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POPULAR RELIGION
EVIDENCE FROM ABU ERTEILA

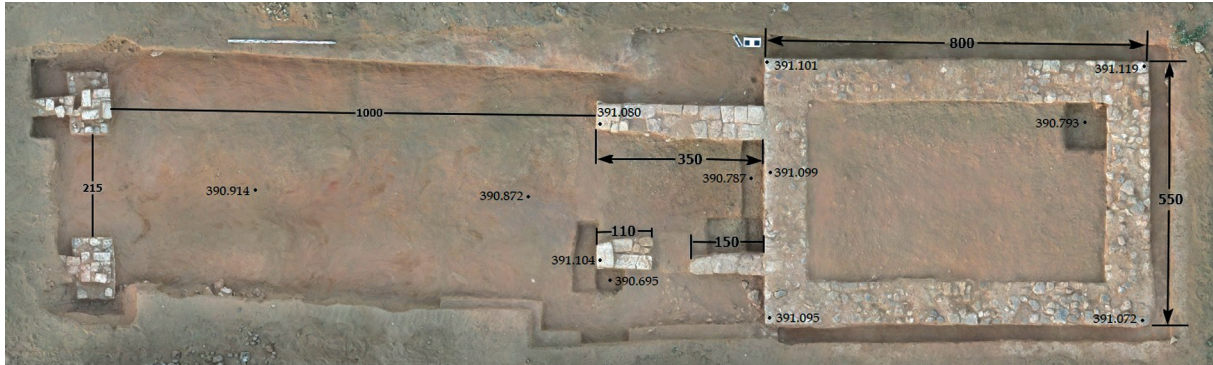


Fig. 1: Orthoplan of the building 46-47 (made by A. Vorobiev).

Excavations of the territory to the east of the Lion temple at Abu Erteila,¹ at a distance of about 10 meters resulted in the opportunity to excavate the remains of the foundation of the structure composed of a room 47 (four walls) and a passageway (46), adjacent to it (fig.1). Both premises, from the walls of which only the basement has been preserved (four in room 47, and two from the passage to it), are oriented on the axis West-East. According to the form of passage consisting of the remains of two walls, jointed to the western wall of the room 47, an open entrance to the construction was located in the West.

The foundation of the dromos-type passageway 46 is composed mostly of sandstones of different size, fastened with mortar (fig. 2). Sandstones of larger size are at the very beginning of the passage from both sides (northern and southern ones). From the northern side the larger size stone is located at the level of 391.080 m asl., on the south side of the



Fig. 2: Orthoplan of the passageway 46 (made by A. Vorobiev).

passage, the stone is at the level of 391.104 m asl., the level of stones at foundation is 390.695 m asl.

The length of the northern wall of the passage is 350 cm. On the southern side of the passage along the axis of West-East, there are no stones at a distance of 110 cm from the entrance. It is not possible to determine exactly whether it is a loss, or there is a trace from an additional passage (the size of which is 90 cm). From this point, the length of the passage to the connection with the southern wall of the room 47 is 150 cm. Thus, the total length of both walls was the same.

1 On the Lion Temple see: Kormysheva E., Lion Temple at Abu Erteila. *Sudan & Nubia. The Sudan Archaeological Research Society*. vol. 24, 2020, p. 162-172.

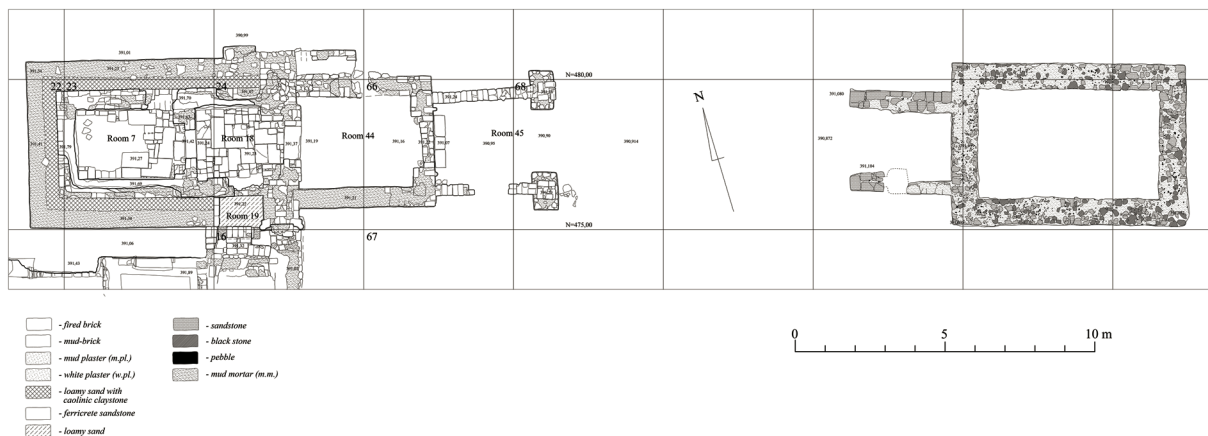


Fig. 3: Lion Temple and building 46-47 (made by S. Vetokhov and A. Skiteva).

Room 47 is also preserved only by the foundation. The size of the foundation is the following: the northern and southern walls are 800 cm, the western and eastern walls are 550 cm. The eastern and western parts of the foundation have different preservation in height. The material displays sandstones of different size, small local stones and black stones. Three rows of stones and rubbles are traced in the foundation of the eastern wall, they were put on a layer of mortar. 1.5 – 2 rows of stones are traced along the western wall and covered with mortar, rubbles and pebbles.

The identification of a foundation is evidenced by the examination of pits made in different points. Testing pits were cut up to 390.793 m. asl. (near eastern wall 47) on the level 390.787 m asl. near western wall and on the level 390.695 m asl. near the entrance (fig. 1, 2). As a result it was established that the existing masonry was laid on the soil ground. The masonry included black stones that were used in the foundation in order to refrain water, which was important especially during the rainy season.

The level of the preserved upper part of the building of the western wall is 391.101 m asl., the upper part of the eastern wall is 391.08 m asl. The lower level of the base on the western and eastern wall is EW - 390.773 m asl.; WW - 391.610 m asl.

The position of this structure along the same axis regarding the entrance to the Lion Temple (fig. 3) hardly leaves doubts about the functional connection of both buildings which are opposite each other with the mirrored location of the entrance to the Lion Temple and passage 46, which is quite obvious.

Trying to determine the destination of the excavated structure, where no diagnostic data have been preserved, one could assume that there was a small one-room temple here. In this case, however, the entrance located on the west side, does not allow

us to follow this hypothesis in the absence of exact parallels in other areas of the Butana.

Considering the ground plan of Kom II at Abu Erteila, where the Natakamani temple with adjacent rooms, as well as the Lion Temple were excavated (Fig. 4), the identification of the structure by its location regarding these temples as an edifice like the Hathor chapel at Naga could be determined. However, the absence of traces of the way through (although the too low height of the preserved basement suggests theoretically the original existence of an entrance higher, which has not been preserved) and the existence of a separate passage way prevent searching for an analogue with the Hathor chapel.

Thus, having no reliable data for self-identification of the remains of this structure, and through comparison with a similar building a possible explanation for its purpose can be proposed only by the location regarding to the famous structures, where a clearer archaeological context has been revealed.

In my opinion, it would be reasonable to compare the structure found at Abu Erteila with the Offering place 360 in Naga, where ordinary people could leave their offerings to god. The remains of this structure at Naga and at Abu Erteila, and mode of construction present the same material – sandstones of different size, covered by white lime plaster, both are located, facing the Lion-Temple and being accessible from the west through a wide entrance.²

2 Kröper K. Offering place 360, in: K. Kröper, S. Schoske, and D. Wildung (eds), *Königsstadt Naga. Naga-Royal city-Grabungen in der Wüste des Sudan. Excavations in the Desert of the Sudan*. Berlin 2011, p. 95, 97, Abb. 112; Kröper K. Excavation of Offering Chapel 360 in Naga, in: J.R. Anderson, and D.A. Welsby (eds.), *The Fourth Cataract and Beyond. Proceedings of the 12th International Conference for Nubian Studies*. British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan 1, edited by Leuven – Paris – Walpole, 2014, p. 711.

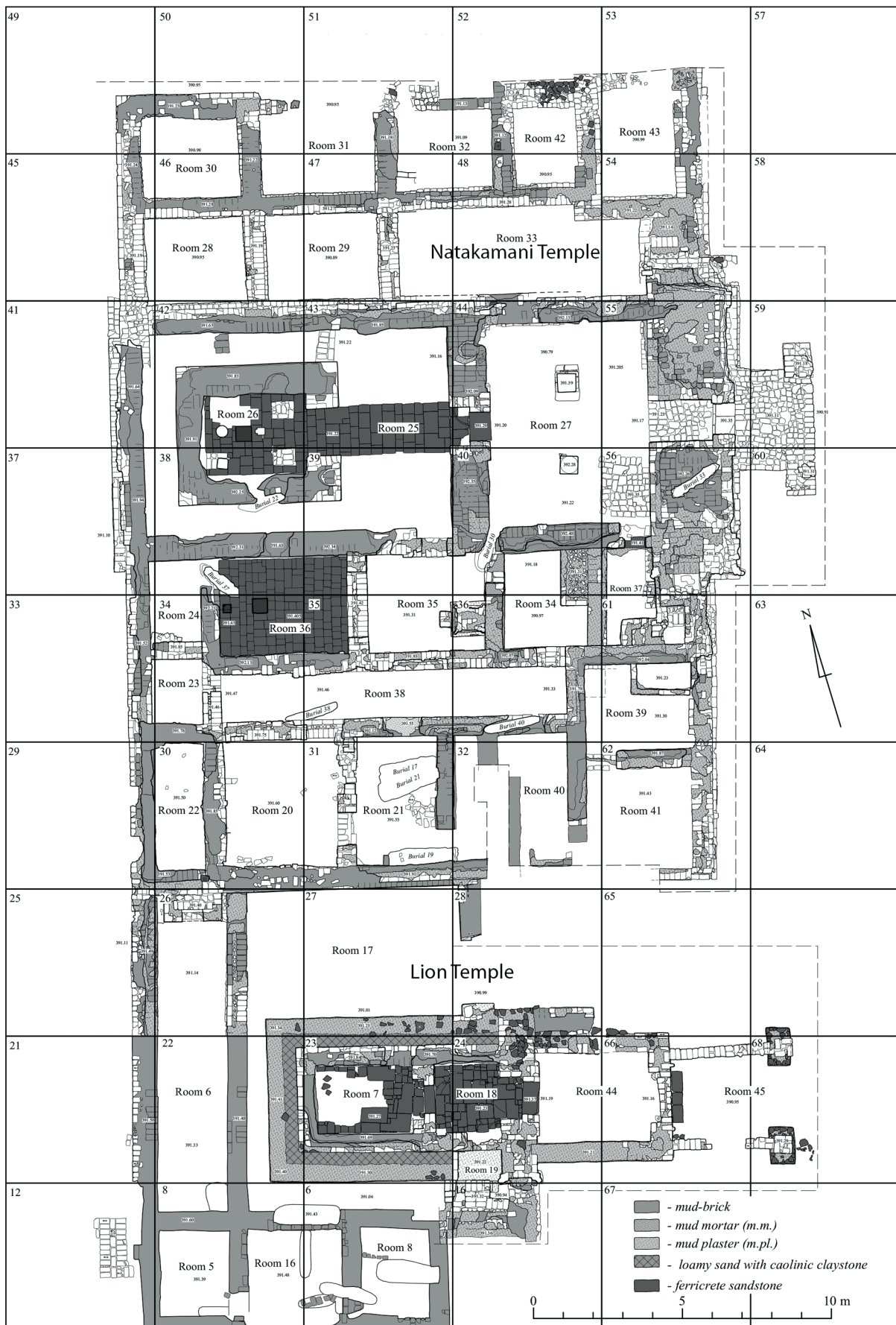


Fig. 4: Plan of Natakamani Temple and Lion Temple (made by S. Vetokhov).

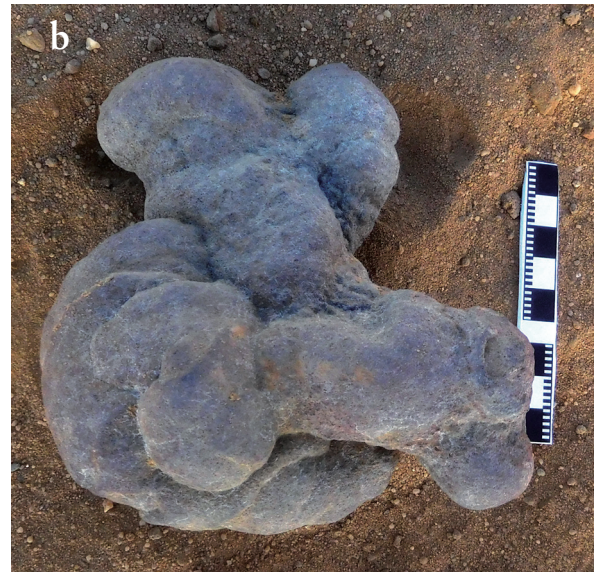


Fig. 5a-f: Miracle sandstones (photo E. Kormysheva).



The cult area's functional connection to the Lion Temple devolves from its placement and orientation. This offering area may be explained by the lively and spontaneous cult active here for the leonine god Apedemak.³ Considering that in Naga this structure is associated with the temple of the lion-headed Apedemak, a similar solution can be assumed in the case of Abu Erteila.

An analogue of the composition of both buildings (in Naga and in Abu Erteila) is the entrance from the west, but at this point the direct similarity ends. The structure at Abu Erteila, has a type of passage-way to a full-fledged rectangular building. On both sides, at the beginning of this passage, larger stones have been preserved (this is especially clearly visible from the southern side), which suggests the existence of an original podium for the statues here, as it is in the case of Offering place 360 in Naga. However, unlike Naga, where traces of the location of the cult statue have been preserved, it is impossible to identify a cult place of the subsequent building at Abu Erteila. It is likely that it should have been possibly somewhere in the middle of the eastern wall of room 47. The Offering place 360 in Naga is located about 40 meters away from the Lion Temple, but not on the axis of the Lion Temple or the Hathor Chapel.⁴ To the contrary, the building 46-47 is positioned on the same axis with the Lion Temple at Abu Erteila on the distance about 10 meters.

Various finds found in Naga in the subsequent area confirm that the Offering place 360 functioned as a popular sanctuary. More than 140 miracle stones were deposited there. Similar votive miracle stones were found in the temples of Jebel Barkal and in Kawa, in Musawwarat es Sufra, Soniyat, as well as in el-Kurru, in latter they were positioned above the tombs.⁵ As Rondot noted the same kind of stone was found at El-Hassa. They were found both in the tombs and in the Meroitic sanctuary of Jebel Barkal, it is a collection of more than six hundred



Fig. 6: Miracle stones in front of the Lion Temple (photo E. Kormysheva).

pieces of these kind.⁶ A research of such objects has demonstrated that miracle stones were found throughout the Nile Valley (in Egypt and in the Sudan) and were used as offerings in temples and as burial implements.⁷

Very similar or even same objects were found in different places at Abu Erteila. These objects were found in different places during the excavation at Abu Erteila, (Fig. 5a-f), even if they are not exactly tied to the context, their large number is not accidental and undoubtedly testifies to folk religion. Finds of ferriferous sandstones at Abu Erteila suggest that Abu Erteila also housed a folk offering place or a kind of sanctuary. In one occasion at Abu Erteila, such miracle stones were placed at the entrance to the Lion Temple (Fig. 6) it was found on the right side (looking West);⁸ it appears to have been found in their original position. At Jebel Barkal, the hiding-place full of miracle stones was found on the right side from the entrance to the temple B 700.⁹

3 Kröper Offering place 360...p. 100.

4 Kroeper, Excavation...p. 715.

5 Kröper, Offering place ...p. 96-98, Abb. 113, 115; Kroeper, Excavation...p. 714.

6 Rondot V., Le matériel culturel du temple à Amon d'El-Hassa, in: G. Andreu-Lanoë, M. Baud and A. Sackho-Autissier (eds.), *Méroé. Un empire sur le Nil*. Paris 2020, p. 239, (fig.) 318.

7 Francigny V., De Voogt A, Jeux de la nature et dépôts votifs et funéraires dans les royaumes nubiens. *JEA* 100, 2014, p. 233-243. I am indebted to Angelika Lohwasser for the reference on this article.

8 Kormysheva, Lion Temple...p. 165, fig. 6b

9 Francigny, De Voogt, Jeux de la nature...p. 236 with the reference to Kendall T. Talat Architecture at Jebel Barkal: Report on the NCAM Mission 2008-2009. *Sudan & Nubia. The Sudan Archaeological Research Society*. vol. 13, 2009, p. 2-16.

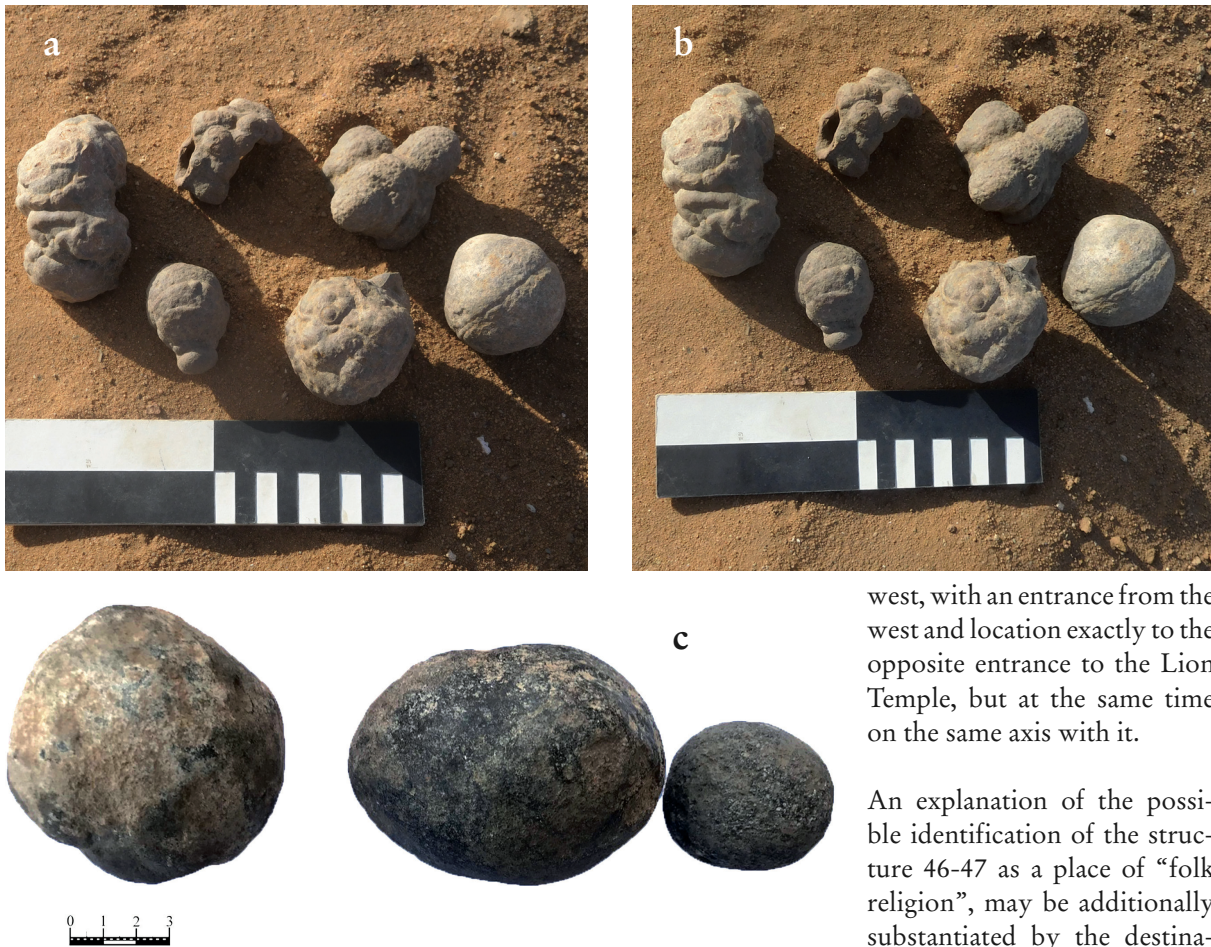


Fig. 7a-c: Sandstone balls (photo E. Kormysheva).

The sandstone balls from Abu Erteila also have an analogy to the miracle stones found in Naga on the Offering place 360 (diameters 5-7 cm).¹⁰ Similar items (Fig. 7a-c), in Abu Erteila (diameters 5-9 cm) were found in square 70, i.e., between the Lion Temple and building 46-47 at walking level 390.872 m asl. The miracle stones at Abu Erteila were mostly found outside of the temple premises, that was clearly a result of the reusing the territory of the temple complex for burial and housing. Miracle stones from Abu Erteila, even if were found out of context, can be considered as an evidence of a “folk religion” by their form and analogy with the same objects from Naga, i.e., bringing gifts to god from the poor population, which was unable to redeem the cult items intended for offering in the temple.

All these finds belong to offering items at Abu Erteila, used in frame of “folk religion”, what makes it necessary to search for their original location. In this case, I assume that it is reasonable to refer to the building 46-47, the orientation of which is east-

west, with an entrance from the west and location exactly to the opposite entrance to the Lion Temple, but at the same time on the same axis with it.

An explanation of the possible identification of the structure 46-47 as a place of “folk religion”, may be additionally substantiated by the destination and performed rituals in the Lion Temple, with which this structure is definitely connected.

It seems that the remains of moving male figures, between which the *zm3* sign is represented, located on three surfaces of the outer side of the Lion Temple give an evidence of the ritual procession that took place around the sanctuary of the temple (Fig. 8).¹¹

The procession is traced being started walking from the eastern external end of the northern and southern walls in the room 18, both are moving to the west. The preservation of the painting on the northern and southern walls is not the same, which may be explained by the fact that a later construction was done at the level of the eastern part of the southern wall (room 18), at least three building horizons can be traced there. It covers this part of the south wall. On the north wall (fig. 9a-b) there are 15 figures of moving people and 14 signs *zm3*, and on the south wall there are 14 figures of people and 13 signs *zm3*. (fig. 10 a-b). At the end of the northern and southern walls, male figures are respectively pictured, and at the beginning of the western wall, (where the pro-

¹⁰ Kröper, Offering place ...p. 99, Abb. 114.

¹¹ Kormysheva, Lion Temple...p. 169.



Fig. 8: 3D photo of the processions around the sanctuary (made by A. Vorobiev).



cession turns from the north and south walls), signs *zm3* are depicted, so both processions are monotonous over the entire surface. On the western wall (fig. 11 a-c) on each side, before the meeting of the two processions, there are 6 figures and 6 signs *zm3*. The distance in the center of the western wall between two figures depicted opposite each other is 26 cm, while the sign *zm3* occupies a space between figures equal to 18 cm in all cases. The image (whether existed or not) between the meeting figures of the two processions on the western side cannot be identified at present.



Fig. 9a-b: Fragments from the northern wall (made by A. Vorobiev).

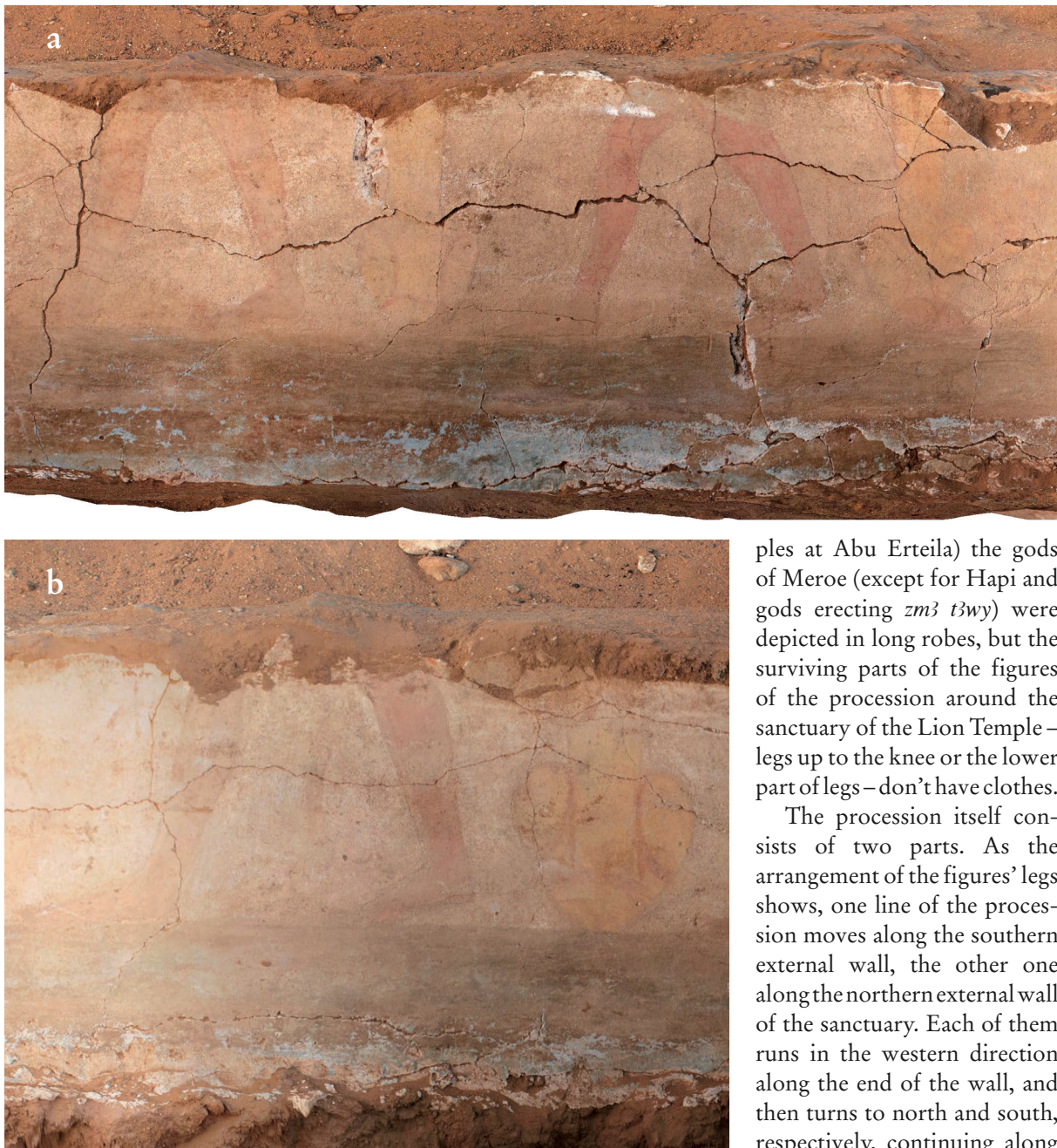


Fig. 10a-b: Fragments from the southern wall (made by A. Vorobiev).

The *zm3* sign, the ancient Egyptian symbol of unity,¹² pictured in front of every figure, hints to the sacred nature of this procession. The loss of the upper part of the figures and of the *zm3* signs as well along the entire perimeter does not allow accurately determine the shape of the figures and the semantics of the scene. It is unlikely that this is a procession of gods (as it is in case of Lion Temples in Musawarat es Sufra and Naga), since by the 1st century AD (an approximate date of the complex of tem-

ples at Abu Erteila) the gods of Meroe (except for Hapi and gods erecting *zm3 t3wy*) were depicted in long robes, but the surviving parts of the figures of the procession around the sanctuary of the Lion Temple – legs up to the knee or the lower part of legs – don't have clothes.

The procession itself consists of two parts. As the arrangement of the figures' legs shows, one line of the procession moves along the southern external wall, the other one along the northern external wall of the sanctuary. Each of them runs in the western direction along the end of the wall, and then turns to north and south, respectively, continuing along the western wall. The processions meet exactly in the middle

of the external western wall and at the level of the central figure, which had to be inside the sanctuary, positioning themselves opposite each other.

When trying to determine the nature of the procession, it can be noted that the above mentioned procession with the sign *zm3* is currently unique in the ancient Sudan. It should be borne in mind that the possibility of identifying moving figures as the Hapi procession, well known in the temples of Egypt especially in Greco-Roman times and in the Naga temple, is hampered by the following circumstances: the location of the Hapi processions in Egyptian temples is usually depicted on a base moving in

¹² Gardiner A. *Egyptian Grammar*. Oxford, 1994, p. 465, F 30, lung and windpipe, unite and derivatives.



one direction. Hapi figures on the painted altar in Naga (two figures of Hapi raising up the hieroglyph for unification),¹³ for example, also do not provide an analogy to monotone processions around the temple at Abu Erteila. Figures of Hapi represented with a symbol *zm3 t3wj* were borrowed from Egypt. As for the sign *zm3*, the interesting variant to this subject presents the image on the altar of Atlanersa from the temple B 700 in Jebel Barkal, where Horus and Thoth raise the figure of the king standing on the sign *zm3*. The similar picture is on one side of the altar from Naga, on the other side are two figures of Hapi,¹⁴ and on the small cylinder of Taneydamani from B 500 in Jebel Barkal.¹⁵ However, these images could hardly serve as a prototype for the figures of the procession from Abu Erteila, since in all the above cases one leg of the gods is lifting at an angle or raised, while in Abu Erteila both feet of every figure in the procession are pictured at the same level. Feet, toes, and the *zm3* sign are anchored to the baseline indicated as green line. Judging from the picture, the left foot is the walking one, the right foot is pictured with an emphasis on the toe

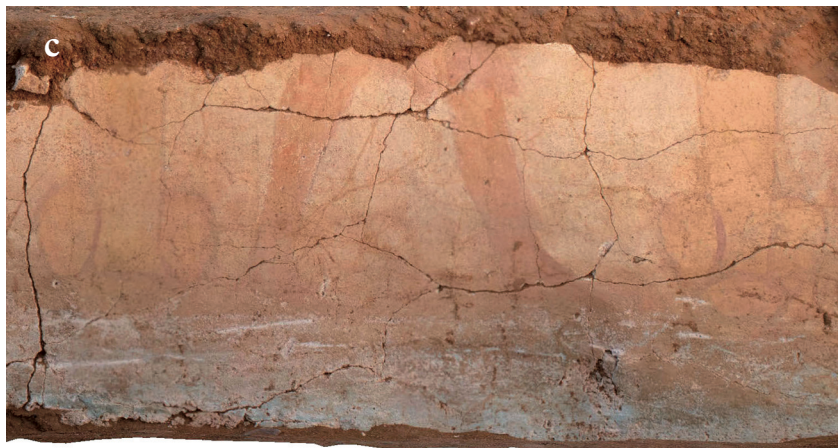


Fig. 11a-c: Fragments from the western wall (made by A. Vorobiev).

(fig. 9-11).¹⁶ The position of the right leg on the toe and raised heel, and the left supporting leg on the foot indicates the movement of the processions. In room 6, one can clearly see that the legs are on a full foot. However, the position of the legs on the podium in room 6 is also indicative of movement.

13 K. Kröper, S. Schoske, and D. Wildung (eds.), *Königsstadt Naga...* p. 38, Abb.38.

14 K. Kröper, S. Schoske, and D. Wildung (eds.), *Königsstadt Naga...* p. 42 – 45, Abb. 42-45.

15 Wildung D. Sudan. *Antike Königreiche am Nil*. München 1997, Cat. 285, S.264.

16 Unfortunately 3D photos were done last season after great inundation, when water covered all the site. The baseline remained a blurred with white base.



Taking into consideration the moving processions and the meaning of *zm3* sign and its central position in the *zm3 t3wj* composition, the semantic meaning of the procession is to be searched in the destination of all the complex in Abu Erteila located on the Kom II. Analysis of the excavated territory in Abu Erteila revealed the temples (fig. 4) and the adjacent premises. Its destination was determined as a royal complex for the legitimation of the heir.¹⁷ The material from the Natakamani temple demonstrates that the main ritual action performed in the complex was connected with the legitimation of the royal family and recognition of a future king.

As for the Lion Temple the type of picturing the processions on outer walls is similar to the decoration of the podium in room 6 (fig. 12 a-b). Both presenting the similar picture of human figures separated by a *zm3* sign and moving from different sides were probably connected by a single ritual. The procession in the room 6 might symbolize the celebration of unity and loyalty to the newly elected king, or demonstrate confirmation of the power of the previous legitimate ruler. This supposition is based on the ritual connected with the king, which is ceremonial one and confirmed is confirmed by the remains of the image of bows on the podium in room 6, where the statue of the king was supposed to be.¹⁸

The typological similarity of both painting, the possible presence of a passage to room 6, suggests a connection between the two complexes. The procession around the Lion Temple, apparently, could have been a ceremonial one walking around the temple with the culmination of a meeting exactly in the center, behind the sacred place on outer wall surrounding the naos. It is impossible to establish what was the culmination of the processions, one may only assume that by gestures or by the symbolism of images the oracle prophecy or confirmation of royalty and power could be expressed (or transmitted by the pose of figures). Who were people performing this ritual is impossible to establish, because only feet are visible in both cases.

An allusion on a possible explanation of the procession may be seen in the description of Diodorus Siculus. Following this idea the definition of this complex as dedicated to the king finds indirect confirmation in the description of the election of the king in Meroe (Diod.: "among the Aithiopians"), rendered by Agatharchidus Cnides in the transmission of Diodorus Siculus: «The priests first select the

best candidates from among themselves, and from among these selected men the multitude then chooses as king him whom the god seizes while being carried about in a procession in a traditional manner» (Diod. III, 5, 1).

According to the description that has been preserved on the stelae of the election of the ancient Sudanese kings in Napata, that have survived to this day, the candidates to the throne appeared before god and according to his will underwent coronation rituals performed by priests and gods.¹⁹ The very choice of candidates remains behind the scenes, and, it seems be foreseen in advance with the established customs of succession to the throne. The other situation is described in the Aspelta stele, where candidates were presented to Amon, who makes his choice by "snatching" one of them.²⁰ Aspelta's text uses the ancient Egyptian verb *it* in its meaning *ergreifen, packen* (Wb I, 149, II, 12), the Greek verb λαμβάνω corresponds to it with the same meaning.²¹ Ordinary people are mentioned in the Aspelta stela, when describing an episode, calling for searching for the ruler. They were warriors, who are described - the most influential and strong male population of the country.²² An allusion to the role of the people in the election of a king is contained in the election stela of Pi(ankh)y (Khartoum 1851): «Gods make a king, men make a king (but) it is Amun that has made me».²³

However, the evidence of the divine election of the king while being carried about in a procession is not confirmed at the moment in any text about the election of the king in Kush. A probable confirmation of the correctness the information of Agatharchidus Cnides, transmitted by Diodorus Siculus, may serve, on my view, the remains of the procession around the sanctuary of the Lion Temple, where

17 Kormysheva E., Lebedev M., Malykh S., Vetokhov S. Abu Erteila. Excavations in Progress. Moscow 2019, p. 228.

18 See in detail Kormysheva, Lion Temple...p. 171-172.

19 See for example Kormysheva E., Das Intronisationsrituals des Königs von Meroe, in: *Ägyptische Tempel - Struktur, Funktion und Programm (Akten der Ägyptologischen Tempeltagungen in Gosen 1990 und in Mainz 1992)*. Hrsg. von R. Gundlach und M. Rochholz. Hildesheimer Ägyptologische Beiträge, 37, 1994, S.187-210.

20 Grimal N.-C., *Quatre stèles Napatéennes au Musée du Caire. JE 48863 - 48866*. Le Caire 1981, pl. VI, l. 18; *FHN - Fontes Historie Nubiorum* I, Bergen 1994, p. 239.

21 This verb has many senses, including the meaning "seize", on this subject see: Liddell H.G., Scott R.A. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford 1940, p. 1026-1027. I use a chance to thank Anna Krukova for this reference. Comments to this passage see *Fontes* II...p. 646, note 307.

22 It is possible that people are mentioned here, since the word *mSa* in later texts also means "people" (Wb. II, 155, 13).

23 Reisner G.A., *Inscribed Monuments from Gebel Barkal*. ZÄS, Bd. 66, 1931, 76-100, pl. V, l. 6-7; *FHN - Fontes* I, p. 57.

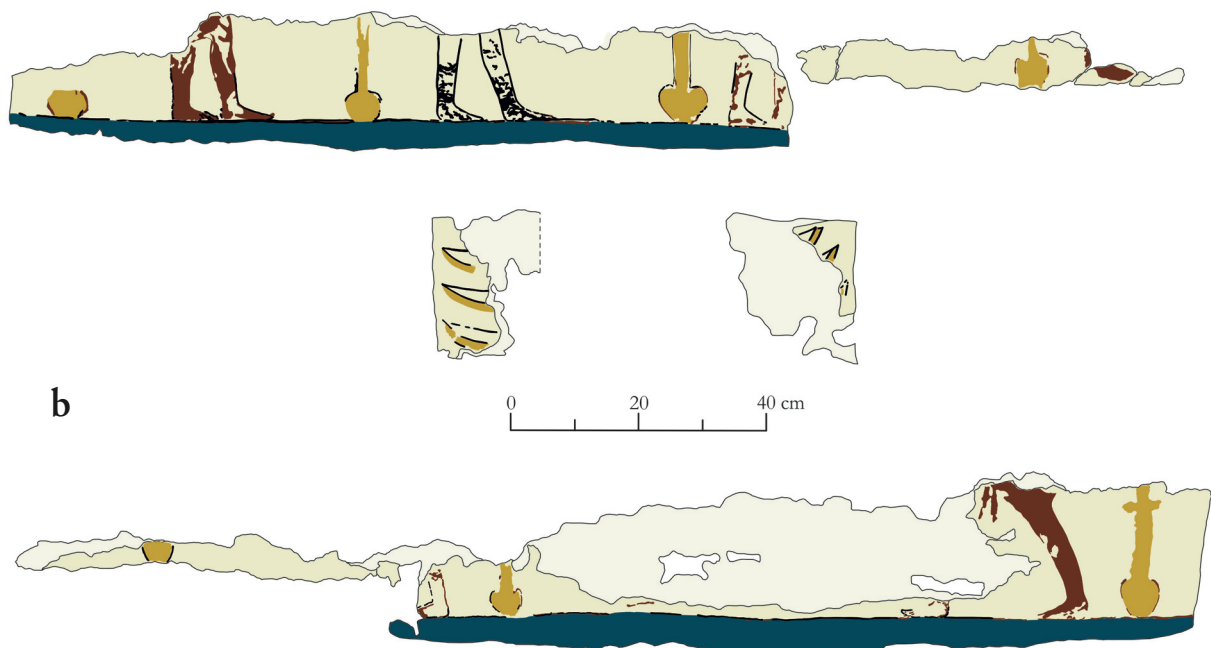


Fig. 12a-b: Photo and drawings of the podium in the room 6 (made by M. Lebedev).

lower parts of moving human figures are seen, and the similar image on the podium at the northern part of room 6, where feet divided by *zm3* signs, the remains of the image of bows are also preserved, that testifies to belonging of the podium to the location of the royal throne.

It is logical to assume the presence and great role of priests in the election ceremonies *a priori*, which is usual for the election of a king, requiring a confirmation by god and expression of god's will, but also people in front of whom the god's will was proclaimed, namely the announcement of a new king or confirmation of the legitimacy of the existing king.

Given the general purpose of the complex as destined to legitimize Shorkaror as the heir to the throne,²⁴ it may be assumed that the procession around the sanctuary of the Lion Temple, and possibly in other cases that have not come down to us, may serve as a real evidence of Agatharchidus Cnides data in the transmission of Diodorus Siculus about the election of a king in Meroe, who during the subsequent ritual was carried about in a procession.

²⁴ In details see: Kormysheva E. Comparative analysis of the iconographical program of the sacred stands from the temples of Abu Erteila and Wad Ben Naga. *Der Antike Sudan*, Berlin 2019, p. 205 – 206.



In this situation, for the presence of ordinary people, as a necessary witnesses of what was happening, needed special space, the territory of Lion Temple at Abu Erteila was clearly not enough. Taking in account this circumstances it is logical to assume that the building 46-47, located in a sufficient distance, but in visibility from the Lion Temple, was a kind of «folk sanctuary» where people might leave their simple offerings that they could find in the area to the Lion god, and also be complicit in the election ritual. This supposition is based by the unusual orientation of the passage to this building, which corresponds to the Naga complex, as well as the finds of several miracle stones in the immediate vicinity of the structures and around the temples.

Despite the lack of a clear archaeological context, the reviewed material proves that the temples of Abu Erteila should be included in the number of those, where evidences of folk religion were found. However, the existence of a special place for folk offerings as well as the interpretation of the remains of the procession around the Temple of the Lion may be only assumed. New finds on the territory of Abu Erteila, or possibly in other sites of Sudan, will be able to provide additional data or analogs for appropriate interpretation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der Artikel analysiert die Funde auf dem Gelände östlich des Löwentempels von Abu Erteila. Dort wurden die Reste des Fundaments der Struktur gefunden, die aus Raum 47 und einem Durchgang (46) bestand. Der offene Eingang zu dieser Struktur liegt auf der westlichen Seite, und auch die Räumlichkeiten selbst waren entlang der West-Ost-Achse ausgerichtet. Die Lage dieser Struktur entlang der Achse des Eingangs zum Löwentempel zeugt von der funktionalen Verbindung dieser Bauten. Beide Gebäude liegen symmetrisch in Bezug auf den Eingang zum Löwentempel und der Passage 46.

Ein Problem in der Identifizierung der Überreste der Struktur in Abu Erteila liegt in fehlenden Parallelen: Die Definition als Tempel wird durch den Eingang von Westen her erschwert, die Identifizierung als Hathor-Kapelle wie in Naqa durch

das Fehlen von Spuren eines Durchganges. Nach Meinung der Autorin ist die ausgegrabene Struktur mit dem Opferplatz 360 in Naga zu vergleichen, wo gewöhnliche Menschen ihre Opfergaben an Gott hinterlassen konnten.

Die ungewöhnlich geformten, kleinen eisenhaltigen Sandsteine, die auf dem Opferplatz in Naga gefunden wurden, sind Steinen sehr ähnlich, die an verschiedenen Stellen in Abu Erteila entdeckt wurden, darunter auch am Eingang des Löwentempels. Die gleichen Geofakte aus Abu Erteila wurden nur in sekundärem Kontext gefunden, aber sie können in Analogie zu den Objekten aus Naga als Beweis für „Volksreligion“ betrachtet werden.

Die Identifizierung von Gebäude 46-47 als heiliges Territorium für „Volksreligion“ kann durch das dargestellte Ritual am Löwentempel untermauert werden. Die Überreste der schreitenden männlichen Figuren an den Außenseiten des Heiligtums könnten ein Hinweis auf eine rituelle Prozession sein. Das Vorhandensein des *zm3*-Zeichens, des altägyptischen Symbols der Vereinigung, spricht für die heilige Natur dieser Prozession. Wie die Abbildungen zeigen, bewegt sich eine Reihe der Prozession entlang der südlichen Wand, die andere entlang der nördlichen Außenwand des Heiligtums, alle treffen sich, einander gegenüberstehend, an der westlichen Wand. Es könnte sich um ein zeremonielles Ritual der Priester gehandelt haben, die um den Tempel herumgingen, und deren Ritual genau in der Mitte hinter dem heiligen Platz im Naos seinen Höhepunkt erreichte.

Angeichts des allgemeinen Zwecks der Anlage, Shorkaror als Thronfolger zu legitimieren, kann die Prozession um den Löwentempel mit dem Ritual verbunden werden, das Diodorus beschreibt, als er über die Königswahl im antiken Kusch schrieb. Demnach wird der König derjenige sein, den der Gott ergreift, während er in einer Prozession herumgetragen wird (Diod. III, 5, 1). In diesem Fall liegt die Vermutung nahe, dass das Gebäude 46-47, das sich in Sichtweite des Löwentempels befand, ein Ort der „Volksreligion“ war, an dem die Menschen ihre einfachen Opfergaben dem Löwengott überlassen konnten und zugleich auch zu Teilnehmern des Wahlrituals wurden.

Trotz des Fehlens eines klaren archäologischen Kontextes beweist das untersuchte Material, dass die Tempel von Abu Erteila in die Reihe derer aufgenommen werden sollten, in denen Zeugnisse der Volksreligion gefunden wurden. Es kann sogar die Existenz eines speziellen heiligen Ortes für Volksoffer vorgeschlagen werden.