

K E R M A

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SOUDAN

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The excavation carried out in the western sectors at Dukki Gel brought to light new architectural features belonging to two temples of Tuthmosis Ist as well as a remarkable building located outside the walls of the town. In the Nubian religious complex were discovered the foundations of another temple of oval shape and – as the previous one – encircled by several fortified walls formed by many rounded bastions.

The XVIIIth dynasty town

The town established by the Egyptians represented an enormous architectural work: three temples protected by a massive defensive system were erected together with an outside wall building located at the south-west close to its entrance, a twenty meters long staircase going through the fortifications led to the main temple's sanctuary. The building, the front walls of which are in the alignment of the central temple's lateral wall clearly belonged to the initial overall planning.

Figure 18 | Plan of the religious quarters and a large building during the reign of Tuthmosis Ist.

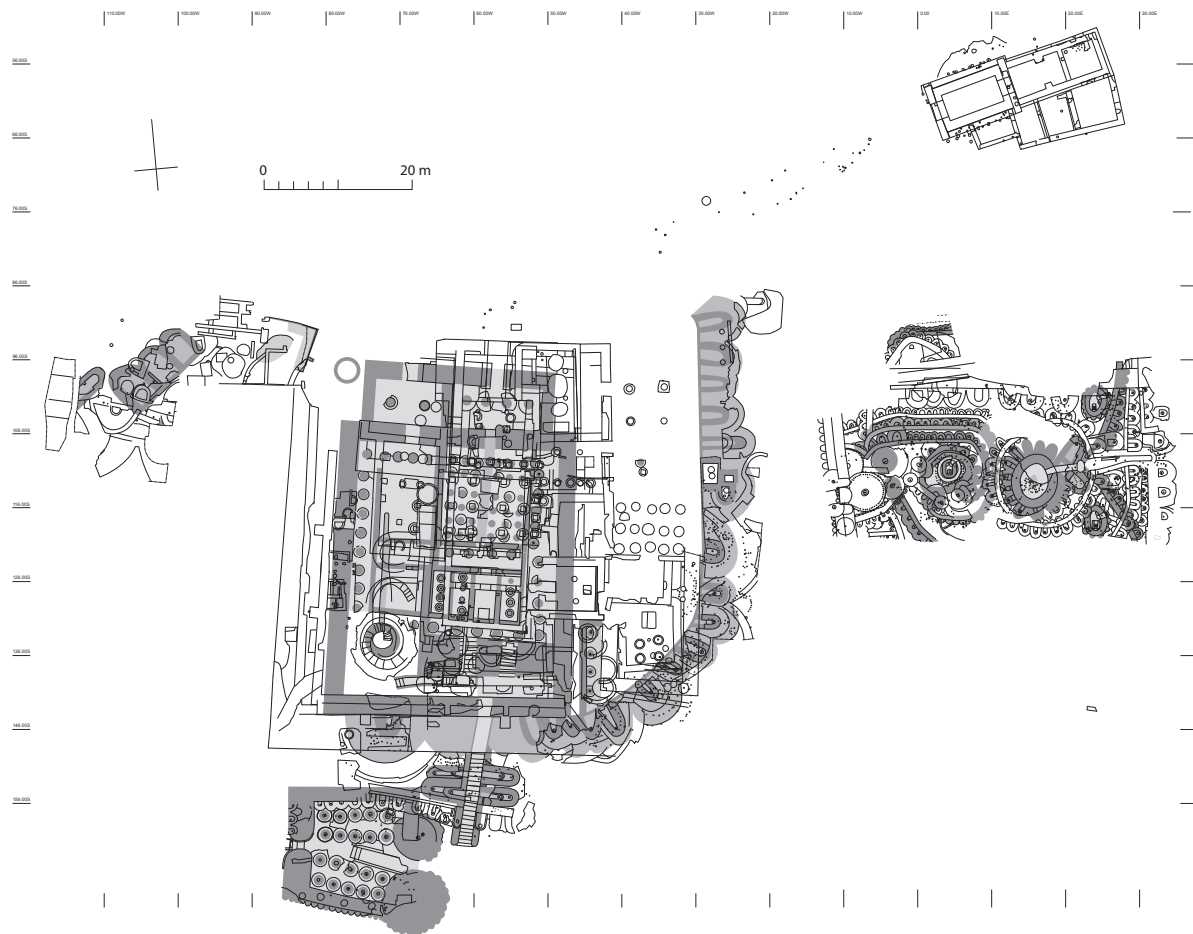




Figure 19 | Hypostyle hall remains of the large building erected by Tuthmosis Ist.

Another perpendicular axis is defined by the eastern gate of the fortifications, which curiously faced the two towers which protected the entrance of the Nubian cultural centre. This eastern axe ends up in the eastern entrance of the Nubian centre. It is thus evident that the Egyptian town and the Nubian complex were linked by a common architectural project (figures 18 and 20).

The central and western temples

The clearance of the levels of the beginning of the XVIIIth dynasty revealed that the two earlier temples were inscribed in a quadrilateral area of 26 meters sides enclosed by a 4 meters width temenos. A very thick wall, probably pertaining to a pylon, was built further north, leaving enough space for two courtyards with porticoes. The two wells of Dukki Gel were associated to the temples from the outset.

The main original feature of this general plan is certainly the peripteral structure. We found the traces of its 36 column bases made of mud bricks. They were placed rather close to the wall. Examples of such external colonnades are not frequent, they are attested around the temples of Queen Hatchepsout at Buhen and Elephantine. Last year the excavation seemed to show that the transformations of the hypostyle hall under Tuthmosis III had destroyed all previous remains. However the researches of this year led to identify 15 bases of columns made of mud bricks belonging to the

most ancient hypostyle hall (figure 19). We can thus reconstruct an impressive hall formed by 6 rows of 6 columns entirely made of mud bricks and which extended to the peripteros. The intercolumniation of the 6 northern columns differs from that observed on the other sides, as they were built in line with those of the hypostyle hall. A central path preceded by a monumental mud brick door led into the pronaos and the sanctuary. Behind the temple the temenos was crossed by two passages, one conducting out of the town and the other joining an underground passage with stone and mud brick steps linked to the southern well. The plan of the early stages of the western temple is not entirely known, as the hypostyle hall has not yet been cleared. The bases of the peripteros had been partially destroyed or enlarged by a new portico supported by stone pillars resting on circular bases. This construction is probably dating to the reign of Hatchepsout whereas the previous mud brick building belongs to the reign of Tuthmosis Ist or II. This relative chronology was reconstructed by the fragments of inscribed decorations and the pottery sherds still in study.

The Nubian religious complex

The continuation of the work in the Nubian centre contemporary to the XVIIIth dynasty enabled us to recover another oval shape temple established to the west of the one studied last year. It was also encircled by a wall reinforced by many subcircular bastions. The study of these remains is very difficult since the whole

Figure 20 | Enclosure wall and bastions of the Egyptian city after restoration.



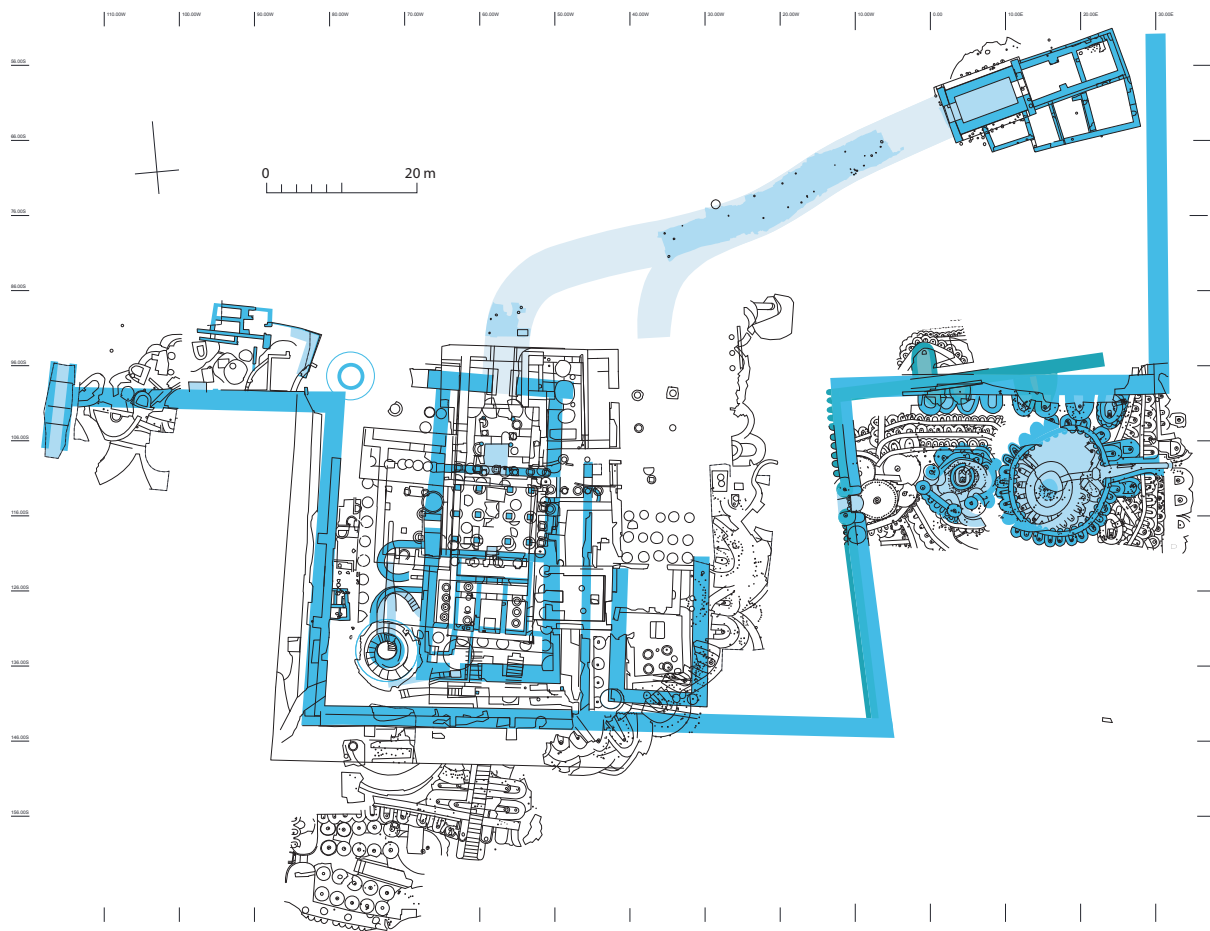


Figure 21 | Plan of the religious quarters after the transformation of the enclosure wall under Tuthmosis III.

cultural area was reshaped several times. This architectural complex is unique and must have provided a startling contrast to the Egyptian town (figures 21 and 22). We can identify here the roots of African traditional architecture. its peculiar proximity to the town raises the question of the relations between the conquering Pharaoh and the heirs of the long Kerma cultural traditions. The sort of agreement reached with the Nubians at the beginning of the XVIIIth dynasty changed under Tuthmosis III who built a new enclosure of the Egyptian town which destroyed the two towers of the Nubian religious complex and prevented any further development to the north. The Nubian temples remained in activity and a new entrance was built.

The north-western building

This new discovered out wall building was oriented east-west and was linked to the central temple of Tuthmosis Ist through the stairway. Its entrance was flanked by two large towers of 6 meters in diameter and was therefore very narrow. It opened into a large hypostyle hall with 4 rows of 5 columns, the bases of which measured 2 meters in diameter. This large hall of trapezoidal shape measured 12 to 14 meters for an axial length of 16 meters (figure 21). The double alignments of columns converge

to the western door which opened into other rooms. The lateral walls of 2 meters width were strengthened by small bastions. The columns were established in the ground at a depth of two meters on a sandy layer. Their height must have been important, about eight meters, considering their width and the deepness of their implantation.

In view of the topography of the site permits, it is possible to propose a length of about 50 meters for this building. It will require a considerable effort to reach all of its remains, some of them being located at a depth of about three meters. The function of this building has yet to be defined but it might correspond to a palace or an official building at the disposal of the king to store the products collected out from the colonized territory. It was burnt and suffered much destruction. Then it has been partially recovered by bastions belonging to an enclosure which we date of the reign of Hatchepsout.

This extraordinary building has been influenced by Nubian construction's techniques and the Egyptians adapted their architectural traditions to the local knowhow. The discoveries of Dukki Gel yielded very precious information on the relations between the Egyptians invaders and the Kerma populations : the deference to the indigenous religion and the use of the local labor workforce and building techniques offer new perspectives on the strategies developed during the conquest.

Figure 22 | Bastions and gate of the Nubian religious complex with its circular temple.

