

B 700-sub chapels: *Talatat* enclosures for the Aten cult.

Beside and in front of the portico of B 700, excavation has revealed the foundations of three very small, single-roomed chapels, all of which were built of *talatat* blocks (**fig. 1**). Two of them, designated "B 700-sub 1" and "B 700-sub 3" had small pylons. Both were built with grey and yellow *talatat* of the type seen in the earliest stone phase (I) of B 500, indicating that they were contemporary with that temple and must almost certainly be attributed to Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten (**figs. 2, 3**). These tiny buildings are actually identical to a type of small roofless chapel, built by the dozens in long lines, pictured in Akhenaten's Karnak reliefs, in which each chapel is shown to contain a single table of offerings over which the king's new god, the Aten (i.e. Sun Disk), hovers, extending his life-giving rays, while the king visits them one by one (**fig. 4**). Such chapels were apparently standard features of the Aten sanctuaries built by this king at both East Karnak and at Amarna, his new capital in Middle Egypt. Judging by these examples, there must have been lines of such buildings at Jebel Barkal, of which these are the only known survivors. Their existence is clear evidence that the king established his Aten cult here at the southern limit of the empire (**fig. 5**).

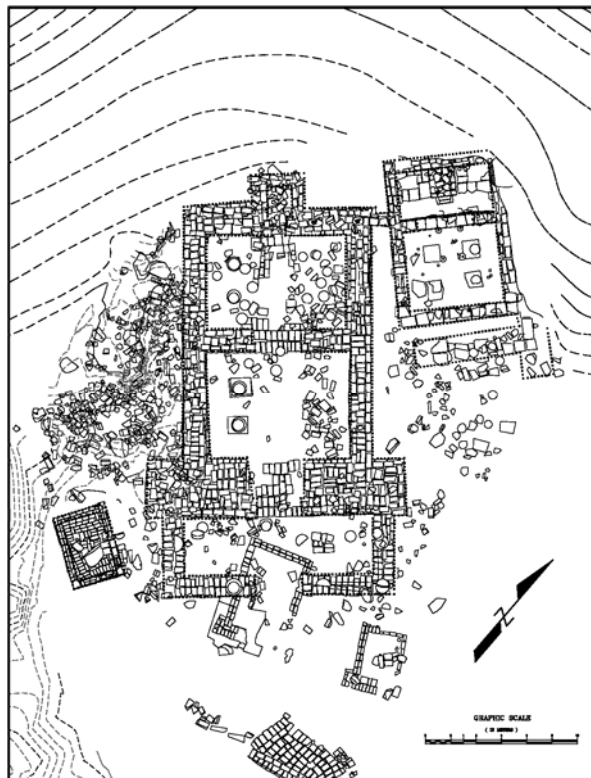


fig. 1. Map of B 700 and B 600, showing the three small *talatat*-built chapels in a line in front of B 700. The center chapel (B 700-sub 1) and that on the right (B 700-sub 3) appear to be offering chapels to the Aten, built early in the reign of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten. That on the left (B 700-sub 2) may be slightly later, either later in Akhenaten's reign or contemporary with B 500-Phase II; it seems to have been built to house a large natural stone. (Plan: R. C. Rosa III).



fig. 2. Photo of B 700-sub 1, as excavated in 2008. This small building had already been leveled to its foundation prior to the construction of B 700, but, on encountering this ancient structure, the Napatan builders left its old stones in place and carefully cut through them when laying the walls of the later temple's portico.

fig. 3. Photo of B 700-sub 3 as excavated in 2008. (Both photos: Pawel Wolf)

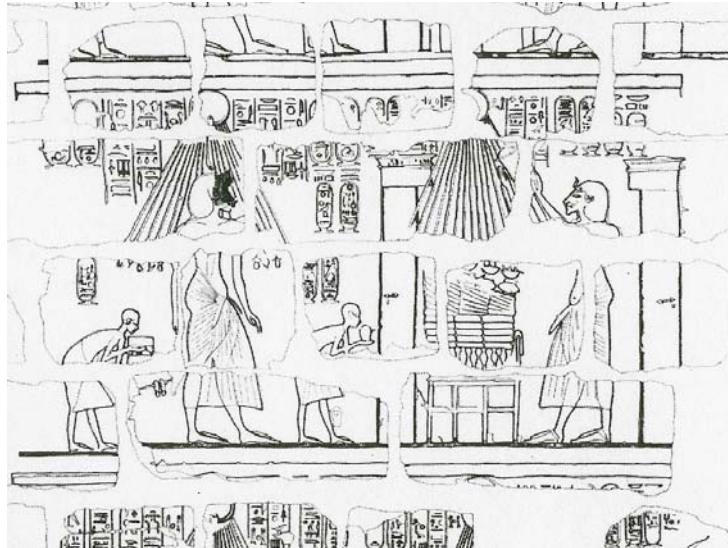


fig. 4. Akhenaten making offerings to the Aten in small roofless chapels with pylons, comparable to B 700-sub 1 and 3. From a series of reassembled talatat reliefs from Karnak, now in the Luxor Museum.



fig. 5. *The Aten chapels (B 700-sub 1 and 3) restored. (Models by Geoff Kornfeld © 2015 NCAM Mission and Learning Sites, Inc.)*

The third *talatat* chapel, designated "B 700-sub 2," lies just southwest of the B 700 portico (**fig. 6**). While the other two were built of grey and yellow sandstone, this one was built of white sandstone *talatat* blocks, comparable to the stones used in B 500-Phase II, which suggests that it may be a little later in date (reign of Tutankhamun or Horemheb?). Whereas the two other structures show no indication of later use (as one would expect of monuments from Akhenaten's heresy), B 700-sub 2 was revived in the Napatan period, perhaps when B 700 was built, and a red sandstone superstructure was built over its white *talatat* floor (**fig. 11**). Unfortunately, almost all of this later phase was demolished when its blocks were carried away by stone scavengers probably in the 19th century, leaving us almost totally ignorant of its ancient form and meaning.

B 700-sub 2 is curious because lying on the original *talatat* floor is an enormous natural boulder, looking as if it had been deliberately lifted up and set down upon the pavement. The boulder itself bears graffiti giving the names and titles of two Egyptian officials of Dynasty 18, but these texts (upside down) appear to have nothing to do with why the stone was set on this foundation. One can only suppose that, for some reason, the stone became an object of special veneration, and the structure was built to house it.

Inside B 700-sub 2, resting on the *talatat* floor, a remarkable collection of votive offerings was recovered. Among these was a hoard of over 600 natural stones of odd or suggestive shape or attractive color (**figs. 7, 8**). There were also objects of human manufacture such as a prehistoric ground stone macehead, several broken polished stone disks, and Egyptian objects seemingly contemporary with the *talatat* floor, notably several small earplugs, and, most surprising, a fragment of a large green stone disk

earplug of the Amarna Period (**fig.9**). This last object, with a concave groove around the rim, would have been held in the stretched ear lobe (**fig. 10**).



fig. 6. Photo of B 700-sub 2 as excavated in 2008, showing its white talatat foundation of late 18th Dynasty date, the large natural stone set on top of it, and the remaining red sandstone blocks of the Napatan building erected over it. (Photo: Pawel Wolf).



fig. 7: Selection of votive sandstone concretions from B 700-sub 2.



fig. 8: Selection of wind-worn votive stones from B 700-sub 2.



fig. 9: Fragment of a large green stone disk earplug with green glass inlays, late Dyn 18; 6.7 cm diam, from B 700-sub 2.



fig. 10: *Wooden statuette of a young girl wearing large disk earplugs like that in fig. 9. Egyptian, late 18th Dynasty. British Museum (EA 32767)*



fig. 11. *The small chapel B 700-sub 2 (with B 700 in the background), as it may have appeared in the Napatan Period. (Model by Geoff Kornfeld © 2015 NCAM Mission and Learning Sites, Inc)*

Ref. T. Kendall. "Talatat architecture at Jebel Barkal," *Sudan & Nubia* 13, 2009. 2–16.