

B 500 Kiosks: B 501 and B 551

In Egypt, the temples of the greatest gods always housed portable, gilded boat-shaped shrines or "barks," each of which enclosed in its "cabin" a statue of its respective god. Each bark was also fitted with a pair of carrying poles so that on ritual days, processional files of priests could bear it from one temple to another so that its divine occupant could visit other gods - or, in the case of Amun, his alternate aspects (**fig. 1**).

Each bark was kept in a special chamber within its temple. At Jebel Barkal during the New Kingdom, the bark of Amun of Napata in B 500 was probably kept inside the small side chapel B 504c. In Taharqa's time it resided in room 506, in the center aisle, resting upon a beautifully carved granite stand, which is now in the Jebel Barkal Museum (**fig. 2**).

Since the bark was a ritual substitute for the boat in which the god was thought to traverse the heavens, the top surface of the bark stand symbolized heaven, and on Taharqa's bark stand it is the hieroglyph "heaven" adorned with stars that is being supported by the repeating figures of the king himself (**fig. 2**).

In B 500 a fragmentary relief inside court 502 (northeast wall) shows the bark of Amun as it was in Piankhy's reign, probably at actual size. It appears to have been about 6 m in length and was carried on its poles by 24 priests, in two files of 12 men, six to each end. Because the bark was richly adorned with gold and small statues of royal figures, and because it housed a hidden image of the god, it was heavy enough so that carrying it must have been laborious. Along the bark route, thus, periodic rest stations known as "kiosks" were built, in which the priestly bearers could set the bark down on secondary stands, perform rituals and thus rest for intervals during its "voyage."

Several kiosks have been found at Jebel Barkal, four in B 500 alone. Traces of one in the lowest level of court 502 suggest that it was built in the late Eighteenth Dynasty in the roadway out in front of B 500-Phase II or III. Seven hundred years later, the Kushite king Tanwetamani (ca. 664-653 BC) built another one on the same spot but on a floor level 70 cm higher. Unfortunately, this structure has barely survived to the present. Much better preserved are two Meroitic kiosks: one in the middle of court 501, and the other (B 551) in front of the entrance to the temple. A fifth kiosk (B 560) was built in front of the newly discovered temple B 561 (q.v.).

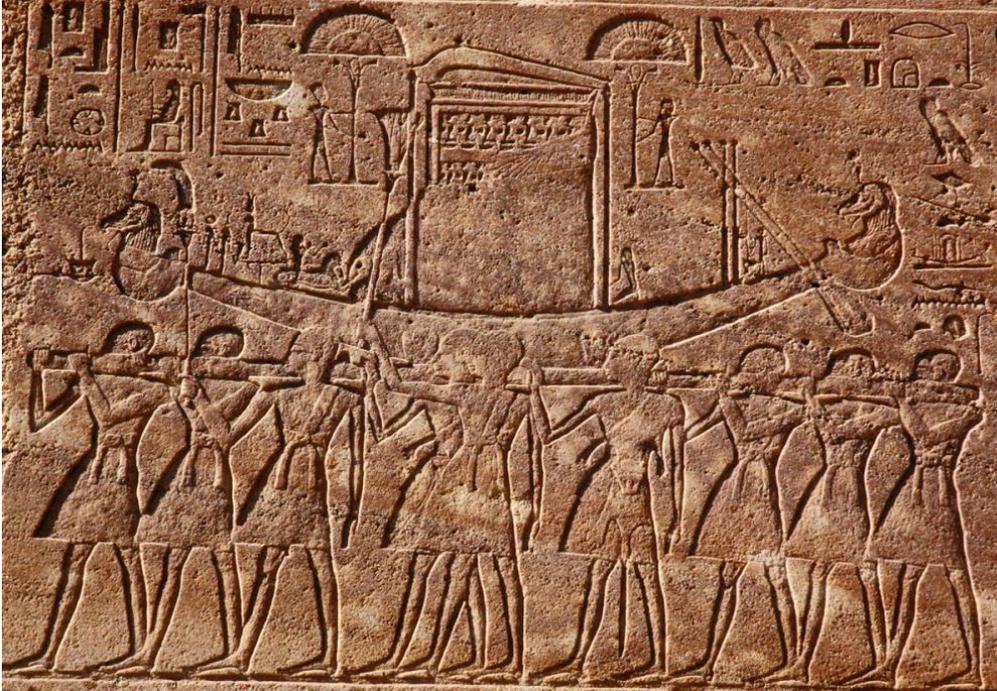


fig. 1. *fig. 1. The bark of Amun, carried by files of priests, as represented on the walls of Hatshepsut's Red Chapel at Karnak. Typically the barks of Amun had ram head figureheads on their prows and sterns, with small figures of kings, standards, and goddesses mounted on their decks. An image of the god was concealed within its closed "cabin."*

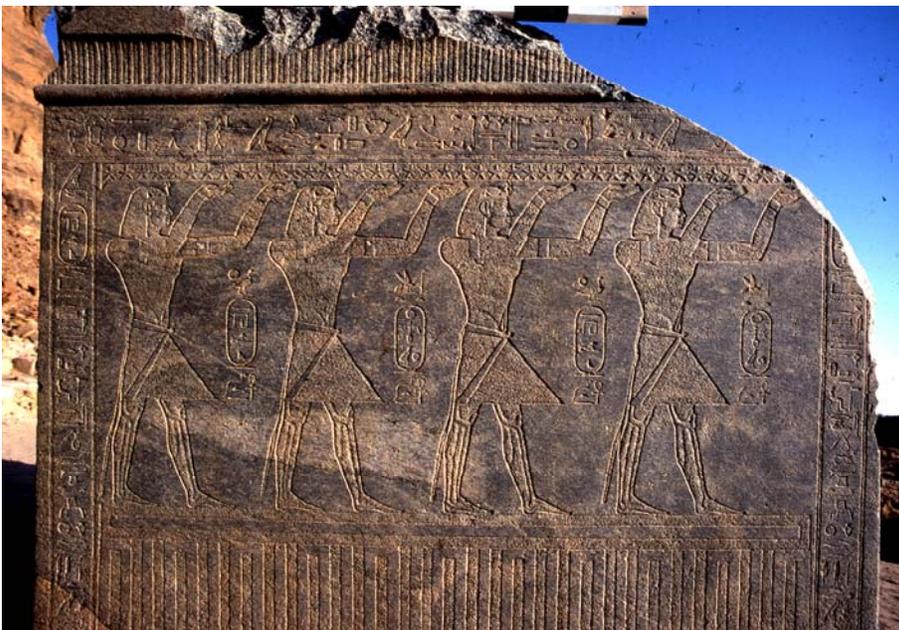


fig. 2. *Taharqa's granite stand for the bark of Amun in B 500, with quadruple images of himself on each side, holding up the sky on which the bark symbolically rested. Since this photo was taken the stand has been removed to the Jebel Barkal Museum. (Photo: T. Kendall).*

Kiosk B 501

In the mid-first century AD, a kiosk was built in the middle of court 501; its dimensions were approximately 7.85 x 10.82m (**fig. 3**). Today only its screen walls still stand, but it originally had ten-columns, which rose from them. There can be little doubt that the builders of this structure were the Meroitic royal couple Natakamani and Amanitore, who must be the king and queen pictured together in its fragmentary interior reliefs. Traces of light blue, yellow and red pigment reveal that the structure was brilliantly, gaudily painted. Its great width also indicates that it must have had a roof made from cedar beams imported from Lebanon (**fig. 4**).

In relief on the inside of the northeast wall, the king and queen, followed by a standing winged goddess, appear walking to the left, toward four gods (**fig. 5**). Although much damaged, it is clear that the gods were Amun, Mut and Khonsu, seated on thrones, followed by a single standing goddess. Although the deities are preserved only from their waists down (or less), it is evident that they were thought to reside *inside* Jebel Barkal, for in front of Amun's figure is a sloping line in raised relief, which represents the mountain's cliff line (a scene paralleled by the complete example of this type in B 300: q.v., fig. 2). On the much damaged opposite wall the royal couple and the same winged goddess appear, facing left, standing before the bark of Amun, which is shown resting on a star-studded stand.



fig. 3: View of the remains of kiosk B 501, as excavated in Dec. 2013. (Photo: Bryan Whitney)



fig. 4: A tentative restoration view of kiosk B 501; all the colors below the tops of the screen walls are actually attested. The column shafts may actually have been decorated to their full height with alternating colored wavy lines. The unusual shape of the column capitals is suggested by the survival of a large section of a single example. (Model: N. Reshetnikova and Geoff Kornfeld © 2015 NCAM Mission and Learning Sites, Inc.)



fig. 5: Fragmentary relief on the inside of the NE wall of kiosk B 501. At right the king and queen, in front of an image of a goddess with splayed wings, face left, toward three seated gods (Amun, Mut, and Khonsu of Jebel Barkal) and a standing goddess. That these deities were imagined to be inside Jebel Barkal is revealed by the raised relief line in front of Amun's knees, which represented the mountain's cliff line. (Photo: Bryan Whitney)

Kiosk B 551

The kiosk B 551 was built immediately in front of the entrance of B 500, between the six ram statues of Amenhotep III (which had been brought from Soleb and re-erected there by Piankhy) (**fig. 6a, b**). The unnamed builder of B 551, judging by her unusual corpulence, was almost certainly the ruling queen Amanishakheto, who is represented twice on its inside walls. Approximately 7.20 x 9.60 m in area, this kiosk differed from the preceding by having square corners front and back, with three columns per side rising from each "window" in the screen walls.



fig. 6a. Kiosk B 551 as excavated, March 2014. (Photo: Bryan Whitney)



Fig. 6b. Kiosk B 551 as excavated, March 2014. (Photo: Bryan Whitney)

Unlike kiosk B 501, which was multi-colored, B 551 seems to have been painted predominantly (if not entirely) light blue (**figs. 7, 8**), a color which was found on all its surviving architectural elements and which was added to all the ram pedestals, doubtless at the same time.



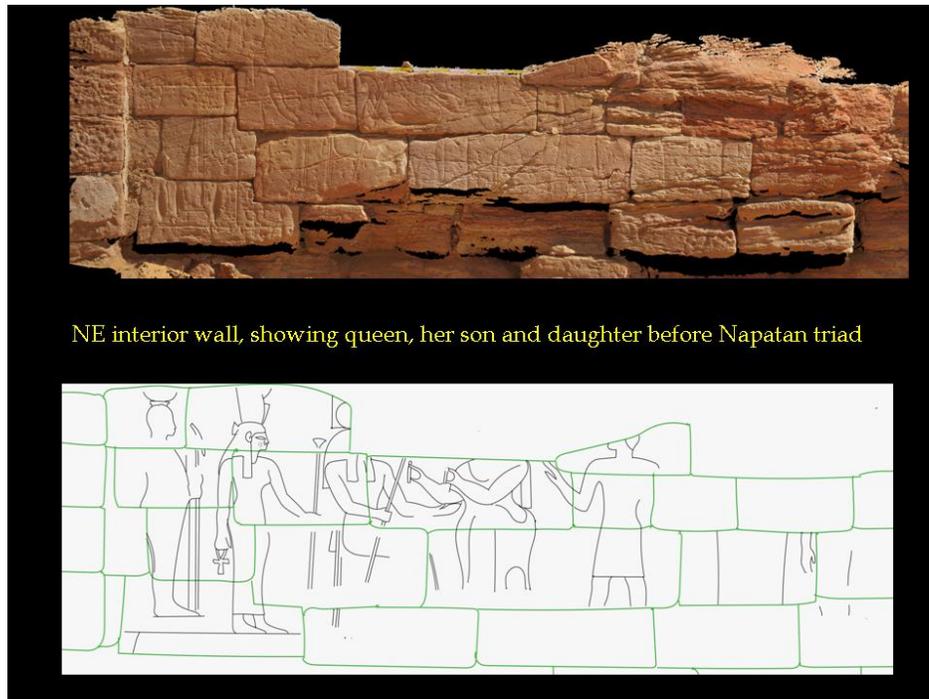
fig. 7. Kiosk B 551 as tentatively restored. (Model by Geoff Kornfeld © 2015 NCAM Mission and Learning Sites, Inc.)



Fig. 8. The kiosk B 551, looking east to the temple B 561 with its kiosk B 560 (q.v.) (Models by Geoff Kornfeld and N. Reshetnikova © 2015 NCAM Mission and Learning Sites, Inc.)

Both inside walls of B 551 depict a queen of great obesity, followed by a normally proportioned male and another female, nearly as large as the queen. The last two figures would seem to be the great lady's son and daughter. On each wall the royal family is shown approaching the gods Amun (seated), Mut and Khonsu (both standing).

On the downstream wall the gods can be recognized as Amun, Mut and Khonsu of Thebes in Egypt, for here Amun was represented human-headed, and Mut appears as any Egyptian goddess. On the upstream wall, however, the gods can be recognized as those of Napata, for here Amun was represented ram-headed, as he was routinely in Nubia. His consort Mut, who stands behind him, was identical to the Egyptian Mut, except in one remarkable detail: she bears three vertical incised lines on her cheek, which are unmistakable as Sudanese tribal scars (**figs. 9-10**).



NE interior wall, showing queen, her son and daughter before Napatan triad

fig. 9. Each inside wall of Kiosk B 551 was fully carved in relief, but today only the rear ends of the side walls preserve legible elements of their figures. On the northeast (upstream) wall, shown here, the great queen (headless) appears in high priest's garb in a leopard skin robe. She is followed by her son and daughter (here largely missing). They stand before the ram-headed Amun of Napata, who is followed by his consort Mut and his son, the moon god Khonsu. (Drawing: T. Kendall).

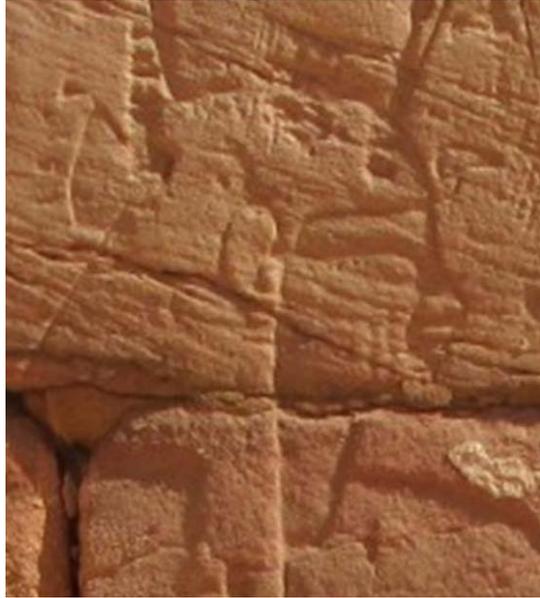


fig. 10. *Mut of Napata rendered with Sudanese facial scars, from the northeast interior wall of kiosk B 551. (Photo: T. Kendall).*

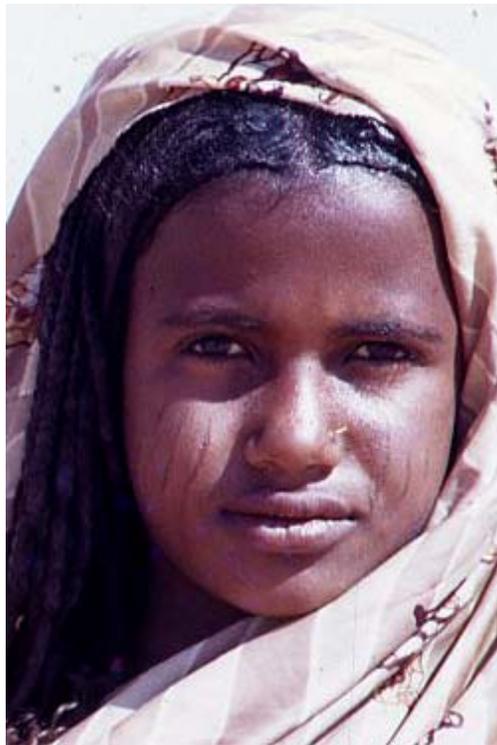


fig. 11. *Young girl with facial scars, photographed at Jebel Barkal in 1987. Photo: T. Kendall)*

