



The Amun Temple at Meroe Revisited

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The Amun Temple at Meroe, also known as M 260, is the second-largest Kushite temple, surpassed in size only by temple B 500 at Jebel Barkal. Unfortunately, Temple M 260 has never been properly investigated, as it was excavated in a somewhat hurried manner by John Garstang during the last month of his 1909-1910 season at Meroe (Garstang *et al.* 1911, 11-16 and pl. III; Figure 1). Additional clearance was carried out in the following season and a new plan of the temple was prepared (Garstang 1912, pl. VIII; see also Török 1997, fig. 24; Figure 2). Neither of these plans was complete or accurate and it seems that the main reason for that was that the temple had not been fully excavated. Judging from Garstang's reports and photographs Temple M 260 was excavated from inside out with the debris dumped next to or over the presumed exterior walls obstructing the clarity of the layout. Moreover, even within the excavated areas the walls were either never fully traced or, when exposed, were marked incorrectly on the plan. New investigations within the premises of the Amun Temple were carried out by Peter L. Shinnie and Ahmed Ali Hakem between 1966 and 1969 and this resulted in Hakem's new plan of the temple (Hakem 1988, 153, fig. 20; Figure 3). Unfortunately, Hakem's book had limited circulation and few scholars took account of his work. Almost a decade later another plan correcting Garstang's plan was published by Friedrich W. Hinkel (Hinkel 1996, Abb. 52; Figure 4). At the time Hinkel was engaged in the conservation and reconstruction of the royal pyramids and in his spare time he took the opportunity to measure and to re-draw the plan of the Temple of Amun. Unfortunately, both Hakem and Hinkel, while correcting some of Garstang's errors, introduced new inaccuracies (see Figures 1-4).¹

Although the Amun Temple was visited by many scholars who subsequently published their observations (e.g. Hofmann and Tomandl 1986, 30-32; Török 1997, 117) the only post-Garstang excavations there were carried out by Shinnie. In 1967 Shinnie excavated an area near the south-west corner of the courtyard M 271 focusing on the problem of the architectural history of the temple. The results were published in his first excavation report (Shinnie and Bradley 1980, 91-95), but since this work was concerned with specific archaeological and chronological questions no new plan was produced. In a later paper, Bradley presented a highly speculative interpretation of the putative rebuilding and extension of the courtyard (Bradley 1982, 168-189) and her ideas were largely accepted by Török (Török 1997, 36, 120). Shinnie returned to M 260

¹ The inaccurate plans were perpetuated through use in such important publications as Welsby's influential book on the *Kingdom of Kush* (Welsby 1996, 116, fig. 45.2) and Wolf's overview article on Merotic temples where Hinkel's plan was used (Wolf 2006, 241, fig. 2).

in 1983/84, during his last campaign at Meroe, and excavated several long trial trenches in various parts of the temple, but the description of this work was not included in the second and final report on the University of Khartoum – University of Calgary excavations (Shinnie and Anderson 2004). However, Shinnie kindly forwarded to the author his rough field notes and these were subsequently presented in the *Meroe Reports I* (Grzymski 2003, 25-31).² While this work added some information about the stratigraphy of the temple it did not increase our knowledge of the layout of the building.

Between 1999 and 2014, the joint mission of the University of Khartoum and the Royal Ontario Museum directed in the field by the author, conducted several field campaigns at Meroe mainly in the area known as the South Mound (Grzymski 2003; 2005).³ The exploration of the Amun Temple, located in the centre of the site, was not part of our research plan which was mainly concerned with the question of the origin of Meroe. Nevertheless, it was felt that because of the discrepancies between various published plans and the fact that Garstang has never fully exposed all the walls of the Amun Temple, it would be worthwhile to undertake a new investigation of it. We did not intend to re-excavate the entire building but merely to draw a new and proper plan of the temple. Sometimes this required the removal of the windblown sand which has accumulated during the last 100 years. Occasionally, small-scale excavations were needed to reveal the wall faces. Since Temple M 260 is the first major structure encountered by the tourists entering the site it was also important to clear at least some of Garstang's dumps obstructing the view of the temple. Thus, during our first campaign in 2000 we removed the dump heaped in front of the north pylon and carried out clearance and study of the courtyard M 271. Afterwards, we turned our attention to palace M 750 and particularly to the pre-Napatan and early Napatan structures found underneath it (Grzymski 2006; Grzymski and Grzymska 2008). Only occasionally, when time and funds permitted, would we engage in the clearing of walls and the studying of architecture of the Amun Temple. In hindsight, it is regrettable that we did not pursue the investigation of Temple M 260 more energetically, because these limited activities produced most satisfying and informative results, even though only selected parts of the temple have been studied. The results of our research in rooms M 271 and M 270, carried out in 2000 and 2004 respectively, were already

² The precise location of these sondages was not known at the time, but recently a sketch map marking their location was found among the papers which Shinnie donated to the Royal Ontario Museum.

³ I would like to express my gratitude to Mr Hassan Hussein Idriss, Director-General Emeritus of the Sudan National Corporation for Antiquities (NCAM) and to his successor Dr Abdelrahman Ali Mohammed for their permission to carry out excavations at Meroe. I would also like to thank my colleagues from the University of Khartoum, Prof. Ali Osman, Prof. Intisar Soghayroun and Dr Hwida Mohammed Adam for their support of our joint endeavour. The cost of field investigations was covered by grants from the Royal Ontario Museum and the Qatar-Sudan Archaeological Project.

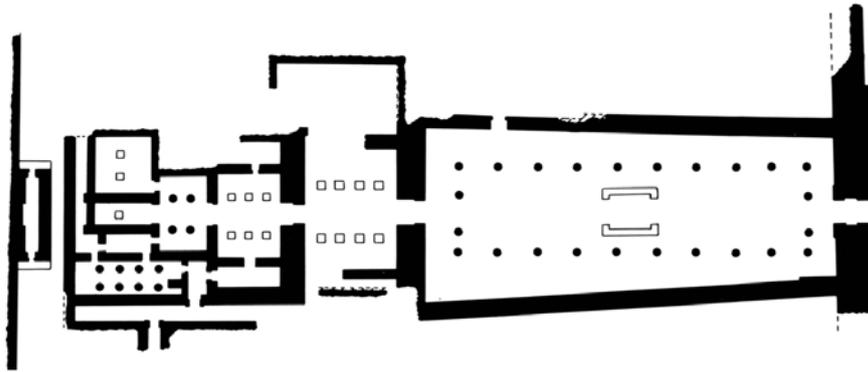


Figure 1. John Garstang's plan of Temple M 260 drawn during the last month of his 1909-1910 campaign at Meroe (Garstang 1911, pl. III).

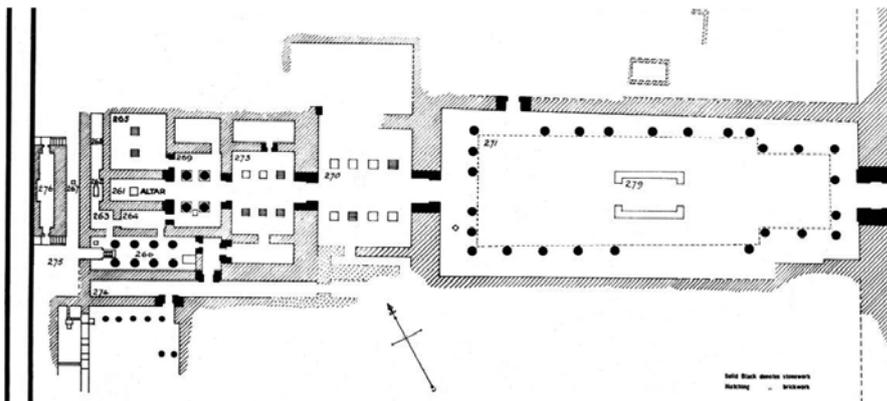


Figure 2. John Garstang's plan of Temple M 260 drawn following the additional clearance undertaken during second season at Meroe (Garstang 1912, pl. VIII).

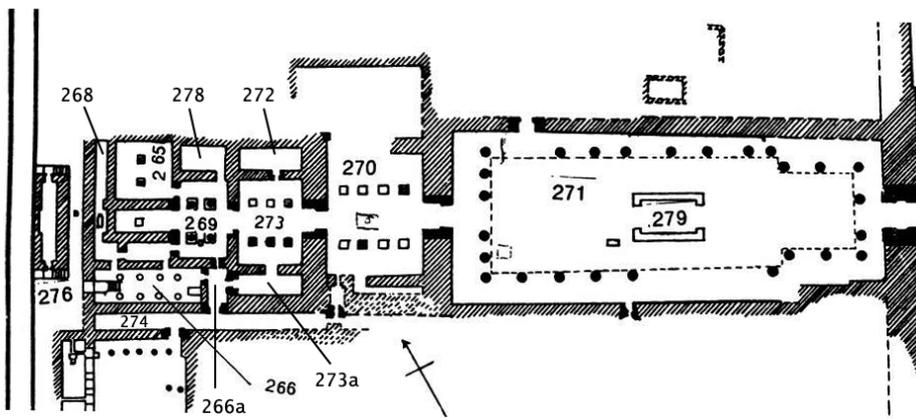


Figure 3. Plan prepared after new investigations of the Amun Temple carried out by Peter L. Shinnie and Ahmed Ali Hakem between 1966 and 1969 (Hakem 1988, 153, fig. 20).

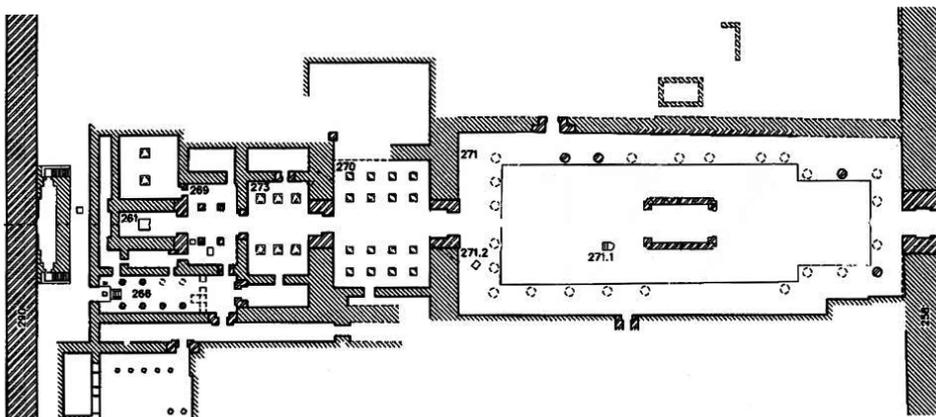


Figure 4. Plan made by Friedrich W. Hinkel in the 1970s (Hinkel 1996, Abb. 52).



incorporated in the most recent plan of the Amun Temple published by Michel Baud (Baud *et al.* 2010, 63, fig. 60).

It was, however, the work carried out during our last two seasons (January – February 2012; November 2014) and focused mainly on the study of the interior rooms of the Amun Temple that allowed us to produce with high degree of confidence a new plan of the entire temple (Figure 5).⁴ Various new features identified and several charcoal samples obtained during these investigations threw new light on the architectural history of the temple.

about 3.5m to 3.8m tall giving thus additional indication of the minimum height of the gate and the pylon.

During our season in 2000 we were able to trace the entire length of the north and south walls of the courtyard. We noticed that the walls were abutting but not bonding with the Second Pylon which separated courtyard M 271 from the forecourt M 270. This clearly indicated that the courtyard was a later addition to the temple. When clearing the interior face of the south wall we were able to locate the south gate to the courtyard. It was first noted by Hakem, but he placed it a

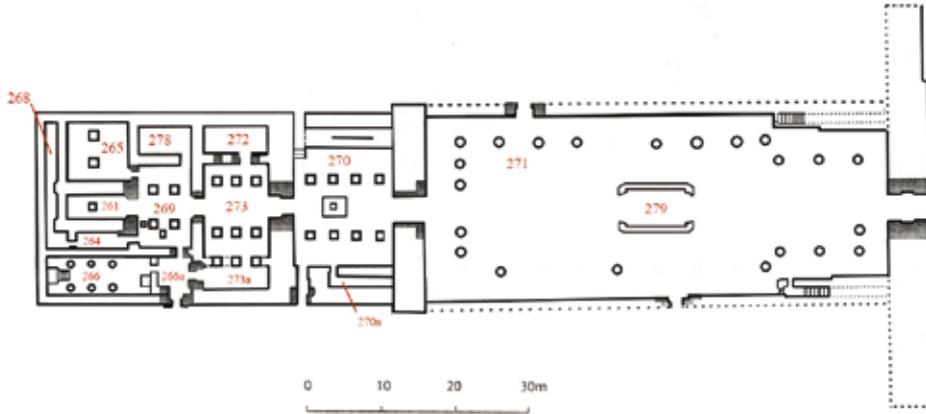


Figure 5. Plan of the Amun Temple as corrected by K. Grzymski.

Courtyard M 271

The most obvious issue needing clarification was the layout of the large courtyard M 271 with its mysterious abutment, sometimes referred to as a 'kink', in the south-east corner and the unusual arrangement of the colonnade in the east side of the courtyard. It was difficult to comprehend why all the previous plans of M 260 failed to account for the fact that a similar abutment was also visible in the north-east corner making the layout of the courtyard quite symmetrical although admittedly without parallel in Kushite architecture. The 'kinks' turned out to be long stairways leading towards the pylons (Grzymski 2003, 11-13; fig. 5). Unfortunately, the stairs are only partially preserved and the pylons are largely destroyed. Based on the average width of each step and the length of the stairway it was calculated that the pylons were at least 3.8m high and possibly higher if there were additional stairs within the core of the pylons, although this seems unlikely. The stairs were made of red bricks, while the pylons had external casing made of red bricks with mud-brick interior. The door jambs of the main gate were made of sandstone blocks. On the west, that is interior, face of the gate one can still trace the outlines in low relief of two standing figures, a female on the north side and a male on the south (already noted by Hakem 1988, 158; see Grzymski 2003, fig. 4a-b, pl. V). The back foot of the male figure is almost completely preserved and originally must have measured about 580mm. Taking into account the body proportions with the foot being approximately $\frac{1}{6}$ to $\frac{1}{7}$ of the person's height, the individual, presumably a king, depicted in the scene must have been

few meters further west than its actual position by mistakenly identifying the gate's west jamb as its east jamb (Hakem 1988, 160). We returned to this area in 2012 to expose fully this entrance and to gauge its thickness in order to calculate the thickness of the south wall of the courtyard. The wall itself is poorly preserved and in many places only its fragmentary foundations could be identified. It was made of a mixture of sandstone blocks, some re-used from earlier buildings, and red bricks just like the northern wall. This construction method was already observed by Shinnie in his trial trenches A, B and F (Grzymski 2003, 25-28), where many re-used stone blocks and column drums from some earlier structures were found, particularly in the north wall. Since the interior walls were plastered and perhaps also painted, therefore the re-used blocks were not visible when the temple was completed. When clearing the south entrance to M 271 we also found several re-used decorated stone blocks with relief fragments placed in the gate. On the other hand the position of the two feet of a deity or royal personality incised on the east jamb of the south gate suggests that these particular reliefs were part of the actual decoration of the gate. We also found a Meroitic graffito incised on one of the blocks in the gate. It was studied by Claude Rilly who, on palaeographic grounds, dated the text, invoking the names of Isis and Mut, to the mid-3rd century AD (Rilly, pers. comm.).

The gate was not quite symmetrical (Plate 1). Its opening was 3.95m wide towards the courtyard for the depth of 1.52m on the east side, equivalent to the thickness of the south wall of the courtyard M 271 in the section between the gate and the First Pylon. On the west side the gate in its wider part has the thickness of the jamb of only 1.45m and

⁴ For the detailed functional analysis of individual rooms in the temple see Török 2002, 314-330.



Plate 1. South entrance to courtyard M 271.

it is likely that the west section of the south wall was also of this thickness. The gate opening then narrowed to 1.86m in its south part which extended beyond the south wall of M 271. The north wall of the courtyard M 271 was thicker than the south wall as it was of the same thickness as the passage through the north gate i.e. 1.93m thick. Generally, all the walls of the north side of the temple were thicker than the southern walls, probably reflecting the fact that the temple was placed in a slight depression. This is further confirmed by the existence of stairs leading up to the north gate of the next room, namely the forecourt M 270. Moreover, strong northern winds might have led to the accumulation of sand along the north wall, a situation that can also be observed in modern houses, hence the need for a stronger wall here. It must be said, however, that the Meroitic builders were not always precise and one finds variations in construction of the different parts of the same gate or in the width of the walls in their different sections.

Forecourt M 270

Perhaps no other room within the temple was so incorrectly drawn on all the earlier plans as the forecourt M 270. Garstang left the north wall unmarked, Hakem noticed an entrance in the south-west corner of the room, and Hinkel doubled the number of columns or pillars in M 270 from eight to 16 while retaining Garstang's layout of the south part of the room and ignoring Hakem's correction (Figure 4). Thus, during two brief seasons (February and December 2004) we undertook surface clearance of this space in order to identify its layout and locate the position of the walls, doors, pillars and the curious feature in the middle of the room, namely a stone offering basin, described and photographed by Garstang, but not marked on the published plan. The stone basin was placed in the centre of the pathway between the third pair of pillars. It was composed of two sections, an actual basin hewn from a square slab 800 x 800mm, and a low sandstone platform with a drain, measuring 1.1 x 1.08m. The religious meaning of this libation basin remains a mystery. A similar feature, but made of red bricks and placed in the south-west corner of the room was apparently found at Dokki Gel (Ahmed 2004, 208).

Red-brick pillars rested on sandstone bases and a stylobate

wall was found extending between but not under the pillar bases. The arrangement was thus different from M 271 where the stylobate wall found by Shinnie in his trenches A, B and F seemed to support the columns of the courtyard (Grzym-ski 2003, 25-26, 28). Rather surprisingly for the previously excavated room we found in the north and north-west part of the forecourt a number of decorated and inscribed blocks not recorded and left *in situ* by the earlier excavators. These included square-shaped cornices suggesting that the square bases supported square pillars rather than round columns. Additionally, we found seven blocks containing Meroitic inscriptions, mainly brief invocations usually beginning with the word *aleqese* which Hintze translated as 'inscription' or 'invocation' (Hintze 1960, 142) and Rilly treated as an adverbial proverb, something like 'verily' (Rilly, pers. comm.). Most importantly we were able to confirm the existence of only two rows of pillars, as drawn by Garstang, disproving thus Hinkel's supposition. Considering the distance separating both rows of pillars it is unlikely that the room was completely roofed; rather its centre was open and flanked by a portico. The exterior walls on the north and south side are unusually thick and one has the impression that the original walls aligned with the stone gates were thickened by the addition of retaining walls on the north side. On the south side of the forecourt M 270 a narrow wall was constructed forming a long and narrow room M 270a (Plate 2).^{5,6} This also led to the

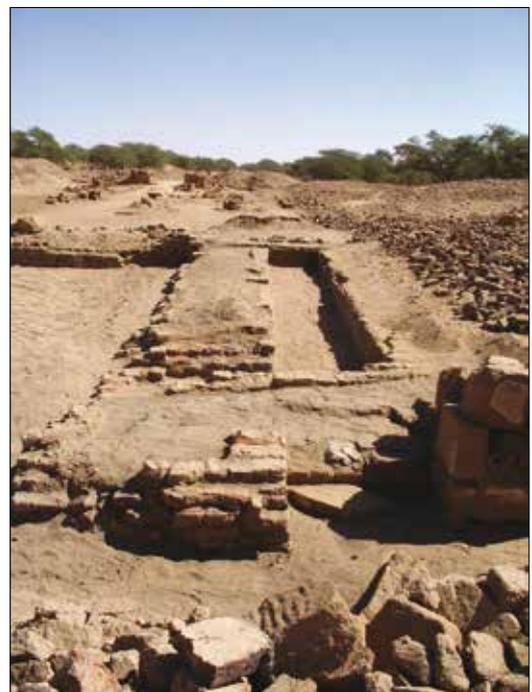


Plate 2. Long room M 270a and south entrance to M 270 (foreground).

⁵ Garstang left some rooms unnumbered and these we provided with the number of a neighbouring room with letters 'a' and 'b' added when necessary (see Figure 5).

⁶ The function of this space is unclear. Did it contain a timber staircase giving access up into the pylon? It is in an identical position to the later stairways by the First Pylon; however, there is no evidence on the ground for such a staircase (editor's comment).



redesign of the north and south gates which were extended inside M 270 by the addition of the red-brick lining. Steps found inside the gates show that the interior rooms of the temple were located in a slight depression. This is particularly evident on the north side where the elevation of the top step was 357.79m a.s.l., while the floor level within the temple, and more specifically, the flagstone part of the floor extending from the temple entrance to the sanctuary was over a metre lower at 356.73m a.s.l.. The north and south entrances to the forecourt M 270 were placed immediately adjacent to the west wall separating the forecourt from the hypostyle hall M 273. A similar arrangement can be seen in two other Amun temples in Central Sudan, namely at el-Hassa (Rondot 2012, 171, fig. 2) and at Dangeil (Anderson and Ahmed 2010, 10).

During the 2012 season we exposed the entire south wall of M 270 to establish its thickness. On the north side we searched for the supposed large room marked vaguely by Garstang to the north of the forecourt. While such a room might eventually be found it would be free standing and not connected to the north wall; rather it seems that Garstang misidentified as a separate wall the red-brick lining of the north-west section of the north pylon of the core temple. Since we also located the south edge of the south pylon, the plan and architectural history of the Temple of Amun at Meroe became clear.

Interior rooms, north side: M268, M 265, M 278

The layout of the interior rooms of M 260 at first seemed exactly as shown on Garstang's plan and our clearance was limited to exposing the temple's north wall in order to establish its full thickness. This was 2m thick in M 268 and M 265, but 2.2m to 2.3m in side rooms M 272 and M 278. This slight widening of the wall was also noted by Hinkel and is presented on his plan albeit in an exaggerated manner. The wall was constructed in the traditional way with several rows of mud bricks encased on either side by red bricks.

Little can be said about rooms M 268, M 265 and M 278. We ascertained the position of the walls and the fact that two pillars in M 265 were placed slightly off-centre, but otherwise were only able to confirm the overall correctness of Garstang's plans. We also re-excavated Shinnie's trial trench C (see Grzymski 2003, 27; note that Shinnie mistakenly referred to 'south' instead of 'north') and revealed the remains of a stone gate mentioned by Shinnie. The gate was made of good quality sandstone blocks with graffiti scratched on some of the blocks.⁷ A 2.9m wide corridor separated this gate from the north wall of the temple.

Hypostyle Hall M 273 and rooms M 272 and M 273a

Room M 272 is of special interest being the find spot of the frequently published stela of Amanikhabale (= REM

⁷This structure is presently investigated by the University of Khartoum team led by Dr Hwida Mohammed.

1038; see e.g. Török 1997, 127; Baud *et al.* 2010, 174; FHN III, 837-840; Wenig 1978, 201). This is seemingly the top part of the so-called Turaeff stela (REM 1001). The scene depicting the offering to Amun and Mut probably inspired the identification of this chamber as a Mut sanctuary (e.g. Wolf 2006, 243). The clearance of the hypostyle hall M 273 exposed two rows of square pillar or column bases made of red bricks. There were three such pillars on each side of the main passage ways and in each row they were connected by a red-brick stylobate. The picture was more complicated with the supposed walls separating the hypostyle hall from rooms M 272 and M 273a. On either side we found three solid bases made of black sandstone, each measuring 870 x 870mm just like the bases supporting the columns in the hall of the offering tables M 269. However, in this case we found no column drums. The bases of the north 'wall' separating M 273 and M 272 were connected by a stylobate made of irregular, angular, light-coloured stones. A red-brick wall standing three or four courses high was actually preserved, extending from the west wall of M 273 to the middle pillar. An open space, c. 1.5m wide, between the middle and eastern pillars was marked as a doorway on Garstang's plan (Figure 2). A similar arrangement could be seen on the south side of the hypostyle hall M 273, although a meagre trace of a wall was observed extending only to the westernmost stone base (Plate 3). It seems that the original design of the hypostyle



Plate 3. Stone pillar bases and wall fragment between M 273 and M 273a.

hall provided for a double row of columns (or pillars), that is six on each side of the central axis. At some later date the columns (or pillars) in the outside rows were removed and replaced with bricks resting on a stylobate and forming a wall with doors between the easternmost and central pillars. Unfortunately, neither the present condition of the temple

remains nor the photographs taken by Garstang can confirm this hypothesis.⁸

Interior rooms, south side: M 266, M 266a, M 263 and M 264

The brushing of the walls in the south interior rooms was concentrated in and around room M 266. It transpired very quickly that the west wall of the temple formed a corner with the south wall and did not extend towards the walls of room M 277 as marked on Garstang's plan. Moreover, as Török had already suggested, there was no door in the west wall behind the dais in M 266, but the cut was made by workmen removing the debris from the interior of the temple (Török 1997, 122). The terrible degradation of the temple since it was first excavated is most visible in the doorway to the small chamber M 264 immediately to the south of the main sanctuary M 261. According to the excavators the jambs in the doorway between M 269 and M 264

“(...) were decorated with figures or groups incised and painted, arranged in superposed series. On the north side were Isis and the king (...), facing east; and a Nile-god looking west. On the opposite jamb were the gods Amon, ram-headed, with solar disk on head, facing east; and a Nile-god facing west. Above the ram-headed Amon in upper register were the traces of another god, either Horus or Thot.”

(Garstang *et al.* 1911, 13).

This whole part of the building has now disappeared and only three small, undecorated blocks can be seen lying on the ground. Garstang marked on his plan two doors in a wall separating chapel M 266 from rooms M 263 and M 264 respectively (see Figure 2). It seems, however, that these supposed doors were simply made by workmen removing debris during the excavations because what would be a natural passage through a doorway from M 269 to M 266a was blocked with mud bricks in antiquity.

M 266 was variously interpreted as the chapel of Amun-Re or Re-Harakhte (Török 1997, 122), a coronation room (Ernst 1999), a *wabet* (Wolf 2006, 242, after Arnold; see also Traunecker 1995), a throne room or simply a dais room (Anderson and Ahmed 2007). There is little doubt that the room functioned in the solar cult (Kroeper 2010, 234) and was associated with the New Year Festival and the coronations taking place then (Lohwasser 1995; 2014). Apparently it was only accessible through a narrow door from a small antechamber M 266a. Garstang's plan shows eight columns placed in pairs in four rows; two platform-like features were marked at the east and west end of the room. Our investigations showed, however, that there were only three

⁸ It must be noted that there is some evidence for later activity and rebuilding of the temple, such as the addition of a step in the north entrance to the forecourt M 270 or blocking the door between M 269 and M 266a.

pairs of columns. It seems that Garstang misinterpreted the overturned column capital and column drum found on the east side of the room as part of the colonnade. In fact, these were loose column fragments lying on the surface as one can also see on one of Garstang's photos (Garstang *et al.* 1911, pl. VIII.1). Thus, like in many other Amun temples, such as Naqa (Kroeper and Wildung 2002, 139), the east part of M 266 was unroofed. The stone throne base measuring 1.93 x 1.8m was located on the west side and, therefore, facing towards the rising sun. It was uninscribed and undecorated in contrast to the similar throne support found in temple B 500 at Jebel Barkal.⁹ A unique feature, not recorded in other Amun sanctuaries in Nubia, was the presence of a second platform in M 266. This 1.5 x 1.5m square made of red bricks was attached to a short red-brick wall extending from a stone doorway of M 266a and forming the east wall of chapel M 266. The function of this brick platform which stood in the unroofed part of chapel M 266 is unclear, though it might have served as an altar.

According to Garstang this part of the temple was connected to a large columned hall M 277 by a small wall extending from the south-west corner of the temple, i.e. the outside corner of M 266. Upon clearing this area we confirmed that, in fact, no such wall existed. The 2.3m wide corridor M 274 extends along the entire length of the temple on its south side. This long corridor was part of a perambulatory passage around the entire core of the temple which was a free standing structure. It also allowed the faithful to access the contra-temple M 276 placed behind the Amun sanctuary and attached to the enclosure wall surrounding the Royal City.

Sondages

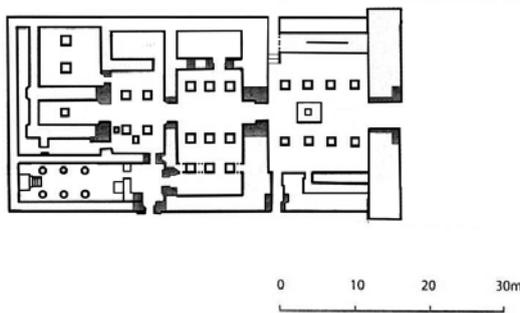
In order to get more insights into the construction history of the temple we excavated two small sondages: one across the north end of the narrow room M 268, another across the corridor M 274 where Garstang marked a wall connecting M 266 and M 277. In both cases we dug until we reached the natural soil known locally as *rigeita* or *sara*. In the first sondage (M 268) the foundation bricks laid on their narrow sides, as was usually the case in the Meroe buildings, were placed directly on this natural soil. Due to the fragility of the foundations and the small size of the sondage we did not attempt to search for the foundation deposit. However, charcoal was found in M 268 both at and under the foundation and in the fill above. The C¹⁴ sample obtained from the sample associated with the foundation level which was not disturbed by the earlier excavators provided 2 sigma date of 90 BC to AD 1 (1 σ of 160-130 BC and 110 BC-AD 20). The sample found higher in the fill and presumably from the occupation layer had 2 sigma date of AD 80-130 (1 σ AD 60-180 and 190-210).

The second sondage, in the corridor M 274, extended from the south wall of room M 266 to the north wall of structure

⁹ This throne base has been discussed in some detail by Ernst 1999.



M 277. Interestingly, the lowest course of the foundation was placed not on top of the *rigelta* but cut into this hard layer. In contrast to the north-west corner of the temple here the walls were very well preserved with no traces of collapse or rebuilding. The whole area was filled with clean sand and no charcoal was found.



Chronology and construction history

The investigations of the Amun Temple M 260 revealed two main phases of construction and some additional rebuilding. In the first phase the 49m long temple ('core temple') was erected. Its plan was very traditional with the central sanctuary, the vestibule, the hypostyle hall, the forecourt and the pylons whose edges extended for 1.3m beyond both north and south walls of the temple. The dimensions of the Meroe core temple are similar to those at Dangeil and el-Hassa and this similarity is further enhanced by the placement of the side doors in hall M 270 (Figure 5). In the second phase kiosk M 279 was built and walls of the courtyard M 271 were added to the outer edges of the pylon of the core temple in such a way that the interior face of the south wall of the courtyard lined up exactly with the external face of the south wall in M 270. Since the north wall of M 271 was thicker, its interior face does not line up with the exterior face of the north wall in M 270, but extends 360mm inside the courtyard. This shows that the Meroites were prepared, when necessary, to depart from the idealized form of the building and incur some inaccuracies when it suited them.¹⁰

The actual construction sequence of the second phase is difficult to establish. It is very likely that the temenos wall with the First Pylon was in fact constructed in the first phase simultaneously with the core temple. Afterwards, in phase two, the courtyard M 271 and kiosk M 279 were added filling the empty space between the temple and the temenos wall. This explains the unusual position of the two stairways leading to the First Pylon as they were added at that time.¹¹

¹⁰ This might help explain mistakes that crept into Hinkel's plan; being a professional architect, he planned the building as it should have been constructed, rather than as it was actually built.

¹¹ Although we are using the term 'pylon' for the decorated gateway which presumably was originally part of a temenos wall the term 'portal' rather than 'pylon', as proposed by Hakem (1988, 154-155), deserves consideration.

What remains unclear is whether the kiosk and the courtyard walls were contemporary or were erected independently. It is conceivable that the kiosk was built first by Amanitore and Natakamani (Figure 6), and then the courtyard walls and stairs to the pylon towers (portal) were added, but it could have been done the other way, i.e. first the courtyard and later the

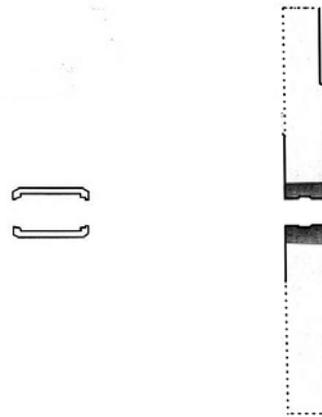


Figure 6. Possible second stage of construction: the core temple and the kiosk M 279.

kiosk. There is no evidence at present to support definitively one of these two options.

The dating of the temple has been a matter of discussion for some time now. In terms of the datable material found inside the building, the earliest was the *cipus* of Horus which Sternberg-El Hotabi dated to 380-280 BC (Kormysheva 2006, 157-162; Sternberg-El Hotabi 1999, 110). Inscriptions of several Meroitic rulers were found in the Amun Temple, namely Amanikhabale, whose stela was found in M 272, Amanishakheto whose so-called obelisk¹² was found in the courtyard M 271 in front of hall M 270, and finally Natakamani and Amanitore, who erected kiosk M 279. The latest royal name associated with the temple is that of Talakhideamani, a king previously known only from an inscription at Philae (see Rilly's article, below).¹³ The main problem is placing these rulers in proper chronological sequence as scholarly opinions vary. King Amanikhabale, for example, was dated by Dunham to 50-40 BC, a date which would be in agreement with the C¹⁴ date of 90 BC-AD 1 from the sample in M 282 and could see this ruler as possible founder of the temple. However, recent research places Amanikhabale's reign in c. AD 40-50, i.e. after Teriteqas, Amanirenas and Amanishakheto (Yellin 2015, 14).

Taking into account all the information deriving from the building sequence, datable inscriptions and C¹⁴ dates, one can attempt to outline the construction history of the Amun Temple at Meroe, although this will remain a working hypothesis, until more thorough excavations are carried out within and without the temple. The *cipus* of Nesmin is almost certainly intrusive as most evidence points to the early to mid-1st century BC as the most likely date of the foundation of the temple. Certain similarities between the

¹² The text probably described the donation to the already existing temple. For detailed discussion of the obelisk see Rilly 2002.

¹³ This inscription was apparently known to Haycock, who read the name as Lakhideamani (Hakem 1988, 175).

Amun temples at Jebel Barkal and Meroe have been noted by several scholars, such as Hakem, Wenig and Török (see the references in Török 1997, 119-120). Thus, M 260 might have been founded by the ruler/s with close ties to Barkal and possibly even buried at Barkal. This would point to Teriteqas and Amanirenas as likely candidates, although neither name appears in the inscriptions found in the temple. Subsequently, Queen Amanishakheto erected her obelisk in front of the (core) temple and a little later Natakamani and Amanitore constructed the kiosk M 279 possibly before the courtyard M 271 was formed (Figure 6). The colonnade and walls of M 271 certainly existed in the 3rd century AD as can

erected which Hinkel dated to the 3rd century AD (Hinkel 1989, 266). The unusual position of the stairs ('kinks') in M 271 suggest that the temenos wall already existed at that time forcing the retrofitting of the stairwells. Similarly, the north and south walls of M 271 are attached to but not bonding with the temenos wall/First Pylon on the east and Second Pylon on the west. In such a scenario the First Pylon of the temple would indeed be simply a portal, as proposed by Hakem rather than a monumental pylon (Hakem 1988, 154-159). In addition to the main building sequence (1) core temple + temenos wall, (2) kiosk M 279 and perhaps also the rams avenue, (3) courtyard M 271, (4) kiosk M 280, there is



Plate 4. Kite view of M 260 and surrounding area after the 2012 excavations (photo courtesy of B. Żurawski).

be inferred from the date of a charcoal sample collected on the stairs in the south-east corner and carbon dated to AD 220-350 and from the inscription found on the South Gate and dated on palaeographic grounds to the 3rd century AD (Rilly, pers. comm.). At this point it is impossible to state with certainty whether the kiosk M 279 and courtyard M 271 were constructed at the same time or the walls and colonnade of the courtyard precede (or follow) the construction of M 279. In front of the temple another kiosk, M 280, was

evidence of secondary changes to the building's layout, such as blocking up the doors from M 269 to M 266a and walling up intercolumnar space in M 273. The overall impression of the completed temple is that of an elegant building laid out according to a well thought-out plan. It is also evident that M 260 was only a part of a large religious complex enclosed by an impressive stone temenos wall. The work of Hwida Mohammed and the University of Khartoum team in the area immediately north of M 260 might throw new light on



the nature of this part of the complex. To the south of the temple lies the still-untouched structure M 740 which likely represents temple magazines and, possibly, a palace associated with the core temple (Plate 4).

Temple orientation

The Amun temples at Kawa, Sanam and Jebel Barkal, are oriented towards the Nile. This is not the case at Meroe although Bradley argued that an extinct Nile channel once ran to the east of M 260. Bradley's hypothesis was readily accepted by Török in his publication of Garstang's excavations and in his later work where he also suggested that the temple was oriented towards the royal necropolis (Török 2002, 318). This contradicted the arguments he presented elsewhere, namely that the Amun temples in Kush generally were orientated in accordance with astronomical principles and in association with the mountains as was the case, for example, in Jebel Barkal and Naqa (Török 2004, 160). The importance of mountains in the cult of Amun and the existence of cave sanctuaries of Amun are also noted by Zach and Tomandl with reference to 'Amun in the Mountain' in the Mut Temple B300 (Zach and Tomandl 2000, 144-145; Robisek 1989, 52ff). The astronomical orientation of the Amun Temple at Meroe is most likely as during the winter solstice the rays of the rising sun fall directly on the main altar. Moreover, it has been observed that the sun rises directly above Jebel el-Hadjies located directly east of the temple (Plate 5). During a brief visit to Jebel el-Hadjies we did not find any caves, but because of its position relative to



Plate 5. View east from the main altar (foreground) towards Jebel el-Hadjies.

the temple one could speculate that this mountain did play a role in the cult of Amun of Meroe.

The Early Amun Temple

Considering the size of the area occupied by the Amun Temple M 260 it is reasonable to assume that it was erected over some earlier structures which once stood east of the Royal City enclosure. Shinnie noted a small crosswall running north-south which he found in his trench B III in courtyard M 271. In the report submitted to the Sudan Antiquities Services on 7th January 1984 Shinnie mentioned the discovery of two slight brick walls, Garstang's 'sarcophagus', running obliquely to each other on the bottom of trench D/E, clearly the remains of some earlier structure (see also Grzymiski 2003, 27-28). However, since the two sondages we excavated in the temple's north-west and south-west corners showed that the foundations were set in clean soil, it is unlikely that any of the walls found by Shinnie came from an earlier Amun Temple. Rather, they represented some other pre-temple structures. In this respect one agrees with Török that an early Amun temple was probably erected within the Royal City, although both the suggested north-south orientation and the large dimensions of this putative temple (Török 1997, 25-30) are unlikely.¹⁴ One would rather expect a smaller structure, oriented east-west with entrance facing the rising sun, located within the unexplored area M 293 and opening directly to the East Gate of the Enclosure Wall of the Royal City. We undertook preliminary investigation of this area by means of the magnetometric survey carried out on our behalf by Tomasz Herbich. Unfortunately, no substantial remains were revealed, probably because this early temple was located below the depth range of a magnetometer. Thus only an excavation can prove or disprove the hypothesis that an early Amun Temple once stood within area M 293. Independently of the search for the early temple within the Royal City, efforts should be extended to search for and investigate any structures located below the Amun Temple M 260.

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¹⁴ It must be noted that Török's argument rests mainly on the discovery near palace M 294 of numerous votive objects associated with the New Year's festival. Some scholars argue that the New Year's hall could have been located within the palace, rather than in the putative temple (Hinkel and Sievertsen 2002, 66; Lohwasser 2014, 232).

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Appendix: New Light on the Royal Lineage in the Last Decades of the Meroitic Kingdom. The inscription of the Temple of Amun at Meroe found in 2012 by the Sudanese-Canadian mission

Claude Rilly

- (1) *aleqese qrnebeyi*
- (2) *tlhidem^r n^r[i] qor: nete pke: pwri[te]*
- (3) *^rn^rtke [?]ese: lxte: seb:*
- (4) *wl meqe[?] de: wide: kete: twsp*
- (5) *wi: lt: mniktesebtirw: wq[?] [s]*
- (6) *hrte: wi [...] l*
- (7) *tewikel[.]b [...]te[...]ledi*
- (8) *semlo be[...]wetexi:*

The inscription (Figure 1; Plate 1) is much eroded in many places. Royal texts remain the most obscure category of Meroitic inscriptions because of the variety of vocabulary and syntactic features, so that it is rarely possible to depend on recurrent elements to reconstruct the missing or unclear signs. Consequently, some passages are of dubious reading, as indicated by dotted letters.

The text seems complete. The first sequence, *aleqese* (see below for possible meaning), attested at the beginning of several other royal inscriptions, occurs here in initial position. The royal name, Talakhideamani (or Talakhidamani), is complete at the beginning of line 2. Moreover, even if the final letter *te* is erased at the end of line 2 and the initial *n* is reduced to traces, the sequence *pwrite nke*, probably 'life and strength', known in divine benedictions upon the royal family (for instance in Naqa), seems uninterrupted between the end of line 2 and the beginning of line 3. Finally, the vague traces

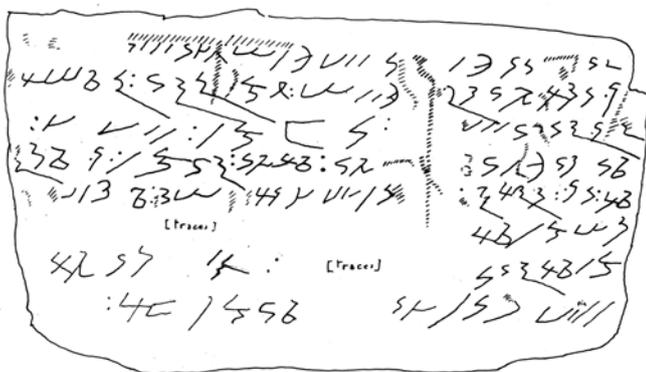


Figure 1. Block on the south side of M 276 with the inscription of Talakhideamani.

on the left of the last word in line 7 are more likely scratches in the stone than actual signs.

The text has obviously been engraved on a block that was in place long before. Roughly in the middle of the stone, a long vertical trace of wear was left blank, the engraver having just inscribed some words in two parts on either side of the trace. The first word, *aleqese*, is even divided into three parts around this central scar and another damaged place. This reusing fits in with a late dating of the inscription, at least later than the building of this part of the temple.

The palaeographical features of the texts unambiguously point to a date between the end of the 3rd century and the beginning of the 4th century AD. As is to be expected, the closest parallels are found in the texts of the so-called 'Meroitic chamber' in Philae, where the same king is mentioned (REM 0101). Significantly, the 't' with an upper hook at the beginning of lines 2 and 3, which is rare in the extreme, has its counterpart precisely in REM 0101 (see Rilly 2007, 349, tab. 15). It sheds some light on the origin of the hand that wrote these famous texts from Philae: rather than a local scribe, it might have been a member of the delegation sent by the king of Meroe to the Temple of Isis, since it is highly improbable that this rare form of letter 't' might have been used in both extremities of the kingdom. The Philae inscriptions have been dated to the second half of the 3rd century AD. They probably postdate the former Meroitic delegation to Philae, led by Sasan and Viceroy Abratoye in AD 253 on behalf of King Teqorideamani in his second regnal year (FHN III, 1000-1010 ; Pope 2008). In AD 260, Abratoye had a *proskynema* in Greek engraved in Philae, where his position as viceroy 'of the king' (βασιλέως) is mentioned (FHN III, 1020-1024). This ruler is not named but he was possibly again Teqorideamani, who would have been in the ninth year of his reign. By contrast, in the delegation of the Meroitic chamber, a new viceroy (*peselo*), Bekemeteli, is mentioned and depicted. None of the officers of the former delegation is still present. However, the palaeography of the text from the Temple of Amun in Meroe is not significantly later than the funerary stela of Viceroy Abratoye (REM 1333), so that a date around



Plate 1. Block on the south side of M 276 with the inscription of Talakhideamani (photo: K. Grzymski).

the end of the 3rd century is likely. The inscription begins with the word *aleqese*, which occurs at the beginning of royal texts REM 0075/1, 1041/1, 1044/1, 1141/1 and of graffiti REM 0414, 0610, 0619B, 1155. It has been tentatively identified as an adverbial formula. A translation such as ‘verily’, possibly connected to Old Nubian $\alpha\lambda\alpha$ ‘in truth’, can be advanced with some likelihood.

The second group is hardly legible: *qrnebeyi* seems the most likely reading. In REM 0094/3-5 (the last royal inscription in Meroitic from Kalabsha), a part of King Kharamadoye’s titles reads: *qore: pteselw: qoreyi: [...] qr Ariteneliselw qrneyi*, ‘ruler being ruler under Amun-of-Napata’s protection, *qr* being *qr* under Aritene’s protection’. In REM 1294/3-4 (Amanishakheto’s stela from Naqa), the titles of the Candace include the clause *Aritene qrnelo* ‘she is the *qrne* of Aritene’. Though hardly translatable still, the word *qr* and its derivative *qrne* are obviously linked to the royal power. Millet suggested ‘heir’ for *qr* in his study of Kharamadoye’s inscription (Millet 1973).

The royal name appearing in line 2 is to be read *Tlhidemni*[ʔ]: Talakhideamani or, better, Talakhidamani. The ‘*e*’ is nothing other than the mention of a final consonant in the verbal suffix *ide*, pronounced /id/. In that case, the name of Amun was expected with initial *a*, ‘Amni’ as in the offering-table REM 0059, where the ruler’s name is spelled *Tmlordeamani* (Tamelordeamani). However, this initial *a* was frequently dropped in the spelling of the god’s name as early as the 1st century AD. It does not mean it was never pronounced. The Demotic transcription *Tqrrmn* of king Teqorideamani’s name in Sasan’s graffito (Philae 416) shows that /d/ was in intervocalic position, where it was realized as a retroflex consonant close to [r] and actually written as such by the Egyptian scribes. The name was, therefore, pronounced /teqoridamani/ and not */teqoridmani/. The spelling *Tlhidemni* in REM 0101 (this inscription is studied below) confirms the pronunciation /talakhidamani/. The name is followed by the title *qore* ‘ruler’. In this position, the noun is regularly accompanied by the article *l*, which is usually assimilated in late texts: *qorel* > *qor* (Rilly 2007, 413). The initial ‘*t*’ is secure and provides a clue to one of the much-debated points in the inscriptions of the ‘Meroitic chamber’ of Philae, namely the beginning of REM 0101. The text reads: *tdxe: mloqorebr: qoretlhidemni*. One or two word-dividers are obviously missing, but this negligence was common among late scribes. Generations of Meroiticists have segmented this passage after Griffith’s first reading of the inscription as follows: *tdxe: Mloqorebr: qoret Lhidemni*. The term *qoret* was considered as an assimilated phrase for **qoresel* according to Griffith’s law, this latter group being regarded as an alternative genitive for the more common *qorisel* ‘of the ruler’. However, this interpretation challenged all the rules of Meroitic syntax and the resulting translations, even if given with question marks, were all highly questionable (see FHN III, 1028-1029): ‘the mother of Maloqorebar the king, Lakhidamani’ (Griffith) confers to *tdxe*, actually ‘child born of a mother’, the opposite meaning ‘mother of a child’ which is never attested;

‘Lakhidamani, the mother’s child of the ruler Maloqorebar’ (Macadam 1966, 66; Haycock 1978, 69) would be theoretically **tdxe: Mloqorebr: qore: Lhidemisel*, provided the indirect genitive could be used for kinship terms, which is never the case (Rilly 2007, 525-527); Priese’s translation, ‘a present that Maloqorebar, the king’s man, and Lakhidamani’ is a reinterpretation of the well-known word *tdxe* as a compound of laboriously isolated elements **tdxe* ‘thing’ that (one) makes (= *t*) to offer (= *d*) to (= *xε*)’ (Priese 1971, 282). Finally, Hofmann tried different hypotheses and suggested *in fine* that Maloqorebar and Lakhidamani were private persons who sent offerings to Isis (Hofmann 1981, 26). In the general context of an official embassy, as depicted in the ‘Meroitic chamber’, this hypothesis is rather unlikely.

The new inscription from Meroe shows that the solution is actually very simple. Of course, it is hardly fair, now that we have a second text with one of these two names, to smile at the efforts of our predecessors, but in terms of methodology, it is a significant example of how mistakes can spread from study to study when the original text is not sufficiently taken into account. In the (purely graphic) sequence *qoretlhidemni*, Griffith read the royal name ‘Lakhidamani’, probably (he does not mention it precisely) because he thought it included the adjective *lb* ‘large, great’, followed by the particle *-id(e)*, which he already singled out in royal names such as Taneyidamani or Takideamani (Griffith 1912, 39). This new royal name was anyway not mentioned elsewhere. Griffith was also the first to assume that the ‘*t*’ after *qore* was ‘the genitive particle’ (assimilation: *-t* < *-se-*, but the normal late form is *qorit* < *qore-li-se-l*). Oddly enough, these two assumptions have never been questioned by his successors, even if, by simply detaching the ‘*t*’ from *qore* and attaching it to the beginning of the royal name, they would have solved most of the problem.

The missing word-dividers must be restored as follows: *tdxe: Mloqorebr: qore[:] Tlhidemni[:]* and the phrase can be translated ‘the child Maloqorebar and the ruler Talakhidamani’. The absence of the article after *qore* is expected if the name follows, in contrast to *Tlhidemni qor* in the text from Meroe, where the order is reversed. This noun-group is the subject of a verbal form *td-b-to*, meaning probably ‘they’ offered (them)’, which follows a list of offerings to the deities with the numbers of items and the names of the gods. All the difficulties are not solved, however, by this new segmentation. If the group now fits in with the rules of the syntax of noun-groups (coordination is often unmarked in Meroitic, cf. Rilly 2007, 569-570), the use of *tdxe* as an independent term for ‘child’ is unexpected. The noun (a compound from the verbal stem *dxe-* ‘give birth’) usually qualifies an individual as the child of a mother, whose name is mentioned before it in a direct genitive construction. The fact that matrilinear succession was the rule in Kush might explain why *tdxe* has been preferred to other terms such as *mte* ‘small one’ or *ar* ‘boy’ for designating a young prince.

In addition, there is an apparent inconsistency between



the description of Maloqorebar as a simple ‘child’ and the initial position of his name, before the ‘ruler’. It might be suggested that Maloqorebar was a baby at the time and that Talakhidamani was ruling as his regent. The absence of ‘Amani’ in Maloqorebar’s name might also indicate that he was not yet given a royal name, since all the rulers’ names at this time include Amun’s name. The name itself is an anthroponymic compound that follows a peculiar syntax, as frequently happens with proper names. It comprises the adjective *mlb* ‘good, beautiful’ in initial position, which is uncommon for predication and apparently restricted to proper names, followed by a noun with plural article *qoreb* (< *qoreleb* with usual assimilation) in a direct genitive relation with *ar* ‘boy’. The name means probably ‘Beautiful is the boy of the kings’. Maloqorebar’s absence in the inscription of the Temple of Amun might indicate that the child had died at some time between the royal delegation in Philae and the engraving of the text in the Temple of Amun at Meroe.

A further clue to this scenario might be the deities under which protection the royals are placed in REM 0101. The names and titles are directly followed by the phrase *Ptrotisehw Armtē: kw*: ‘under the protection of the Patarus and (?) Horus the Child’. Patarus (*Ptroti* < *Ptroseli* with assimilation of the article *li* according to Griffith’s law) is probably an epithet of Isis, known from several instances in funerary texts (Rilly 2007, 94). The protection of Isis is of course connected to the temple of Philae where the inscription REM 0101 was engraved. As for the rare mention in Meroitic of Harpocrates (*Armtē*), absent from all the contemporary graffiti left by the Meroites in Philae, it might be correlated with the young prince Maloqorebar.

The name Talakhidamani/Talakhideamani includes three elements, a stem *tlb*, a verbal suffix *id(e)* and the Meroitic name of Amun. On the fine ‘Cargill tablet’ in the Worcester Art Museum (REM 1005), Prince Arikankharor is depicted slaying the enemies, protected by a goddess with large wings and winged sandals, obviously inspired by the Hellenistic representation of Nike, the goddess of Victory. Above her, a tiny caption in Meroitic hieroglyphs reads *Tleb qo* (not **Tly*, as suggested by Millet 1977, 319) ‘this is Talekha’. If *Tleb* / *Tlb* is indeed the Meroitic translation of Greek Νίκη, ‘Talakhidamani’ might mean something like ‘he is victorious, Amun’. With the difference of the suffix *id(e)*, perhaps rendered necessary by modifications in the Meroitic syntax, it is the same name as the Napatan king Talakhamani (buried in Nu. 16), dated to the second half of the 5th century BC. For that reason, it seems preferable to regard Talakhidamani as a king rather than a queen. Furthermore, a regent queen would probably have been termed in REM 0101 as *kdke* ‘Candace’, even if *qore* ‘ruler’ is frequently added to this former title.

The inscriptions from Philae and Meroe are possibly not the only traces from the reign of Talakhidamani. In the Great Enclosure of Musawwarat, three unpublished graffiti in cursive Meroitic which might include the name of Talakhamani (the Napatan king) are mentioned in Wolf

1999 (Wolf 1999, 52, n. 16). However, as the Meroitic script appeared only at the beginning of the 2nd century BC, Wolf suggested that the deified king might have been the holy patron of the temple compound. This is very surprising, considering the relative obscurity of this Napatan king. In consideration of the poor state of preservation of the majority of the Meroitic graffiti in Musawwarat, it might be suggested that the ruler was not Talakhamani, but his later near namesake Talakhidamani. This assumption needs of course a closer examination of these graffiti and especially of their palaeographical features.

The new text from Meroe includes in lines 2-3 a surprising number of divine gifts that the god is called to provide to the ruler. The usual gifts, for instance in the inscriptions of the Lion Temple in Naqa, are *pwrite* ‘life’, *ntke* ‘strength (?)’ and *mlowi* ‘beauty’, more or less accurately adapted from the famous Egyptian eulogy ‘life, health, strength’ that follows the names of the Pharaohs. Here, there are no less than five nouns: *nete pke. pwrri[te]* ‘*n* *1* *tke* [?] *eyē*. The last is illegible and might be read as well ‘*ay*’. The first two nouns are known as divine gifts respectively in REM 1001/17 and in the oracular decrees (Rilly 2007, 216-226), but they cannot yet be translated. They are followed by the verbal complex *lxte* ‘give (him)!’ where *x* is a singular dative marker referring to the ruler. This singular particle shows again that the child Maloqorebar was no longer associated with Talakhamani in the inscription of Meroe. By contrast, in the Lion Temple at Naqa, all the benedictions, even those used as captions for an isolated member of the royal family, read *lhxte* ‘give them!’ with plural dative marker *hx-*, referring to the Candace Amanitore and her son Natakamani. The rest of the text is too obscure or too damaged to be commented on at length. The mention of the god Amun (*Mni*) in line 5 is surrounded by illegible signs, so that it cannot be decided whether the god is referred to, or a person with a theophoric name.

The inscription in the Temple of Amun brings invaluable information about the last reigns of the Kingdom of Kush. Instead of a ‘Queen Lakhidamani’ with question marks, we can add to the royal lists the corrected name of a king, Talakhidamani, who, after a role as regent in a kingdom whose legitimate heir was a child, became the sole ruler in Meroe.

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