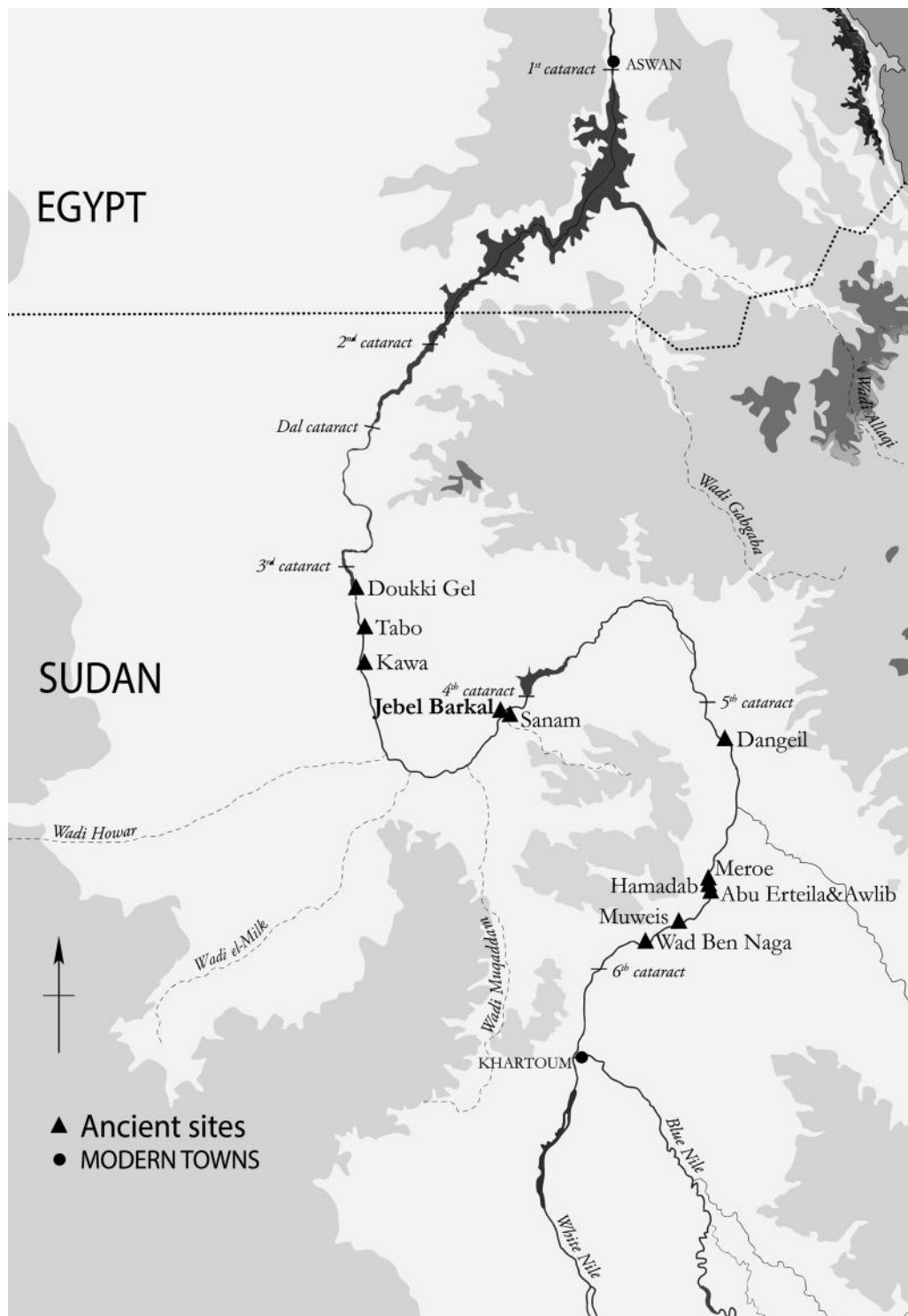


Fig. 1. Map of Sudan with archaeological sites mentioned in the text (Maksim Lebedev).

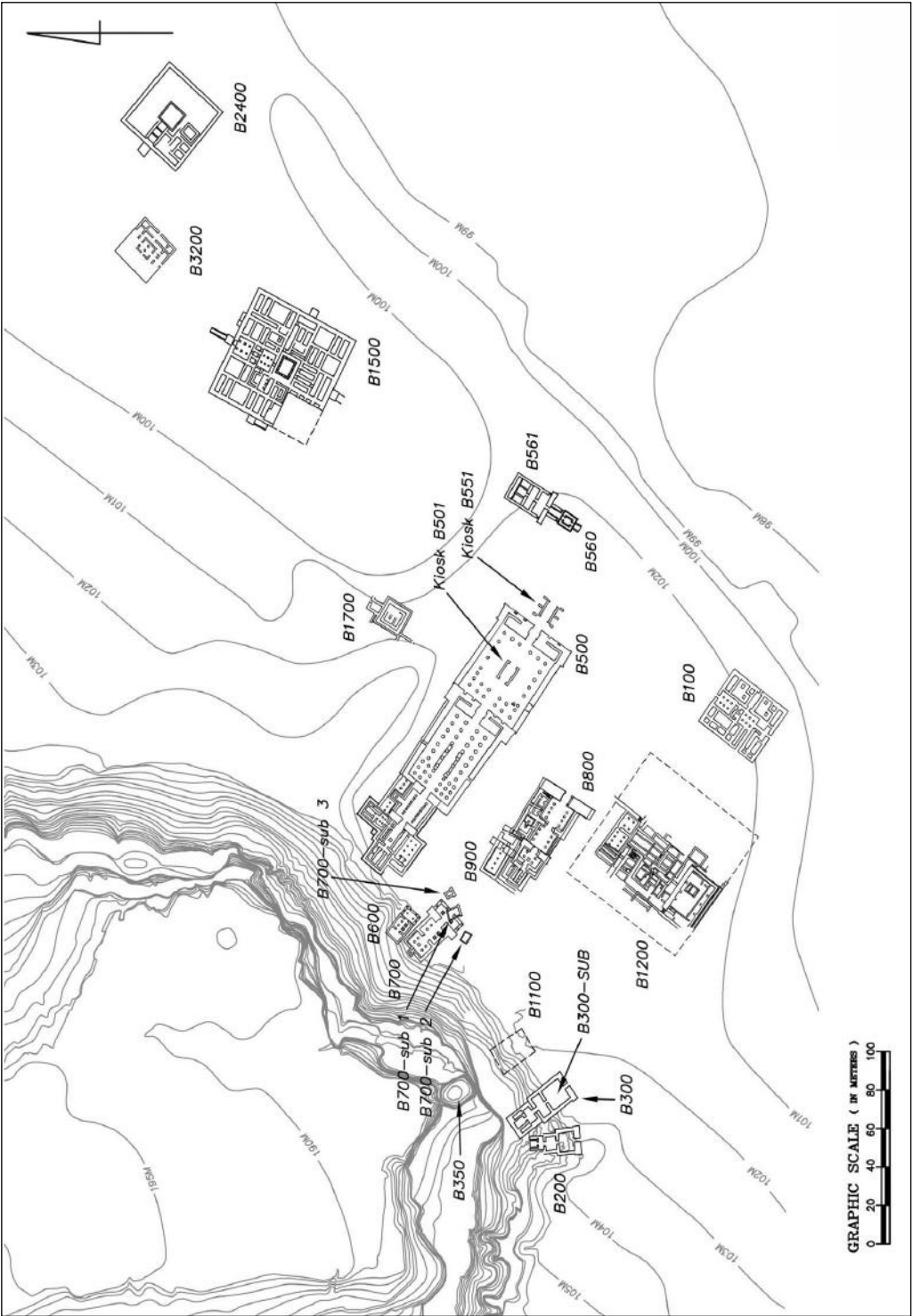


Fig. 4. General plan of monuments excavated at the foot of Jebel Barkal (surveyed by Rob Rosa).

Egyptian New Kingdom empire, the main god worshiped at Jebel Barkal was Amun. Other deities that had established cults were Mut, Khonsu, Isis, Osiris, Osiris-Dedwen, and, probably, Aten (during the reign of Akhenaten) and Apedemak. The cult of Amun of Napata was of an exceptional importance for both the Egyptians and the Kushites who gained control over Napata and its temple area at the foot of the sacred mountain in the aftermath of the collapse of Egyptian control around 1100 BC.

Jebel Barkal was first visited by European travelers and scholars in the first half of the 19th century [Porter, Moss, 1995, p. 203]. First excavations on the territory of the temple area were started in 1916 by the American mission directed by G.A. Reisner [Reisner, 1917; 1918; 1920; Dunham, 1970]. Systematic archaeological works at Jebel Barkal have been continuing since the 1970s [Roccati, 2008]. Regular exploration of the urban area of Napata started only few years ago [Tucker, Emberling, 2016, p. 52–53].

In 2006, the mission of the National Corporation of Antiquities and Museums (NCAM) directed by Timothy Kendall and El-Hassan Ahmed Mohamed conducted a magnetic survey of the area to the south-east, east, and north of the Great Amun temple (B 500) and revealed several interesting features below the modern-day surface (fig. 2). Among them, there were clear walls of the building previously labeled and referred to as B 1700 (the ruins of this structure first appeared on the map surveyed by Lepsius and his team [Lepsius, 1849, Taf. 125]) (fig. 3–4).

First excavations on the territory of B 1700 were conducted by the NCAM mission in 2015.² After these initial excavations, however, archaeological investigation of the area was postponed. In 2020, excavations were resumed by a joint team of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences directed by the present author³.

By 2015, B 1700 represented as a small *kom* (*tell*) covered with numerous pottery shards, some fragments of sandstone blocks, and fired bricks in the N and NE parts of the mound. Several pits visible on the surface gave evidence for later activities on the site. The main objectives of the works on B 1700 were the study of the general plan of the building, its stratigraphy, and, finally, its meaning. The first season brought to light a monumental mud-brick foundation platform of casemate type from an elite (presumably residential) building, remains of an earlier mud-brick structure utilized in the platform, and clear evidence of later activities at the site after the abandonment of the main structure.

The area investigated during the season 2015 covered a surface of approximately 420 sq. m. The area investigated in 2020 was 145 sq. m. The depth reached during excavations varied from square to square from 0.40–0.50 m required to expose preserved walls to over 3.5 m in deep sondages. By the end of the season 2020, 163 different archaeological contexts were recorded: 89 deposits (layers), 41 pits, and 33 walls.

SUMMARY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MATRIX

Plan of the platform (fig. 5)

B 1700 was oriented in accordance with the “Nile north.” The excavated central part of the mud-brick foundation platform is almost square in plan and consists of an inner enclosure (10.80 × 10.40 m) and a second enclosure (16.40 × 15.60 m) divided by “corridors” of up to 2 m wide.

² Excavation of B 1700 in 2015 was supervised by Simone Nannucci and Maksim Lebedev.

³ I would like to thank for their most appreciated cooperation co-directors of the NCAM mission (part A) Timothy Kendall (independent scholar) and El-Hassan Ahmed Mohamed (NCAM) and all the members of the Russian team: Sergey Vetokhov (Institute of Oriental Studies, RAS), Viktoria Yarmolovich (Centre for Egyptological Studies, RAS, and Institute of Oriental Studies, RAS), Sergey Malykh (Metropolitan Archaeological Bureau), and Alla Troshina (Institute of Archaeology, RAS).

The inner enclosure is subdivided into three casemates (“rooms”) of which two encompass remaining walls of an older building that break the regular subdivision of this part of the construction. The inner enclosure is formed by walls of up to 1.50 m thick whereas the second enclosure has walls ranging from 0.90 to 1.10 m thick.

The double enclosure forms the central part of the foundation platform which extends in all directions. For now, the minimum dimensions of the building are 32.4 by 22.4 m, but its actual size is still unknown. On the NE side of the exposed part of the structure, we detected what may be an outer wall of the platform. It is 1.40 m thick and has a mud plaster coating.

Besides casemates that had no entrances and were filled with debris, the foundation platform encompassed at least three rooms (Rooms X, XI, and XIII) with plastered walls and living floors. One of these rooms (Room X) is 7.20 × 2.30 m; dimensions of the other two rooms remain unknown.

Many column fragments (mostly drums of different diameter) recovered from the central part of the building and in square B0 give evidence of columned rooms that once existed over the platform. Thick walls of the inner enclosure may have served as basements for the central columned hall as it was, for example, at Wad Ben Naga [Baud, 2011, fig. 4] and B 1500 at Jebel Barkal [Barberini, 2010, fig. 8; Baud, 2010, fig. 112].

The top of the foundation platform may have been accessed via one or several ramps. However, excavators have not managed yet to identify remains of any ramp and we do not know yet where was the main entrance to the building.

Construction of the platform

The casemates of the platform were filled with pottery shards mixed with sand and debris: crushed and complete mud-bricks, silt, ashes, sand with desert pebbles, and reused sandstone blocks. Most of the pottery shards may have been brought from the great pottery dump located to the west and north-west of B 1700. A major part of pottery shards belongs to bread molds but there were also diagnostic fragments of imported Egyptian amphorae, storage jars, bowls, and pots dated to the late Napatan and early Meroitic periods (6th–2nd centuries BC). Some of diagnostic pottery may be dated to the 2 century BC or later. Radiocarbon dates for charcoals collected from the fill of casemates in 2015 varied from the 4th to the 1st centuries BC. These data set the *terminus post quem* for the construction of the platform.

Two deep sondages in Rooms II and IV made it possible to study the construction methods used in the central part of the foundation platform. The preliminary observations made in 2015 were confirmed by excavations in Rooms VI and VII in 2020. The walls of the platform preserved to the height of 1.75 m above the foundations and there were several construction phases that correlated to the process of filling the casemates with potsherds and rubble.

The builders started with the central enclosure and incorporated into the platform an earlier Meroitic structure. The upper 0.90 m of the fill of the inner enclosure consisted of sandstone blocks, fragments of mud-bricks, and a small number of fired bricks over a thick layer of potsherds. The blocks made of red sandstone were considerably weathered and had rounded forms. To all appearances, they originated from an earlier structure or structures and may have been used as a compact rubble fill of casemates in B 1700. In 2020, among the weathered blocks inside the central enclosure, excavators recovered several decorated sandstone fragments. One of them preserved the bottom of a royal cartouche carved on an inclining surface. No doubt, the block once belonged to the casing of one of temple pylons. The closest pylons to B 1700 are the first and the second pylons of the Great Amun temple (B 500). The latest attested restoration of the Napatan temple and its pylons was held by Natakamani and Amanitore in the 1st century BC. One can assume that the weathered Napatan blocks of the casing were partly removed and then reused in Meroitic

foundation platform of B 1700. The use of stones may indicate a considerable weight of structures built above casemates of the central enclosure. For instance, stone rubble was sometimes used for the core fill of access ramps and stairs [Maillot, 2016, p. 188–190]. The same fill (sandstone and silt) was found in Room XII in the western part of the exposed structure. Its function must be determined in the course of further excavations.

When the inner enclosure was finished, the bricklayers started to build the walls of the second enclosure and, at the same time, filled the newly emerging space between the two enclosures with sandy debris, mud-brick rubble, and piles of potsherds (fig. 6). Casemates were designed to raise the main structure above the ground on a stable foundation platform to reduce the effect of natural weathering and, sometimes, increase the significance of the building within the monumental landscape of the area.

As a rule, casemates were filled to the top with dirt, rubble from earlier buildings, and waste materials from the construction site itself [Leclère, 2008, p. 660; Maillot, 2014, p. 788]. The earliest known examples of casemate platforms from Egypt clearly demonstrate this feature [Leclère, 2008, p. 632; Małecká-Drozd, 2014, p. 151–152, 163]. However, casemates at Muweis may have had vaulted ceilings and seem to have been at least partly empty by the time when the main structure collapsed [Baud, 2008, p. 57; Maillot, 2014, p. 788]. French colleagues came to this conclusion after analyzing the thickness of the walls and the stratigraphy of the fill of casemates that included fragments of sandstone, white lime plaster, and fired bricks with deep sunken lines made by fingers [Maillot, 2014, p. 788; 2016, p. 191]. Our observations on the stratigraphy of the fill in Rooms II and IV suggest that, beyond the central enclosure, the foundation platform of B 1700 may have also utilized only partly filled casemates. Indeed, the width of outer walls of Egyptian casemate foundations filled with rubble varied from 3.00 to 3.50 m [Leclère, 2008, p. 631]. This thickness was enough to withstand the lateral pressure of the fill. However, the walls of Meroitic structures are often much thinner. In the case of B 1700, the walls of the second enclosure were 0.90–1.10 m thick and the outer wall of the platform was 1.40 m thick. Considering the stratigraphy recorded in deep sondages, it seems very probable that only the lower two-thirds of Rooms II and IV were filled with rubble and potsherds while the upper third remained empty and, since no traces of wooden beams have preserved, was probably covered with mud-brick arched ceilings. This building technology may have been a compromise that provided stability for the platform and reduced the lateral pressure on its walls. It seems possible that, depending on expected stresses, Meroitic architects could vary the materials used inside casemates and the degree of their fill. Like in other similar monuments, the platform of B 1700 could raise for about 2 m above the ground.

“Storerooms”

As was noted above, in its northern part, the foundation platform of B 1700 encompassed at least three rooms with living floors that were accessible when the building was functioning. Rooms like these are not uncommon in Meroitic platforms and are usually referred to as “storerooms” (although their exact meaning is not always clear). In 2020, the mission excavated a major part of Room XI reaching the latest floor level that was whitewashed and covered with a deposit of reddish sand with some small desert pebbles and domestic Meroitic pottery (fig. 7).

In the central part of the room, there was an elongated depression (pit 144P) (4.15×1.70×1.35 m; depth 0.45 m) with carefully plastered walls (mud plaster). The feature was cut through earlier floor deposits 0.30–0.35 m thick and reached the construction layer composed of a grey-brown sandy loam with many fragments of crushed mudbricks and some bread molds. Over the floor of the pit, there was a thin deposit of coarse sand. Above the sand, excavators found a silty occupation layer that contained charcoals, fragments of grinding stones, animal

bones, and potsherds found lying horizontally. Both fragments of domestic pottery and available radiocarbon date for charcoals from the deposit correspond to the 1st century BC – 1st century AD.

The debris fill of Room XI differed considerably from the fill of the casemates. It consisted of eolian sand and rubble from the collapsed upper parts of the structure: sandstone fragments, fired and mud bricks, many potsherds and fragments of faience tiles. At least two of the plastered rooms had entrances that were subsequently blocked with mud- and reused fired bricks (Rooms XI and X). This gives evidence of a certain reorganization of the functional rooms of the platform at a later occupation phase.

Earlier building

Excavators recorded seven walls from an earlier structure integrated into the platform. They preserved to the height of up to 2.30 m. These earlier walls have no traces of coating and does not bear any traces of any considerable weathering. The earlier walls were cut in their upper parts and then overlapped by the walls of the foundation platform. In their lower parts, where it was possible to observe, walls of the platform were built to the earlier structure brick to brick.

Pottery associated with the basement of one of the earlier walls allows dating the structure to the Early Meroitic period (3rd – 2nd centuries BC) or somewhat later. However, this date is only preliminary and should be verified by further excavations. Since the plan of the earlier building is still largely unknown and the presumable occupation layers connected to this structure were exposed on just a limited area of two deep sondages, we cannot be sure about the nature of this structure. The absence of any coating and clearly definable floors suggest that the only fully excavated wall of the earlier structure might belong to either an open court or an utility/production room.

Under the occupation deposits associated with the earlier building, we have found a layer of crushed sandstone and then alternating deposits of desert sand with pebbles and silt without any pottery but with some animal bones. The alternating layers were deposited by regular natural processes that included rains or floods. In none of the sondages, bedrock has been reached and the exact meaning of the naturally deposited contexts is still to be established.

B 1700 is not certainly unique. For instance, while building the palace M 750S in Meroe, ancient architects used existing constructions in a later casemate foundation. The earliest of these buildings predated the Meroitic palace for about 900 years [Grzymski, Grzymska, 2008]. Judging from the deep sondages, the spot where B 1700 was constructed had a less complicated history of occupation. However, one must remember that these preliminary observations consider stratigraphic sequences recorded in two small sondages situated remarkably close to each other.

Brick masonry

The fired brick module used in B 1700 corresponds to the standard Meroitic module (35×18×8 cm) attested at Wad Ben Naga, Muweis, Meroe, Awlib, Abu Erteila, and elsewhere in the Sudan. Like at Muweis [Mailliot, 2014, p. 787] and other Meroitic sites, fired bricks were used to strengthen specific points of the platform of B 1700. The mud-brick module is somewhat less stable but tends to correspond to the same measurements. Mud-bricks from both the earlier structure and the foundation platform had many inclusions such as desert pebbles, charcoals, crushed animal bones, desiccated plant macro remains, and potsherds. Anthropoc materials may indicate that some of the bricks were produced from earth recovered from earlier occupation deposits.

The foundation parts of the walls of the platform were composed of bricks laid both on their edge and flat. This was probably because the ancient builders did not level the early Meroitic

surface over the whole area assigned for the new platform [Baud, 2011, p. 354; Maillot, 2016, p. 185] but just eliminated the main irregularities. For example, the foundation of wall 100W was partly built over a pile of sand, sandstone fragments, pottery shards, and mud-bricks. In Room II, the ancient builders leveled the surface with crushed mud-bricks.

Evidence of late activities at the site

Dense layers of ceramic fragments in the central and southern parts of the *kom* formed over B 1700 were disturbed with a great number of pits of up to 2 m in diameter. Most of them were filled with eolian sand and pottery fragments. Similar pits are visible today on the surface of the great pottery dump to the north of the Great Amun temple (B 500). The fill of the pits has natural stratification with many seasonal interlayers and does not bear any traces of their use for dumping or storing. Thus, the pits recorded on the surface might be the result of plundering and extracting *sebakht*⁴ and potsherds by local people. No secure date for these intrusions may be established. However, latest pits might well be dated to the 19th or even early 20th century.

The uncovered mud-brick walls of the foundation platform and layers of packed silty deposits inside were extensively disturbed with another type of pits most of which were dug in several phases. Walls of pits preserved clear marks of digging tools which had a standard metal working surface about 5–6 cm wide. Most of these pits followed the contours of the walls and were filled with eolian sand, ceramics, and stones (including architectural details) that slid down, as well as layers of silt and mud from eroded bricks washed inside the pits. Dating of these features is complicated since no reliable organic material was found inside. The use of similar cutting tools suggests that most of the pits were made during a relatively short period of time. The upper fill of the pits in the central part of the structure contained big fragments of painted craters dated to the 1st century BC – 1st century AD which means that the mud-brick walls might have been targeted by lokal *sebakheen* during the Classic Meroitic period. Intensive destruction of Meroitic mud-brick complexes is a common feature of Napata as a densely populated area with limited resources [Roccati, 2003].

Finds

Besides architectural elements and their fragments⁵, the number and variety of individual finds that have been recovered from the foundation platform of B 1700 is quite limited. This probably gives evidence that the structure was meticulously plundered. Finds are represented by four groups of objects: 1) beads (made of faience, ostrich shell, bone, stone, and glass); 2) faience tiles; 3) grindstones and pounders; 4) varia (pigments, unidentified small metal objects, fragments of golden leaf, reused potsherds, objects made of unfired clay, etc.). Many fragments of faience tiles (fig. 8) found at the site are similar to those recorded by the Italian mission that excavates the royal district of Natakamani. Their presence suggests that B 1700 was an important elite building. Grindstones and pounders are mainly associated with upper deposits formed in the time of abandonment of the structure. Beads are common in all contexts.

⁴ The term is primarily used to denote decomposed mudbricks from archaeological sites that was extracted by local people to be used as an agricultural fertilizer.

⁵ Among the sandstone blocks recovered in 2020, mostly from the fill of Room VI, from outside the outer wall in square B0, and from some later pits, there were 45 fragments of architectural details made of white, yellow, pinkish, and red sandstone: 33 fragments of column shafts of different diameters, 1 rounded molding, 11 small fragments from decorative elements (varia). 6 more fragments of architectural elements in square B0 were mapped and left in situ for the next excavation season. Some of the details had remains of white plaster painted red or yellow. A part of a pavement made of plastered reused blocks was found outside the structure in square F3 (fig. 5). As trial trenches demonstrated in 2020, many more architectural details may be found outside outer walls and in the fill of unexcavated functional rooms (Rooms XI and XIII).

Pottery dump

As was mentioned above, the fill of casemates of the foundation platform of B 1700 contained many potsherds from a huge pottery dump that dominates the landscape to the north of the Great Amun temple (B 500). The known area of the dump exceeds 9500 sq. m and more pottery may be expected under the eolian sand. The actual size of the dump might exceed 1 ha.⁶ Our calculations suggest that about 1.5 million of pottery shards from cone-shaped bread moulds and other vessels were removed during the excavation in B 1700.

The piles of potsherds mixed with ashes, animal bones, plant macro remains, and other discarded materials must be connected to the temple bakery (or bakeries) that operated in the vicinity of the Great Amun temple (B 500). Similar dumps and bakeries were found associated with Kushite Amun temples at Dangeil, Sanam, Kawa, Tabo, and Doukki Gel [Anderson, Ahmed, 2006, p. 96]. It is assumed that the bread from temple bakeries was initially offered to the god and then distributed among priests and other people related to the cult. When used, the bread moulds were piled in the vicinity, usually behind, Amun temples.

Since the redeposited material of the pottery dump composes a considerable part of the archaeological matrix of B 1700, we decided to study in detail its nature and composition and then compare these data with the data from undisturbed deposits of the pottery dump itself. In 2020, we collected 1 cubic meter of context 115L (pottery shards mixed with some grey-brown sandy loam) from the fill of one of the casemates in the central part of the platform (Room VII) and 1 cubic meter of context 122L from a trench in the pottery dump. All potsherds from the two samples were sorted and then counted manually.⁷ In one cubic meter of context 115L there were 91 895 potsherds (of which 91 651 belonged to bread moulds) while the sample from the pottery dump (122L) contained 78 816 potsherds (of which 76 769 belonged to bread moulds). The difference of about 13 000 in the number of potsherds is because the redeposited ceramic fragments from context 115L were at average of smaller size; also, the fill of pottery dump (122L) contained more inclusions other than pottery (desert pebbles, fragments of sandstone, animal bones, etc.). In addition to the statistical data, the study revealed different types of bread moulds and associated ceramics as well as potter's marks which must be classified and described in detail during future seasons⁸. The great pottery dump preserved a considerable information on the economy of the cult of Amun of Napata. Applying our sampling strategy to other parts of the dump and the fill of the platform of B 1700, we expect to determine the nature of the dump, its stratigraphy and chronology, and be able to estimate the volume of bread distributed in the temple area and, probably, the number of people who benefited from Amun cult in the late Napatan and early Meroitic periods.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The “profane” monumental landscape of the temple area of Napata was dominated by at least five palatial and residential buildings that have been partly excavated so far: B 1200 [Kendall 1991; 1997, p. 322–323; Kendall, Wolf, 2007], B 100 [Kendall, 2014], B 1500 [Donadoni, 1993; Roccati, 1997; 2003; 2004; 2008], B 2400 [Sist, 2011, p. 159–160], and B 3200 [Sist, 2011, p. 160–162] (fig. 4). B 1700 is yet another structure that may be added to this list now.

⁶ The original ancient dumping area had to be smaller in scale. One must consider the sprawling of the dump due to weathering and human activities.

⁷ The work was done by Viktoria Yarmolovich and Alla Troshina.

⁸ Results of the ceramological study will be published as a separate paper by Viktoria Yarmolovich.

Foundation platforms with cells (“casamatta”)⁹ are common in the monumental architecture of the Nile Valley from the Second Intermediate Period onwards [Malecka-Drozd, 2014]. This technique is well attested in Meroitic monumental architecture [Baud, 2011, p. 349–352; Maillot, 2015, p. 82–83] and there are numerous examples of structures with casemates excavated in Meroe, Wad Ben Naga, Muweis, Jebel Barkal, and elsewhere. Many of them have been interpreted as private residential buildings, administrative structures, or palaces.

The now available plan of B 1700 resembles the standard outline of Meroitic elite buildings based on the classic square plan with rooms arranged around a central columned space, utility chambers on the ground floor and official areas on the upper floor(s) [Baud, 2011, p. 343; Maillot, 2015, p. 80]. Inner central enclosures of similar dimensions are attested in Meroitic palaces B 1500, B 2400, and B 3200 at Jebel Barkal as well as in the palaces of Muweis and Wad Ben Naga.

The dense concentration of “rooms” and “corridors” within the casemate platform does not necessarily imply that the plan of upper floors followed this pattern. In fact, since casemate structures were used only as platforms and their main goal was to provide stability for the whole building, the number of rooms in upper store(s) may be smaller in comparison to the number of casemate cells. Above the platform, architects were able to design a space that was more convenient for encompassing necessary functions, i.e. living, administrative, and storage facilities.

Ceramic material and radiocarbon dates suggest that B 1700 functioned in the 1st century BC – 1st century AD. Thus, the excavated structure may be contemporary to or somewhat later than B 100, with which it is comparable in size. The utilization of reused blocks from the Great Amun temple in the foundation platform of B 1700 suggests that the building was erected either during the dramatic renovation of the area to the north and east of the temple initiated by Natakamani and Amanitore, or shortly before this.

Palatial and other elite structures usually had a strong connection to the main temple [Török 2002: 19–34; Maillot 2015: 83–85]. B 1700 was built almost opposite the gate on the NE side of the outer court of the Great Amun temple (B 500). Remains of a pavement made of reused blocks found in square F3 suggests that the space between B 1700 and the Great Amun temple was of some importance and have been extensively used. At the same time, excavations in square B0 that revealed many stone architectural elements, suggest that the main entrance to the structure was probably oriented towards east, i.e. facing the urban area.

Earlier Meroitic walls reused in the platform of B 1700 (like in the case of B 1500) suggest that the newly discovered structure was an important element that was once introduced into a well-developed area. Today, the area around B 1700 is covered with a thick layer of eolian sand and Reisner’s debris. However, before dumping debris from excavations, the American mission made more than 20 trial trenches and surveyed the area assigned for dumping. These trenches hit mud-brick walls to the west of B 1700 (probably visible also on the magnetometry image)¹⁰. Unfortunately, no information concerning these trial trenches and materials recovered from them has ever been published.

The season 2020 continued to bring to the light a new monumental structure within the temple and royal area of Napata. Its excavations raised new questions that must be answered during upcoming field seasons. Further excavations of B 1700 and its surrounding must improve our knowledge of the history of Jebel Barkal and the territory to the north of the temenos of the Great Amun temple as well as provide new data for discussions on the nature of Napata as an economic and political center of Meroitic Kush.

⁹ Also called in literature “cellular platforms” [Arnold, 2003, p. 49–50] and “foundation chambers” [Török, 1997, p. 182].

¹⁰ See, for instance, photo A2840_NS from Reisner’s archive (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).

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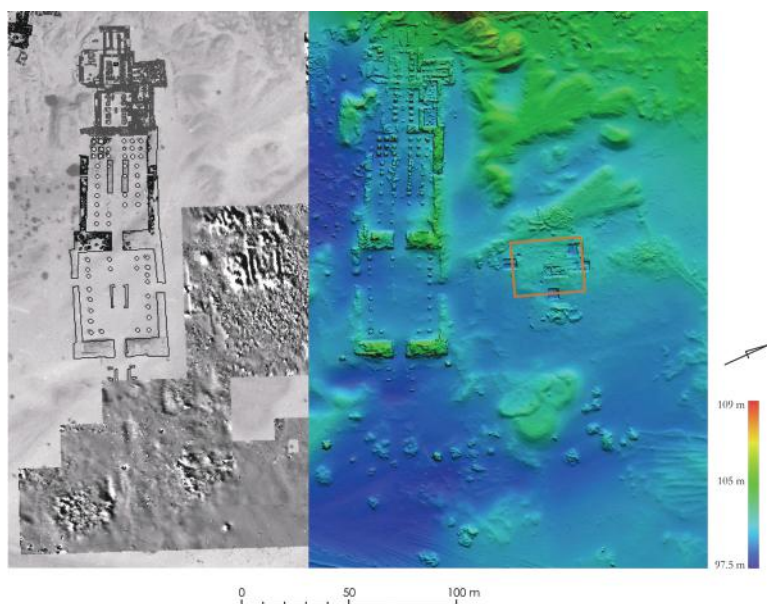


Fig. 2. Magnetic image of the area to the north of the Great Amun temple from the survey held in 2006 (after [Kendall, El-Hassan, 2016, p. 127, fig. 1]) and digital elevation model generated from aerial photography in 2020 (Sami El-Amin – aerial photography, Maksim Lebedev – 3D-modelling).



Fig. 3. Great Amun temple and position of B 1700 (aerial photo by Sami El-Amin).



Fig. 5. Plan of the excavated part of B 1700 (Maksim Lebedev and Simone Nannucci).

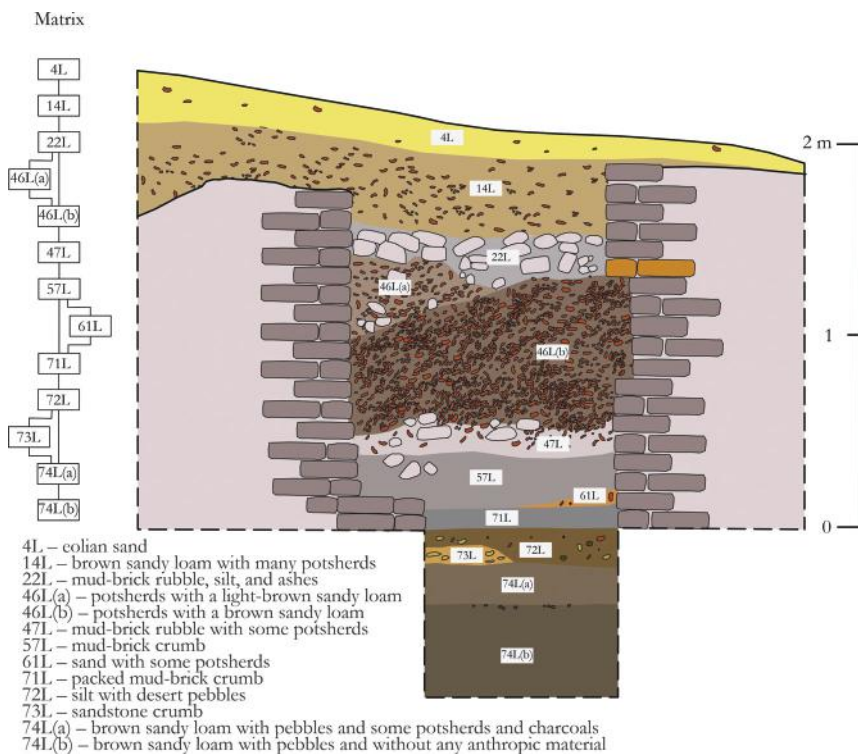


Fig. 6. Stratigraphy of the fill of Room II (drawing by Maksim Lebedev).



Fig. 7. Excavation of Room XI (photo by Maksim Lebedev).



Fig. 8. Selected fragments of faience tiles found in B 1700 (photo by Maksim Lebedev).