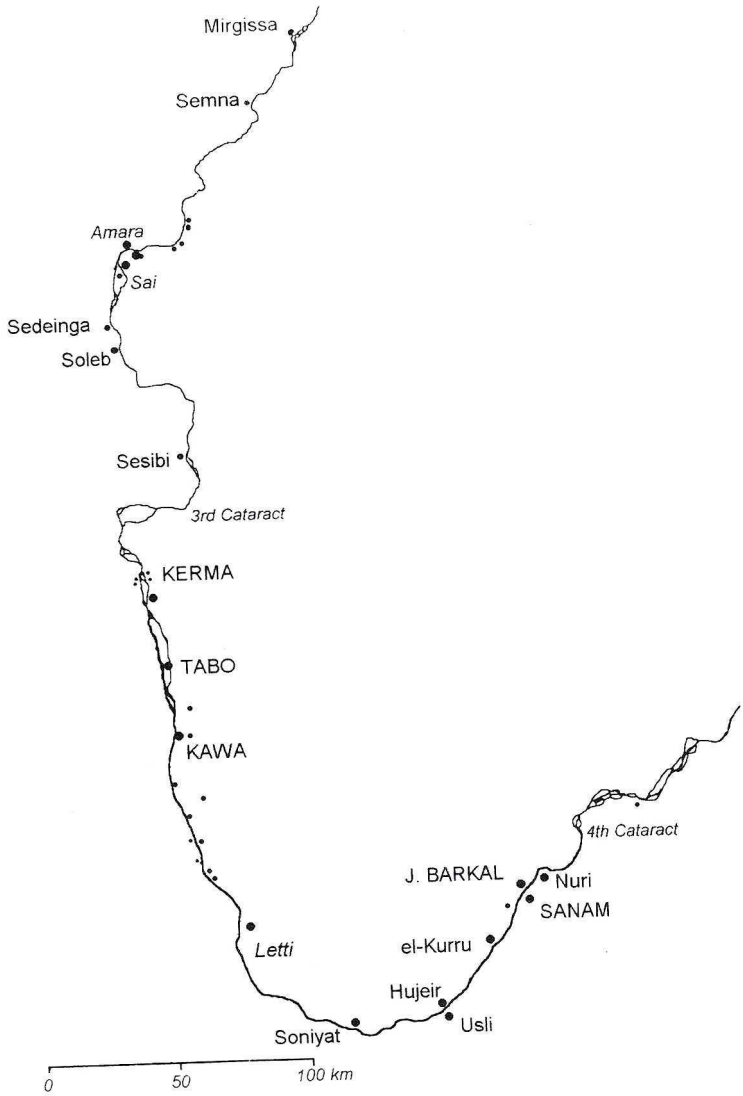
FOLIA ORIENTALIA
VOL. 47 2010

Katarzyna Juszczyk

Jagiellonian University
Cracow

COMMENTS ON THE LAYOUT OF THE KUSHITE TEMPLES CONSTRUCTED IN NAPATAN PERIOD

The reign of XXVth Dynasty (747-656 BC) represented a period of renewal in Nubia. Everywhere, large buildings were erected and the monarchs enjoyed unrivaled power. The Kushite temples were constructed during the reign of XXVth Dynasty and even after when the Napatan kings ruled only in the territory of Upper Nubia. With the establishment of the double kingdom of the XXVth Dynasty, large scale building activity began in Kush bringing Egyptian architects, sculptors and artesans of all sort, as well as Egyptian technologies and artefacts of Egyptian manufacture to the Middle Nile Region. During the time, the Egyptianization of the Kushite society had been noticed in the most areas of its life, especially in architecture. The Kushites adopted the ancient Egyptian interpretation of a cult temple as an image of the world. The Kushite temple, with its sloping floor, was built to visualize the primeval mound. Furthermore, its relief decoration was, as in Egypt, composed to describe worshiping of the gods by ruler (Török 2002: 40-41). The Napatan interpretation of the god-king relationship was descended from the Egyptian culture. The decisive impact of the New Kingdom cult of Amon-Re on the Kushite kingship ideology was obvious. Similarly, a number of deities which began to compose for the Kushite pantheon, were derived from the Egyptian religion. There are more than 15 sacral buildings in the territory of Nubia, which we can call „Napatan temples". To most important belong those constructed in: Gebel Barkal, Kawa, Sanam, Tabo, Semna and Qasr Ibrim (Fig. 1). During the XX century, new discoveries of temples were made in the Sudan, each with rather extraordinary implications. These are the find at Doukki Gel/Kerma, Soniyat, Hugeir, Usli, Dangeil and Meroe. As in most other facets of the Kushite life the influence of Egypt on the Kushite architecture was significant. Both the construction material, as well as a plan, decoration, location of a temple and the deities, who the temples were dedicated to, they were based on the patterns that came from the north. The coexistence of the features of



1. Napatan settlement (After Edwards 2004: fig. 5.3)

Egyptian and Kushite architecture led to use some solutions that are invisible on the territory of Egypt. The Kushites copied prototypes derived from the New Kingdom achievements (especially the plan), enhanced by Old Kingdom decorative elements.

The influence of the Egyptian architecture on the Napatan one concerns especially temples layout. The actual proportions of a temple were based on the system of internal harmonic proportions where the space was designed as one or more rectangles each with sides with the ratio 8:5. By the combination of a number of different rectangles some layout diversity could have been achieved (Welsby 1996: 133-134). It is possible to indicate the usage of this ratio on the example of Taharqa temples constructed in Kawa and Sanam. The measurements of a whole temple (68,5 x 38,7m) or its particular parts (22 x 13m, 29 x 20m or 25,5 x 17m) generally correspond to this principle with only some exceptions. This system of harmonic proportions was used in those Kushite temples which were dedicated to the Egyptian deities. On the territory of Egypt these features were generally applied in the cult temples from the Predynastic to Ptolemaic Period.

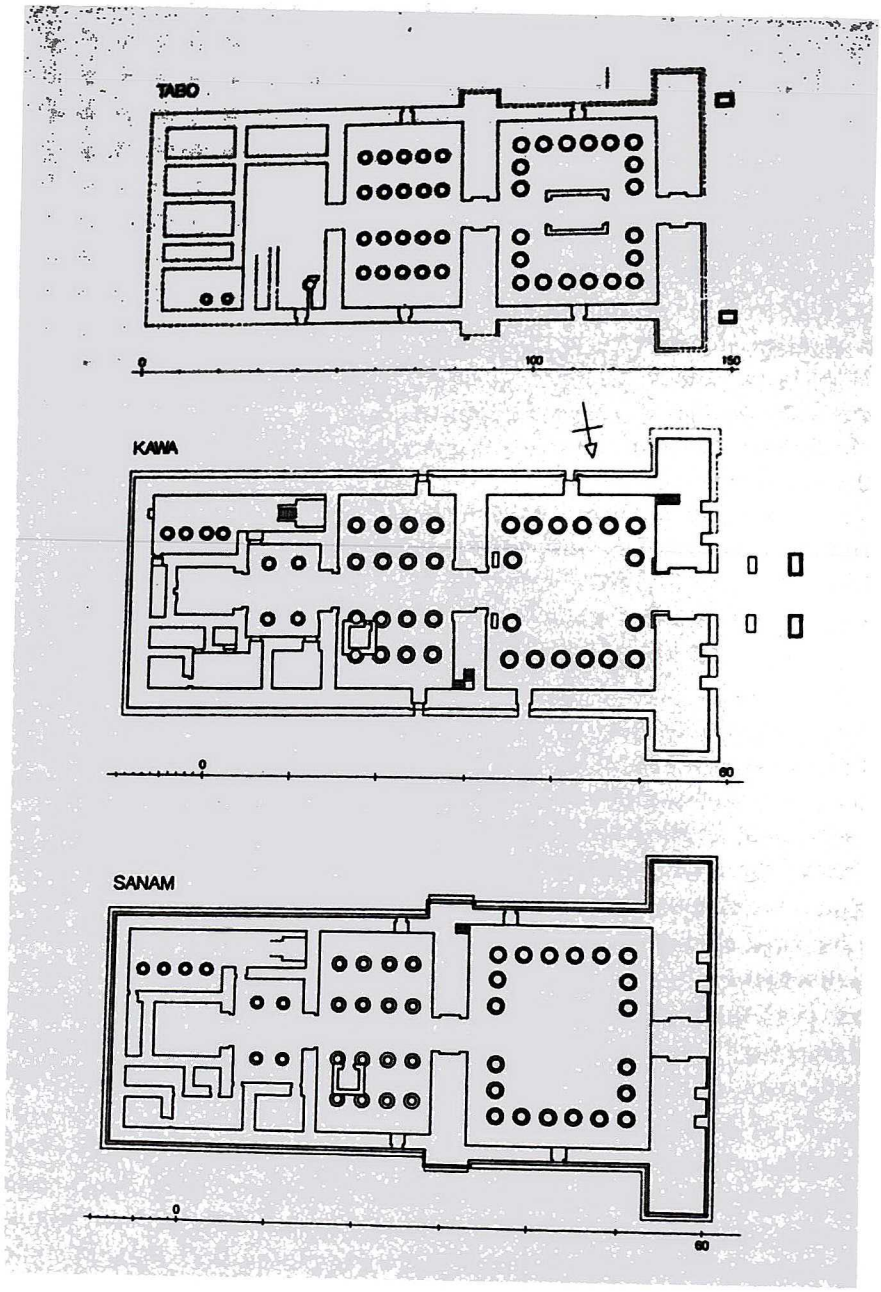
A typical layout of Kushite temples was based on the plan, which was developed in the New Kingdom times. It was used for the first time by Amenhotep's III architect – Amenhotep (the Hapu son's). Napatan temples, are basically Egyptian in plan, with pylon, gateway, forecourt, hypostyle hall, pronaos (in some cases), and naos flanked by cellae (Adams 1984: 258). The usage of the Egyptian plan could have been the result of designing Napatan temples on the ruins of New Kingdom's temples. It regards the Great Temple of Amun (B500), which was built as a provincial temple of Amun of Karnak by Tutankhamun or Horemheb, and it was expanded by Seti I and Ramses II. By the eighth century it had became the primary sanctuary of Amun of Napata, and was extensively renovated by Piye, who was constructed the first court, the first pylon and cellae (Kendall 1994: 141-143). A very similar situation was discovered in Doukki Gel, where the temple of Amon of Pnubs was a copy of the temple built by Thotmes III and Ahnaton (with some exceptions). At the other archaeological sites, remains of stone blocks (sometimes talatats) with cartouches, suggesting their earlier although very difficult to reconstruct phases, were found. There are also some examples of temples without earlier phases (Soniyat). The New Kingdom remains have not yet actually been found at Sanam temples, but Taharqa's inscriptions there allude to its foundation by the "ancestors".

According to the similarity of the plan of Napatan temples, it is possible to distinguish a few groups which were compared on the basis of their similarities and differences. Most of the temples were already known in the 70's. Ali Hakem and Wenig classified them into two groups: multi-roomed temples and single-roomed temples. In these classifications, the groups were divided into sub-groups according to their plan, orientation and deities, which they were dedicated to. Although this system is of valuable help, it also bears some problems. Generally, archaeologists do not take into consideration temples discovered at the end of the XXth century. Moreover, the Ali Hakem's classification seems too general, while in the Wenig classification, firstly a few temples were not assigned to proper

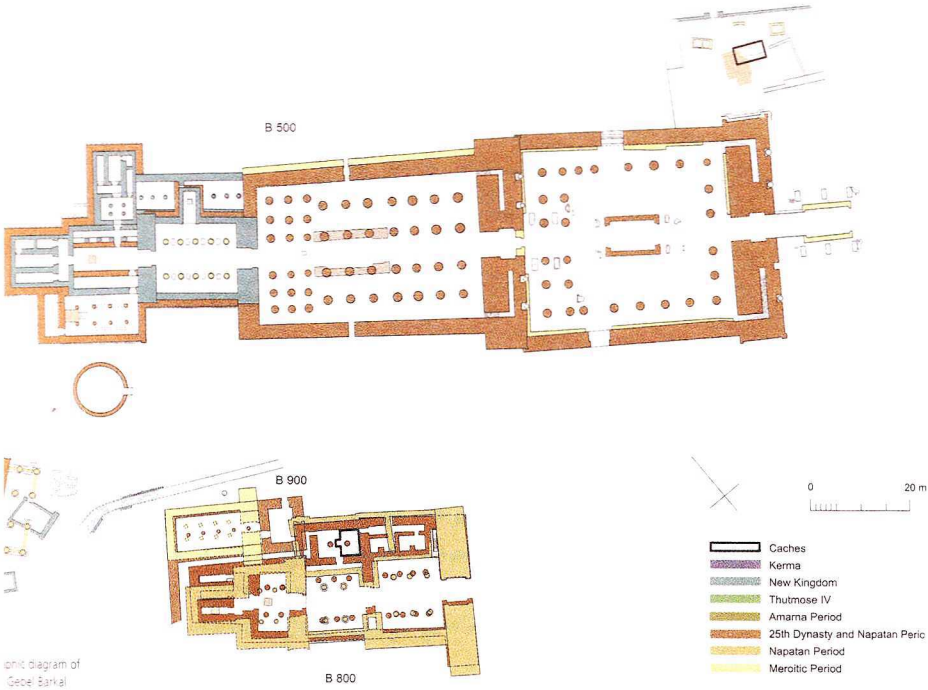
group, secondly, some temples had such features that suit to many groups at the same time. Napatan temples were marked by so many common features, that it is possible to create classifications according to a different feature. In some papers (alter alia Wolf 2006), such a common feature is called „dais-room". This is a partially roofed room with an altar, always oriented towards the East and accessible through a ramp like flight of steps. Thus, Wolf mentioned the temples in Sanam, Kawa, sometimes in Tabo, B 500 in Gebel Barkal and M 260 in Meroe as one group. In the other case, when the authors consider the function of the temples regarded coronation journey, they count into one group the temples constructed in: Meroe (M260), Napata (B500), Gem-aton (T temple), Pnubs (Tabo or Doukki Gel) and Krtn (an unidentified place).

The division into five groups suggested in this paper lists Napatan temples in a different way. It is based particularly on common features. In this classification the Taharqa's temples in Kawa, Sanam and Tabo are counted into one group, B 500 and B 800/900 into second, B 200 and B 300 into third and the temples in Qasr Ibrim and Semna into fourth group. The rest of the temples (especially those discovered in the XXth century) was discussed separately in view of their similarities and differences, and in relation to other Napatan and Egyptian buildings. This division is very simple in its structure, although it facilitates discussion of the architecture of Napatan temples. Both, the general shape of the plan of temples, location of different rooms, size, orientation and sometimes even the material used for construction were taken into consideration. In this division, the author focuses on the capture details of each plan. This enabled observation of a process, based on creating some of the temples on the basis of a plan of other Napatan structures, what sometimes could have also meant the participation of the same architect.

The temples in Kawa, Sanam and Tabo were constructed by the pharaoh Taharqa, who perhaps was the greatest temples builder in the region from Rameses II. These temples share many features in common. It suggests that they were designed by the same architect(s) perhaps using the same plan (Fig. 2). Their plan consist of: the massive pylon opens into an open courtyard with six columns on each side, the hypostyle hall, its central axis was flanked by eight columns on each side, roofed pronaos with four columns, leading to the inner sanctuary and four ancillary rooms (Bianchi 2004: 182). In spite of such similarity of temples, there are small differences visible between them. The main differences are that Sanam had two pylons to Kawa's one, at Sanam the temple is narrower behind the second pylon, and the capitals in the court and hypostyle hall were palmiform (Macadam 1955: 61, Bonnet, Jaquet 1969: 103 - 111). The Tabo temple faces east whereas both Sanam and Kawa face west, the former is slightly larger in all its dimensions (75,6 x 31 m), the hypostyle hall contains five columns in each row instead of four, there was no kiosk of Aspelta or Taharqa. It is evident that the temple of Tabo resembles in so many points the two Taharqa



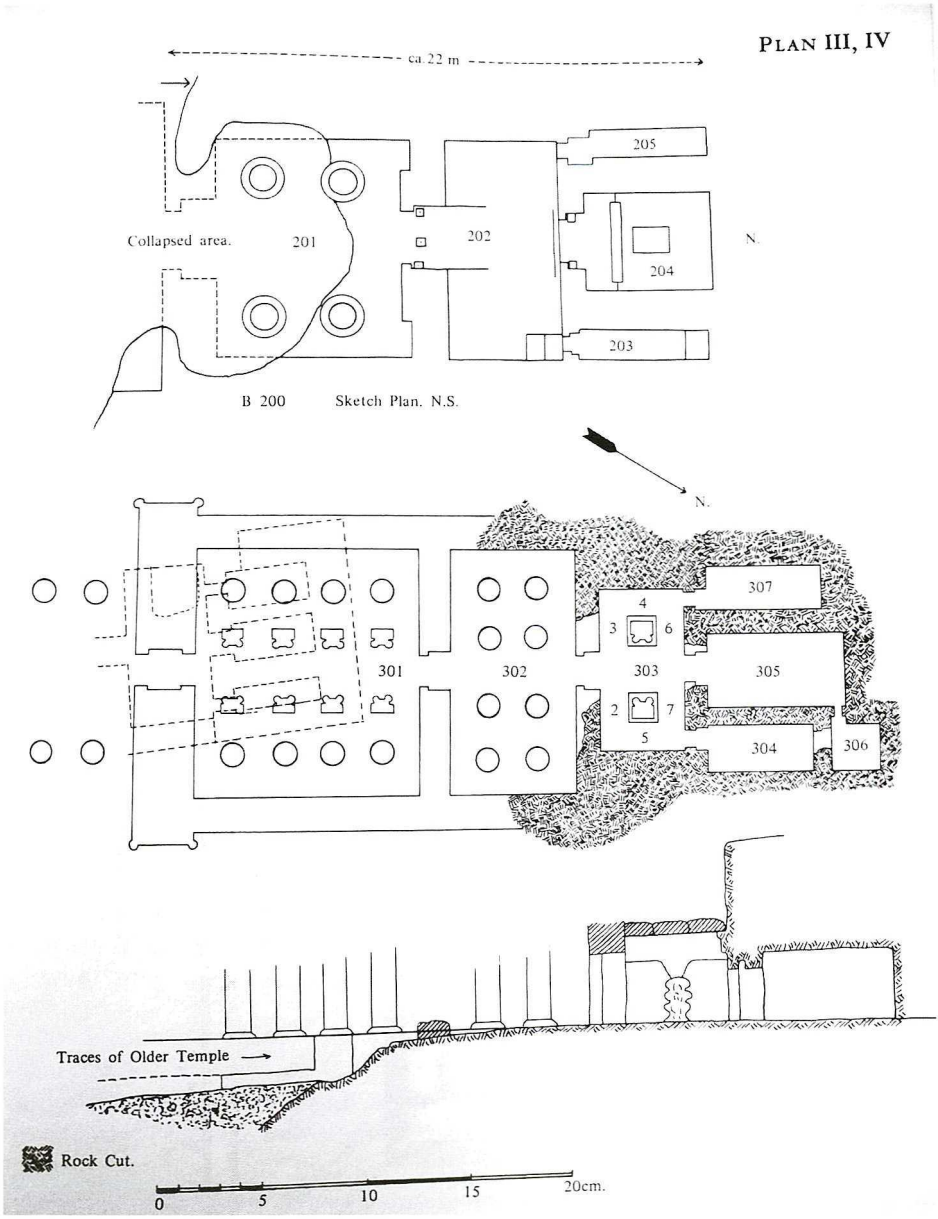
2. Plans of the temples of Taharqa at Tabo, Kawa and Sanam (After Arnold 1999: fig. 31)



3. Plans of the temples B 500 and B 800/900 at Gebel Barkal (After Bonnet, Valbelle 2005: page 67)

temples of Kawa and Sanam, which are practically identical, in contrast to other Napatan temples.

The same plan with slight changes was used in the subsequent temples created not much earlier at the time of first Napatan rulers (especially Piye). It concerns the B 500 temple and it smaller size counterpart –temple B 800/900 (Fig. 3). The main features of these temples were: tripartite shrine with preceding it coronation rooms and side rooms – appendices. The B 500 temple took the characteristic shape in the form of a row of rooms of varying widths along the length achieving 150 meters. The length has made it one of the largest temples in Nubia. Temple B 800/900 was built parallelly to the old Amun Temple B 500. Although B 800/900 was smaller in scale than B 500, one can see from its plan that the builders tried to follow closely the original plan of the older temple. Except this, the rest of rooms were also irregular, that shows that the axes of an individual room do not overlap with each other. Moreover, it was not



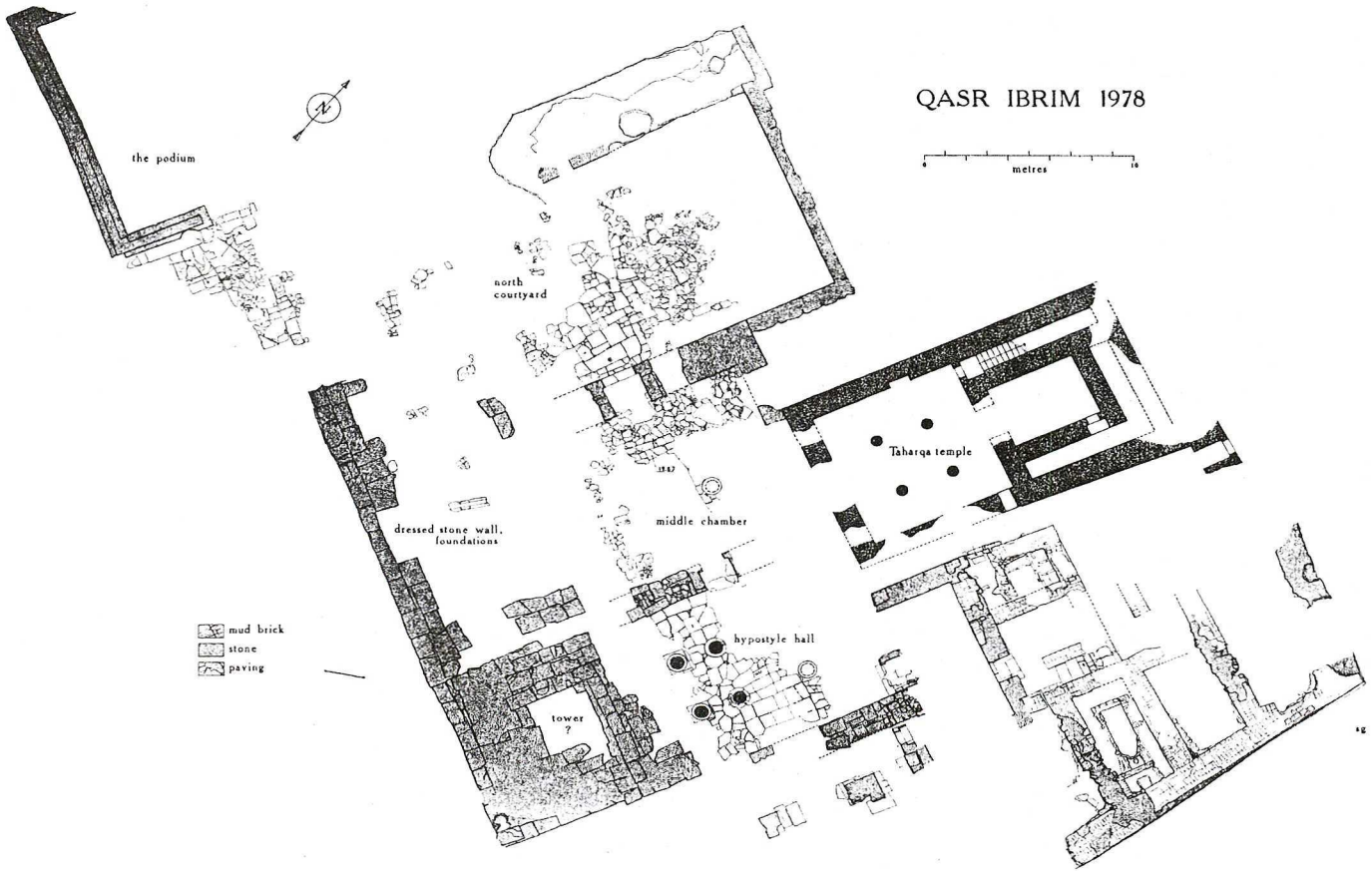
4. The rock-temples B 200 and B 300 at Gebel Barkal (After Dunham 1970: plan III and IV)

obvious, whether the same relative dimensions of two temples (both overall and for individual rooms) was intended. Perhaps it was an intentional idea to create B 500 miniature and connected these two temples to one function manifested in two aspects of their dedications to Amon of Napata (Török 1997a: 53; Kendall 2002: 11-14).

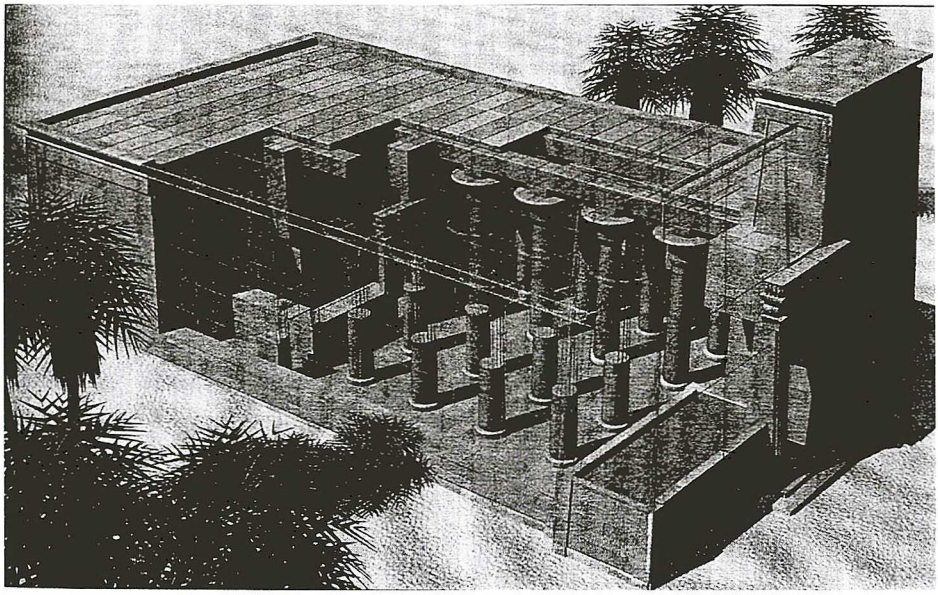
The similar layout of the sanctuary, which consists of three chapels with transverse vestibule was used in only two rock-temple built in the Napatan period. B 200 and B 300 (Fig. 4) differed from other Napatan buildings, which were dedicated to female deities. Remains of the relief decoration suggest that B 200 was dedicated to Mut and/or Hathor-Tefnut who were, however, associated with Amun of Napata similarly to B 300 (Török 2002: 74-79). Both temples had the same plan, which differed between themselves only with the number of columns used in each room. It was related to their size (B 300 was bigger). The hall with columns leading into a chamber cut in the rock, which gives access to three inner rock-cut chambers were preceded by a court and pylon (Dunham 1970: 10). The need for the rock temples built at Gebel Barkal resulted from the religious rituals. During the coronation the ruler could physically enter the holly mountain to obtain the confirmation of the coronation. During the New Kingdom times, the Egyptians originally built nearby B 1100 as a rock-cut shrine and B 300 as a free-standing shrine, can see that Taharqa rebuilt B 1100 as a free-standing shrine and converted B 300 into a rock-cut shrine. The Kushites would have used the latter as their mean of accessing the mountain. The similarity between temples B 200 and B 300 and the rock-temples constructed in Lower Nubia at the time of Ramses II, could indicate the imitation of construction activity by the pharaoh Taharqa.

The next Taharqa's temples were constructed in the Lower Nubia, where rulers building activity was not present in the earlier or subsequent periods. The structures built by Taharqa at Semna and Qasr Ibrim are nearly identical, comprising in each case of a small forecourt, and naos with cellae at the sides and back. At Qasr Ibrim (Fig. 5), but not at Semna, the forecourt roof was supported on four interior columns (Adams 1984: 259). These buildings were of small sizes what was the result of the fact that they were constructed within the already existing metropolitan area, surrounded with walls. Thus, the space for constructing them was considerably limited. In these examples as well as in rebuilding that took place in the Taharqa's temple at Buhen, it is possible to notice action consistency, because they all imitated one plan, and perhaps even the model of Ramses II that have been built in Lower Nubia.

The temples at Soniyat, Hugeir, Usli, Doukki Gel, B 1100 at Gebel Barkal and ruins in Meroe are still being excavated, and therefore, their plans, the deities who they were dedicated to and the time of their construction are unknown. However, they certainly played an important function in the Kushite society and religion. It is possible to distinguish within the Soniyat temple two parts: the



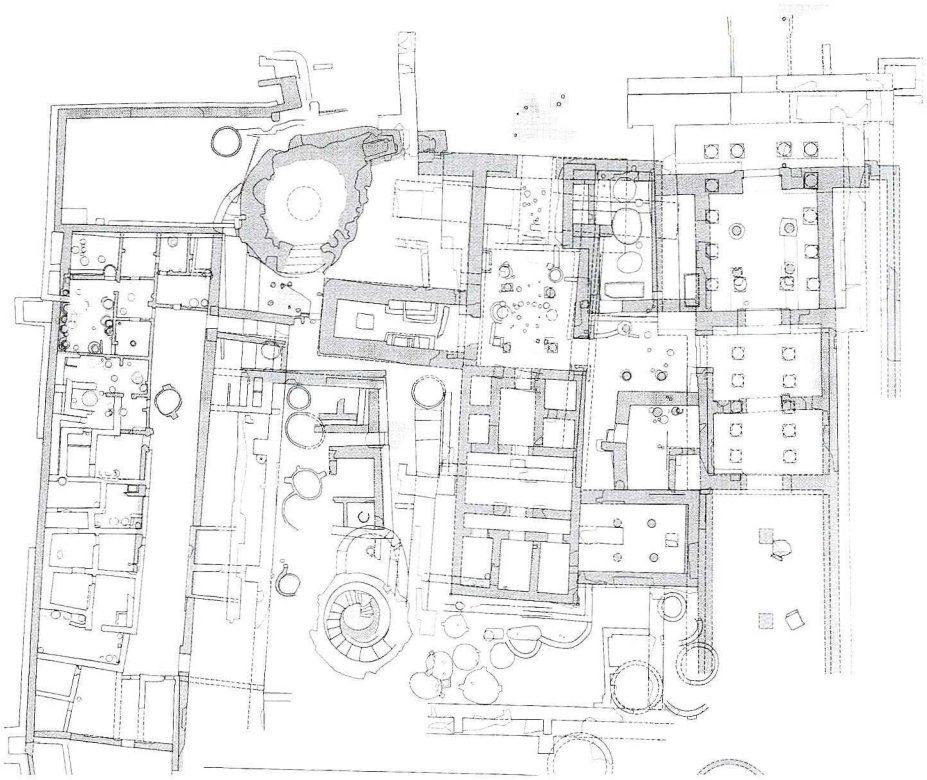
5. The Kushite Temples complex at Qasr Ibrim (After Anderson, Adams 1975: fig. 1)



6. Three-dimensional reconstruction of the Kushite temple in Soniyat (After Żurawski 2002: fig. 2)

northern and southern one (Fig. 6). The better preserved northern part is built on a regular, symmetrical plan of a tripartite naos with transversal pronaos, flanked on both sides by a long chamber - like corridor (Żurawski 1998b:77). The Soniyat temple constitutes also a good parallel to other Napatan temples like: B 500, B 300 (triple sanctuary) or Semna and Qasr Ibrim - two parts of temple (Żurawski 2003: 244). However, the nearly perfect symmetry of the central part of the temple is a feature, that did not exist in other Kushite temples.

The second temple with a great importance was constructed at Kerma (Fig. 7). There was a major Napatan temple to the north of the site of the old metropolis of Kerma, overlying the site of the New Kingdom temples (Edwards 2004:124-125). The architectural concept of a transversal chapel erected alongside the temples sanctuaries is entirely comparable to other buildings of the reign of Taharqa (Kawa, Sanam Tabo). The tripartite sanctuary preceded by a transversal corridor that provides access to each of the three chapels could indicate the connections with temples B 500 and B 800/900 constructed at Gebel Barkal (Bonnet, Valbelle 2005). For the other Napatan temples, it is very difficult to find any analogies or differences between them, because they are still being excavated.



7. Schematic diagram of Napatan buildings in Doukki Gel (After Bonnet, Valbelle 2005: page 38)

Amongst all the Napatan temples, the temple built by king Atlanarsa and Senkamanesken at the foot of Gebel Barkal was conspicuous. The temple was planned and nearly finished by Atlanarsa then decorated and completed by his son - Senkamanesken. It consisted of two rooms, each with four columns, together with the pylon on the front side. During the Meroitic period the temple was restored: its walls and columns were rebuilt, a small inner sanctuary was added at the back, and a columned portico was put in the front of the pylon (Reisner 1918: 111-112). Temple B 700 is so far the only one created entirely during the Napatan period, after the period of the reign of the XXVth Dynasty. Steffen Wenig (1984) classified that temple as a single – roomed one. This type is very prominent in the Meroitic Period, when local culture elements had a greater influence on architecture. It could have meant that Atlanarsa and Senkamanesken, in the construction of their temple, were based on a different plan than rulers of the XXVth Dynasty, and perhaps these principles were derived from the local

traditions. This simple plan could be compare to the small temples built during the XVIIIth Dynasty or to the Osiris Chapel constructed in Karnak.

The Wenig's and Ali Hakem's classifications, mentioned above, divide all the Kushite temples into two groups: "Amon temples" and "Lion temples", which correspond to multi-roomed and single-roomed temples. This division clearly underlines the relationship between the Napatan temples and temples constructed in Egypt. In fact, the terms „Amon temples", „Napatan temples" and „multi-roomed temples" concerns the same group. Even thoughthese terms would be too general, the influence of the Egyptian element on the Napatan architecture was significant. The Napatan architecture could be characterized on the basis of its relationship between these two cultures. It could be a mistake, however, to regard the temples erected in Nubia as typical Egyptian construction because the element of local tradition or even the local resources influenced the formation of their distinct style.

References

Adams, W.
(1984), Meroitic Architecture. An Analytical Survey and Bibliography, Meroitica 7, 255 – 279.
Adams, W., Anderson, R.,D.
(1975), Qasr Ibrim 1978, JEA 65, 30 – 41.
Arkell, A.,J.
(1955), A History of the Sudan from the Earliest Times to 1821, London
Arnold, D.
(1999), Temples of the Last Pharaohs, New York.
Bianchi, R., S.
(2004), Daily life of the Nubians, Greenwood
Bonnet, C., Jacquet, H., Jaquet, J.
(1969), Pnubs and the Temple of Tabo on Argo Island, JEA 55, 103-111.
Bonnet, C., Valbelle, D.
(2005), The Nubian Pharaohs. Black Kings of the Nile, Cairo – New York.
Dunham, D.
(1970), The Barkal Temples, Boston.
Edwards D.
(2004) The Nubian Past: An Archaeology of the Sudan, London – New York.
Kendall, T.
(1994), A New Map of the Gebel Barkal Temples, [in:] Bonnet (ed.) 1994: 139-145; (2002), Napatan Temples: a Case Study from Gebel Barkal. The Mythological Nubian Origin of Egyptian Kingship and the Formation of the Napatan State. Tenth International Conference of Nubian Studies. Rome, September 9–14, 2002
Macadam, L.
(1949), The Temples of Kawa I. The Inscriptions, London;

(1955), The Temples of Kawa II. History and Archaeology of the Site, London;

Porter, B., Moss, R.

(1995), Topographical bibliography of Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic texts, reliefs and paintings, tom VII: Nubia, The Deserts and Outside Egypt, Oxford.

Reisner, G.

(1918a), The Barkal Temples in 1916, JEA 5, 99-112.

Torok, L.

(1997), The Kingdom of Kush. Handbook of trhe Napatan – Meroitic Civilization (Handbuch der Orintalistik Erste Abteilung. Der nahe und Mittlere Osten 31), Leiden – New York – Koln.

(2002), The Image of the Ordered World in Ancinet Nubian Art. The Construction of the Kushite Mind, 800 BC – 300 AD, Leiden – Boston – Koln;

Welsby, D.A.

(1996), The Kingdom of Kush. The Napatan and meroitic Empires, London

Wenig, D.A.

(1984), Gedanken zu einigen Aspekten der kuschitischen Tempelarchitektur, [in:] Hintze (1984), 381-408.

Wolf, P.

(2006), Temples in Meroitic South – Some aspects of typology, cult and function, [in:] Roccati, Caneva (eds) 2006: Acta Nubica. Proceedings of the Xth Internetional Conference of Nubian Studies, Rome 9-14 September 2002, 239-262;

Żurawski, B.

(1998b), Pliny's "Tergedum" discovered, Sudan & Nubia 2, 74-81;

(2002), Dongola Reach. The Southern Dongola Reach Survey, 2001, Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean XIII, 217 – 226.

(2003), Nubia II. Southern Dongola Reach Survey 1. Survey and Excavations between Old Dongola and Ez – Zuma, Warszawa.