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Front cover. Block 1000.0049 from Naga (photograph courtesy Karla Kroper).

Above. Pottery jar with decoration of sorghum heads from BMC 60, Berber (photograph courtesy Mahmoud Suliman Bashir).

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Preliminary report on the excavation of Building 1000 at Naga

Karla Kroeper and Christian Perzlmeier

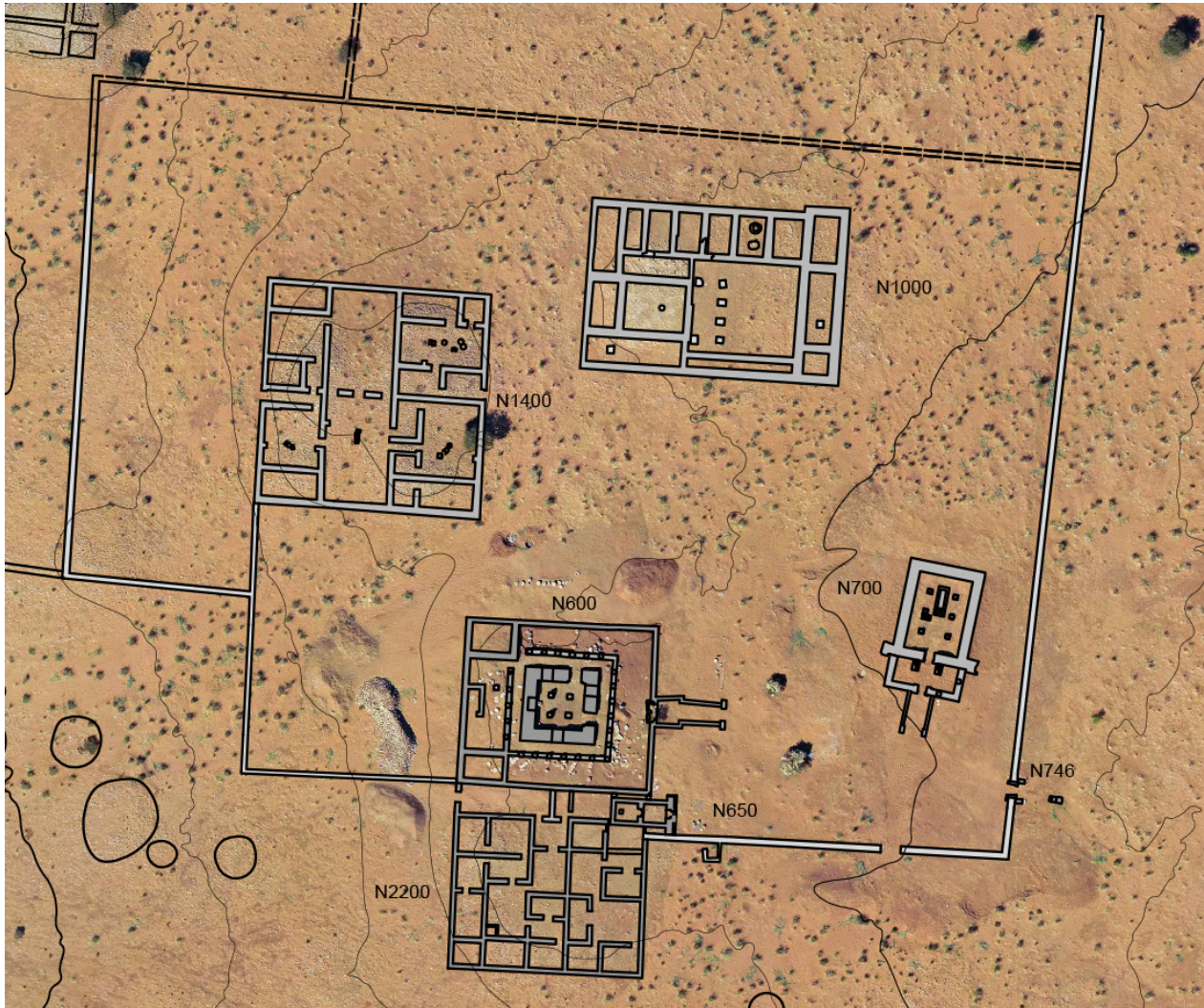


Figure 1. Aerial plan of Naga structures N1000, N1400, N700, N600, N746, N650 and N2200 (© Naga Project).

During the seasons October-December 2022 and January-March 2023,¹ Building 1000, which is located on the high sandy part of the eastern slope of Naga, was excavated (Perzlmeier and Schlüter 2023, 24ff). The building is one of four, including 600, 700 (Perzlmeier and Schlüter forthcoming) and the unexcavated building 1400, all forming a complex surrounded by a common wall (Figure 1). The building fits chronologically into the scheme of the other buildings at Naga dated to Natakamani and Amanitore c. 50BC-AD100.

The surface of the building was found to be badly deflated. Final evaluation and analysis of various aspects is still pending. Building 1000 was already partly examined during a surface survey by J. Knudstad

¹ The Naga Project of the Staatliches Museum Ägyptischer Kunst, München; Director A. Schlüter (e.g., Schlüter 2020). At the same time and parallel to the excavation, conservation work was undertaken at the Lion Temple by the team of J. Hamann. The Restoration Project was financed by the German Foreign Ministry section 'Kulturerhalt'. Reports will be published later.

in 1997 (unpublished). It is the only building constructed of cut sandstone blocks in this area of Naga with very deep rubble foundations. In the 2023 season, 16 rooms and a newly discovered ramp to the east of the building, placed parallel to the outer wall of Room 1014, were examined. Most of the walls of the rooms are eroded down to their foundations. The singular column drum found here is not *in situ* and one would probably expect that originally there would have been four columns, similar to building 600. Only in the centre room (1012) are the remains of the first layer of stone/socle, on top of which the first layer of stones for the wall was placed, still *in situ*. Here the alignment lines and other architectural features are exposed, and on the vertical surfaces of the socle stones mason marks were found.

The walls are constructed, as in other places in Naga, in double wall fashion with well-worked outer surfaces and the back inner faces being mostly triangular in shape; the space between the walls is filled with rubble and some mud mortar. Unfortunately, due to the deflated state of the walls it was not possible in most cases to detect doorways. The building (without the ramp) is 25.9x37.5m in size and consists of 16 rooms or units (Figure 2). The central Room 1012, almost square in shape, reminds one of the similar shaped Building 600 located in the same complex to the south. Here also, a niche seems to be found in the wall at the west end of the room and in the south wall (Perzlmeier and Schlüter forthcoming).

Only two doorways were preserved, one between Rooms 1012 and 1010, and another from 1010 to 1003 leading to the northern room compound comprising eight rooms. However, no door sills were found in any of the other rooms so that movement to and from these rooms could not be established. The probable approach to this central room (1012) was from the east through a now destroyed doorway from Room 1013. Here four free standing pillar foundations and two others close to the outer wall (north and south) were located. One should consider this area to have consisted of two parts: a covered porch fronting the entrance to 1012, this being approached through the large open courtyard (Room 1013). The most eastern adjoining 'rooms' 1008, 1014 and 1009 may not be rooms at all, but only the subdividing walls built into the podium to stabilise the approach to the building. Since only foundations are preserved, a final statement is difficult to make at this time. A similar situation was encountered in Building 3400 (Kroeper and Perzlmeier 2022, 152ff.) where several cross walls built into the podium were at first thought to represent rooms, but were later discovered to be internal walls in the podium to stabilise the fill.

Generally, the temple walls were built on rather solid stone rubble foundations almost 2m deep (Figures 3 and 4). The east-west arrangement of 1000 is flanked on the south by two long rooms, with no. 1016 appearing more like a hallway than a room. The ramp 13.25m long (discovered in 2023), was built parallel to the eastern façade of the building running from north to south with a final height at the south end of 0.98m, which corresponds to the height of the podium (Figure 5).

Unfortunately, the doorway from the ramp into the building has not survived. The outer ramp wall was also built of stone with a double wall arrangement as mentioned above. The podium retaining wall is in part well-preserved. Remains of a panel decoration (Figure 6) visible on the wall near the entrance of the ramp, may have been similar to that known from the Podium Temple 1200 (Kroeper 2019, pls 7, 12).

Furthermore, some fragmentary decorative elements still preserved at the beginning of the ramp indicate that the entrance gate originally had highlighted details. Especially interesting are the long triangular stones, which were used as a balustrade, placed on the outside wall of the ramp. A similar construction is known from Temple 1200 and is also especially well-preserved at the entrance ramp of the Amun temple in Naga (Figure 7).

The best-preserved walls, consisting of the highest of the foundation blocks as well as the first row of wall blocks, were found in Room 1012 (Figure 8). At the beginning of excavation, the floor was covered with rubble, broken stones, and fragments of flat stones with plaster.

At first, the vast quantities of lime-plastered sandstone slabs that covered almost the entire room



Figure 2. Plan of Building 1000 with room numbers and ramp at the east side (© Naga Project).

1011 Profil 01



Figure 3. Section in the northeast corner of 1011 showing the foundation consisting of gravel at the bottom, rubble sandstone plates with tough clay between the layers, followed by roughly worked sandstone blocks, on top of which the first layer of the actual wall was placed. View from south to north. (© Naga Project).

1011 Profil 02



Figure 4. Section in the northeast corner of 1011. View from west to east (© Naga Project).



Figure 5. Ramp 1038, view from north to south, including the entrance and double wall section (© Naga Project).



Figure 6. View from the east to the podium with some paneling visible. In front of the podium is the entrance to the ramp (on the left) with some balustrade blocks and other collapsed stones of the decorated entrance (© Naga Project).



Figure 7. The entrance ramp of the Amun temple at Naga with the balustrade made up of large triangular blocks still *in situ* (© Naga Project).



Figure 8. View of the inner north wall of Room 1012. At the bottom, roughly hewn stones, on top of which the last foundation stone with workmans signs engraved and the first block of the actual wall was placed, here all *in situ* (© Naga Project).

were puzzling (Figure 9). Since the walls consist of blocks of sandstone and these sandstone slabs were plastered horizontally on their flat side, it was clear that these fragments did not come from wall bonding. However, since they were clearly above the former floor level and partly lay on the sandstone blocks of the room walls, the assumption of a lime-plastered floor had to be quickly abandoned. What remained was the ceiling.

The sandstone slabs, between 20-100mm thick and from 20x20mm to 200x250mm in size, were the top layer of the roof and needed a structural support. The stone slabs were placed on woven mats on which they were embedded in thick clay. This is clearly shown by lumps of clay as well as lime plaster, which show remains of the negative impression of these mats. Some imprints are so finely preserved and defined that it may be possible to determine the plant material used. Under the mats there might have been poles or branches that lay on solid wooden beams. Remains of wooden beam construction has previously been found in Room 109 of the temple of Amun at Naga where the beams had collapsed, and impressions of their existence remained (Figure 10). Charred beam remains were also found in other space units. The same type of roof construction as in Building 1000 was also discovered in the neighbouring Building 600 in Room 601.

That lime plaster was not applied directly to the mats is certainly due to the fact that this method of construction would have been too light for the roof and a subsequent movement of the mats on the lower timbers would have led to cracks and breaks in the closed lime plaster ceiling, and thus cause leaks in the roof.

It can be clearly proven that the roof was painted a yellow colour and was replastered at least three times. Even at that time, therefore, 'restorative' interventions had to be made again and again, even on

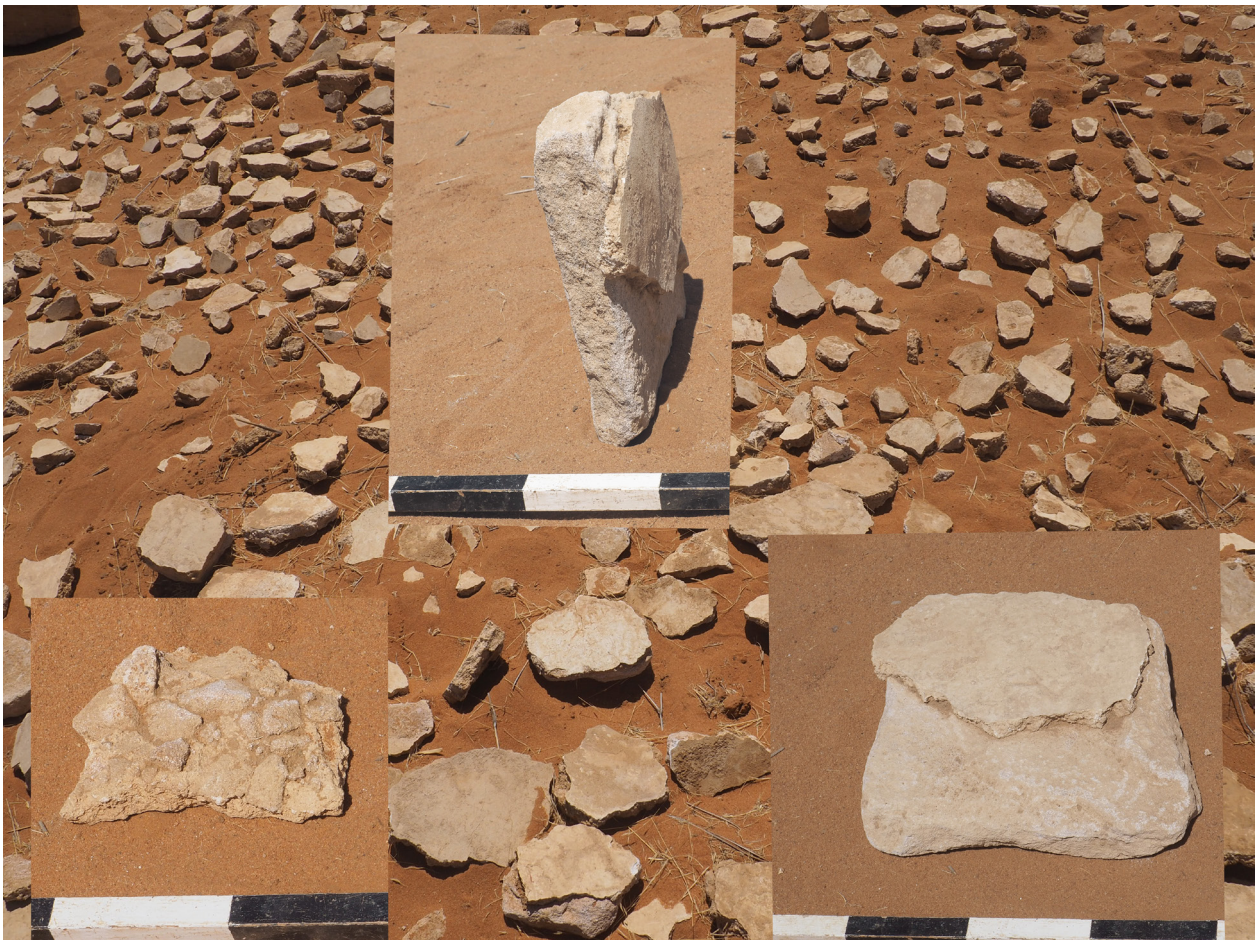


Figure 9. Sample of flat stones covered with plaster from Room 1012, part of the collapsed ceiling (© Naga Project).



Figure 10. Floor of Room 109 in the Amun temple. In the foreground the remains of beams, which had carried the roof construction, are still visible (© Naga Project).

and 12). Surprisingly, on this level many blocks, or fragments thereof, with relief decoration were found. After locating and removing the blocks it became clear that this room had been decorated with extensive painted reliefs, these having collapsed onto the floor, mostly face down, so that the pigments of the paintings had discoloured the floor. Although many of the blocks had lost their colour over time, some are preserved in an almost pristine state showing for the first time the actual colourful state of the reliefs, which in other buildings in Naga (i.e., the Amun temple) are not so well-preserved. The 87 relief blocks that survived in the sand and rubble when completely preserved, varied in size but not to a great extent averaging about 395x260mm, and almost all have, even if very miniscule, paint remains of mostly red and yellow colour. A small selection of the decorated blocks found will be presented here.

Already in 1997, when the first blocks were found on the surface of Building 1000, it was clear that the walls of the rooms must have been decorated at two different scales: one of major large size scenes and a second smaller relief series. This is well known at Naga from other temples, for example 200 (Kuckertz 2021, 191), and 300 (Gamer-Wallert, 1983, Bl. 11b-3). The themes represented suggest two different registers. Interesting to note is that of the smaller scale decoration scheme, most blocks have only the upper parts of figures preserved, whereas the blocks of the large size scene contain parts of reliefs from the middle and lower part of figures. A planned analysis of the proportions of the different representations shown on the blocks may lead to an evaluation of the height of the figures and the original walls.

The first block (264x268mm; Figure 13) discovered is only decorated with a palm staff connected to an ankh sign. It is arranged diagonally across the block and fills the entire face, and therefore, is a block from the large size decoration. So far parallels found at Naga (Figure 14) show that this sceptre is only carried by the king or queen (for example in the Lion temple (Gamer-Wallert 1983, bl. 6a-2)). Other examples of

the contemporary buildings.

As already mentioned at the beginning, many blocks bear stone carving marks or brands (Karberg 2020). These are without exception blocks that were later invisible, i.e., all sandstone blocks of the uppermost foundation layer. The same is true of the podium blocks if at this level the blocks were later invisible, as this would be the case on the east side after the ramp had been built. This also shows very nicely that the building plan was clearly outlined from the beginning. Construction was time-efficient and economical by not working off the bosses on the parts later covered, by placing the marks on these stones. On the other hand, this also shows that it was essential to have these markers on the individual stone blocks. This, and their setting in the building, make it clear that the applied marks do not designate a special place for shoring but served only for the apparently necessary counting of the blocks of a work troop unit. At Building 1000, 14 different types of sign groups were found.

The blocks in Room 1012

After the removal of rubble an amazing amount of red ochre discolouration, mixed with a smaller amount of yellow and blue-green pigments, was noted in the sand (see Figures 8

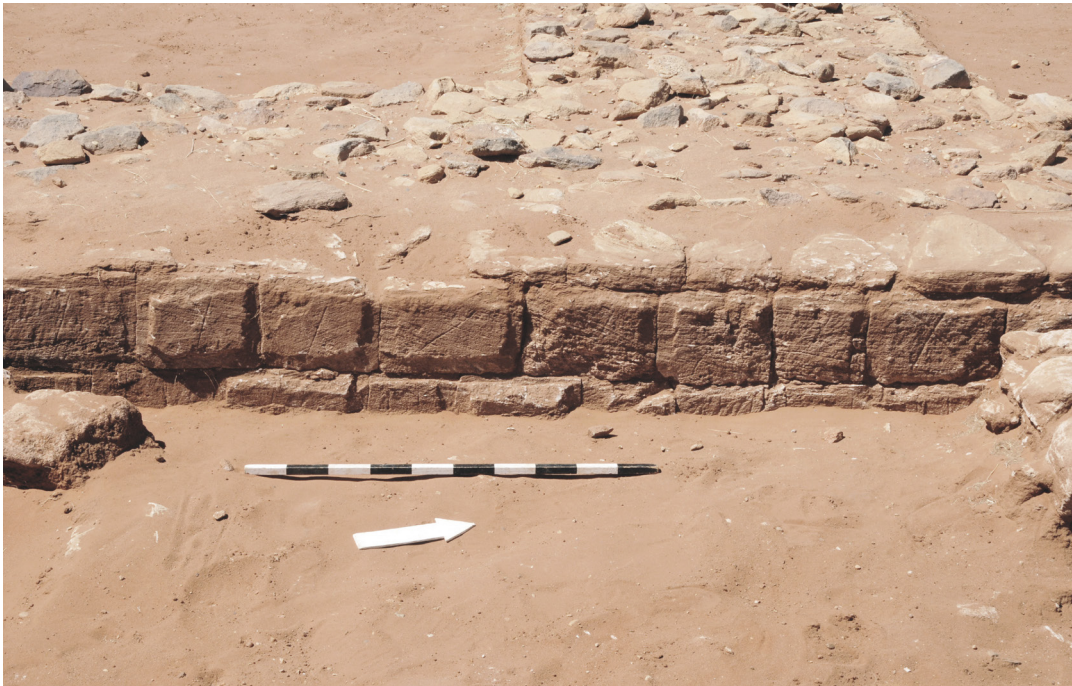


Figure 11. View of the roughly hewn stones with bosses left *in situ* since it was known and planned by the builders that this section would be invisible. Also engraved mason marks on the lower stone in Room 1012 (© Naga Project).



Figure 12. Floor of Room 1012 after removal of rubble. Very strong discolouration of the surface is evident throughout the floor level due to disintegrated painted wall decoration (© Naga Project).



Figure 13. Block with raised relief of a palm sceptre with *ankh* sign (© Naga Project).

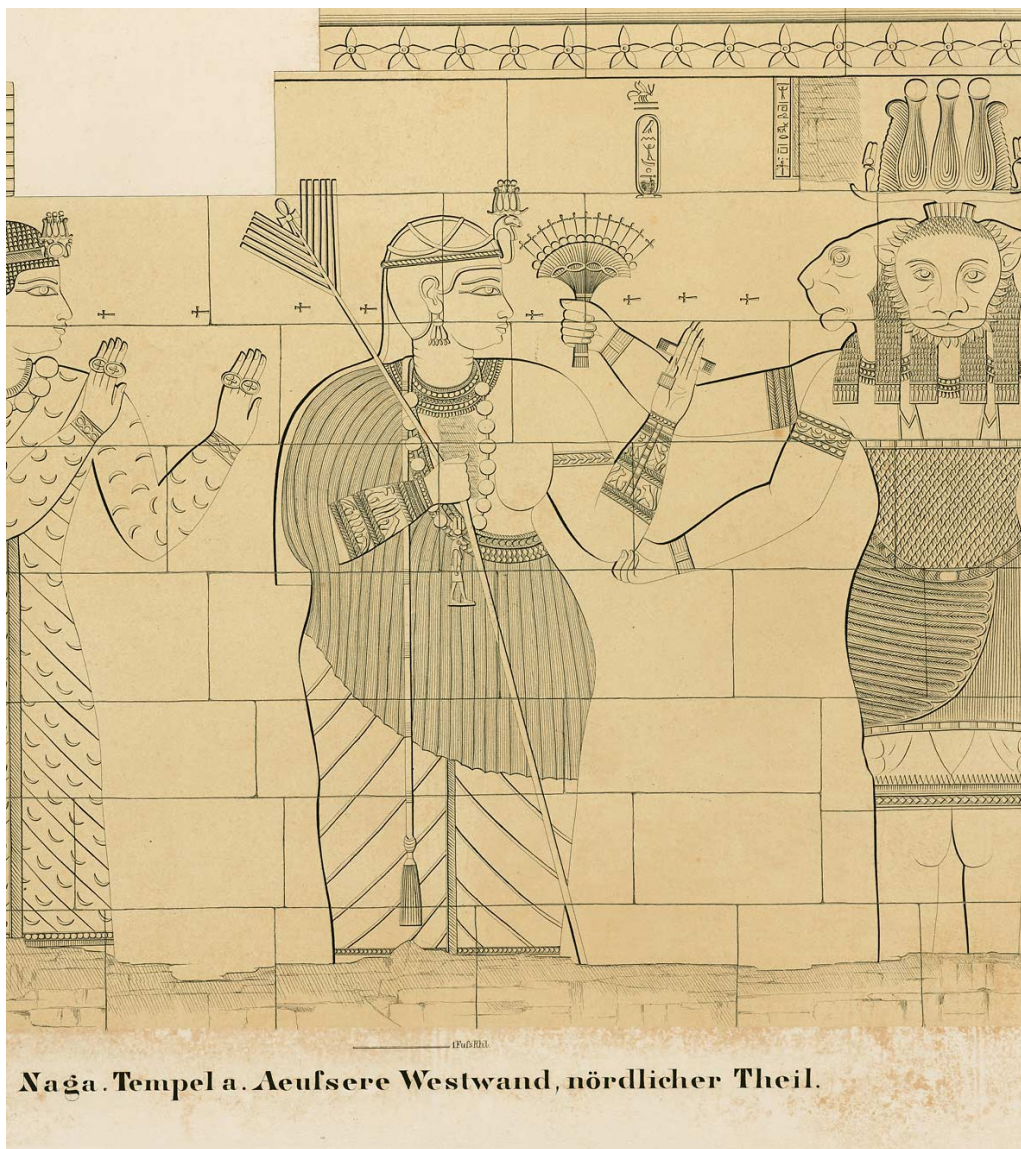


Figure 14. The sceptre in use by the king and queen in the Lion temple in Naga (Lepsius 1885-1889, Abtg. V.B. 59).

the large-scale decoration are the two blocks 1000.0021 and 1000.0023 (483x270mm, 291x288mm).

On both blocks (Figures 15 and 17) parts of panther skin are seen which in Naga can be worn by the king and queen during ceremonial rites; for example, in the Amun temple (Figures 16 and 18). On the block in Figure 15, only the paws, right and left, as well as part of a panther head in the middle are preserved. These are usually visible just below the waistline of the wearer. Various blocks with smaller scale decoration represent mostly the upper part of female figures/goddesses facing from right to left in a procession probably similar to representations in many temples.

For example, the preserved decoration on Blocks 1000.0002, 0007 and 0043 show female goddesses facing to the right, each with a different crown. Block 1000.0002 shows a well-preserved relief of a female with the double crown, probably Mut, and a second figure further to the right (Figures 19 and 20) incompletely preserved, probably a male. Block 1000.0007, which is only partly preserved (Figures 21 and 22) nevertheless, shows part of a female figure wearing a crown consisting of horns and probably a sun disk (273x213mm). This headdress is generally assigned to the goddess Hathor, however various



Figure 15. Block with the lower part of a figure wearing a panther skin (© Naga Project).

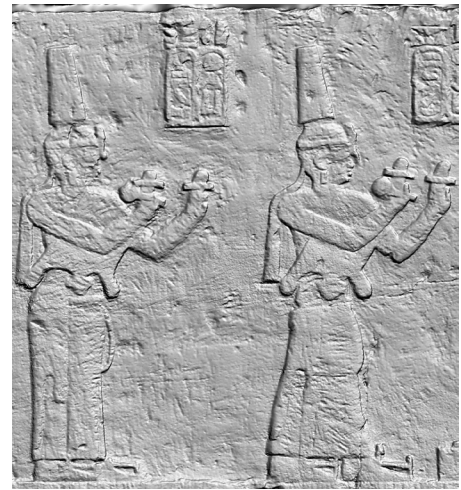


Figure 16. Comparative views of the wearing of a panther skin as shown on Architrave B in the Amun temple Naga (© Naga Project).



Figure 17. Block with the lower part of a figure wearing a panther skin of which only one paw is visible along with part of the garment with a tassel (© Naga Project).

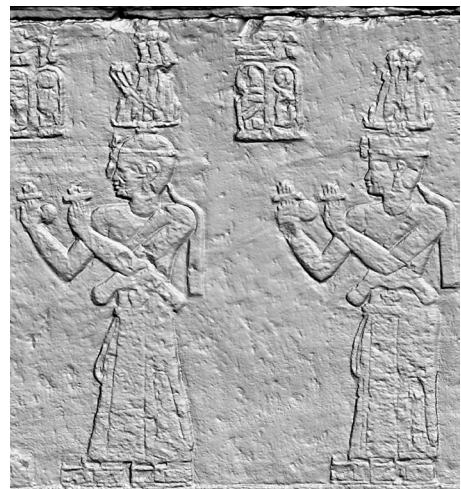


Figure 18. Comparative views for Figure 17; from Architrave A of the Amun temple (© Naga Project).



Figure 19. Block 1000.0002 (© Naga Project).

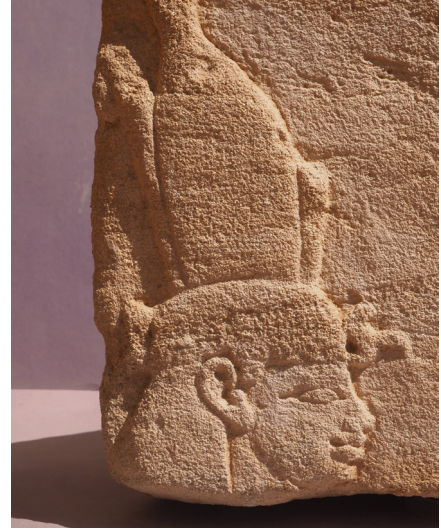


Figure 20. Block 1000.0002 detail (© Naga Project).



Figure 21. Block 1000.0007 (© Naga Project).

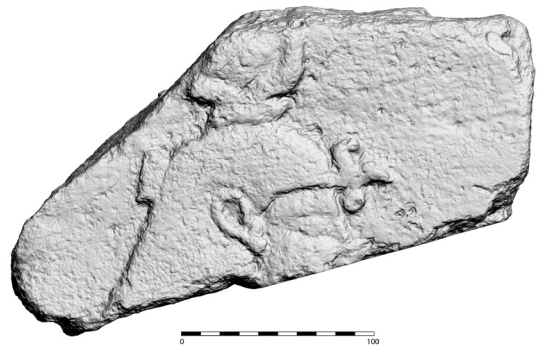


Figure 22. Block 1000.0007 (scan by T. Bauer Trigon Art).



Figures 23. Block1000.0043 (© Naga project).



Figure 24. Block1000.0043 (scan by T. Bauer Trigon Art).



Figure 25. Comparative views of scenes from the sanctuary in the Amun temple (© Naga Project).

goddesses including Isis and even the queen herself can also be represented with this feature (Kuckertz 2021, 164). Better preserved is Block 1000.0043, where the female figure is again facing to the right and follows a male figure wearing the red crown (Figures 23 and 24). The goddess or queen has a crown of two large feathers possibly combined with a sun disc, a combination which may also represent Hathor, Isis, or the queen. The whole scene is very similar to one found on the north wall of the sanctuary of the Amun temple where the queen and king are moving toward the god presenting him with the red crown (Figure 25).

The most unusual block is no. 1000.0049 (preserved size 396x217mm). It is part of the smaller scale scene fitting the above-mentioned blocks but certainly represents the central figure of the scheme.

A female figure, astoundingly, is shown in a unique three-quarter view. She wears a yellow, tightly fitted dress partly emphasised by red lines over which a red shawl is placed that covers the shoulders. The shawl is bound together at the front between the breasts in the so-called 'Isis knot', the top of which can just be seen above the break in the stone (Figures 26 and 27). The female depicted can clearly be identified, according to the hair style and the characteristic garment, as a representation of the goddess Isis (Wildung 2001, 328; 2018, 98ff.).

The hair is painted black with inner details added to produce the typical corkscrew curls of Isis leaving the ears free. The slight turn of the face to the right is emphasised by a small difference in the size of the ears, which are also shown in a perspective view. Even details such as the eyelashes are still preserved. A further accentuation of the three-quarter view is the fact that her locks are placed in front of the right shoulder whereas the locks of the left side are behind the shoulder. On top of the hair, above the forehead, a smooth yellow diadem with a centrally placed round decoration plaque in blue is seen. It is unclear if



Figure 26. Block 1000.0049 (© Naga Project).



Figure 27. Negative of the relief of Block 1000.0049 on the floor in 1012 (© Naga Project).



Figure 28. Blocks with star frieze from the upper part of the wall (© Naga Project).



Figure 29. Blocks with papyrus plants alternating with ankh-signs probably from the lower part of a doorway, as was found also in Temple 1200 at Naga (Kroeper 2019).

she had any other adornment, i.e., a crown or some such, on top of the head. Perhaps a bracelet was worn on the left upper arm since there are some small traces of blue/green paint just visible.

The face is rendered soft and voluptuous as are the breasts and arms, corresponding to many of the pictural representations of Queen Amanitore, who is often shown slightly plump and full. Horizontal neck folds added in strong curved red lines reinforce this impression. This extraordinary picture of Isis is practically a relief version of the faience statue of Isis found in the Amun temple (Wildung 2018, 98 ff.). The left arm is raised toward the figure approaching from the left; perhaps she even places her hand on this shoulder, a welcoming gesture known from various temple decorations at Naga and elsewhere. Of the second person on the right, only one hand holding a sceptre and part of the shoulder is preserved. The state of preservation of the block is amazing considering how long it has rested face down in the sand and rubble. Equally astounding is the fact that after removing the stone an impression of the face with its painting was found in the sand as a negative (Figure 27), and after many hours of restorative work, this impression was also salvaged.



Figure 30. Uraeus frieze with thick layers of yellow ochre preserved (© Naga Project).

Architectural features belonging to the upper edge of the temple including cavetto, cornices, torus, and tooth mouldings as well as star frieze and doorway blocks were also preserved (Figures 28 and 29).

The best-preserved architectural feature consisted of eight large blocks with an uraeus decoration with very thickly applied yellow paint. Details of the snake markings were added in dark red paint (Figure 30). Unfortunately, no traces of inscriptions were found; these were possibly only applied with paint.

Summary

Although Building N1000 is eroded down to the foundations, not only can the individual rooms be reconstructed, but also the roof construction of the central room and part of the wall decoration. Thus, Room 1012 can indeed be considered as a stroke of luck, because here all the architectural and decorative steps can be followed, starting with the foundation trench, and continuing through the masonry, up to the construction of the roof.

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