

Jebel Barkal and Ancient Napata: An Historical Overview

Timothy Kendall

Introduction

Jebel (“Mt.”) Barkal¹ is an isolated sandstone butte on the right bank of the Nile, about 354 km (220 mi) NNW of Khartoum and 80 km (50 mi) up the reverse curve of the Nile’s Great Bend. Today it stands on the southwestern edge of the modern town of Karima and marks the center of one of the largest archaeological districts in Sudan, the site of ancient Napata, whose vestiges extend 10 – 15 km (6 – 10 mi) upstream and downstream on both banks (figs. 1, 2 [map]).



Fig. 1. Aerial view of Jebel Barkal, looking north across the Nile (which here flows to the southwest). The Barkal pyramids are visible to the left of the mountain (cf. fig. 24). The ancient city of Napata probably sprawled along the riverbank, just above the flood zone. (Photo: Enrico Ferorelli, 1989)

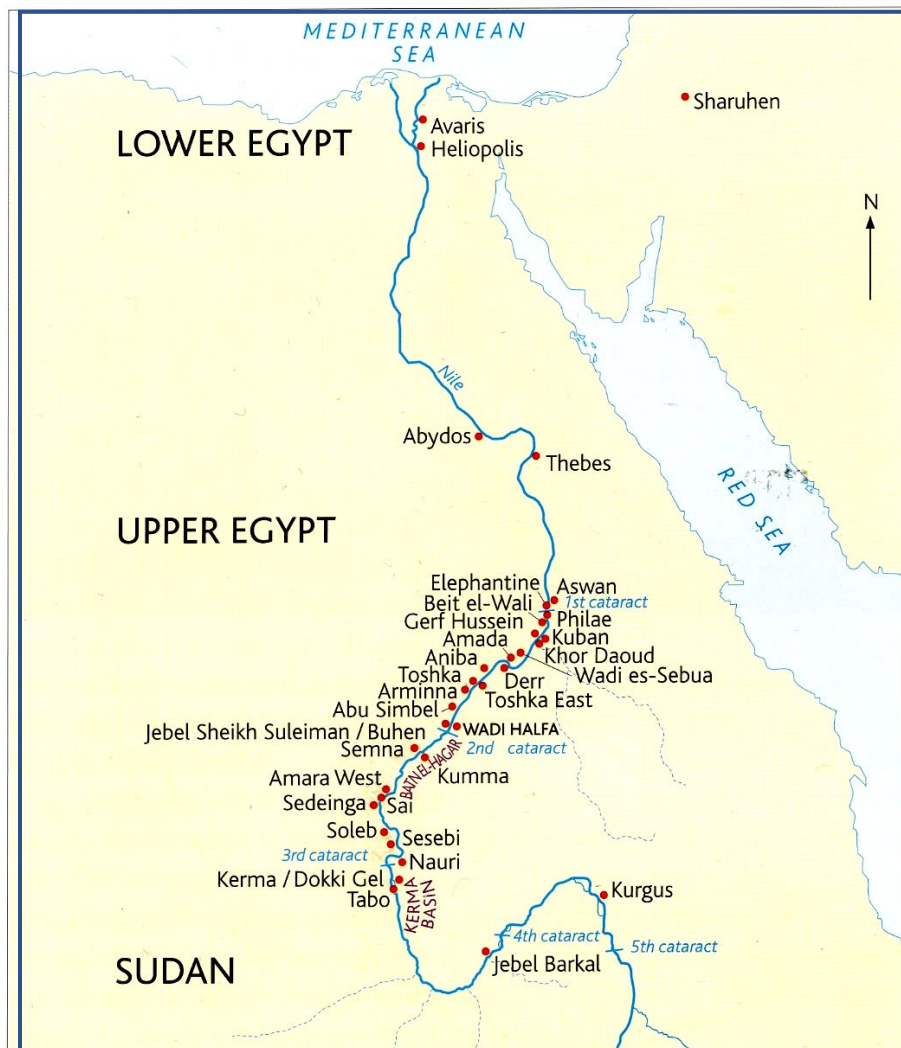


Fig. 2. Map of the Nile Valley, showing the major Egyptian sites in Nubia

Napata was founded by the Egyptians as a fortified military outpost, probably on or near the site of a pre-existing Nubian settlement, sometime in the early or mid-fifteenth century BCE, not long after their conquest of the early kingdom of Kush, centered at Kerma, 280 km (174 mi) downstream. The fort grew rapidly into a walled town, which for the next four centuries became the southernmost permanent settlement in Egypt's Nubian empire.² It lay 1260 km (783 mi) upriver from the Egyptian southern capital at Thebes (modern Luxor) and marked Egypt's actual (if not official) southern border.³

From the moment of its founding, Napata achieved an outsized religious importance because of Jebel Barkal, which the Egyptians identified as the major Nubian residence of their national god, Amun of Karnak, whose central shrine at Thebes required a downriver boat journey of about six weeks to reach. In the eighth century BCE, Napata rose to special prominence as the hometown of a dynasty of native Sudanese kings who would comprise Egypt's 25th Dynasty—the so-called

“Black Pharaohs”⁴ - and for a thousand years thereafter, the city would remain the religious capital of the revived kingdom of Kush (ca. 7th century BCE - 4th century CE).

During Egyptian colonial times (ca. 1450-1080 BCE) Napata was very remote, even from the other Egyptian-controlled Nubian towns, and it must have been extremely difficult to reach by river. Here, on the great reverse-curve of the Nile, the current flows nearly “backwards,” from northeast to southwest, and this, together with the prevailing north wind, would have conspired most of the year to keep ships downstream from reaching the town by sail or oar. At these times ships could only have reached it by being towed laboriously from the banks. Regular navigation upstream to Napata would probably only have been possible during the summer months when the prevailing wind blew from the south. At any other time of year, normal travel to Napata from more northerly (downstream) points on the Nile, such as the cities of Gem-Aten (Kawa), Pnubs (Kerma/Dukki Gel), and Tombos (at the Third Cataract), would have required an arduous 160 km (100 mi) overland trek across the Nubian Desert (see fig. 2).

As a frontier fort, Napata in the early Eighteenth Dynasty provided a defense on the north bank of the Nile as a barrier against any potentially hostile Nubian group attempting to move downstream into Egyptian-held territory. Its only other strategic significance, it seems, was that it lay at the main Nile crossing-point of a key north-south overland caravan route that linked the Sixth Cataract region (about 273 km [170 mi] to the southeast across the Bayuda Desert) with Kerma and the Third Cataract region (across the Nubian Desert). During its four centuries under Egyptian control, Napata would have been the main ferry point where valuable African products from the central, eastern and southwestern Sudan, arriving by caravan at the south bank, were trans-shipped to the north bank and stockpiled before being sent down to Egypt as part of the annual “tribute of Kush” (fig. 3).⁵



Fig. 3. Egyptian scribe recording shipments of goods from the central Sudan, many of which probably entered the empire first at Napata. This painting, from the tomb of the Vizier Rekhmire at Thebes (second half of the 15th century BCE), depicts ebony logs, elephant tusks, leopard skins, ostrich feathers and eggs, ring ingots of gold, and baskets of semi-precious stones and vegetable products - even a monkey. (N. Davies 1936, I, pl. xvi)

Although prominent as a trading hub, Napata's primary importance was always religious. From the moment of its discovery, the Egyptians identified Jebel Barkal as the most important landmark in Nubia's sacred landscape. For centuries they had considered the Nile inundation, which annually brought fertility and renewed life to Egypt, as the gift of Amun. Because the god had his major residence at Thebes, they realized that somewhere far to the south, at or near the mysterious Nile sources, he must have had a primeval alter-ego, who released the waters each year, just as he was said to have done at the mythical "first occasion."⁶ As the Egyptians pushed their conquests ever further up the Nile, south of the Second Cataract, they established several towns, each with its own local form of Amun,⁷ but when they encountered Jebel Barkal, so much farther upstream - around the Nile's Great Bend and just below the Fourth Cataract - they became convinced they had found the god's birthplace, where at the beginning of time, according to legend, he raised himself up out of the *Nun* (the primordial waters that first covered the earth), self-engendered the first gods, gave birth to the Sun ("Re") as a form of himself (so that he became "Amun-Re") and brought divine kingship to earth.

If one stands before Jebel Barkal today, it is easy to see why the Egyptians accorded the mountain such revered status. It stands strangely alone in the middle of a vast desert plain as an almost miraculous anomaly in the landscape (fig. 1). It rises abruptly 104 m (341 ft) and faces the river with a sheer cliff, 80 to 90 m (260-295 ft) high and 250 m (820 ft) long. And soaring above it at all times of day are innumerable hawks and vultures, the avian avatars of their greatest deities.

The hill had yet another feature which made it unique among mountains in the Nile Valley and which excited intense theological speculation. This was a towering pinnacle, 75 m (246 ft.) high, which rose from the south corner of the cliff and presented the illusion of a gigantic statue (fig. 4). The Egyptians saw this monolith as a powerful magical effigy because from different angles and in different lights, it projected different recognizable forms—a trait which it shared with Amun, who was thought to incorporate all divine forms within himself.⁸ Depending on the viewing angle, the pinnacle could be seen as a colossal standing king or god, wearing the tall, knobbed "White Crown," symbolic of royal hegemony over the South, b) as a phallic entity, suggestive of the presence of Amun as Creator and source of fertility, and c) as a rearing cobra ("uraeus"), suggesting the presence of a goddess (or many goddesses united) in the serpent form.⁹ The uraeus was also the chief symbol of royal authority, again, suggesting the mountain as the ultimate source of kingship. That these and other imagined forms within the pinnacle combined to prove Amun's presence within the hill is suggested by a prayer to the god, preserved at Karnak, by the Kushite king Taharqo (690 – 664 BCE), who, as a native son of Napata, described him, probably as he knew him best from here, as one...

*whose images are secret, whose appearances are numerous, whose true form is unknown.... through whose manifestations all manifestations manifest themselves... the great elder... who was first to come into existence... father of fathers, mother of mothers.... King-of-Upper-and-Lower Egypt, Amun-Re, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands, lord of heaven, earth, water, and mountains...*¹⁰

If one were an animist like the ancient Egyptians and Kushites—who believed that all statues and suggestive features of landscape were inhabited by the spirits of whatever they represented—Jebel Barkal would have seemed to be alive with divine and royal power. Since the form of the pinnacle suggested many divine beings simultaneously, and since Amun was thought to absorb all deities within himself, they considered this proof that Amun resided “hidden” behind the cliff—“Hidden” being the very meaning of his name.¹¹



Fig. 4. Jebel Barkal and its pinnacle viewed from the second court of the Great Amun Temple (B 500) (Photo: T. Kendall)

The Ancient Names of Jebel Barkal

The Egyptians gave Jebel Barkal two names: *Dju-Wa'ab* (“Pure Mountain”) and *Nesut-Tawy* (“Thrones of the Two Lands”). (The latter was also sometimes written as a singular, so that it became *Neset-Tawy* [“Throne of the Two Lands.”]) The resident Amun, in his full title, was called “Lord of the Throne(s) of the Two Lands, who dwells within the Pure Mountain of Napata, the great god, Lord of Heaven.”¹²

The earliest Egyptian document known from the site is the famous Jebel Barkal Stela of Thutmose III (now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), which is dated to the king’s 47th regnal year (ca. 1432 BCE).¹³ This text refers to Amun of Jebel Barkal as the *ka* (i.e. ancestral life force) of Amun of Karnak, whose name in Egypt had for centuries been coupled with the epithet *Neb Nesut-Tawy* (“Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands”), a title that emphasized the god’s

role as master of the royal thrones and progenitor of kings. The title, in fact, had come to be virtually synonymous with “Karnak.”

When the Egyptians became aware of Jebel Barkal, the Amun priesthood apparently concluded that, as the dwelling place of Amun’s most ancient form—nearest the (supposed) Nile sources—It must also have been the source of his most ancient title. Thus, when Thutmose in his Barkal Stela tells us that “ ‘Pure Mountain’ was called ‘Thrones of the Two Lands’ before it was known by the people,”¹⁴ he seems to be introducing a newly contrived religious tenet, which was that, from his day forward, whenever Amun at Thebes was called “Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands” - even in texts long-predating the discovery of Jebel Barkal (i.e. “before it was known by the people”) - one could understand that the “Throne(s)...” in the title alluded to the god’s “rediscovered” birthplace at the southern limit of the empire, which was thus a kind of primeval “Karnak.”

The Nature of Amun at Jebel Barkal and the Nubian Tradition of the Origin of Egyptian Kingship

Despite Amun’s “hidden” nature, he was, of necessity, represented rather simply in art. In the Egyptian mind, Amun of Jebel Barkal and Amun of Karnak were dual aspects of the same divine being. Their iconic forms differed because each conveyed a specific meaning having to do with time and direction. “Amun of Napata, who dwells within Pure Mountain,” typically represented as a man with a ram’s head, crowned with a sun disk and two tall plumes, was conceived as the god in his primeval state. His Theban manifestation, “Amun, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands, foremost of Karnak,” was represented fully as a man, wearing a crown with a similar headdress. He was imagined as the deity in his present, universal state.

At Jebel Barkal, these two forms of the god always appeared together as directional reflections of each other. At the tops of stelae they stand back-to-back or facing each other (fig. 5). On opposite walls in the temples they appear across from each other. (Today this is best seen in the magnificent, newly restored painted wall reliefs inside temple B 300). The ram headed Amun is always on the right side (or wall), which by river direction (=here northeast) implied upstream, “south”, Sudan, and ancient time. The anthropomorphic Amun is always on the left side (or wall), which by river direction (=here southwest) implied downstream, “north”, Egypt, and present time. Paradoxically, both forms of the god were thought to be present inside the mountain, merged as One.

For centuries the Egyptians had believed that Amun initiated Creation at the Theban mountain.¹⁵ But once having come face to face with Jebel Barkal, they revised their thinking, now imagining that the Theban mountain had been a kind of northern manifestation of the Nubian and that the primeval Nubian Amun (in the form of Amun of Luxor) effected a simultaneous parallel Creation at Thebes with Amun of Karnak (and all future kings) as his heir. To our minds this way of seeing the world seems strange, but to the Egyptians it was perfectly logical.

The parallelism of the two Amuns was shared by their two main sanctuaries, their two mountains and their two mother-cities.¹⁶ Amun’s temple (B 500) at Jebel Barkal was imagined to be a

southern manifestation of Karnak, and in Napatan times (if not also in the New Kingdom) it even carried the same name as the great Theban temple: *Ipet-Sut* (“Most Select of Places”).¹⁷ The Jebel Barkal temple may, in fact, during the New Kingdom, have had the status of a far-flung “branch office” of Karnak, through which was intended to pass, without interference, the first pick of the valuable trade products of Africa, destined as offerings for the god in his central Theban temple. The close relationship of the two sanctuaries suggests that during the Egyptian colonial era all of the enormous territory separating them – and each Amun temple in between – was under the direct theocratic governance of the Theban priesthood. The god’s Theban and Napatan temples, in other words, would have been considered the geographic “bookends” of Amun’s vast southern cultic domain. This perhaps explains the rather surprising comment of Thutmose I in his Tombos stela that his just-completed conquest of Kush (ca. 1504 BCE) was not an effort to enlarge Egypt but rather one “to broaden the boundaries of Thebes.”¹⁸



Fig. 5. The two directional forms of Amun typically pictured at Jebel Barkal: an anthropomorphic form (always on the left sides of stelae and walls) and a ram-headed form (always on the right). These distinct images symbolized the god’s downstream and upstream forms, associated respectively with Egypt and Sudan and with present and ancient time. At Jebel Barkal the god inside the mountain was thought to combine both. (From the Stele of Harsiotef found at Jebel Barkal, Nubian Museum, Aswan. Grimal 1981b, pl X a)

Why Amun at Napata (and everywhere in the former territory of Kush) was represented as a ram or as a man with a ram’s head is still something of a mystery. The ram-headed Amun as an icon made its debut in the Hagr el-Merwa inscription of Thutmose I, only months after the king’s conquest of Kerma, and there he was depicted, just as he would later appear at Jebel Barkal, with the very same head ornament (fig. 6).

As a symbol, the ram form of Amun came to have special associations with water, the Nile, the inundation, fertility, the South and ancient time.¹⁹ It is widely assumed that this new iconography came about soon after the Conquest as a result of the Egyptians' desire to merge Amun with an ancient native Nubian high god associated with the ram (fig. 13).²⁰ The intended purpose of such a merger would have been to try to unify the Nubians and Egyptians by encouraging the former to believe that their own god had always been a primeval form of the Egyptian Amun. And since Amun was also the Egyptian dynastic god (who was believed literally to be the father of the pharaoh), it would have required the Nubians to accept—as the will of their own ancient god—that the Egyptian king was his own son and thus their rightful overlord.

The ram form of Amun also had another meaning, which the Egyptians seem to have kept largely unstated but which the Greek historian Diodorus (I:88) expressed openly in the first century BCE. His remarks seem to offer the key to understanding Jebel Barkal's most fundamental underlying meaning. Of the Egyptians, he wrote that they

*...deified the goat (i.e. ram), just as the Greeks are said to have honored Priapus, because of the generative member, for this animal has a very great propensity for copulation, and it is fitting that honor be shown to that member of the body which is the cause of generation.*²¹

The ram-headed Amun of Jebel Barkal, in other words, was closely associated with the phallus,²² and, given his stated roles as “the great god of first time, the primeval god, and fashioner of the king's beauty,”²³ we can only conclude that he was the uniquely Nubian form of Amun's explicitly phallic aspect in Egypt, which was known variously as Min and/or Kamutef (“Bull of his Mother”) (figs. 6, 7).

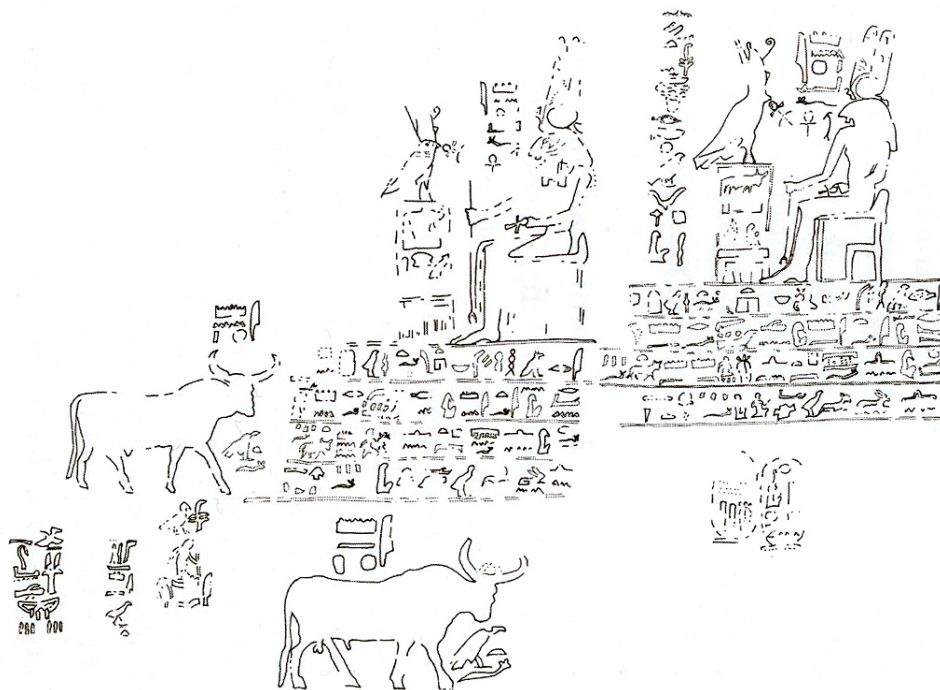


Fig. 6. Drawing of the Hagr el-Merwa inscription, about 250 km (155 mi) upstream from Jebel Barkal, which features the earliest image of Amun in the ram-headed form he would later assume as the god of Jebel Barkal. The original panel of Thutmose I (ca 1504 BCE) is at right; that of his grandson Thutmose III (ca. 1432 BCE) is in the center. Here each image of the god has been further identified below as Amun-Re Kamutef (“Bull of his Mother”). This monument marks the extreme upper limit of known Egyptian penetration of the Nile Valley (W. V. Davies 2017; illustration: W. V. Davies 2001:48).

In Thebes, when Amun was represented as Min/Kamutef, he was typically shown as a man wrapped as a mummy, with an erect phallus (fig. 7a). One of his arms was always upraised, bent at the elbow, supporting a flail on the tips of his upright fingers, and on his close-cropped head he wore a pair of tall plumes, bound with a fillet, with a long ribbon that fell behind his body to his feet. Much more rarely he was shown as a ram-headed man, crowned with a sun disk, having the same upraised arm and flail but lacking the visible phallus (fig. 7b).²⁴ In whichever way he was represented, “Amun-Re Kamutef” was imagined to be Amun in his primeval role as a self-generating creator-god: a being who was at once his own father, mother and child, and who had the ability to reproduce himself forever through the medium of divine kingship, which he also symbolized.²⁵



fig. 7a, b. (Left) Amun as Kamutef, primeval Creator and progenitor of kingship. (From the White Chapel of Sesostri I at Karnak). (Right) Kamutef, now ram-headed, combining his Egyptian and Nubian forms. (From one of the western chambers [Room 40] at Medinet Habu). (Photos: T. Kendall).

The official Egyptian propaganda stated that Amun, as Min/Kamutef, was literally the father of the king. As “Bull” (*ka*), he was conceived as a male sexual being who impregnated his own female aspect, called Amunet (“[female] Amun”) or Mut (“Mother”), who then became his own

mother by giving birth to himself as his own child. This child-Amun was thought to be the first earthly king as well as the personification of the immortal essence of kingship, called the “royal *ka*.” This “royal *ka*” was believed to be physically imparted by Amun to each future king as part of himself, so that each new king was thought to have a godlike aspect that was Amun in child form.²⁶ When a candidate for kingship was acknowledged to possess the “royal *ka*,” he was accepted as true pharaoh, for he was then recognized not only as Amun’s “bodily son” but also as the god’s human manifestation on earth. (In other words, the “Bull” [*ka*] and the divine royal child [*ka*] were proven to be identical by verbal pun!)

Upon its discovery, Jebel Barkal would have become an important focal point of this age-old Egyptian mystery because, as an acknowledged birthplace of the primeval Amun, it had also, by definition, to be a birthplace of the “royal *ka*” and, thus, a birthplace of Egyptian kingship. As will be explained below (Part II), proof of this seems to have been obvious in the Jebel Barkal pinnacle itself, for, like Kamutef, the rock combined - in a single “statue” - his essence as “father of fathers” (visible in its phallic form), as “mother of mothers” (visible in its uraeus form), and as “King of Upper and Lower Egypt” (visible in its crowned form), thus in perfect accord with Taharqo’s description of him, quoted above.

Here, then, at the “ends of the earth” at Jebel Barkal in Nubia, the pharaohs believed they had found not only the most ancient home of their greatest god but also the ultimate source of their own royal authority and divinity. Here was proof that their own divine parent and “royal *ka*” had originated in Kush, that the god’s primeval aspect still dwelt in Kush, and that he now authorized his royal sons to rule Kush as part of Egypt.

The Pharaohs at Jebel Barkal

As remote from Egypt as it was, Jebel Barkal seems to have been visited by—or was at least patronized by—most of the pharaohs of the New Kingdom from Thutmose I to one or more of the successors of Ramses II, even to Dynasty 21 (as evidenced by the recent discovery of a reused block picturing the Theban High Priest of Amun [and later “King”] Menkheperre [ca. 1045-992 BCE]).²⁷

The Amun temple (B 500) began life as a small mud brick structure (called the god’s “Resthouse of Eternity”), sponsored by Thutmose III – or perhaps by Thutmose III jointly with his co-regent, aunt and step-mother Hatshepsut.²⁸ This temple remained mud-brick for about a century, when in the latter fourteenth century it was replaced with a version in stone. Although no royal name is associated with this new stone temple, its date is easily confirmed by the small blocks employed in its construction, which are still visible by the thousands in its inner rooms. These blocks, familiar in Egypt, are known as “*talatat*,” which are always approximately one Egyptian cubit (52.3 cm [20 5/8] in length). This type of masonry, so easily and quickly quarried and transported, was the distinctive building medium of the “heretic pharaoh” Amenhotep IV, alias Akhenaten (ca. 1353-1336 BCE), who, after a brief co-regency with his father Amenhotep III (ca. 1386-1349 BCE), may have co-opted the Jebel Barkal site (as he did the other major Nubian cult centers, Pnubs [Dokki Gel/Kerma], and Gem-pa-Aten [Kawa], as well as the major Egyptian sites of East Karnak and Heliopolis [near Memphis]) for his religious revolution. Akhenaten then

banned the worship of Amun and the other members of the pantheon, established a new capital at Akhetaten (Tell el-Amarna), and insisted his subjects throughout the empire worship the sun directly as the Aten (“Disk”) and himself as the god’s son.²⁹

Paradoxically, this first *talatat* temple appears to be an Amun Temple (because it has the typical three parallel enclosed sanctuaries at its rear, meant to house the god and his “family”: Amun, his consort Mut, and his child, Khonsu, the Moon god). The same temple, however, also appears to have had a roofless terrace on the northeast side of the sanctuary, as if intended for worshipping the sun at sunrise, as the Aten, directly in the open sky. For this reason, we might suspect that the temple was built during a period before the complete proscription of Amun.

Because this first *talatat* phase of B 500 is not linked to any surviving royal inscription, it remains uncertain whether this temple, having the three parallel sanctuaries typical of an Amun temple, was built by Amenhotep IV during a “proto-Amarna” period [during the co-regency with his father Amenhotep III, when the worship of Amun had not yet been forbidden] or whether it was built quickly after Akhenaten’s death as an Amun Temple by his son Tutankhamun at a time when the Amun cult had been newly restored but before the Aten cult itself had been entirely banned. Unfortunately, the royal builder’s name was removed from the temple’s foundation deposits. Was this an act of the Amun priests, to erase the memory of Akhenaten? Or was it the work of Horemheb, to usurp the work of Tutankhamun? We may never be sure, but several reused *talatat* blocks from a destroyed chapel of Amenhotep-Huy, Tutankhamun’s Viceroy of Kush, were also found in this sector of the temple.³⁰

Following Tutankhamun’s brief reign, the temple was enlarged in phases attributable to Horemheb, Seti I, Ramses II, and to one or more unknown builders in Dynasty 20. Near the end of his life, Ramses II seems to have initiated a plan to add to B 500 a gigantic hypostyle hall of 56-60 massive columns in attempt to give the temple corresponding status with Karnak (to which he had also added a gargantuan hypostyle hall). But the king apparently died just as the huge column foundations were completed, and this project was left unfinished.³¹

It is noteworthy that the earliest stone building at Jebel Barkal was not B 500, but B 600. This small structure, built up against the Jebel Barkal cliff, was ordered by Thutmose IV (ca. 1400-1390 BCE), whose foundation offerings laced the foundations. Judging by its later Kushite restoration, it was likely originally built as a royal enthronement pavilion for coronations.³²

Despite the great distance between Thebes and Napata, each of the pharaohs, we may suppose, aspired to visit Jebel Barkal at least once during his reign in order to unite ritually with his supposed divine parent, the primeval Amun of Napata believed to dwell inside Jebel Barkal, and to reclaim from him his “royal ka.”³³ The ceremony would have concluded with a coronation, an event probably also timed to coincide with the New Year, which would have been celebrated in mid-summer with the arrival of the Nile flood.³⁴ Since the New Year was considered an anniversary and replay of the moment of Creation, and since Jebel Barkal was deemed the place where Creation had occurred, Napata, at the headwaters of the empire, would probably have been thought the most auspicious place for a king to be when welcoming the inundation. The ceremony allowed the king, as the god’s living image on earth, to preside over the flood, and, from his royal boat, to conduct the fertilizing waters down to Egypt on his “father’s” behalf. These actions would have symbolized both the annual revival of the Egyptian state and the

renewal of the king's own physical vigor and divinity, events which would have been occasions for great public rejoicing.

To the Egyptian pharaohs of the New Kingdom Jebel Barkal appears to have had such important implications for understanding their divine origins that, soon after the visit of Thutmose I, they ordered a new temple to be built at Thebes (fig. 8), which they seem to have conceived as its conceptual facsimile. This was Luxor Temple, called *Ipet-resyt* ["Southern Harem/Private Chamber"], which, like Jebel Barkal, was dedicated to a form of the primeval Amun in both his ithyphallic and ram-headed forms.³⁵ The temple was built 2.7 km (1.6 mi) south of Karnak, parallel to the Nile on the east bank, with its sanctuary directed upstream, as if aimed at a god imagined to dwell far upriver.³⁶ Here, in an annual inundation ceremony called the *Opet* each king, in company with a statue of Amun of Karnak (together with those of Mut and Khonsu), traveled in a nightly ceremonial procession of boat-shrines, carried on the shoulders of priests, from Karnak to Luxor so that god and king could revisit their imagined sire, who was believed to dwell inside Luxor Temple. Arriving there near midnight, both of the key visitors entered and magically united with the Luxor Amun, an event believed to simulate the moment of Creation, which was thought to bring about their joint rebirth and the restoration of their co-divinity.³⁷ For the solar god Amun-Re of Karnak, his rebirth was signified at Luxor by the sunrise. For the king, it was simultaneously signified in the temple by his coronation, in which he received from the god a crown with ram's horns. This would symbolically, if cryptically, have expressed his birth and regeneration through the agency of the Nubian Amun at Jebel Barkal (fig. 9).

The ritualized procession of boat shrines between Karnak and Luxor during the *Opet* would have been a ceremonial simulation of the long and difficult river voyage necessary to travel between Karnak and Jebel Barkal, but it was couched in allegorical terms as the nightly riverine journey of the Sun God, after sunset, to the imagined mound at the bottom of the Underworld, which the god was required to enter in order to unite with Osiris, thereby attaining rebirth as the rising Sun of dawn.³⁸ Amun's cosmic renewal in sunrise and the king's physical renewal in coronation, and the renewal of the State by the simultaneous peak Nile flood, all recalled the moment of Creation, whose annual repetition was understood to be completed by the performance of the Luxor *Opet* – a ritual which was surely duplicated at Jebel Barkal on those infrequent occasions when an Egyptian king actually visited Napata.



Fig. 8. Luxor Temple at Thebes, at the end of the long processional way from Karnak, seems to have been built by the pharaohs to house the same primeval Amun whom they imagined dwelt at Jebel Barkal. By building a substitute home for the god at their cultic capital, they made it possible for themselves to visit their imagined “father” locally and on a regular basis without having to make the long and difficult voyage to his “actual” birthplace at Napata, which they might have been able to visit only once in their lives. (File photo: internet)

Of the hundreds of images of Amun carved on Luxor’s interior walls, none, strangely, show him ram-headed. He appears only anthropomorphic or ithyphallic. Outside the temple, though, mainly on the West Bank, we find several images of a ram-headed “Amun of Luxor” in which he appears as a perfect clone of the Amun of Jebel Barkal.³⁹ Similarly, none of the texts inside Luxor Temple explicitly mention Jebel Barkal, unless it is within the god’s titles.⁴⁰ Of the 102 images of Amun in the south rooms, for example, by far the most numerous of his accompanying titles are two: “Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands” (24) and “Lord of Heaven” (45).⁴¹ The first, of course, incorporates the formal name of Jebel Barkal (“Thrones of the Two Lands”), but Amun at Thebes is so commonly called by this title as to leave its reference to the Nubian mountain debatable.⁴² As for the title “(Amun), Lord of Heaven (*Nb Pt*),” it looks very much like a concealment by pun of the god’s Nubian name: “(Amun) of Napata” (*Npt*).



Fig. 9. Amun crowning Amenhotep III inside Luxor Temple with the so-called Atef crown (symbolic of the moment of Creation). Note that the king sprouts ram horns from his temples, apparently identifying himself as a son of the god's primeval Nubian aspect. (Photo: T. Kendall)

Jebel Barkal and the Kings of Kerma?

It seems almost unimaginable that the Egyptians would have invaded Upper Nubia, overthrown the monarchy of Kush at Kerma, then passed upstream to behold Jebel Barkal and instantly identified it as a primeval residence of Amun in a previously unattested ram-headed form. Would they have done this if the mountain had not already been held in a similar sort of religious veneration by the Kushites themselves, or if it had not already been the home of a local god associated with the ram? Although there is yet no confirming archaeological evidence for this, there is a strong circumstantial case to be made that the Egyptians indeed found a pre-existing Nubian sanctuary at Jebel Barkal, then occupied the site in order to control the local cult, then declared the resident god to be merely an aspect of their own god Amun of Karnak, the father of the Egyptian king.

What evidence might be brought forward to support such a theory? First, in the 1930's, two British officials, independently of one another, wrote of visiting different isolated groups of people in the Nuba Mountains, barely affected by Christianity or Islam, who venerated large tubular or upright rocks of phallic shape and worshiped them as sources of generative power and manifestations of godlike ancestors and serpents (fig. 10).⁴³ The existence of such beliefs in Sudan, probably very ancient, as well as the enormous scale of the Jebel Barkal pinnacle, strongly suggest that this statue-like, phallic-shaped monolith would have been the focus of a major regional fertility cult within Kush long before the Egyptians arrived there (fig. 3).



Fig. 10. Upright stones worshiped by the peoples of the Nuba Hills (Bell 1936, pls. XV, XVI). As recently as the 1930's, they were still venerated by the Nuba as sources of fertility and divine power.

Was there a Nubian royal cult at Jebel Barkal before the Egyptians? Although there is yet no evidence from Jebel Barkal itself, there may be evidence from Kerma as we observe the striking similarity between Jebel Barkal as it was after the Egyptian conquest and the main religious structure at Kerma, known as the “Western Deffufa,” as it was before the Egyptian conquest (fig. 11).

The Western Deffufa was a kind of brick-built “mountain,” which still stands nearly 20 m high.⁴⁴ Rectangular in shape, with a side-staircase leading to its summit, it was erected in stages during the seven centuries preceding the Egyptian conquest. Just as Jebel Barkal stood at the center of the later Egyptian town of Napata, was believed to house a deity, and had a cluster of temples built at its foot facing the Nile, the Western Deffufa occupied the center of Kerma, was also believed to house a deity, and had a cluster of small temples built against its foot, facing the Nile. Just as Jebel Barkal had its venerated pinnacle on its downstream (southwest) corner, the Deffufa (in its earlier phases) had a semi-circular projection in the center of its downstream (northern) wall, as if this may have been the base for a comparable built feature. In its latest building phase this projection disappeared and the north side of the Deffufa was squared, but, as if to replace the rounded projection, an independent circular structure (a temple?) was built at the north end of the Deffufa.⁴⁵ The extraordinary parallelism between Jebel Barkal and the Deffufa within their respective cities is so striking that it is hard to imagine that they did not share a cultic relationship.



Fig. 11a, b. Jebel Barkal (left) contrasted with the Western Deffufa at Kerma (right). So similar are they in form and (apparent) function within their respective sites that one suspects the latter was built by the early kings of Kush as an alternate residence at Kerma for the god whom they believed dwelt within Jebel Barkal. (Left: Photo; Enrico Ferorelli, 1989; Right: Photo: Swiss Mission of the University of Geneva)

If the pharaohs indeed built Luxor Temple at Thebes as a substitute residence for the Amun of Jebel Barkal, would it not also be just as plausible that the early kings of Kush built the Western Deffufa at Kerma as a substitute residence for the same god in his pre-Egyptian identity? After all, while Jebel Barkal may have been important as a sacred mountain and god's residence, it was exceedingly remote and inconveniently located from either of these major seats of royal power. Is it possible that both the early kings of Kush and the 18th Dynasty kings of Egypt, out of reverence for the god of Jebel Barkal, felt compelled to build him alternate residences at their respective capitals?

Immediately after the Egyptian conquest of Kerma, a north suburb of the city (now known as "Dokki Gel") became the center of an Egyptian fortified town called Pnubs ("The Jujube Tree"). This settlement instantly became the home of another previously unknown primeval ram-form of Amun, called "Amun of Pnubs." This god was represented either as a standing or recumbent ram under a tree, or as a fully anthropomorphic figure identical to Amun of Karnak. He was even represented as a goose, Amun's earliest mythical form.⁴⁶ Where did this god come from? Was he invented on the spot? Or was he, in fact, the newly Egyptianized aspect of the original local god of Kerma, the former resident of the Western Deffufa and possible alter-ego of the god of Jebel Barkal?⁴⁷

That knowledge of an ancient relationship between Amun of Pnubs and Amun of Napata was remembered even during the earliest period of Egyptian rule is suggested by the fact that immediately following their conquest of Kerma, about 1504 BCE, the Egyptians built three connected temples at Pnubs, which, unusually, like Luxor Temple, paralleled the Nile and had their sanctuaries directed *upstream*.⁴⁸ Were they simply aimed toward the river's source as the god's place of origin, or were they directed toward Jebel Barkal (where its temples would all later be built with their sanctuaries directed toward the mountain)? The three original temples of Pnubs, which were later reduced to two, seem to have been dedicated (judging from later inscriptions) to "Amun of Pnubs," "Amun of Nubia," and "Amun of Karnak."⁴⁹ These same temples were rebuilt repeatedly throughout the New Kingdom and then again throughout the

Napatan and Meroitic eras. At the same time, Amun of Pnubs became an important god at Jebel Barkal.⁵⁰

Barely 40 m east of the Dokki Gel Amun temples lay a distinctly un-Egyptian building of round plan. Obviously, a temple of Nubian design and conception (fig. 11a), it was comparable to the one, described above, which, before the destruction of Kerma, had been built at the north end of the Western Deffufa. This round structure, which was already standing at the time of Thutmose I, was rebuilt repeatedly alongside the Egyptian Amun temples and, like them, remained in use continually even into the Meroitic Period.⁵¹ The cult it served obviously co-existed peacefully for centuries with the Egyptian Amun. Did its god differ from Amun of Pnubs? Or was he merely the same god, housed in a uniquely Kushite temple and honored according to indigenous practice?

Charles Bonnet, the excavator of Dokki Gel, has noted that this round temple took the form of a type of conical domestic dwelling still seen widely in northern Sudan, and that the carved, dome-shaped stone shrine, found in temple B 500 at Jebel Barkal, may have been a model of just such a temple (fig. 11b).⁵² Since the latter is also quite clearly a stylized model of Jebel Barkal,⁵³ we may justly wonder if the Dokki Gel temple itself was not imagined as a substitute “mountain” shrine for the local Amun.



Fig. 12a, b. (Left) Ground plan of the round Nubian temple at Dokki Gel, as it existed in the 19th Dynasty. Aside from its many interior bases for floor supports, it had traces of a rectangular podium in the center of the floor, perhaps for a cult statue (Bonnet 2018:170-73, figs. 147-148). (Right) A dome-shaped shrine, carved of sandstone, found in the Great Amun Temple B 500 (room 503) at Jebel Barkal and believed to be a model of the mountain. A small statue of an enthroned Amun would have been inserted in the niche on the floor, and the opening would have been sealed with a fixed panel, probably bronze, which would have had a uraeus on the front (see Section II). It was inscribed for the Meroitic King Amanakhereqerema, ca. late first century CE. (MFA 21.3234. Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

What the original Kushite god may have looked like is uncertain, since no known explicit images of him survive. But like the later Egyptian Amun in Nubia, who was routinely represented as a

man with a ram head, one suspects that he was closely identified with the ram.⁵⁴ Whole sacrificed goats or rams wearing ornate spherical topknots of ostrich feathers have commonly been found buried with the human dead in Kerma graves, as if these were sacred animals (fig. 13a).⁵⁵ Similarly crowned rams appear widely in rock drawings across north Africa in the Atlas Mountains from Algeria to Morocco, showing that this cult had a vast western distribution (fig. 13b).⁵⁶ The same motif of a crowned caprid is also known from a rare clay figurine from a Lower Nubian grave at Aniba (fig. 13 c). Such head ornaments, of course, closely parallel the sun disks that appear on the heads of all later images of the Egyptian ram headed Amun, which makes the evolutionary link between them seem a virtual certainty.

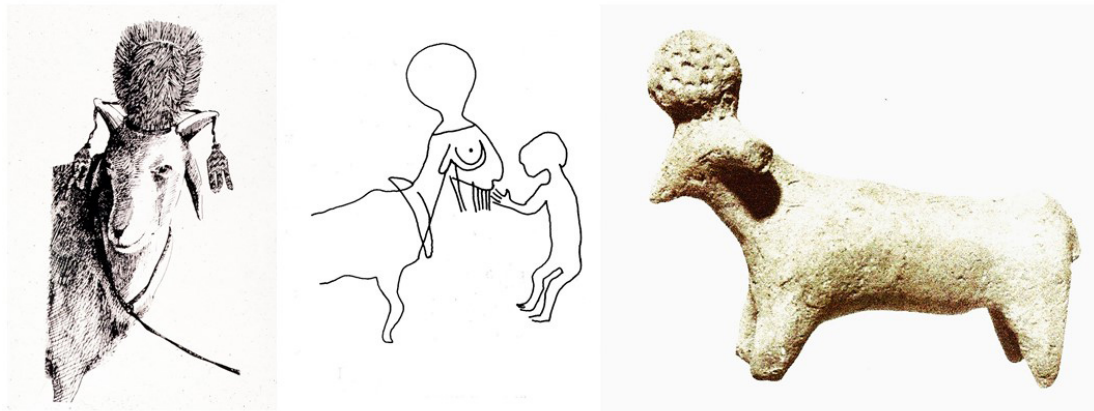


Fig. 13a, b, c. Artist's sketch of a Kerma sacrificial goat wearing a spherical crown of ostrich feathers (Drawing by G. Deuber, see note 55); rock drawing of a goat, crowned with a spherical topknot, from Algeria (Camps 1994, fig. 5:3); terracotta figure of a goat with spherical topknot, from Aniba, Lower Nubia (4373 University of Leipzig, Egyptian Museum; Wenig 1978, p. 129).

How similar the early Kushite religion may have been to the Egyptian is difficult to say, since from the Kerma sphere we have no written records, only archaeological data. But even here, we can see patterns suggesting quite close parallels between the two. In Kerma graves, for example, the dead are always buried lying E-W, with the head east. The great round tumuli of the Kerma kings of the seventeenth century BCE are always bisected with corridors running E-W. These details, like the “solar” topknots of their sacrificial goats, suggest that the people venerated the sun and that their chief god was a sun god, like Amun-Re. This conclusion finds further support from two preserved lintels over doorways of royal monuments, which were carved (or painted) with winged sun disks.⁵⁷ That the king himself was considered a son of this god is implied by the fact that the great royal funerary chapels K II (“The Eastern Deffufa”) and K XI in the Kerma cemetery east of the city were nearly identical in size and other respects to the Western Deffufa. If the latter was the god’s residence in the city, the former obviously housed (if temporarily) the deceased kings in the necropolis, suggesting not only that the chief Kushite god and the Kerma king were closely related in status, but also that, as in Egypt, they probably had a father-son relationship.

Finally, it is important to recall the existence of a stela from Buhen, which pictures a Kerma king carrying a bow and wearing a White Crown (fig. 14a). This object asks us to consider whether

the crown was a mere imitation of a piece of Egyptian royal regalia, or whether it may actually have had a Nubian origin.⁵⁸ The latter idea seems almost heretical, but when we recognize that the earliest representations of the White Crown are found at Qustul in Lower Nubia, we cannot easily dismiss it (fig. 14b).⁵⁹ At the same time, if we insist that the crown is Egyptian, we must ask what could have inspired such an odd, ungainly style of ceremonial headgear in Egypt in the first place, and how it could have acquired its specific reference to “Upper Egyptian” (=Southern) kingship. To anyone who has worked at Jebel Barkal as long as we have, he or she naturally leans toward the possibility that in a remote Nubian past the form of the White Crown was inspired by the shape of the Jebel Barkal pinnacle (fig. 4), from where it would have passed north into Upper Egypt. By adopting this crown, its earliest wearers may have wished to show descent from the great god whose form they saw in the rock.

The argument of whether the White Crown was Egyptian or Kushite in origin was obviously an ongoing one, even in Hellenistic times, for it was mentioned by the Greek historian Diodorus (3.1.1 – 6). Whatever the White Crown’s actual origin, it seems clear that the pharaohs of the New Kingdom, once having seen its shape in the Jebel Barkal pinnacle, accepted the mountain (even if substituted at Thebes for Luxor Temple) as the true source of the “royal *ka*” and divine kingship.

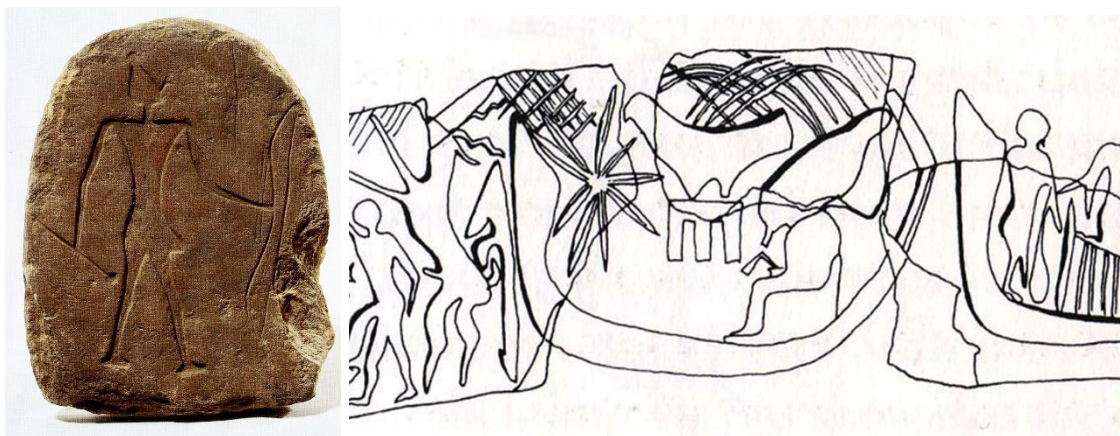


Fig. 14a, b. (Left) Stela from Buhen picturing a king of Kush wearing the White Crown, ca. 1700-1600 BCE. Sudan National Museum 62/8/17 (Wildung 1997, no. 100; Photo: J. Liepe). (Right) Detail from the Qustul incense burner, showing a king, wearing the White Crown, seated in a boat, ca. 3200-2900 BCE (Oriental Institute, U. of Chicago).

From the foregoing, we would have to suspect that in the centuries prior to the Egyptian conquest, the national cults and kingship ideologies of Egypt and Kush were very closely related. Given the shape of the Jebel Barkal pinnacle as a vaguely human figure crowned with the White Crown, it is tempting to suppose that the Kerma kings derived their crown and royal authority either from this “god” or from his presumed alter-ego, dwelling within the Western Deffufa. Following their conquest of Kerma about 1502 BCE, the Egyptians, we also suspect, followed local precedent and legitimized themselves in the same way, first by merging the ancient Nubian god of Jebel Barkal with Amun of Karnak, so that the two were conceived as a single deity, and second by having themselves crowned by this god at Jebel Barkal, thus granting them a united kingship of Kush and Egypt – a ritual also performed at Luxor. In this way, we suppose, the Egyptians united Kush and Egypt under one divine authority, Amun of Karnak, and under one

kingship: their own. Unwittingly, however, they set the stage for a future time when the same kingship – now granted by Amun “of Karnak” at Jebel Barkal – would be secured by a native Kushite dynasty, whose members would inherit the “royal ka” and restore, under their own authority, the same joint kingship of Egypt and Kush that had been held by the pharaohs of the New Kingdom, whom the Kushites would now claim as their “ancestors.”

Jebel Barkal from the End of the New Kingdom to the Rise of the Neo-Kushite State

For nearly four centuries, from about 1450-1080 BCE, the Egyptians governed Kush successfully with an efficient colonial and military administration headed by a Viceroy, called “King’s son of Kush.”⁶⁰ Toward the end of the 20th Dynasty, however, the colonial government began to weaken as the Egyptian state faced internal divisions, political fragmentation and new threats in the North by foreign invaders attempting to settle in the fertile Nile Delta.⁶¹ Some of these marauders came by sea from the east; others, from Libya in the west. The king - combating the threats from his seat now in the northeast Delta - found his authority in Upper Egypt usurped by a succession of High Priests of Amun at Thebes, who were also his generals and who at times were tempted even to assume for themselves the title of “King.” As troops were withdrawn from the South to shore up defenses in the North, Egypt’s Nubian garrisons were fatally weakened. Kush and Upper Nubia soon became unmoored from Egyptian royal control, and the “Pure Mountain,” which during the New Kingdom had achieved fame as a source of Egyptian kingship and the “royal ka,” was now set politically adrift, beyond the reach of any pharaoh seeking direct access to its god, his putative “father” and the presumed source of his own divinity.

The political fracturing of Egypt that began in the eleventh century BCE was unprecedented and introduced a three-century era, known as the Third Intermediate Period, when Egypt split into two semi-autonomous political domains, which viewed each other with increasing hostility.⁶² What transpired in Sudan during this “Dark Age” is unclear, for nearly all intelligible written and archaeological records cease.

The major sources for interpreting events in and around Napata during this opaque era are two cemeteries. The first, called Hillat el-Arab, consists of at least 19 rock-cut tombs in the sandstone ledges on the right bank of the Nile, about 3 km (1.9 mi) downstream from Jebel Barkal. Because these are now surrounded and overbuilt by private houses, they are not accessible to visitors. Although much plundered, they evidently belonged to members of one or more elite local families, who lived at Napata from the latter stages of the Egyptian colonial era into the period of Egyptian abandonment. The interior walls of some of the tombs are painted with bands of red and blue, and with naïve human figures in boats, or others accompanied by cattle or ostriches. Despite containing a wealth of Egyptian imported objects and pottery, the occupants of the tombs cannot have been Egyptian, for the better-preserved burials indicate that the tomb owners were buried simultaneously with others, who appear to have been sacrificed slaves. Several, too, were buried with their horses.⁶³

The second cemetery is El-Kurru, also on the right bank and 10 km (6.2 mi) further downstream.⁶⁴ Although its chronology is still much debated, its grave sequence probably began sometime around 900 BCE. The earliest tombs in the series apparently belonged to a line of local rulers, whose names are not preserved, while the latest are those of the historical kings, their

apparent descendants, who seized control of the entire Nile Valley in the later eighth century BCE and became Egypt's 25th Dynasty.⁶⁵ The occupants of all these graves are presumed to be members of the successive generations of a single ruling family. Whether they were related to those buried at Hillat el-Arab is not known.

The earliest graves at El-Kurru were a type of traditional Nubian burial, in which the dead were interred in pits or rock-cut side chambers, flexed, lying on beds, surmounted by circular mounds (fig. 15). Midway through the sequence the graves become square in plan, with funerary chapels, and evolve toward a type of small, Egyptian-style pyramid, beneath which the dead were placed in coffins and buried according to Egyptian funerary practice. The sequence makes clear that the earliest members of this family were not Egyptianized and represented a group that had evidently moved into the region sometime after the Egyptian withdrawal. By the end of the sequence, however, they had largely abandoned their native cultural traits and had adopted the Egyptian – while still, like those at Hillat el-Arab, retaining a desire to have their horses accompany them to the afterlife.⁶⁶ The important question here is: how did a family of local Nubian rulers from Napata, whose members had probably never set foot in Egypt and who were neither ethnically, culturally nor linguistically Egyptian, become so “Egyptianized” in two centuries (or less) as to be able to seize control of the Egyptian throne and to claim themselves the true heirs of the pharaohs of the New Kingdom? Circumstantial evidence again may provide a clue.



Fig. 15. The royal cemetery at El-Kurru, 14 km (9 mi) downstream from Jebel Barkal. The site contains a sequence of much plundered elite graves, probably belonging to a single ruling family from the district around Napata. The earliest graves (in center and left foreground), which probably date from the early ninth century BCE, were round tumuli of traditional Nubian type. These rapidly evolved into small Egyptian-style pyramids, set on high square bases (middle row, moving from left to right chronologically). The last tombs in the sequence (upper left and center right foreground) were pure pyramids and belonged to four of the five kings of the Kushite 25th Dynasty of Egypt. (The tombs of their queens appear at far right). A cemetery of their horses was found about 200 m (650 ft) to the left, beyond the border of the photo (Photo: Katherine Rose, 2019)

In the middle of the tenth century BCE the kingship of Egypt fell to a strongman of Libyan descent named Shoshenq I (ca. 945 – 924 BCE), who made his capital at Tanis in the

northeastern Nile Delta. He was the founder of Dynasty 22. By his fifth year, he was able to re-establish complete control over Thebes, which he may have followed with a military campaign into Lower Nubia.⁶⁷ As the tenth century passed into the ninth, there was increased friction between Thebes and the ruling Libyan kings as competing royal lines now attempted to control religious affairs at the southern city. In the last half of the ninth century, when King Takelot II of Dynasty 23 attempted to appoint his son Osorkon as High Priest of Amun, he was met by stiff resistance from the Thebans, who backed a local king named Pedubast (ca. 835 – 810 BCE) and his own preferred candidate for the High Priesthood. This prompted Takelot to send an army to Thebes, led by Osorkon, who brutally put down the revolt and executed the ringleaders.⁶⁸ This incident was only the beginning of an extended period of Theban opposition to Takelot's line, which continued intermittently for at least two more decades.

Although the Theban disturbances appear to have had nothing to do with events in Sudan, one cannot fail to notice that they occurred at about the same time that the ancestral graves at El-Kurru began to exhibit strong Egyptian cultural influences. It seems doubtful that the owners of the graves could have been influenced in their habits and religious beliefs by any Egyptian community still surviving in Napata from the New Kingdom. And if they themselves had not visited Egypt and become acculturated, there seems no other way to explain their rapid Egyptianization than to assume that, at about the time of the Theban rebellion, they had received at their court one or more groups of Egyptian priestly refugees from Thebes, fleeing the persecution of Prince Osorkon.⁶⁹

Since the chiefs of El-Kurru ultimately adopted a devout reverence for both Amun of Jebel Barkal and Amun of Karnak, it is tempting to hypothesize the arrival at Napata of one or more groups of high-level Thebans. These men would have come seeking protection from the local rulers, while at the same time seeking to reestablish at Jebel Barkal a kind of "New Karnak," where they could remain fiercely devoted to the Theban god but bitterly opposed to the Libyan kings. One can imagine their objectives: they would have sought to reunite the god's "Upper Egyptian" domain as it had existed in the New Kingdom, to restore Amun's long-neglected sanctuaries all over Nubia, to initiate the Kushite rulers into the god's "secrets" and to promote them as his unique champions and rightful heirs to the New Kingdom pharaohs. By promoting the Kushites as Amun's new "bodily sons", the expatriate Egyptian priesthood could ensure that they and their allies at Thebes would be well protected against further northern political interference.

This reconstruction of events, of course, is all speculation, but the archaeological and historical record suggests that a related scenario occurred. If the Theban revolt in the reign of Takelot II took place within the last quarter of the ninth century BCE, the rise at Napata of a pro-Theban, anti-Dynasty 23 rival dynasty took place in the first quarter of the eighth century BCE. The apparent sixth ruler in the El-Kurru tomb series was Alara, the first known of his dynasty by name, whose accession is placed at approximately 785 BCE.⁷⁰ Connected history of the Napatan dynasty begins with this king, who is the first reported of his line to have put his faith in Amun.⁷¹ Almost certainly it was he who began restoration of the temples at Jebel Barkal, and his first construction, parallel to and just southwest (downstream) of B 500, was a new Amun temple, dedicated, not surprisingly, to Amun of Karnak (B 800).⁷² This temple

was enlarged by each of Alara's two successors so that by mid-century it had become a near twin of B 500 as it then existed. Just as the pharaohs in the New Kingdom seem to have built Luxor Temple as a way of housing Amun of Napata at Thebes, now it appears that the Kushite kings built B 800 at Jebel Barkal as a way of housing Amun of Karnak in a separate temple at Napata.

Alara's successor Kashta (ca. 770 – 747 BCE) is known to have traveled at least as far north as Elephantine and probably all the way to Thebes to receive full pharaonic honors from the priests at Karnak.⁷³ His assumption of power at Thebes would have quickly eclipsed the authority of the titular "Theban" rulers of Dynasty 23 (who probably actually resided at Herakleopolis, 350 km [217 mi] downstream).

Once convinced that they were the new possessors of the "royal ka," Kashta and his successor Piankhy (whose name is also commonly read "Piye") could boast of being the true heirs of the New Kingdom pharaohs, who had also received their crowns and authority from the god at Jebel Barkal. Apparently during the period 760 – 740 BCE, both Kashta and Piankhy formally declared themselves king of Egypt by joint authority of Amun of Jebel Barkal and Amun of Karnak (who spoke as One through the former). Such an event was depicted at the top of the famous sandstone stela from Jebel Barkal, usually attributed to Piankhy (whose name has been erased) (fig. 16). Here the god and the king make this remarkable exchange:

Words spoken by Amun, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands, of "Pure Cliff" (i.e. Jebel Barkal) to his son, whom he loves [Piankhy]: "I said to you in your mother's womb that you were to be ruler of Egypt. I knew you in the semen while you were in the egg that you were to be lord. I made you receive the Great (Double) Crown, which Re caused to appear at the moment of Creation...It is I who decreed (the kingship) for you. (So) who shall share it with you? For I am Lord of Heaven. As I give to Re (i.e. the Sun god), (so) he gives to his children, from gods to men...It is I who grant kingship to whomever I will"

*(Then) spoke the Son of Re, Lord of Diadems, Beloved of Amun, [Piankhy ?]: "Amun of Napata has granted me to be ruler of every foreign country. He to whom I say "You will be chief," he will be chief! He to whom I say, "You are not king," he will not be king! Amun in Thebes has granted me to be ruler of Egypt. He to whom I say "Make (your) coronation!" he shall make a coronation. He to whom I say, "Do not make a coronation," he will not make a coronation! ...Gods make a king; men make a king, but Amun made me!"*⁷⁴



Fig. 16. Detail from the so-called Sandstone Stele of Piankhy/Piye (ca. 747-716 BCE), found in the Great Amun Temple (B 500) at Jebel Barkal, now in the Sudan National Museum, Khartoum. Here Amun of Jebel Barkal, speaking both for himself and for Amun of Karnak, declares the kingship of Egypt for the king of Kush and presents the latter with the Cap Crown (signifying royal authority over Kush and Upper Egypt [see figs. 19a, b]) and the Red Crown of Lower Egypt. The king's image at right (Piankhy or an earlier king) had once been erased and then restored. The text gave the king a kind of emperor status over all the then reigning chiefs and minor kings of Egypt. (Photo: Reisner 1931, pl. 6)

Jebel Barkal and the Kushite 25th Dynasty of Egypt

Initially the new kings of Kush claimed rule only over “Upper Egypt” (which, as it had been understood in the New Kingdom, included all of Kush). About 727 BCE when an armed alliance of Lower Egyptian rulers contested Kushite claims to the greater Thebaid (which included much of Middle Egypt), Piankhy led his army and fleet downstream, occupied Thebes, made offerings to Amun at Karnak, celebrated the *Opet* at Luxor,⁷⁵ and pushed downstream as far as Memphis, besieging the city and eventually overwhelming all opposition (figs. 17, 18).⁷⁶ Receiving the city's surrender and the homage and tribute of the Delta kinglets who had opposed his rule, he effectively reunited Upper and Lower Egypt and established his family as Egypt's 25th Dynasty (ca. 716 – 656 BCE). The resulting empire, which now extended from the confluence of the Blue and White Niles to the Mediterranean, was the largest ever achieved on the Nile in antiquity.

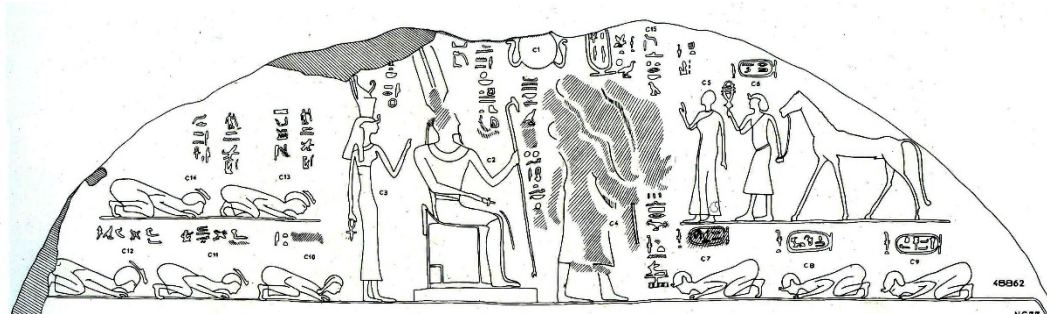


Fig. 17. Line drawing of the scene at the top of the Triumphal Stele of Piankhy, from Jebel Barkal, now in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo. Here the Napatan king, whose figure (as on the Sandstone Stele) has been partly erased, receives the submission of nine petty rulers of Lower Egypt in the presence of “Amun-Re, Lord of the Throne of the Two Lands, of Ka[rnak, who dwells in] Pure Mountain” and his consort Mut. (Note that the god is wearing the headdress of primeval Amun-Kamutef [cf. fig. 7a]). (Drawing: Grimal 1981a, pl. V.)



Fig. 18. This block, found in debris inside the Great Temple of Amun (B 500) at Jebel Barkal preserves a portrait of Piankhy as his own “royal ka.” It is the only known surviving portrait of the king. Jebel Barkal Museum. (Photo: T. Kendall)

Piankhy was succeeded on the united throne of Kush and Egypt by two of his own sons, Shebitqo (fig. 30a) and Taharqo (fig. 19a), a brother (or grandson) Shabaqo, and a grandson (or great-grandson) Tanwetamani (fig. 21). The Greeks called them “Aithiopians” (“burnt-faced ones”) for their dark skin, but ethnically they were northern Sudanese. They were non-native speakers of Egyptian, but they had become thoroughly Egyptianized and were famous in antiquity for their great piety and devotion to the Egyptian gods. Believing that they were the new heirs to the most ancient kingship of Egypt, granted by Amun at the source, they inaugurated and pursued an Egyptian cultural renaissance by reviving ancient rituals and archaic

art styles, building grand monuments, purifying the ancient Egyptian language, in some cases taking throne names of Old Kingdom pharaohs, choosing Memphis as their capital, and even reintroducing the pyramid as the proper type of royal tomb—although they built their pyramids only at Napata in Sudan, to which they all returned in death and where they were all buried.

In Egypt the Kushite kings wore all the traditional Egyptian crowns, but their preferred headgear was something novel. Known as the “Cap Crown,” it was a kind of tight-fitting skull cap with twin uraei and two long ribbons that hung down the king’s back. Whereas Egyptian kings normally wore only one uraeus on their crowns, the Kushite crown always featured two, in which the twin serpents were typically also crowned respectively with the White Crown of Upper Egypt and the Red Crown of Lower Egypt (figs. 19a, b). These twin uraei seem to have signified the union of Kush and Upper Egypt with Lower Egypt. The origin of the Cap Crown itself has long puzzled scholars, but, as we will see (Chap. II), it was almost certainly intended to simulate the shape and profile of Jebel Barkal.⁷⁷ At the same time the kings also typically wore a necklace and earrings hung with gold ram head pendants, which, like the crown, were symbols of their devotion to the Amun of Jebel Barkal.



Fig. 19a, b. (Left) Taharqa, modeling the Cap Crown, from his statue at Dokki Gel, now restored and set up in the Kerma Museum. (Photo: Bryan Whitney). (Right) A rare undamaged profile view of the Cap Crown, showing its twin uraei, preserved on a reused block still visible inside the sanctuary of temple B 700 at Jebel Barkal. (Photo: T. Kendall)

With Egypt under Kushite rule, Thebes and Napata again became northern and southern capitals of the Amun cult. Thebes was now ruled officially by a Kushite princess, who was literally married to Amun at Karnak.⁷⁸ Bearing the title “God’s Wife,” she was envisioned as Amun’s living protective uraeus (See Chap. II). The kings themselves, as noted, dwelt at the northern city of Memphis, the better to monitor their reluctant subjects in the Delta and the gathering political storm in the Near East.

Assyria vs. Kush: Two World Powers Collide

Both the Kushite kings of Egypt, from their northern capital on the Nile, and the kings of Assyria, from their capitals on the Tigris, considered the petty rulers of Phoenicia, Israel, Judah and Philistia their vassals. As the Assyrian kings attempted to bring them into their empire by force, the Kushite kings sent their own armies to aid them in their resistance and were temporarily successful.⁷⁹ But in 671 BCE, the Assyrians, led by their king Esarhaddon (680 – 669 BCE), launched a massive retributive invasion of Egypt, which resulted in the defeat of Taharqo's army, the fall of Memphis into Assyrian hands, the looting of his treasury, and the capture of his chosen heir, his chief wife, his harem and many of his children (fig. 20).⁸⁰ Falling back to Thebes and even bearing the wounds of battle himself, Taharqo waited for the inevitable Assyrian withdrawal and then reinvaded Lower Egypt in 669 BCE, by which he briefly clawed back his former capital and rid the country of its Assyrian administrators. Esarhaddon, meanwhile, died, but in 667 his son and successor Assurbanipal (668 – 627 BCE) ordered a new strike on Egypt, in which the Assyrian army again overwhelmed Taharqo's forces, compelling the Kushite to make a second retreat to Thebes (or perhaps to a place even further south), where he died in 664.⁸¹ In Egypt his body would have been mummified, carried to Napata by boat and interred in his pyramid at Nuri, the first such royal tomb built at that site (fig. 24).⁸²



Fig. 20. The Zincirli Stele of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria, now in the Pergamon Museum, Berlin. Here the Assyrian king addresses his national gods, shown over his head, while holding in his left hand two ropes, each ending in a ring that passes through the lip of one of the tiny prisoners at his feet. The smaller figure, wearing the Kushite Cap Crown, is believed to be Taharqo's captured son, the Crown Prince Ushanakhuru. (File photo)

In Napata, Taharqo was succeeded on the throne by his nephew or great-nephew Tanwetamani, who, after having dreamed in his sleep of a pair of cobras, symbolic of a reunified Egypt and Kush, reinvaded Egypt in 663 BCE, and, again, while the Assyrian armies were absent from the country, re-occupied Memphis and briefly re-established Kushite rule as far as the Mediterranean (fig. 21).⁸³ However, when word reached him in 661 of a new Assyrian army on the march, he fell back to Thebes to make his stand. When the Assyrians gave pursuit, he fled further south, leaving Thebes exposed to the enemy's depredations. The Assyrians, stretched thin—and wary perhaps of Tanwetamani's army just over the horizon—hastily looted the city of its movable treasures, slaughtered many of inhabitants, and beat a retreat to the North. That Kushite rule in Egypt was not permanently terminated by this episode is revealed by the fact that Theban monuments continued to be dated by Tanwetamani's regnal years until 656 BCE. The king himself, however, seems never to have returned to Egypt, choosing instead to remain safely in Kush, perhaps at Pnubs or Napata, where he seems to have been content merely to posture as King of Egypt.

Meanwhile, following the last Assyrian withdrawal from Egypt, a new claimant to the Egyptian throne appeared in the Egyptian Delta city of Sais. This prince, a former Assyrian collaborator, quickly stepped into the power vacuum left by Tanwetamani and seized the kingship in northern Egypt for himself. This was Psamtik I, the founder Egypt's 26th Dynasty (660 – 525 BCE), whose rule in Upper Egypt began in 656 BCE when he sent a powerful naval flotilla to Thebes to compel the highest governing nobles there, many of them allied by marriage to the Kushite royal family, to acknowledge him as king of Upper Egypt and to compel the reigning Kushite “God's Wife of Amun” to adopt his own daughter as her successor to this highest female sacerdotal office.⁸⁴



Fig. 21. The painted tomb of Tanwetamani at El-Kurru (Ku. 15), which features a fine portrait of the king at left, as he is led by the four sons of Horus to his final resting place (which was the inner chamber). (Photo: Enrico Ferorelli, 1989)

Jebel Barkal and the Napatan/Meroitic Kingdom of Kush

For six decades the Kushites and Saites maintained a tense stand-off at the First Cataract, making rival claims to the kingship of Upper Egypt, which the kings at Napata never officially conceded. The issue was not finally settled until the early sixth century BCE, when the Saite king Psamtik II (595 – 589 BCE) launched an invasion of Kush with an army composed heavily of Greek and Carian mercenaries.⁸⁵ Psamtik's force apparently struck at Pnubs, Napata, and Sanam Abu Dom, where extensive fire damage has been found, all dating to the reign of the Kushite king Aspelta (ca. 600 – 580 BCE). At Jebel Barkal the royal statues set up in the great temple's first court were deliberately toppled and smashed (fig. 22), and the temple's wooden roof was burned along with Aspelta's splendid new palace B 1200.⁸⁶ The erasures of the royal images on the Sandstone and Victory Stelae of Piankhy are probably evidence of the same Egyptian vendetta (figs. 16, 17). One suspects that Napata was the main objective of the Egyptian raid, since Psamtik would have wished to put an end, once and for all, to Kushite pretensions to his throne and to the Amun-oracle there that continued to promote them.

Once his army had returned victorious to Egypt, Psamtik set about gleefully defacing the monuments there of his Kushite rivals, erasing their names from their cartouches and replacing them with his own, and occasionally attacking their faces (fig. 23) but more commonly merely excising the second uraeus from their crowns. The erased uraeus (representing the cobra goddess Wadjet) symbolized Kushite authority over Lower Egypt, Psamtik's homeland, a fact which the Saite monarch obviously deeply resented and sought to deny.



Fig. 22. The statue cache at Jebel Barkal, found by Reisner in 1916. (Photo B 2681, from the photographic archive of G. A. Reisner's Harvard University-Museum of Fine Arts, Boston Expedition. Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)



Fig. 23. Block from a dismantled Kushite temple at Edfu, in which the royal donor's face was attacked with a chisel. The defacement obviously reflects the anger felt by the Saite king Psamtik II toward his Kushite rivals, who, even in his day, were apparently still plotting to take back their Egyptian empire, lost by their predecessors Taharqo and Tanwetamani in their struggles with the Assyrians six decades before. (Photo: Gay Robins)

The devastation at Napata forced Aspelta to flee to Meroë, 290 km (180 mi) to the southeast of Napata, across the Bayuda Desert, where he and his successors developed a new political capital and founded other towns above the Fifth Cataract, each with its own temple to Amun.⁸⁷ Now in effect relinquishing their claims to Egypt, and safely beyond the reach of any threatening Mediterranean power, the Kushite rulers consolidated their own southern kingdom, while continuing to model it on the ancient Egyptian state. There, in the vastness that is now Egyptian Nubia and northern Sudan, they created a stable, urban, literate civilization, with an unbroken line of nearly eighty monarchs that endured until the fourth century CE.

If the later kings of Kush made Meroë their chief royal residence, they still considered Napata their religious capital. With its “Karnak,” it became to Kush what Thebes and its “Karnak” was to Egypt.⁸⁸ These two great sanctuaries housed the same supreme god, but in the South, of course, Amun, dwelling in his imagined primeval state within his “Pure Mountain,” now sired and promoted the kings of Kush. At Thebes in Egypt his counterpart now granted the kingship to the northern pharaohs, who after 525 BCE, following the conquest of Egypt by the Persian king Cambyses II (529-522 BCE), were mainly foreigners: Persians, Macedonians, and Romans.

The later history of the kingdom of Kush is divided into two cultural phases, known as the “Napatan” and the “Meroitic.” The term “Napatan” describes the earlier phase, from the eighth to the early third century BCE, when the art and culture of Kush were most heavily influenced by Egypt, when Egyptian was the language used by the Kushite kings for their formal inscriptions,

and when Napata hosted the sites of the main royal cemeteries, El-Kurru, Nuri, and Jebel Barkal. The term “Meroitic” describes the later phase of the kingdom, from the mid-third century BCE to the fourth century CE, when the central royal residence and most of the royal pyramids were located at Meroë, when the Egyptianizing art and culture of Kush incorporated many indigenous African and imported Greco-Roman traits, when new native gods were added to the old Egyptian pantheon, when powerful queens ruled in their own right, and when the rulers inscribed their monuments in the still imperfectly known native Kushite language and alphabetic scripts (a cursive and hieroglyphic), called “Meroitic.”

During much of the Napatan period, the kings of Kush routinely journeyed from Meroë to Jebel Barkal to consult the god of “Pure Mountain,” through his oracle, on matters of war and state, and to perform the New Year ceremonies.⁸⁹ Upon the death of a king, all candidates for the succession would gather at the mountain, accompanied by the army, the priesthood, the officials and general public, to seek the god’s oracular choice for successor.⁹⁰ Replicating and perpetuating rites conducted by the Egyptian pharaohs many centuries before, each new king of Kush would be officially selected by the god as his chosen heir, and, once recognized as the new possessor of the “royal ka,” he would be formally crowned and worshiped by the people as a living god. He would then proceed to the other major towns of the kingdom and repeat the same ceremonies before each local manifestation of Amun.⁹¹

Until the late fourth century BCE, all the kings and most of the queens of Kush returned to Napata for burial in pyramids built for them at nearby Nuri (fig. 24).⁹² When the royal cemetery was moved to Meroë in the third century BCE, some of them still preferred burial beside Jebel Barkal and built their pyramids there (fig. 25).⁹³



Fig. 23. The Napatan royal cemetery at Nuri, 10 km (6.2 mi) upstream from Jebel Barkal and on the opposite bank of the Nile. These are the tombs of the kings of Kush from the mid-seventh to the late fourth century BCE. The cemetery was founded by Taharqo, the occupant of the largest pyramid (now a ruined mound at left rear), and it was used by nineteen of his successors and 53 queens to the time of Nastasen (ca. 335-315 B.C.). Nastasen's immediate successors then built individual pyramids at El-Kurru and Jebel Barkal. Afterwards, the main royal cemetery was moved to Meroë, the capital of the kingdom, but a few rulers and their relatives continued to build their pyramids beside Jebel Barkal until the second century CE. (Photo: Enrico Ferorelli, 1989)

In 30 BCE, Rome conquered Egypt, which for the previous three centuries had been ruled by the Macedonian Ptolemies. Shortly afterward the new Roman governor of Upper Egypt attempted to impose a tax on Lower Nubia, which the Kushites considered their own province. This action triggered a Kushite attack on the southern Egyptian city of Syene (modern Aswan), in which their army plundered the town. In response, Rome sent an army to attack Napata, which was said to have been “razed to the ground” and its inhabitants enslaved.⁹⁴ This is the only time the city of Jebel Barkal figures in an historical incident known and recorded by the Classical historians. These mutually destructive events ultimately led to the signing of a treaty between Rome and Kush, which secured peace between the two neighboring states for as long as their regimes existed on the Nile.



Fig. 25. On the west side of Jebel Barkal there are at least 25 pyramids, large and small, in various states of preservation, which range in date from the late fourth century BCE to the early

second century CE. They belonged to several kings, ruling queens and high-ranking members of the royal family. Most of the rulers during these centuries chose to build their pyramids at Meroë, but the “Pure Mountain” of Napata was obviously a burial site still preferred by some. If little is known about the individual owners of these tombs, the Jebel Barkal pyramids are among the best preserved in Sudan (Dunham 1957; Photo: T. Kendall).

Although no obvious trace of destruction has yet been found that can be attributed to the Roman attack, the old temples at Jebel Barkal, perhaps as a result of the raid, were completely restored and refurbished in the early first century CE by the energetic Meroitic royal couple Natakamani and Amanitore, who also constructed a massive palace at the site (B 1500), which established a precedent followed by several of their immediate successors (figs. 26, 27).⁹⁵



Fig. 26. The restored foundation platform, over 60 m square, of the Meroitic palace (B 1500) built at Jebel Barkal by the royal couple Natakamani and Amanitore in the mid-first century CE. The excavation of this huge structure has been a continuing project of the Italian Archaeological Mission at Jebel Barkal since the 1970's. (Drone photo: Bryan Whitney, 2018)



Fig. 27. Fragmentary sandstone head from a life size, composite statue of Natakamani or Amanitore, found in 1916 by Reisner inside the sanctuary of B 500. The statue, bearing traces of gilding, had inlaid eyes. (MFA 24.1797. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Photo: T. Kendall).

The Jebel Barkal sanctuary remained fully operational until the third century CE, when it seems to have been devastated by an earthquake. This catastrophe toppled some of the temples and dislodged huge rocks from the cliff that destroyed others built up against the mountain. The site was then left unrestored, and its importance as a cult center quickly waned—like the kingdom itself, which finally flickered out in the mid-fourth century.

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¹ We have chosen to render the site name here as “*Jebel ...*” rather than the older form “*Gebel Barkal*” (popularized by the American excavator George A. Reisner, who worked the site from 1916 to 1920) in order to bring it into conformity with the English rendering of all other mountain names in Sudan (which are rendered “*Jebel...*”) and to acknowledge the modern Sudanese (rather than Egyptian) pronunciation.

² In his Amada stela, Amenhotep II states that in his third regnal year (ca. 1424 BCE), after returning victorious to Egypt from his Syrian campaign, he brought back with him seven captive chiefs. He killed six of them and hung their bodies “from the walls of Karnak”; the seventh he brought all the way to Jebel Barkal, executed him there and hung his body from “the walls of Napata” (Török 2009:165, 186.). Until now, no trace of the fort, which was called *Sema-Khasetiu* (“Slaughtering the Desert-Dwellers”) or of the “walls of Napata” have been identified, but the text is important in revealing the close relationship between Karnak and Jebel Barkal, which had been declared when the Egyptian settlement was founded. (For more on this topic, see sections I B and C, below). On Napata, see Guernsey 2005:524-39; Kendall and Mohamed 2017:156-59, and refs. On the possibility of an older Nubian town, named Deger or Degel, existing on the site, see Gabolde 2018:93-95.

³ The official boundary lay some 250 km further upstream at the Hagar el-Merwa, where Thutmose I left a monument, later augmented by his grandson Thutmose III. See fig. 6.

⁴ This designation, first used by Morkot 2000, has since been popularized and appropriated, with variants, for many museum exhibitions and television documentaries.

⁵ Probably even in the New Kingdom a town on the south bank, 4 km downstream from Jebel Barkal, existed as the terminus of the southern leg of this route. Often called “Contra-Napata,” this site (whose ancient name is still unknown) is today called Sanam Abu Dom. During the 25th Dynasty it became a major receiving center for African goods and raw materials arriving at the Nile via caravans from the south, and Italian archaeologists are currently excavating a warehouse complex 250 m in length, in which rooms have been found still containing remains of elephant tusks, unworked semi-precious stones and Red Sea shells, among other raw materials. See Vincentelli 2011, 2016, and refs. The site also preserves the ruins of a temple, dedicated to “Amun-Re, Bull of Nubia,” built by the Kushite king Taharqa in the early seventh century BCE. See Guernsey 2005:519-24, and Pope 2014:58 ff.

⁶ Kormysheva 2004:112-14; Klotz 2006:21-25, 29-31; Török 2009:249-51.

⁷ See map, fig. 2. In chronological order the towns were: Sai (Ahmose and Amenhotep I), Kerma/Dukki Gel (Thutmose I, Thutmose II and Hatshepsut), Napata (Thutmose III, Amenhotep II), Tabo (Amenhotep II ?), Soleb and Sedeinga (Amenhotep III), Sesebi (Amenhotep III and Akhenaten), Kawa (Akhenaten and Tutankhamun), and Amara West (Seti I and Ramses II). Information about these sites in the New Kingdom can be easily searched online, but some recent publications are: Doyen 2009 (Sai); Török 2009:230-42 (Soleb and Kawa); Spence et al. 2011 (Sesebi); Bonnet 2011 (Tabo); Bonnet 2018 (Dokki Gel/“Pnubs”). See also Török 1997:303-9; Valbelle 2004; Gabolde 2021.

⁸ Assmann 1995:133-55; Allen 2005:83-85. In the Hymn to the “ba’s” of Amun at Hibis, for example, the text states: “You are Amun; you are Atum (the Setting Sun god); you are Khepri (the Rising Sun god); you are Re (the Sun God of mid-day), sole one who made himself into millions... You are the one who built his body with his own hands, in every form of his desire... while rising from Nun within the primeval mound.” See Klotz 2006:54.

⁹ For the iconography of Jebel Barkal, see Section II.

¹⁰ Eide et al. 1994:181-83

¹¹ Assmann 1995:136-42; Klotz 2006:17-18.

¹² This is his most complete title. It is found attached to an anthropomorphic image of the god in the South Chapel at Abu Simbel (Kormysheva 2004:121, fig. 13). Typically, he was called only “Amun (or Amun-Re) of Napata” or “Amun, Lord of the Throne(s) of the Two Lands, who dwells within Pure Mountain.” For a range of the variation in his titles, appearing on the column inscriptions in temple B 700 at Jebel Barkal, see Kendall 2014:676.

¹³ MFA 23.733. Reisner and Reisner 1933.

¹⁴ Ibid. 1933:35, l. 33; Cumming 1982:4.

¹⁵ Kemp 1991:201-206; Richards 1999:88; Morkot 2000:235.

¹⁶ See note 2.

¹⁷ In later Napatan times B 500 would be known as the “Karnak of Amun of Napata” (*Ipt-Swt Imn-Npt*) and as the “Karnak House of Gold (*Ipt-Swt Pr-Nbw*)” (Eide et al. 1996:443, 444, 478, 480). At Abu Simbel, the anthropomorphic Amun is depicted sitting inside Jebel Barkal. There he is called “Amun-Re, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands, foremost in *Ipt-Swt* (i.e. Karnak).”

¹⁸ Spalinger 1995:273. Thanks to Paul Mooney for bringing this reference to my attention.

¹⁹ Pamminger 1992:113-5; Kormysheva 2004:111-4; Török 1997:303-9; 2009:249-51, n. 329.

²⁰ Pamminger 1992; 105-110; Kormysheva 2004:109, note 1; Török 2009:224-25, 227-29; W. V. Davies 2017:69 and note 6 (refs.); Gabolde 2018:95-97.

²¹ Oldfather (trans) 1960:303.

²² Klotz 2006:21-25. The Invocation Hymn to Amun preserved at Hibis Temple in Kharga Oasis in Egypt addresses the god by his ten secret names or manifestations (*ba*'s). His first *ba*, described as the "Bull (*Ka*) who ejaculates Nun," had a ram-head, crowned with a sun disk and uraeus (See figs. 6b, 15).

²³ Reisner and Reisner 1933:37, l. 43.

²⁴ Probably representing the god as imagined in footnote 20.

²⁵ L. Bell 1985, pp. 258-259; Kemp 1991:197-209; Klotz 2006:145-46.

²⁶ The royal dogma was that the god came to the wife of the living king, disguised as her husband, and, making love to her, impregnated her. The child of this union, as a future king, was believed to have twin selves: one mortal and the other divine. The latter was his "royal ka." Kemp 1991:197-200; Bell, L. 1997:136-44, 170-78; Török 1997:276-79; Klotz 2006:35.

²⁷ Kendall and Mohamed 2017:182-84, fig. 19.

²⁸ Ibid. 2017:155-59.

²⁹ Ibid. 2017:165-70; Kendall 2009. On Akhenaten at Dokki Gel, see Bonnet and Valbelle 2006:55-63; Bonnet 2018:142-66.

³⁰ Kendall and Mohamed 2017:170-72.

³¹ Ibid. 2017:178-81.

³² Kendall and Wolf 2011.

³³ Kendall 2014:681-82.

³⁴ The cultic practices described here are theorized based on the rituals later described in Piankhy's Triumphal Stela. In that text the king is said to have refused to embark on his Egyptian campaign until he had completed the New Year ceremonies at Napata. Eide et al. 1994:77. On the importance of the New Year ceremony at Jebel Barkal, see Kendall and Wolf 2007:84 and Kendall 2008:120-24.

³⁵ Pamminger 1992:99-105, Tafs I-III, fig. 1; Török 1997:303-306; 2009:224, 227-28, 250-51. Some scholars suspect there may already have been a kind of proto-Luxor in the Middle Kingdom, but the evidence is inconclusive. See Ullmann 2007:11.

³⁶ Amun temples usually had east-west axes to acknowledge the god's primary persona as a sun god. Luxor temple differed in that it seemed to reference mainly the god's association with the Nile and its annual flood. Pamminger 1992:113-15.

³⁷ Bell, L. 1985, 1997; Kemp 1991:206-9. The name *Opet* ("Harem/Secret Chamber") would seem to have alluded to the chamber where the king was said to be conceived by the god Amun and his own mother and reborn as a living "royal ka." See note 25.

³⁸ Kendall 2008:126-34, especially figs. 14-17. Images of Jebel Barkal and the Underworld Mound of Osiris are nearly identical. Both depict a hill formed by the arching body of a snake, in which the head of the snake rears up in front of the hill just like the Jebel Barkal pinnacle. Both of these mounds sheltered a great god within. Jebel Barkal sheltered the god Amun. The Underworld Mound sheltered a god called "Flesh of Osiris" (who wears Amun plumes). Scenes of the latter are a regular feature of the Book of *Amduat* ("What is in the Netherworld"), whose texts and vignettes were reproduced in each royal tomb of the New Kingdom beginning with Thutmose I or Hatshepsut – that is, shortly after the Egyptians had become fully aware of Jebel Barkal. Just as it was believed that a royal visit to Jebel Barkal (or Luxor) could physically renew the king, so it was believed that the solar visit to the mythical Underworld mound at midnight could revive the Sun for his rebirth at dawn. The two journeys and destinations seem to be parallel, but the one for the living king was terrestrial and the other for the Sun (and the deceased king) was cosmic. The *Opet* Festival seems to have simulated both. The introductory lines of the *Amduat* inform us that when the Sun God "enters into the Western Gate of the Horizon, ... Seth [i.e. god of chaos] stands on the bank of the river (on which the god journeys), which is 120 *iteru* in length." The text implies that 120 *iteru* was the distance the Sun had to travel each night in order to reach his Mound. An *iteru* was 20,000 cubits, or 10,460 m. Thus, 120 *iteru* was 1255.20 km (780 mi), which, incredibly, is almost precisely the river distance between Karnak and Jebel Barkal (calculated by Google maps to be 1260 km)! See Piankoff and Rambova 1954:230; Fig. 80 (opposite p. 277).

³⁹ See note 35.

⁴⁰ There is one known exception to this where among personified (ram-headed) Nubian hills listed at Luxor there is one named “Thrones of the Two Lands,” cited with six other gold-producing hills. Gabolde 2018:92-93.

⁴¹ Brunner 1977:75.

⁴² “Throne(s) of the Two Lands,” as the name for Jebel Barkal, must have been very well known at Thebes. This is evident not only from the reference in note 40 but also from the statement in the tomb biography of the Viceroy Amenhotep-Huy that his authority extended from Nekhen to “Thrones of the Two Lands” (Gardiner and Davies 1926:10, pl. VI; see also note 13). A stela, now in the Louvre (E 6247), was dedicated to Setau, the Viceroy of Kush under Ramses II, and his wife by a man named Pen-Neset-Tawy (‘He of ‘Throne of the Two Lands’ [= Jebel Barkal’]), who bore the title “Scribe of the Altar of Kush.” From these examples, we can assume that Jebel Barkal was well-known as “Throne(s) of the Two Lands” at Thebes, even though its name seldom appeared outside of Amun’s title. Undoubtedly, for those Egyptians privy to “the secrets” – and for anyone in the Nubian foreign service – whenever Amun at Thebes was called “Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands,” the Nubian mountain would immediately have come to mind.

⁴³ G. Bell 1936. His introductory remarks (p. 313) are worth quoting: “A deep veneration for the earth, for rocks and serpents and trees, all as symbolic of the generative principle, is generally accepted as being inherent in many primitive religions. Throughout the Nuba Mountains the worship of ancestral spirits, upon which tribal life and the life to come are established, finds expression in a reverence for these same symbols of fertility. The present note deals only with a few examples of rocks or stones wherewith the principle of generation is outstandingly connected and is descriptive only of a number of clearly phallic objects of worship found in the Eastern half of the area.” See also Bolton 1936:96-100, pl. II.

⁴⁴ See Bonnet 2004.

⁴⁵ Bonnet and Honegger 2007: vi; Bonnet 2019.

⁴⁶ Bonnet 2018:82-88, 130-139; Guerneur 2005:501-7; Rundle-Clark 1959:55, 213.

⁴⁷ Török 2009:227-28, 336, 338, 341.

⁴⁸ The New Kingdom Temple at Kawa had the same orientation. Török 1997, fig. 7.

⁴⁹ Bonnet 2008; Valbelle 2008:89, 91, fig. 14; Bonnet 2018:83-87, 130-31.

⁵⁰ Török 2009:227-29, 336, 338, Robisek 1989:118.

⁵¹ Bonnet 2019:73, 76, 89, 91, 97, 112, 118, 121-24, 126, 144, 152, 167.

⁵² Ibid. 2019:51

⁵³ Wildung 1997:270-72, fig. 288.

⁵⁴ Gabolde 2018:96-97; Kendall 1997:76-77 and refs.

⁵⁵ Bonnet 1984:14-17, iv-v.

⁵⁶ Camps 1994. Note that major centers of the Amun cult were also established in the Khargeh and Siwa Oases in the Western Desert – but only after the 25th Dynasty.

⁵⁷ Bonnet 2004:120, 122; Kendall 1997:77.

⁵⁸ Kendall 2004:126-29. See also Morkot 2000:37-68.

⁵⁹ Kendall 2004:127. Török 2009:42-43 and refs.

⁶⁰ Török 2002:169-207; Morkot 2013.

⁶¹ Cline 2014.

⁶² Myśliwiec 2000:17-35, 40-67.

⁶³ Vincentelli 2006-07, 2014.

⁶⁴ Dunham 1950.

⁶⁵ Kendall 1999a, b. For an excellent discussion of the problems of trying to interpret the history of this period, see Török 2008.

⁶⁶ Dunham 1950:110-17; Kendall 1982:32-33.

⁶⁷ Kitchen 1973:287-302; but doubted by Török 2002:290.

⁶⁸ Myśliwiec 2000:50-56.

⁶⁹ But note that Shoshenq I employed Kushite mercenaries on his campaign into Philistia, Judah, and Israel (I King 14:25-26; 2 Chronicles 12:3), and that his successor Osorkon I (ca. 924-889 BCE) sent an army into the same region, led by “Zerah, the Kushite” (2 Chronicles 14:9-13). This would suggest that there must have been some high-ranking Kushites in Egypt at this time.

⁷⁰ Török 2002:311-19; 2008:156-59; 2009:311-18; Eide et al. 1994:41-42.

⁷¹ Eide et al. 1994:141.

⁷² Kendall 2014:663-66.

⁷³ Török 2002:319-28; 2009:319-24; Eide et al. 1994:42-47.

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- ⁷⁴ Adapted from Eide et al. 1994:55-62.
- ⁷⁵ The first documented instance of the *Opet* since the New Kingdom.
- ⁷⁶ Eide et al. 1994:62-118; Grimal 1981a; Myśliwiec 2000:68-85; Török 2002:319-28.
- ⁷⁷ W. V. Davies 1982; Török 1987; Leahy 1992; Myśliwiec 1988: pls. xxvii-xlvi; 2000:91-92.
- ⁷⁸ Myśliwiec 2000:33-34, 56-57, 72, 94, 110-16.
- ⁷⁹ Morkot 2000:264.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid. 2000:267-72.
- ⁸¹ Ibid. 2000:277-80.
- ⁸² Ibid. 2000:268, 272; Dunham 1955:6-16; Kendall 2008; see Chapter VII, below.
- ⁸³ Eide et al. 1994:191-209; Morkot 2000:293-304. Tanwetamani's exploits are recounted on his famous "Dream Stela" found at Jebel Barkal in 1862, now in the Nubian Museum at Aswan. Duplicating the Jebel Barkal Stela of Thutmose III, set up at Jebel Barkal nearly eight centuries before, the anthropomorphic "Amun-Re, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands, who resides in Karnak" (on the left at the top of the stela) gives the king "every land, all foreign countries..." while the ram-headed "Amun-Re, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands, who resides in Pure Mountain" (on the right) gives him the office of "King of Upper and Lower Egypt...."
- ⁸⁴ Myśliwiec 2000:113-16.
- ⁸⁵ Bonnet and Valbelle 2005:164-71; Bonnet and Honegger 2007: iv-v; Török 2009:361-62
- ⁸⁶ Dunham 1970, pls. I-II, VII-XXIII; Kendall 1996:468-76; Kendall and Wolf 2007.
- ⁸⁷ Gabolde 2021.
- ⁸⁸ See note 17.
- ⁸⁹ See note 32.
- ⁹⁰ Eide et al. 1994:232-52; Eide et al. 1996:646 (Diodorus III 5. 1).
- ⁹¹ Török 1992; 1997:403-4.
- ⁹² Dunham 1955.
- ⁹³ Dunham 1957.
- ⁹⁴ Eide et al. 1998:828-35, 876-81, 882-84 and references; see also Eide et al. 1996:700-4.
- ⁹⁵ Donadoni 1993; Roccati 2004, 2008.