



Trabajos de Egiptología

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Alfonso MARTÍN FLORES

**Napatan Tomb Decorations. Loans from Private Theban Burials
in the Royal Kushite Necropolises**
Simone PETACCHI



 **Centros de Estudios Africanos**
Universidad de La Laguna



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Papers on Ancient Egypt

**Preliminary Report on the Third and Fourth Seasons
of the New Kingdom Scribes Project (2021–2022)**

Lucía DÍAZ-IGLESIAS LLANOS, Ángeles JIMÉNEZ-HIGUERAS,
Daniel Miguel MÉNDEZ-RODRÍGUEZ, Ignacio BERMEJA GIGORRO,
Sagrario MARTÍNEZ RAMÍREZ, Santiago SÁNCHEZ-CORTÉS, Antonio GÓMEZ LAGUNA

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to the Late Period. Part I. Corpora of Texts and Complementary Documents**
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A Female Egyptian Statuette in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid
Miguel JARAMAGO



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Artículos | Articles

Napatan Tomb Decorations. Loans from Private Theban Burials in the Royal Kushite Necropolises

Simone PETACCHI

This paper deals with the funerary architecture of the royal necropolises of the Napata Kingdom where an evident influence comes from the Theban elitist models of the Asasif. These decorative loans were randomly chosen and in use in Nubia following a specific local taste in relation to the layout of the tombs, their figurative and epigraphical decorations. They show an independent, adaptive and selective emulation, as well as a personal mingling of Egyptian models, sometimes reinterpreting them, shaping new patterns in visual art and creating an indigenous textual program within the burial chambers. Egyptian religion had a key role in the provision of textual corpuses even in periods of conflict, when a continuous trade of religious equipment and scriptural material were brought to Napata through an international market system managed by religious institutions.

Decoraciones en las tumbas de la Dinastía de Napata: préstamos de enterramientos privados tebanos en las necrópolis reales kushitas

Este trabajo trata sobre la arquitectura funeraria de las necrópolis reales del Reino de Napata, en las que se muestran préstamos evidentes de modelos provenientes del elitista Asasif tebano. Estos préstamos decorativos fueron elegidos al azar para su uso en Nubia siguiendo un gusto local específico en relación con la disposición de las tumbas, sus programas figurativos y epigráficos. Manifiestan una emulación independiente, adaptativa y selectiva, así como con una mezcla personal de modelos egipcios, a veces reinterpretándolos, dando forma a nuevos patrones en el arte visual y creando un programa textual indígena dentro de las cámaras de enterramiento. La religión tuvo un papel clave en la provisión de corpus textuales incluso en períodos conflictivos, cuando llegaba a Napata un comercio continuo de equipamiento religioso y material escrito a través de un sistema de mercado internacional administrado por instituciones religiosas.

Keywords: el-Kurru, funerary art, Nuri, pattern handbooks, royal architecture.

Palabras clave: arquitectura real, arte funerario, el-Kurru, libros de modelos, Nuri.

The special and symbiotic relationship between Kush and Egypt did not end with the defeat of Tanwetamani, his withdrawal to Nubia, and the end of his political influence over Egypt. Instead, it continued over the centuries, in the vivid emulation of the Pharaonic culture displayed in temple and

funerary architecture and in the creation of an indigenous, randomized selection and adaptation of Egyptian models in funerary art and architecture, as well as in the choice of texts and the way they were used.

At Nuri, in the royal necropolis, Nu. 1, which belonged to Pharaoh Taharqa, the founder of

¹ Leahy 1994; Leahy 2014: 70.

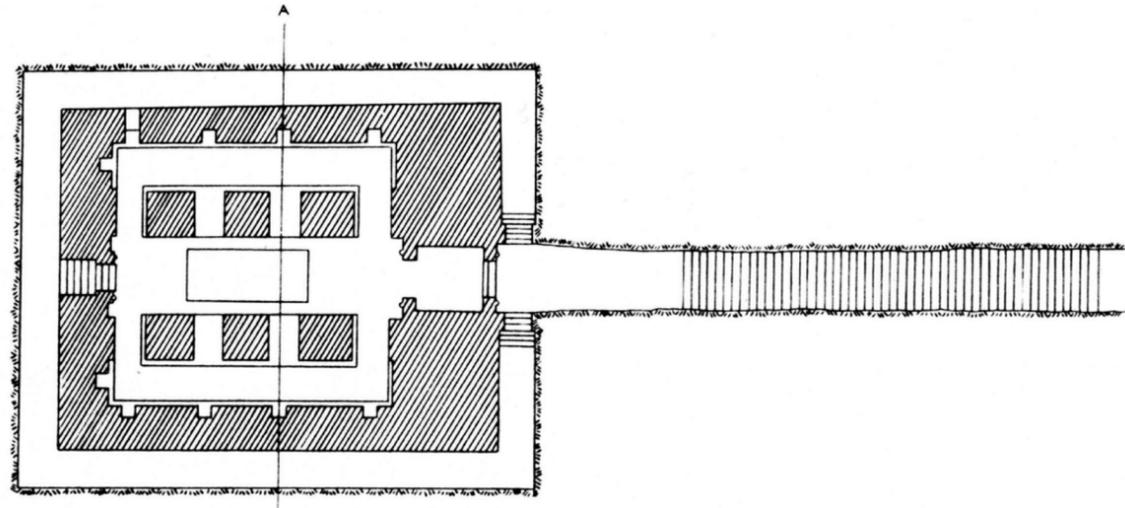


Figure 1. Pyramid Nu. 1, Nuri. After Dunham 1955: 6.

this cemetery, represents the first monumental burial in the cemetery and is the only one in Nubia with a plan like an Osireion or an Osirian tomb-like. Taharqa wanted to emulate Sety I's cenotaph in Abydos only apparently. Indeed, according to the myth, it was the official place for Osiris' tomb, and for this reason, it was chosen for the burial of some members of his family and their courtiers ("Cemetery D").¹ The substructure of Nu. 1 is rectangular (21 m x 16.5 m) with thick walls (2–3 m), 13 m deep into the ground. The emplacement of the coffin, which was accessible through a nine-step ramp, was separated from the bedrock by a narrow corridor/canal surrounding it. A hypogeum staircase of 51 steps is linked to a three-step lengthwise corridor with a barrel-vaulted ceiling with direct access to a small antechamber, almost square (3.30 x 3.10 m). The main chamber, namely the funerary chamber, is separated by three vaulted

naves with two rows of massive square-based pillars placed on a low plinth and carved on the rock (12.60 m x 13.30 m). They were all plastered and painted in the past. On the north and south walls, four niches are carved at regular distance from each other. On the west wall, another staircase is carved in the middle, whereas others are carved on the eastern and western walls. In the centre of the chamber, a rectangular basin is sunken in the bedrock (5.9 m x 2.45 m) where the gilded (?) anthropoid coffin of the king was laid (fig. 1).² It represents the emplacement of Osiris funerary bed or the island of his myth, considering that this part of the tomb was intentionally surrounded by groundwater but not sufficiently raised, so that even the royal coffin was submerged. The first attempt to reproduce an Osirian tomb model in the Theban area dates to Montuhotep II. In fact, his tomb at Deir el-Bahari consists of a hypogeum carved

in the bedrock of the temple complex, where a sandy mound was created in the centre to reproduce the primeval hill. It is worth mentioning the same ratio of sizes between the Middle Kingdom monument and Taharqa's tomb: 3:4.³

Moreover, Taharqa's burial shows more affinities with the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth large funerary buildings in the Asasif than with Sety I's monument. In fact, Nu. 1 diverges from the former monument since it is a real burial and not a symbolic cenotaph, and there is no raised level aimed at protecting the burial pit. The corpse of the deceased⁴ might have been conceived as being submerged to be symbolically regenerated in the pure waters of the Nun, in a cyclical rejuvenation and rebirth. In addition, Late Period Theban tombs share some recurring features linked to an Osirian-solarized symbolism. These include a carved corridor often surrounding the burial chamber, a real or a symbolic mound at the centre of the burial chamber, the presence of water basins in the courtyards and/or in the subterranean rooms, and sometimes courtyards with plants as a symbol of rebirth, regeneration and evergreen fertility associated with the annual inundation of the Nile. Recently, C. Traunecker suggested that the peripheral corridor of Taharqa's tomb, accessible through the lower step of the main ramp, at 1.30 m above the funerary chamber, was conceived as a corridor for the visitor subterranean circumambulation ritual around the coffin, like the one in Padiamenope's tomb, TT 33, making the burial a sacred place for pilgrimage.⁵ Despite the epigraphical evidence in the latter tomb

where this is clearly attested, the lack of texts and the worse state of conservation of the Nubian burial cannot corroborate this hypothesis. Taharqa's funerary project was a planned experiment but was modified over the years in at least two stages, and it is not certain that it was fully achieved as originally conceived. Considering that the iconographic model of Osirian funerary architecture was in fashion in West Thebes during the Twenty-fifth Dynasty (Harwa's tomb, TT 37; Padiamenope's tomb),⁶ two questions arise: did the Napatan architectural programme conceived at court influence the one of the powerful courtyards in service at Thebes? Or did this trend develop particularly in Thebes because it was developed by a local workshop serving the Pharaoh? Unfortunately, the debate is still open and far from being closed. Probably, the craftsmen who worked for Harwa and Padiamenope at least used pattern handbooks which were employed in the construction of Nu. 1, unless some artists of the same workshop did work in both tombs.

The single burial chamber of Queen Ireturu (Nu. 53) was probably one of the first tombs erected there following the building of Nu. 1. Excavated by G. A. Reisner in his first campaigns at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was reopened, cleared, and deeply studied by the Nuri Archaeological Expedition's team during the 2018-2019 campaigns.⁷ It is worth observing the iconographic programme of the east and west walls of this tomb, two mirrored scenes of which the east one has almost completely lost its decoration due to inundation and wicking. Here, the walls are decorated with two rows of

² Kendall 2008: 119, n. 7.

³ Einaudi 2007: 480, 483.

⁴ Kendall 2008: 120.

⁵ Traunecker 2018: 142–144; Traunecker 2022: 236.

⁶ Einaudi 2007: 483–484.

⁷ Strong *et alii* 2021: 200–201.

six mummiform figures who are offering food to the deceased. Each mummiform god shows a red face, a curled black false beard, a chin strap, and a blue wig which leaves the ears exposed. Their body shows an alternating colour structure: either blue shoulder wrap and yellow body or yellow shoulder wrap and red body. In front of each figure, a line of hieroglyphs was copied with a shortened offering formula accompanied by a small offering table piled high with different forms of circular bread loaves (fig. 2).

Blue pigment was largely used in the tomb for tracing the outline of objects and hieroglyphs. On the top of each wall, a *hṯp di nsw* formula was painted with a different list of goods, an element that neither Reisner nor Dunham had noted in their publications. The standing mummiform funerary genii might be creatively reinterpreted as having the function of those shabtis which were commonly placed against the walls of the coffin chamber of Napatan royal tombs. This design seems to have common roots with the Theban tomb of Karakhamun (TT 223) which lies in the South Asasif necropolis. In fact, both tombs have an astronomical ceiling painted in blue with red-yellow stars and mummiform gods on each long wall. Due to lack of space, in Ireturu's tomb, we do not find the same number of gods as in Karakhamun's tomb (42) but we do not know why the goddess Nut at the centre of the ceiling was not copied. Moreover, considering that this Egyptian tomb was built at the beginning of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, during the reign of Shabataka - Shabaka,⁸ it predates the one of the Nubian queen: "...the tomb of Karakhamun [is] the first fully decorated Kushite tomb and a creative 'workshop' for the



Figure 2. West wall of Nu. 53. Photograph: Simone Petacchi. Courtesy of Nuri Archaeological Expedition.

revival of monumental decorated tombs, the so-called 'Kushite Renaissance.'⁹

At this point of the analysis, one might infer that a group of craftsmen from the same Theban workshop might have also worked in Nuri, or that the local artists might have been inspired by the decoration of Karakhamun's tomb using pattern handbooks probably from that workshop,¹⁰ or simply followed a common fashion already existing during the first phase of the

⁸ Pischikova 2014: 31–37.

⁹ Pischikova 2021: 169.

¹⁰ Kahl 2010: 3.

Twenty-fifth Dynasty. As for the temple decoration, the burial ornament must have been planned on papyrus scrolls¹¹ and curated in temple libraries, where preliminary drawings or detailed instructions were recorded,¹² to avoid wasting time and making mistakes.

However, Napatan artists did not limit themselves to slavishly copying decorative elements from these sources. In fact, they adapted the models to their own will by introducing offering formulae flanking the funerary genii. This was done as they not only needed to guarantee protection to the dead but also nourishment and comfort in the afterlife, as the shabti-servants conceived for the afterlife.

An opposing phenomenon can be seen recorded in the tomb of Karabasken, TT 391, mayor of Thebes probably under Shabaka,¹³ also located in the South Asasif. It has an unusual layout compared to other contemporaneous and local tombs, as it is composed of a single axis substructure featuring a long and deeply carved staircase and a ramp giving access to a rectangular burial chamber, and has a superstructure composed probably of a small pyramid with 70° of slope, encased in sandstone.¹⁴ It clearly drew inspiration from the royal design of el-Kurru tombs in use since Shabataka's reign (see Ku. 18).¹⁵ Although there is no evidence of family data in TT 391, the titles of mayor/defender of Thebes and fourth prophet of Amun

are mentioned. The presence of a stone sarcophagus inside the tomb and of particular funerary objects corroborate a higher social status confirmed by his political role, perhaps linking him to the Napatan royal family by pedigree or by marriage as recently suggested by E. Pischikova.¹⁶ Another element which suggests a link with the royal Nubian family and a possible production coming from an accredited workshop is the presence of tiny pieces of ivory from a small box with incised hieroglyphs similar to the ones in Shabaka's tomb, Ku. 15. In particular, the type of incision and modelling echoes one of the royal specimens found in el-Kurru,¹⁷ and the group of funerary statuettes in faience found in TT 391, in Kushite style, are very similar to those of Queen Qalhata, mother of Tanouetamani. As we already know, the royal shabtis in serpentine for Senkamanisken were made in a stone only found in Egypt, and the workshop marks incised on the base of their feet suggest that they are objects imported from Egypt. They were probably linked to the same Theban workshop where Montuemhat's stone shabtis were sculpted (fig. 3a).¹⁸ These footmarks were not previously known in Nubia, but they could provide us with information related to a particular group of craftsmen who left their "signature" on them, or they signal a specific troop and its precise and already determined position within the tomb (fig. 3b). In fact, the evidence of such statuettes proves

¹¹ Einaudi 2021: 367–377; Einaudi 2022: 69–78.

¹² Goyon 2004: 359, fig. 467; Vittmann 2003: 106–136.

¹³ Contra: Taylor and Payraudeau in Payraudeau 2003: 147, n. 89. They suggest a late dating, namely under Taharqa.

¹⁴ Pischikova 2021: 53.

¹⁵ Dunham 1950: 67.

¹⁶ Pischikova 2021: 45.

¹⁷ Pischikova 2021: 77–79.

¹⁸ Howley 2018: 23.

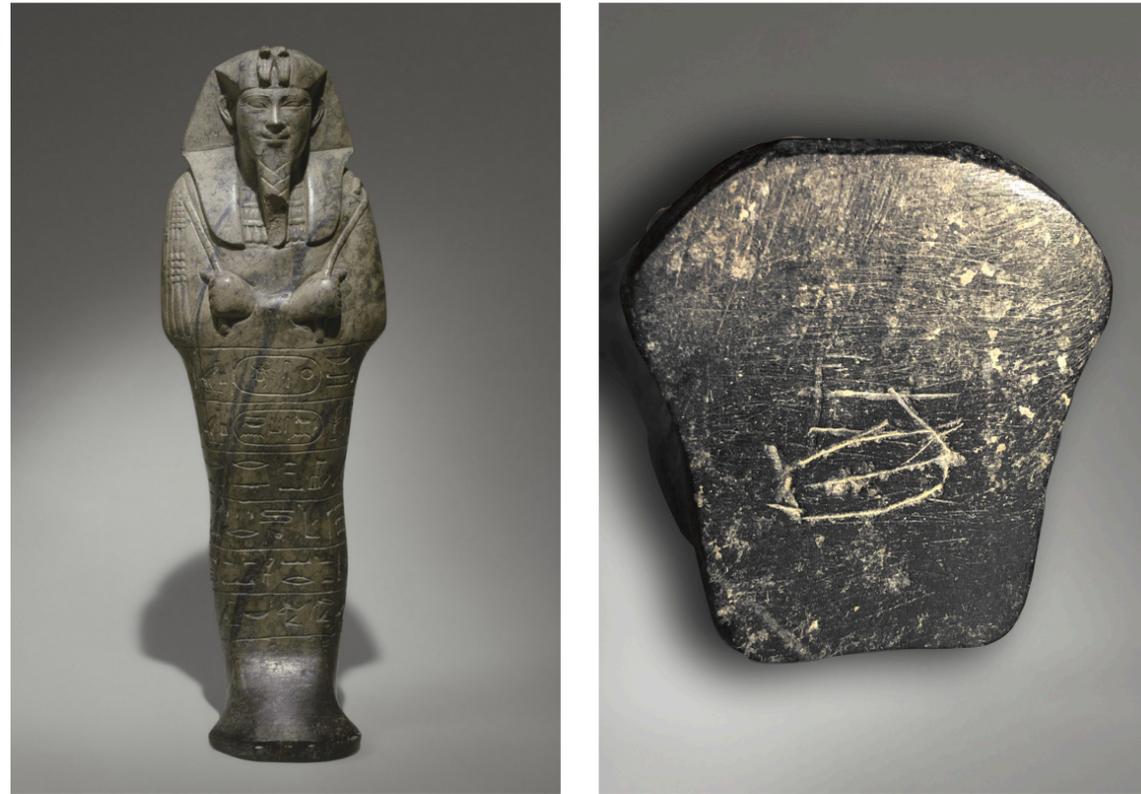


Figure 3a and b. Senkamanisken serpentine shabti with a marker on the base of the feet, accession number 39.5. Creative Commons-BY. Brooklyn Museum, from the museum website.

continuing and direct connections between Kushite and Egyptian priesthods even after the end of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, at least until the earlier Twenty-sixth Dynasty, due to a “prestige goods economy” in which religion played a key role. Further evidence is provided by the faience specimens of Senkamanisken’s funerary statuettes, where only one hoe was featured, a stylistic feature which was shared by the troops typically

for court officials buried in the Asasif.¹⁹ The insertion of two uraei is not only a Nubian innovation of this period, but also a peculiar characteristic of Senkamanisken’s production, which was not continued by his successors.²⁰

In addition, in the necropolis of el-Kurru, Ku. 16, the tomb of Tanwetamani, the last Pharaoh buried there, the royal deceased is displayed in a very rare scene, the same as his mother in her

tomb, Ku. 5: his body wrapped in the fine white linen bandages has just gone out from the Gold Chapel, clean and covered in perfumed oils but still inanimate (south wall). The opposite wall (north) shows the awakening of Osiris on his funerary bed, lying on his belly, head to east, and coming back to life thanks to the life breath offered by an officiant god (Horus). Therefore he/she can move again. The thirty-six funerary genii who flank the dead at each side are protecting him/her. Textual extracts corroborate the scene as part of the Awakening of Osiris.²¹ It is remarkable to note the presence of this iconographic motif in Egypt exclusively within the funerary chamber of the Kushite tomb of the chief of the Treasury (*imy-r3 pr h3d*) of Taharqa, Ramose, TT 132. Despite the Napatan iconographic layout of the royal tombs, in TT 132 the scene is displayed on the western wall and does not cover the entire wall.²² However, in the older tomb of Padiamenope, TT 33, this motif was copied on the western wall of the vaulted “Room XIX” along the same axis, opening towards the cenotaph. The scene appears to recur more consistently in its original location (western wall) during the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, as evidenced by the tomb of Pabasa, great butler of Nitokris I (*imy-r3 pr wr n dw3t-ntr*) TT 279, and the one of Irtieru, great servant of Nitokris I (*šmst 3t n dw3t-ntr*), TT 390, both located in the Asasif necropolis.²³ The two horizontal inscriptions painted on the top of the Napatan northern and

southern walls are formulae mentioning sacred snakes and the king’s journey up to the circumpolar stars,²⁴ coinciding almost totally with the sequence of the corpus belonging to the Abydeneian cenotaph within Padiamenope’s tomb in the Asasif: the ones copied on the north wall are similar to the ones on the southern and eastern walls in TT 33, while the ones on the south wall are similar to the ones on the northern wall, but they diverge from the ones on the western wall in TT 33.²⁵ These elements confirm a strong link with Thebes as well as probably the use of the funerary sources coming from the same temple archives of the Egyptian city, which influenced the Napatan decorative programme of the two el-Kurru burials.²⁶ In particular, Padiamenope, with his predominant position (Amun’s festivals conductor in absence of the Pharaoh), might have had a key role in the choice and acquisition of such a funerary corpus and for the creation of Napatan archives. In fact, he was chief in charge of the royal archives (*hry-tp šš nswt 3 n hft-hr*) and divine-scribe of Re-Horakhty, and was therefore very familiar with texts having personally managed temple libraries in Egypt. Moreover, as a fine and passionate erudite man, he wanted to copy them on the stone walls of his burial transforming his tomb into a sort of underground library. This was a text repository conceived not only for scholars but also for curious (but cultivated) visitors and pilgrims; besides, he made his burial always accessible to the public.²⁷

¹⁹ Howley 2018: 23.

²⁰ Already before, Taharqa personalized his stone shabtis fully Osirianised introducing a crook and a flail as a symbol of this god rather than a symbol of royal power.

²¹ Dunham 1950: pls. 19–20; Roberson 2013; Einaudi 2021: 378.

²² Greco 2014: fig. 8.1, 180.

²³ Einaudi 2021: n. 193, 154.

²⁴ Gasm el Seed 1985: 71–72; Petacchi 2013: 110–111.

²⁵ Traunecker 2022: 237–238. The chief of the lector priests Padiamenope served Taharqa and almost certainly Tanwetamani unless even Psammetik I, see De Meulenaere 2008: 301–306.

²⁶ Traunecker 2022: 238.

²⁷ Traunecker 2015–2016: 52–83.

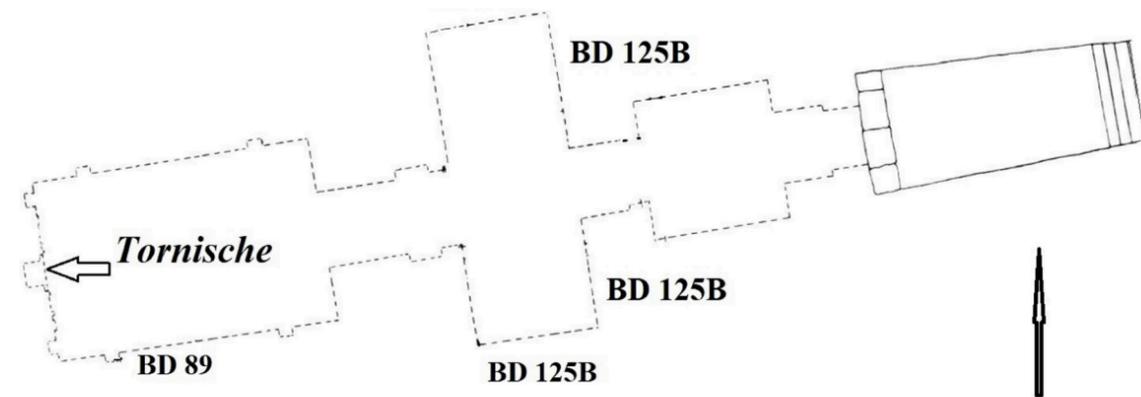


Figure 4. Senkamanisken's burial, Nu. 3 at Nuri. After Dunham 1955: fig. 26.

In Senkamanisken's tomb, Nu. 3, the western wall of the last niched room with a barrel vault ("chamber C", according to the editors of the *RCK II*) is relevant as it is clearly inspired by the same door frame arrangement of the Twenty-Fifth tombs of the noblemen buried in the Asasif necropolis. The Theban cavetto-corniche niche is very similar to the monumental one on the western wall within the burial chamber of the king, where his coffin was placed (fig. 4). Previous scholars named it *Tornische*.²⁸ The central niche was framed by a small cavetto cornice placed inside a bigger one surmounted by an arch with the archaizing motif of bound papyrus plants.²⁹ On each side a papyrus-bundle

column flanked by a small niche with an arch, and again this motif at each side in the style of the *pr-nw* of Egyptian tradition, often found on the outer sides of the anthropoid coffins³⁰ and *qeresw*³¹ of the same epoch (fig. 5).

In Egypt, the meaning of this decoration seems to represent the shrines of the funerary genii who oversaw the guard and protection of the deceased in the Hereafter.³² However, in Kush no trace of them survived. If these statues existed and were housed in the niches, then they were probably stolen because they were covered with precious material or were made in metal. If not, *pr-nw* features might have been simply employed as a mere decorative feature without necessarily

²⁸ In the Theban tombs, this is the large niche that leads from the *Lichthof* to the first pillared hall: Arnold 1994: 264–265; Eigner 1984: fig. 95, 120; Eigner 2017: 73–88; Molinero Polo 2017: 217–237.

²⁹ Eigner 1984: fig. 95, 120. Further decorative motifs with the same plants are discussed in Russmann 1995: 117–126.

³⁰ As for example, CG 41053, belonging to lady Tjesmutperu and CG 41061 belonging to lady Tadiankh, Moret 1913: pls. 15 and 29.

³¹ As for example, CG 41002 (sides 1-3), belonging to the priest of Montu Nesperamun II, and CG 41031 (side 3) of Nespermin, Moret 1913: pls. 7–9, 25.

³² Eigner 2017: 78.

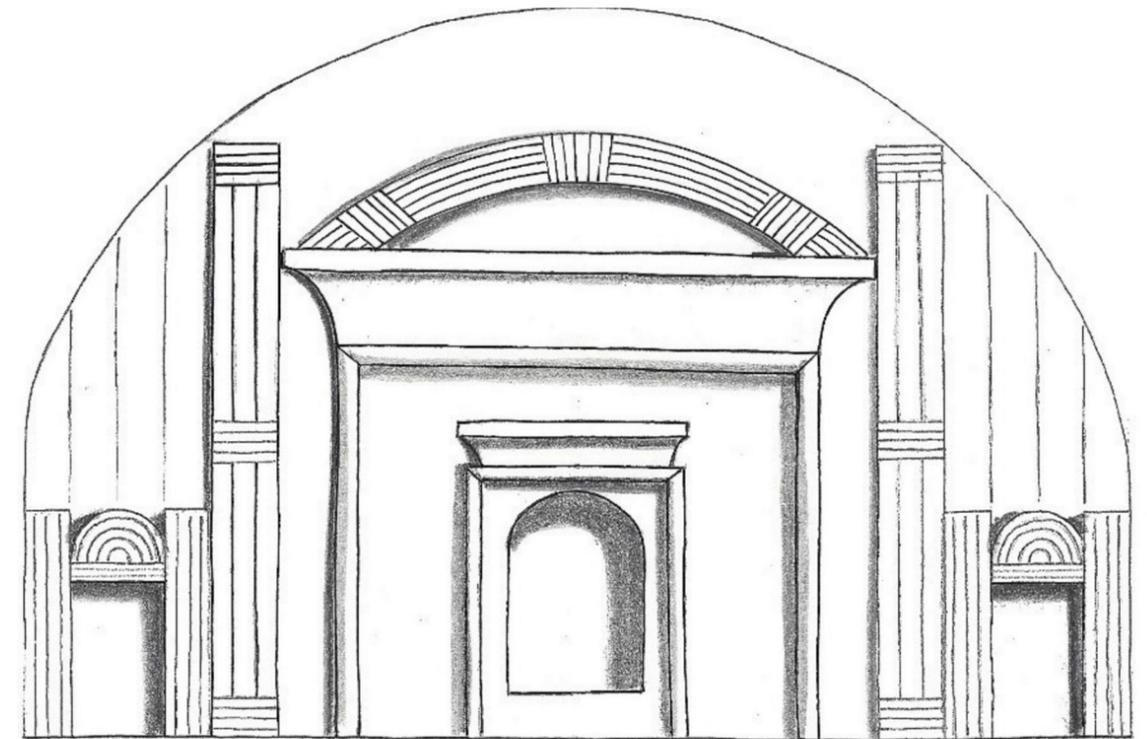


Figure 4. Senkamanisken's burial, Nu. 3 at Nuri. After Dunham 1955: fig. 26. Drawing: Simone Musso.

painting such a type of gods within them on the wall. In any case, this decorative motif intentionally echoes and imitates the *qeresw* itself as it was the case of Montuhemat's first court, in his tomb, TT 34 as well as in Karakhamun's tomb, TT 223.

This archaic decorative pattern, used to represent arched transoms and openwork window tracery imitating actual mat furniture, had

been known since the Old Kingdom,³³ particularly to frame a false-door or to surmount niches and doorways in the private tombs of the New Kingdom. Later, they became a typical local pattern of funerary architecture in the so called "Theban renaissance". We have evidence of this decorative motif in the burials of important court dignitaries such as Padiamenope (TT 33),³⁴ Montuhemat (TT 34),³⁵

³³ Haeny 1984: 563–574.

³⁴ See the niches in the cenotaph within TT 37, but without cavetto cornice in Traunecker 2015–2016: 67, figs. 5–6, 69, fig. 9.

³⁵ Eigner 2014: figs. 4.9, 84.



Figure 6. Sculptured papyrus stems sculptured on the wall of the sun courtyard in TT 34. Photograph: Simone Petacchi.

Ibi (TT 36),³⁶ Harwa (TT 37),³⁷ Karakhamun (TT 223),³⁸ Irtieru (TT 390)³⁹ and Karabasken (TT 391).⁴⁰

In the Theban tombs, the *Tornische* is always a monumental niche with a vaulted ceiling in front of the *Lichthof*,⁴¹ the sunken courtyard dedicated to solar cults, namely the opened pillared hall below the surface level which gives access to the *hypogeum*. Despite this tradition, a clear modification was made in Senkamanisken's tomb, where this architectural feature consists of a dummy gate with a cultic meaning, which probably

hosted a statue or a stela which is now missing. This cult of life renewal may have been associated with Osiris-Re in a deeply solarized approach of the dead. However, the planimetry of the burial chamber in Nu. 3 with the recessed walls decorated with the *pr-nw* chapels echoes the layout of the *Lichthof* of the Theban tombs even without any altar or stela, any plant basin, pit or offering table found *in situ*.

The decorative motif, consisting of a pair of papyrus stalks tied together at the top of the stems

36 Graefe and Eigner 1990: pl. 13.

37 Eigner 2014: figs. 102, 129.

38 Eigner 2014: figs. 7.2, 111 and 114. A palmiform column is a variant recorded in Irtieru's burial (TT 390), see the above reference, note 8, 117.

39 Eigner 1984: pl. 26, B.

40 Molinero Polo 2017: 221–222.

41 Arnold 1994: 141–142.

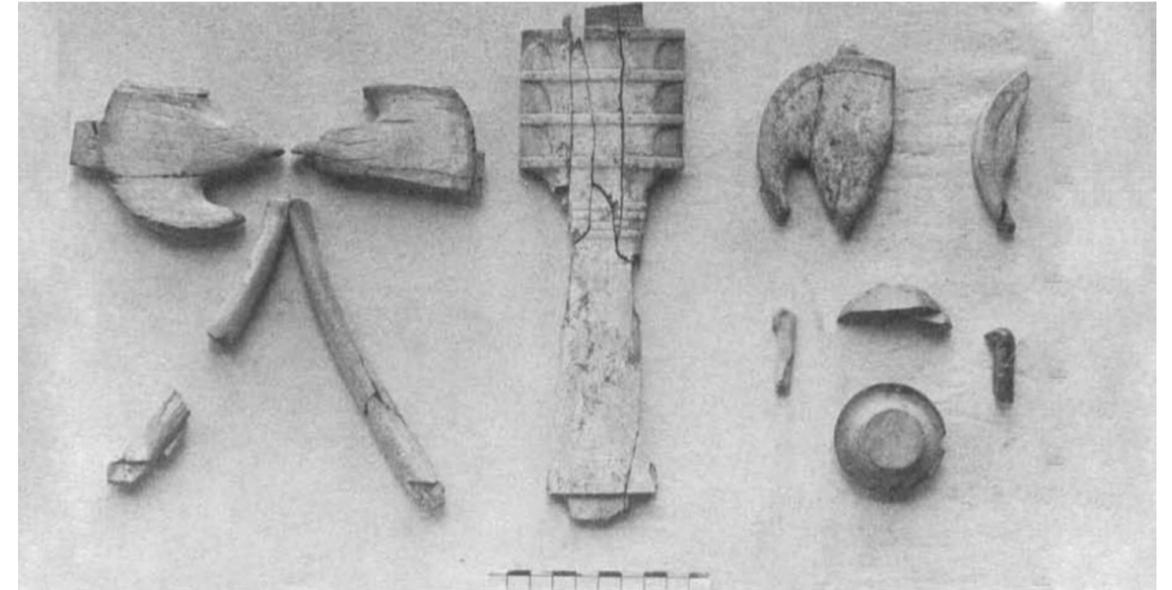


Figure 7. Papyrus stems in ivory from tomb Ku. 62, El-Kurru. After Dunham 1950: pl. 32.

used in the decoration of Montuhemat's tomb (fig. 6), seems to be linked with the funerary furniture discovered at el-Kurru, in tomb Ku. 62, dating back to Shabaka's reign.⁴² Here, a fragmentary element made in ivory (MFA 24. 1012; part of a chair/bed? fig. 7) consisting of a couple of papyrus stalks (1.3 cm x 7.4 cm) was alternated with other fragments of *djed* pillars and cartouches, all inscribed with the name of that Pharaoh. Every piece had some perforations at its base for the insertion of tenons. This decorative pattern, in use at least as early as the First Dynasty,⁴³ is common in the subterranean chambers as well as in the open courtyards of the Theban monuments and clearly evokes Osiris mysteries as a symbol of

resurrection. Only one case from Giza (Saitic period) provides evidence of such a vegetal decorative motif in the area. The north wall of the north chamber of Tjery's tomb in Giza shows a frieze of these stalks painted as a plinth above which a sitting Osiris is accompanied by his sisters and probably by the wife of the deceased. Even the layout of the open courtyard of the tomb seems to have been influenced by the elitist architecture of the Asasif tombs, as no other contemporaneous parallel has been recorded so far.⁴⁴

In Senkamanisken's tomb (Nu. 3), G. Reisner recognized an extract of BD 125 on the north, east and south walls within the first chamber (named "B" by the author), as reported in

42 Dunham 1950: 99, pls. 36A–36C.

43 Russmann 1995: 118.

44 Stammers 2009: 43–44, figs. 44–45.

*The Royal Cemeteries of Kush – Nuri.*⁴⁵ In the published images, the northern and southern parts of the eastern wall show the scene of the standing king. He is in front of nine columns on the northern side and of fourteen columns on the southern side of the entrance. The extracts belong to the *negative confession* (BD 125 B). Senkamanisken shows a bare chest with the *nemes* headdress and is wearing a long kilt that reaches his ankles. He is offering a small Maat statue at each side, echoing the name of the place. On the top of each narrow column, a standing and mummified god with a false beard is portrayed, representing the forty-two judges of the Hall of the Two Maats. The denial of a specific sin, which starts with the sentence “I have not...” is below the figure. Although the chapter is in use in the Theban tombs of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, the layout of these burials, as, for example, Karakhamun’s tomb, is different: BD 125 is copied in the second room and not in the burial chamber. This feature will be kept by the craftsmen who decorated the burial of his successor, Aspelta, in Nu. 8. In each text, two of the three common elements are missing: the name of the deity and his provenance. Only the evils refused to have been committed by the deceased are retained in the inscription.

In addition, the list of crimes in Nu. 3 does not follow a standard order. As a matter of fact, the same sequential position of crimes that differs from the New Kingdom edition and the canonic

Saitic recension⁴⁶ may have a Theban origin, as can be seen in a *qeresw* and in an anthropoid coffin of two members of the Theban elite who lived between the end of the Twenty-fifth and the beginning of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty.⁴⁷ The former is CG 41003 of Nesykhonsu II,⁴⁸ the wife of the priest of Montu Neseramun II, and the latter is CG 41060, belonging to a singer of the inner domain of Amun, Dimutshepenankh.⁴⁹ Therefore, the manuscript used for both coffins should be linked to some of the ones used for the Napatan tombs.

Moreover, on the first right column of the south wall in queen Nasalsa’s burial chamber (Nu. 24), outside the figurative frame with the vignette, the text which is carved on seventeen vertical columns and reads left to right contains a standard invocation with name and titles of the deceased followed by a passage from another chapter of the BD, i.e., BD 90 (*Spell for removing foolish speech from the mouth*), originated from the Coffin Texts, Spell 453.⁵⁰ It is worth noting that this chapter of the BD does not quote the title of the spell, but the text is introduced by the formula *dd mdw in Wsir* + name of the deceased + epithet *mꜣꜥ hrw* as it is the case of the extracts of the BD in the second pillared hall of Karakhamun’s tomb (TT 223).⁵¹ This is a stylistic feature that suggests again another possible Theban influence, perhaps of Kushite origin.

At this stage of research, we can confirm that Napatan craftsmen (merely copyists? Not enough confident lapiceds?)⁵² used handwritten

manuscripts edited in hieratic for the decoration of tomb walls,⁵³ sarcophagi,⁵⁴ and monumental royal stelae.⁵⁵ However, Lenzo doubts that any repetitive mistake or confused signs may be considered a real misspelling but rather a local graphic innovation (at least for royal stelae in Nubia),⁵⁶ I have proven that, as for the BD chapters copied on the walls of royal burials, there are not only graphical variants of hieroglyphic signs used by the Napatans, but also omissions, misspellings, useless repetitions, as well as dislocations of passages which sometimes make no sense.⁵⁷ Unfortunately, we do not know so far if they were due to the handwriting copy of local agents in charge of carving the texts on the tombs, or to the primary sources used at el-Kurru and Nuri where all the relevant mistakes were already present.⁵⁸

In addition, the copy of BD 65 in Nasalsa’s burial, BD 125 B and BD 145 in Aspelta’s burial (Nu. 8), edited in a version belonging to the Saite recension, proves a diffusion of contemporaneous texts abroad as well as continuing and direct connections between Napatan and Egyptian priesthoods, even after Tanwetamani’s political defeat until the earlier Twenty-sixth Dynasty. This was clearly due to the already quoted “prestige goods economy” in which religion allowed such a continuous exchange.⁵⁹

To sum up, a clear Theban influence seems to concern funerary architecture in the royal Napatan necropolises, probably developed in a

private but elitist context, in an Osirian-solarised conception of the funerary place and equipment of the dead, as the result of relevant changes in funerary religion since the eighth century BC in Egypt. These decorative loans were randomly chosen and in use in Nubia following a specific local taste in relation to the layout of the tombs, their figurative and epigraphical decorations. However, Napatans always followed an independent, adaptive, and selective emulation, as well as a personal mingling of Egyptian models. They sometimes reinterpreted those models shaping new patterns in visual art and creating an indigenous textual program within the burials. Within the phenomenon called long “cultural entanglement,”⁶⁰ there is evidence of ornamental patterns linking el-Kurru and Nuri to the Asasif and to the use of papyrus scrolls containing extracts of BD with the Saite recension, which proves cultural exchanges between Thebes and Kush throughout the seventh and the sixth centuries BC, in spite of possible conflicts/military punitive expeditions undertaken between the reign of Psammetik II and Amasis. This was possible probably thanks to the Kushite presence among the high ranks of the Theban priesthood (Karabasken, Montuemhat, Harwa, Padiamenope) which allowed a continuous trade of religious equipment and scriptural material brought to Napata, through an international market system managed by religious institutions which did not suffer any crises even

45 Dunham 1955: 41; Petacchi 2020/2021: 42–43.

46 Petacchi 2020/2021: 45, n. 26.

47 Elias 1993: 352–379.

48 Moret 1913: 61–75, pls. 10–11.

49 Gauthier 1913: 363–381, pl. 26.

50 Petacchi 2020/2021: 53–54.

51 Griffin 2014: 174.

52 In fact, we do not know even who copied out the texts on the tombs, whether Egyptian language was their own primary idiom or not, whether they were cultivated and trained copyists with a certain experience or not.

53 Petacchi 2020/2021: 76, 78.

54 Doll 1978: 4.

55 Lenzo 2015: 280–288.

56 Lenzo 2015: 285–286.

57 Petacchi 2020/2021: 49–51, 53, 54, 56, 60–71.

58 Petacchi 2020/2021: 76.

59 Petacchi 2020/2021: 76.

60 Sharing religious beliefs and conception of kingship despite different cultural backgrounds and being in interaction each other along the centuries. Buzon, Smith and Simonetti 2016: 285–287, 293–297.

during war periods. However, the introduction of a specific BD engraved for the first time on a stone support such as the offering table of king Malowiamani, who lived around the middle of the fifth century BC, can clearly prove that even in the Late Napatan Period, a continuous and vivid creativity still allowed the Kushites to experiment with a new way of using funerary Egyptian

texts. The poor evidence of other similar examples or imported goods might be just fortuitous and due to a massive plundering which affected several royal tombs.⁶¹ Further fieldworks at Nuri, Gebel Barkal and Thebes, as well as more studies of unpublished material could give new insights into the Napatan culture and strongly confirm what has been reported in this paper.

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61 I disagree with K. Howley (2020: 498) concerning the decrease of epigraphical material with no important evidence in Late Napatan Period, especially based on what I have shown in Petacchi 2018: 353–364. In fact, even Nu. 10 (see Dunham 1955: 154), the tomb of king Amani-nataki-lebte had a substructure with “walls originally plastered and painted (now illegible)”, so it cannot be excluded the possibility that there were extracts from the BD or other funerary corpuses therein.

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