



## PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE FOURTH EXCAVATION SEASON OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPEDITION TO WAD BEN NAGA<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** During its fourth excavation season, the Archaeological Expedition to Wad Ben Naga focused on the continued exploration of the so-called Typhonium (WBN 200), where fragments of the Bes-pillars known from descriptions and drawings of early European and American visitors to the site were discovered. Furthermore, fragments of the Lepsius' *Altar B* with bilingual names of Queen Amanitore (and King Natakamani) were unearthed.

**KEY WORDS:** Wad Ben Naga – Nubia – Meroitic culture – Meroitic architecture – Meroitic script

### Expedition

The fourth excavation season of the Archaeological Expedition to Wad Ben Naga took place between 12 February and 23 March 2012. The mission was headed by Dr. Pavel Onderka (director) and Mohamed Saad Abdalla Saad (inspector of the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums).

The works of the fourth season focused on continuing the excavations of the so-called Typhonium (WBN 200), a temple structure located in the western part of Central Wad Ben Naga, which had begun during the third excavation season (cf. Onderka 2011). Further tasks were mainly concerned with site management. No conservation projects took place. The season was carried out under the guidelines for

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the 'archaeological excavations' as defined by the *Ordinance for the Protection of Antiquities of 1999*.

### 1. Excavations of the Typhonium (WBN 200)

The archaeological field work was confined to a single square with the side of 10 m (labeled as T6; cf. Fig. 1), located to the south of the areas excavated during the third excavation season (cf. Onderka 2012: 126–132). This area corresponds to the northern peak of Cailliaud's *kom A*.

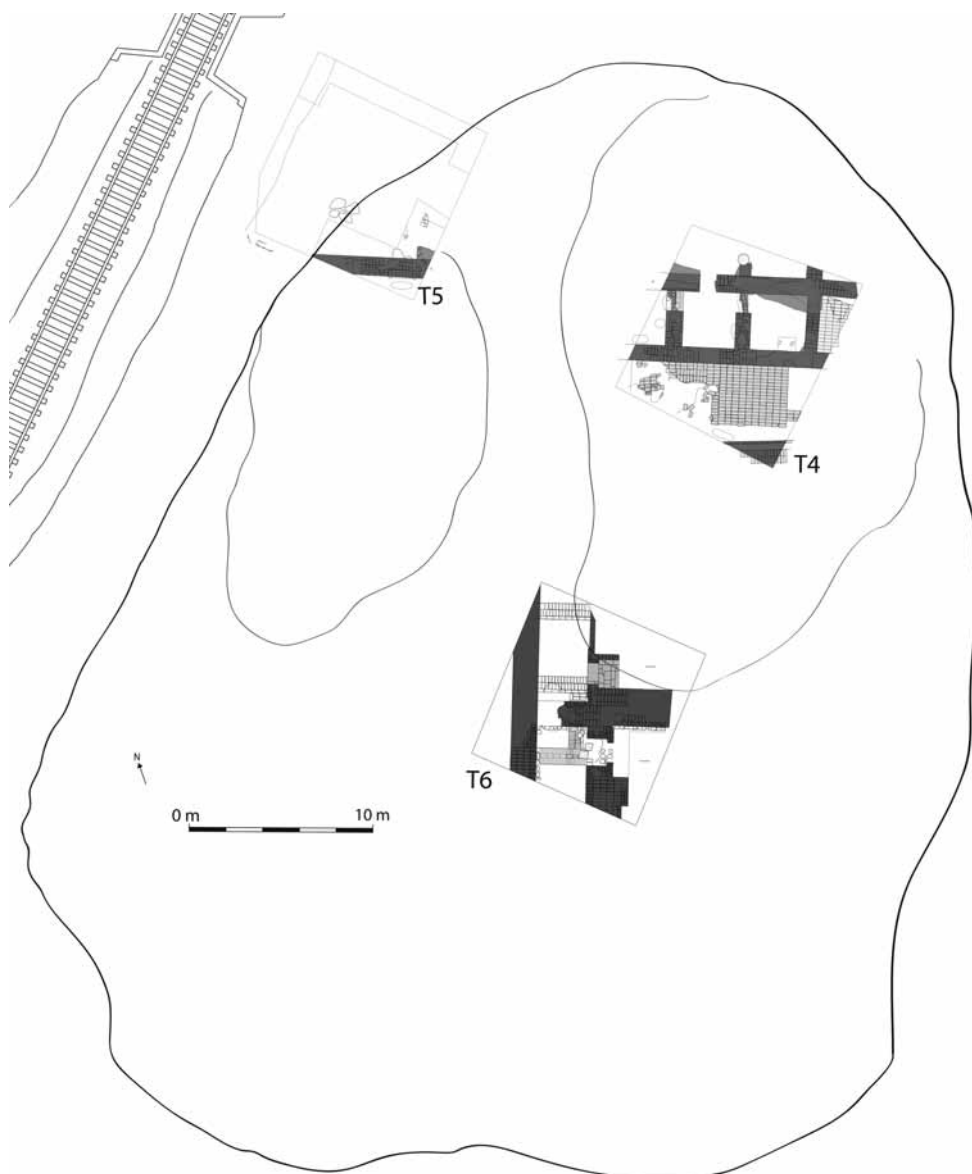


Fig. 1: Exploration of the Typhonium (Illustration by Vlastimil Vrtal).

The surface collection had already yielded a number of interesting finds: among the manifold fragments of red bricks (with the approximate dimensions of a complete brick being 36 x 18 x 9 cm) were fragments of sandstone of two different qualities and colors, namely softer violet sandstone and harder ochre sandstone. Some fragments of the former were still covered with remains of plaster on their original outer surfaces, and some fragments of the latter bore traces of a relief decoration that survived despite the material's strong tendency to crumble. The latter showed a much higher cohesion affected only by weathering and deposition context. The fragments of the violet softer sandstone were also present in high quantities in the uppermost archeological layers. It soon became clear, that the soft violet sandstone fragments once formed parts of the Bes-pillars known from drawings published by e.g. Frédéric Cailliaud (1821/22), George Alexander Hoskins (1833) and Carl Richard Lepsius (1844). Further descriptions are provided by many others (cf. below) along with notes on other stone architectural elements of the temple building.

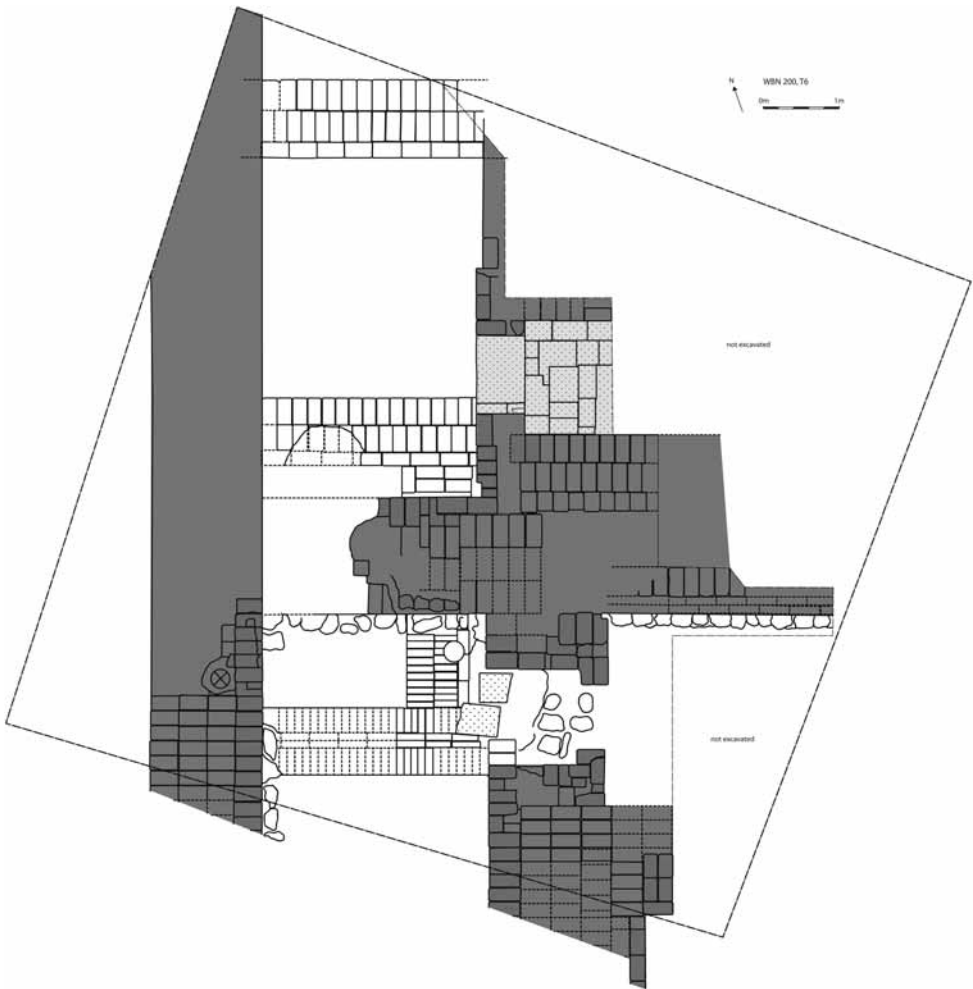


Fig. 2: Square T6 (Illustration by Vlastimil Vrtal).

Several fragments of the harder ochre sandstone were inscribed with Egyptian hieroglyphic signs, which indicated their association with Egyptian language inscriptions of King Natakamani and Queen Amanitore. During their reigns (conventionally dated to the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE; e.g. Welsby 1996: 208), the ancient Egyptian language and script were reemployed in the royal monuments of Kush (e.g. Shinnie 1967: 134; Welsby 1996: 189).

The walls of what is believed to be the temple's sanctuary area are preserved to the maximum height of 70 cm in T6. These walls are constituted of a mud brick core and red brick outer casing. Such masonry was typical for Late Meroitic buildings with numerous parallels at Wad Ben Naga, e.g. the outer walls of the so-called Palace of Amanishakheto (WBN 100) and the Circular Building (WBN 50).

The square T6 yielded a complex of four rooms (*pro tempore* labeled as *Rooms J to M*; cf. Fig. 2), two of which (*Room J* and *M*) are located on the temple's axis, while the remaining two (*Rooms K* and *L*) are side rooms. The western limit of the room complex was provided by a destroyed wall, for which only the lower courses of bricks are preserved. The floor in *Room M* was paved with sandstone blocks. In the doorway between *Rooms J* and *K* a threshold broken into two parts was discovered. In the north-east corner of *Room K*, a large vessel was set into the ground.

### 1.1 Early settlement at Wad Ben Naga (Pl. 1)

Under the floor level of the Typhonium, remains of another system of walls or more precisely their foundations were discovered (cf. Fig. 3). These were built of mud bricks quite different from those employed in the constructions of the walls of the Typhonium itself. The foundations likely belong to a structure built in the earlier phase of the ancient city's development. As far as we know from the present state of exploration of Wad Ben Naga, the early settlement was concentrated in the western part of Central Wad Ben Naga.

At the latest, during the terminal phase of the Napatan Period, a settlement of considerable size most likely existed at Wad Ben Naga. Its name Arabam (Latin accusative form) is mentioned in Pliny the Elder's *Historiae Naturalis* (HN 6, 193), namely in the extracts from the itinerary of Bion of Soloi, who visited the Middle Nile region in around 300 BCE (Priese 1984: 497). The site's name is further known from inscriptions of King Arnekhamani, a contemporary of Ptolemy III Euergetes I (reigned from 246 to 222 BCE) and Ptolemy IV Philopator (reigned from 222 to 204 BCE; for chronology cf. Welsby 1996: 208; Török 1997: 205) on the walls of the Lion Temple in Musawwarat es-Sufra, which were written in Egyptian language and Egyptian script. The name of Arabikeleb appears in two captions accompanying the depiction of the (Crown) Prince Arka (possibly the future king Arkamani II; cf. Török 1997: 210–211; FHM II: 587), who is identified as the "King's Son, Priest of Isis Arka of Arebep(-ankh) and Arabikeleb" (*s3 nswt hm ntr n 3st Jrkj n Jbrp(-nḥ) Jrbjklb*; Hintze et al. 1993: 79, 86, Abb. 28, Abb. 37), where Arebep(-ankh) is believed to have been modern Musawwarat es-Sufra and Arabikeleb modern Wad Ben Naga.

### 1.2 Bes-pillars

To the earliest European and American visitors to Wad Ben Naga, the ancient site was, above all, represented by three pillars bearing the depictions of the originally Egyptian god Bes who was later associated with the Greek mythological creature

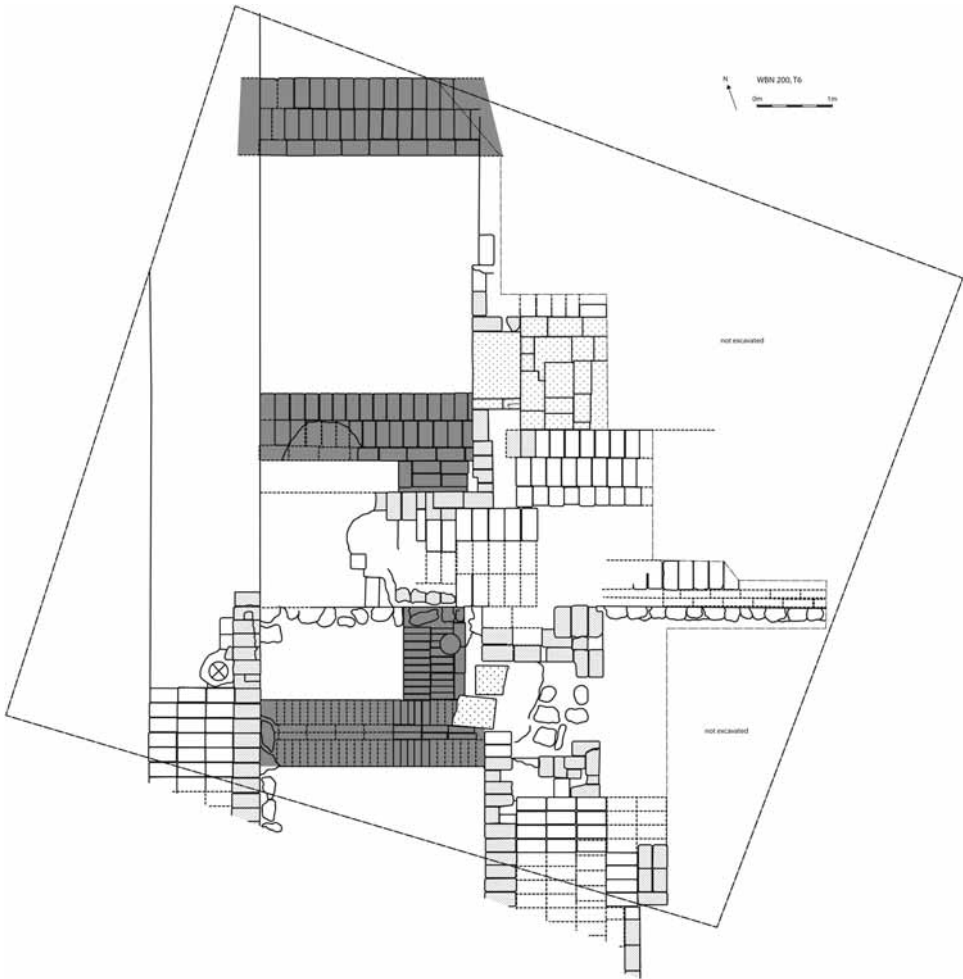


Fig. 3: The Early Temple (Illustration by Vlastimil Vrtal).

Typhon. The figures of the god Bes were crowned with Hathoric capitals. This association resulted into naming the structure the Typhonium (similarly to other structures at Gebel Barkal [B300] and Meroe [M720] that also employed the Bes figures in their inner decorations).

Five original drawings (and several non-authentic copies of theirs) of the Bes pillars are at our disposal at the moment:

[1] The first one comes from the year 1822 and was drawn by Alessandro Ricci (died 1834), the Italian artist and the companion of Frédéric Cailliaud (1787–1869). Ricci's pictures were used as illustrations to Cailliaud's book *Voyage en Méroé et au Fleuve Blanc*, published between 1823 and 1827 (Cailliaud 1823–1827; Pl. 2). Ricci's picture was reproduced in John Ward's (1832–1912) book *Our Sudan: Its Pyramids and Progress* (Ward 1905). [2] The second one was drawn by Linant de Bellefonds but was never published.

[3] The third drawing was made by George Alexander Hoskins (1802–1863) during his travels in the Middle Nile region in 1833. The picture was published two

years later in Hoskins's book *Travels in Ethiopia* in 1835 (Pl. 3). An adjusted non-authentic copy of the drawing was published in *The Illustrated London News* of 23 February 1884 (Pl. 4).

[4] In the very same year, the first American, John Lowell (1799–1836), visited Wad Ben Naga in the company of the Swiss artist Charles Glèyre (1806–1874) whose drawing remains unpublished. Glèyre's drawings are now in the possession of the Lowell Institute, Boston, and are recently on a long-term loan in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

[5] The last depiction comes from 1844 when the Prussian Royal Expedition visited Wad Ben Naga. Years later, the picture appeared in the monumental *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien* (Pl. 5). It was reproduced in the second volume of *The Egyptian Sudan* by E. A. Wallis Budge (1857–1934; Budge 1907: II.124) and others.

Each of the drawings provides some details that either confirm or supplement the information in the others.

T6 revealed the first fragments of the pillars that may be positively identified as coming from the figures of Bes and from the Hathoric capitals, including a foot of Bes (Pl. 6; feet of the god are never shown as they were covered in sand at the time when drawn) and two parts of Hathor's wig with a cow's ear and with typical curl (Pl. 7). The above-mentioned discovered fragments do not offer much hope that the pillars have been preserved in a relatively complete state.

### 1.3 Lepsius' Altar B (Pl. 8)

Even though Erbkam and Wiedemann, the two members of the Royal Prussian Expedition led by Carl Richard Lepsius tasked with the exploration of ancient ruins at Wad Ben Naga in 1844, were rather skeptical about the site's potential to provide its explorers with a substantial discovery, they were soon to admit that they had been wrong.

Their excavations mainly focused on Cailliaud's *kom B* under which the so-called Isis Temple of Wad Ben Naga (WBN 300) was discovered. T6, or more precisely its surface and the top layer, yielded fragments of the Lepsius' *Altar B* which was originally discovered in the so-called Isis Temple (WBN 300). The depiction of the bark stand was included in the *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien*, though without its text. The texts were only published in 1984 by Karl-Heinz Priese, 140 years after the object had been discovered.

The fragments that have been identified so far come from the eastern side of the bark stand and depict the Queen Amanitore in the gesture of supporting the (starry) sky. The forehead of Amanitore is decorated with an *ureus*. A cartouche with her *nomen* in Meroitic hieroglyphs (Tx. 1) is placed in front of her face, while her *prenomen* in Egyptian hieroglyphs (Tx. 2) is behind her head. Two columns of text (Tx. 3) provide the name of another deity worshipped in the so-called Isis Temple (WBN 300) – Hathor the Great, Mistress of the Netherworld.

Tx. 1:  $s3(.t) r^c nb(t) h^c w mmitgre$   
Daughter of Re, Mistress of the Diadems, Amanitore

Tx. 2:  $s3(.t) r^c nb(t) t3wy mry-k3-r^c$   
Daughter of Re, Mistress of the Two Lands, Merykare

Tx. 3    *h̄tp=tw zp 2*  
*h̄wt-h̄rw wrt nbt jkrt*  
*hr p n nh̄h*  
*h̄tp=tw hr=f*  
*dj=t ḥnh n s3(.t)=t jmn-t3wy-<r>-yt*

*Be in peace, be in peace,  
Hathor the Great, Mistress of the Underworld,  
on the throne of eternity!  
May you rest on it!  
May you give life to your daughter, Amanitore!*

The fragments must have been secondarily displaced from the original location of the bark stand. It is evident that after the Prussian Royal Expedition left *Altar B* at the site, the monument was damaged. Fragments of the same material are scattered on the surface between the Typhonium (WBN 200), the Isis Temple (WBN 300) and the Palace of Amanishakheto (WBN 100).

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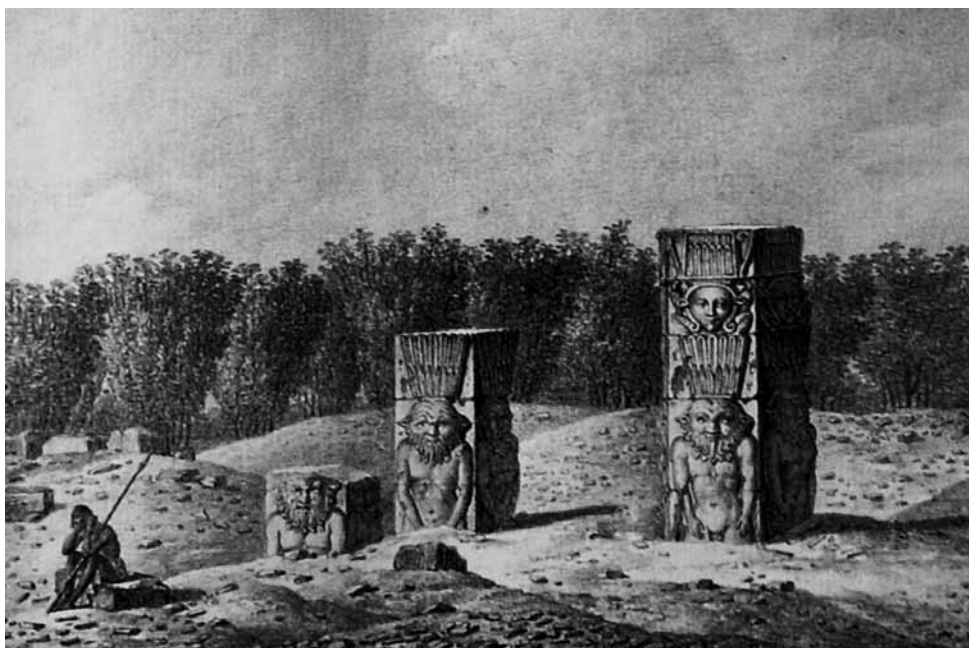
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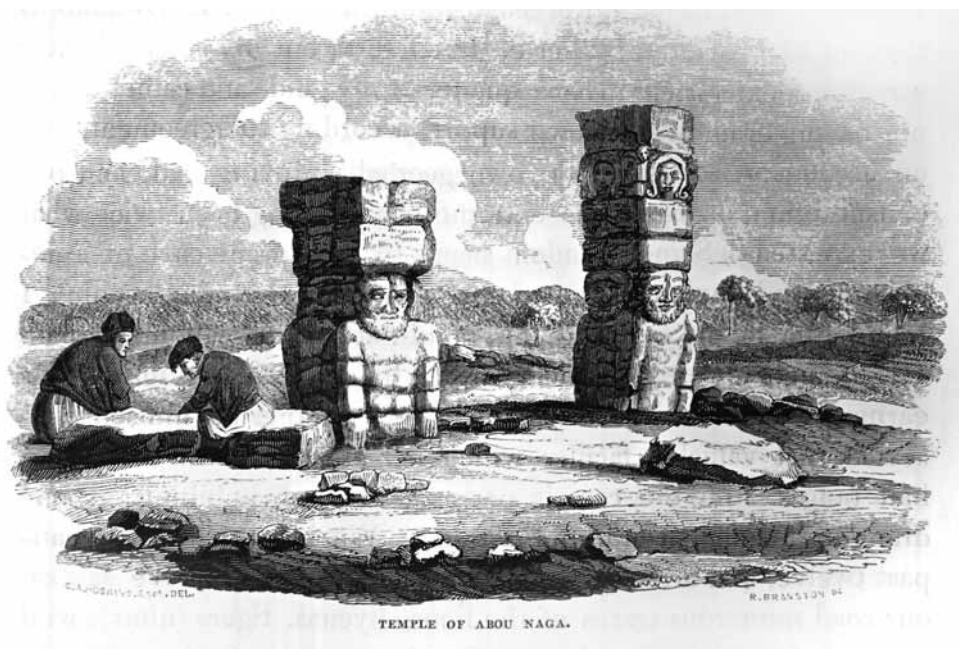




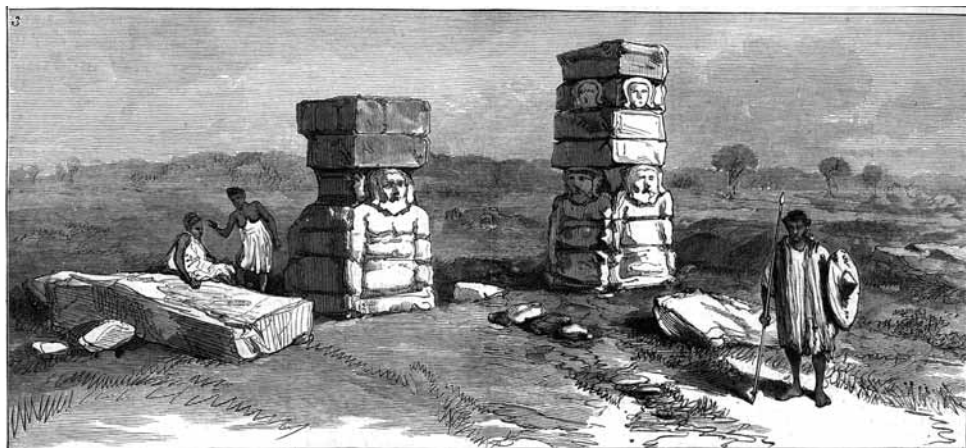
Pl. 1: Foundations of the "Early Temple" (Photo by Pavel Onderka).



Pl. 2: Depiction of the Typhonium: Cailliaud/Ricci 1822 (Vercoutter 1962).



Pl. 3: Depiction of the Typhonium: Hoskins/Bankes 1833 (Hoskins 1835).



Pl. 4: Depiction of the Typhonium: Illustrated London News 1884.

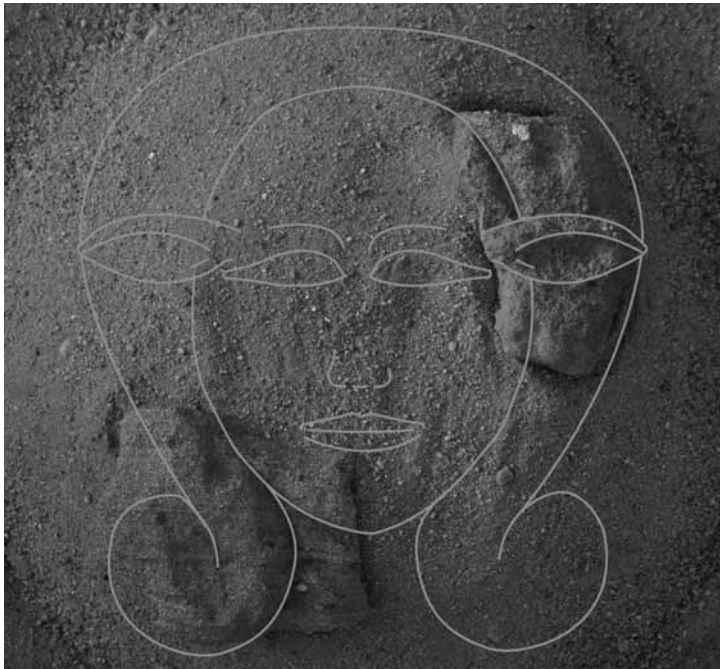


Ansicht der Tempelruinen von Ben-Naga.

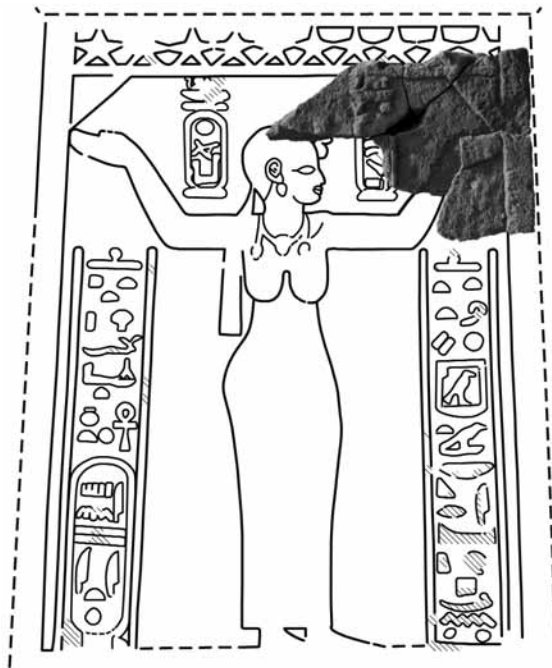
Pl. 5: Depiction of the Typhonium: *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien* 1844.



Pl. 6: Foot of the god Bes from the Typhonium's pillar (Photo by Pavel Onderka).



Pl. 7: Fragments of the Hathoric capitals (Illustration by Vlastimil Vrtal and Pavel Onderka).



WBN, ALTAR B, 'EASTERN SIDE'

0cm 25cm

Pl. 8: Fragments of the Altar B (Photo by Pavel Onderka).