What Was Left Behind: A study of the temple of Ptah at Gerf Hussein and the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia

Bor, Margit

What Was Left Behind

A study of the temple of Ptah at Gerf Hussein and the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia

Author: M.E. Bor

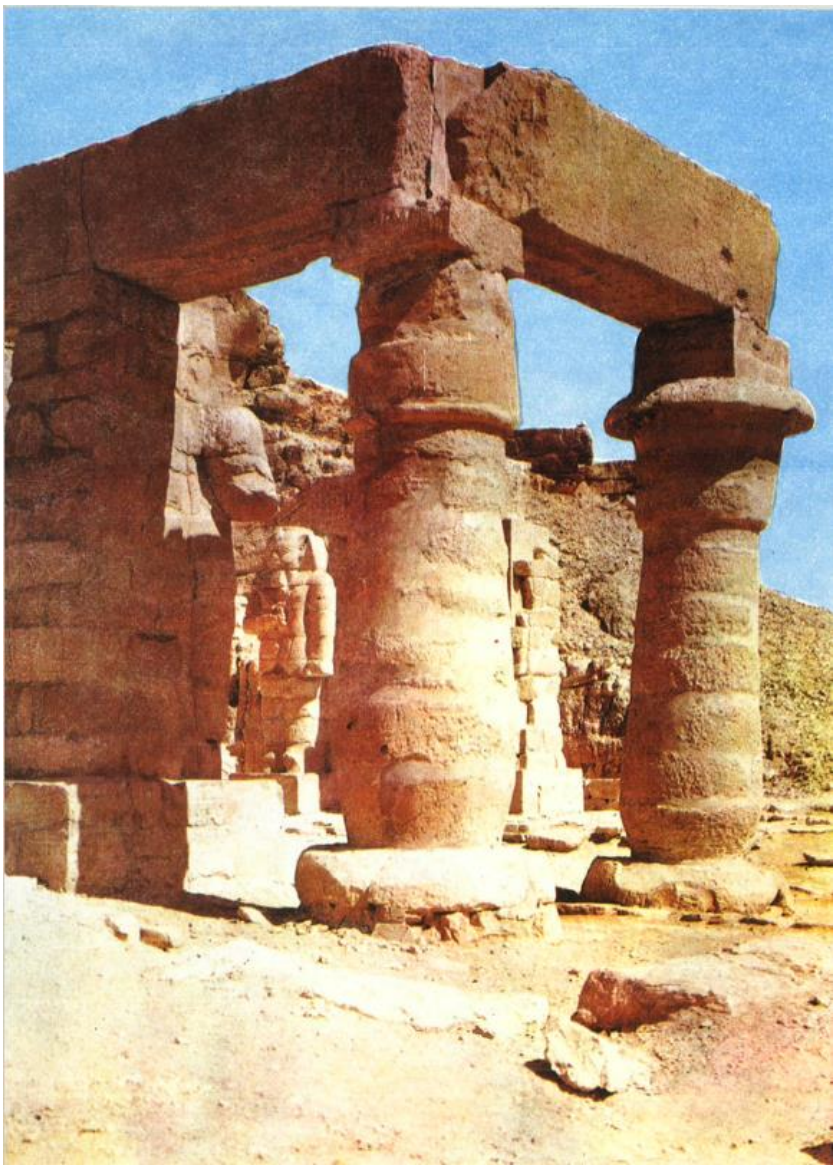

*Image on title page: Side view of the courtyard of Gerf Hussein. (*El-Tanbouli, M.A.L., *Garf Hussein* 1965, 29)

What Was Left Behind: A study of the temple of Ptah at Gerf Hussein and the International Rescue Nubia Campaign

M.E. Bor (s1833006)

s1833006@vuw.leidenuniv.nl

Supervisor: O.E. Kaper

Date: 24-12-2021 (first version)

Master Thesis Classics and Ancient Civilizations

University of Leiden, Faculty of Humanities

Abstract

The International Campaign for Safeguarding the Nubian Monuments remains the biggest rescue operation ever undertaken. The campaign, initiated in a reaction to the building of the Aswan High Dam, resulted in many Nubian monuments being saved from the rising waters. However, not all monuments could be rescued. One of these monuments was the temple of Ptah at Gerf Hussein. Of this rock-cut temple, only the courtyard could be rescued. This paper means to investigate the factors that could have played a role in UNESCO's decision to only partially rescue the temple. As the temple is now completely submerged under the waters of Lake Nasser, literary research remains the only available avenue. The most important resource for the investigation is the series written by M.A.L. El-Tanbouli called the *Collection Scientifique*, which is the only complete documentation of the temple of Gerf Hussein that was ever made. Something else that needed to be investigated was whether there were any other temples that were only partially rescued. These temples turned out to be the chapels of Qasr Ibrim and the chapel of Horemheb at Abu Oda.

Similarities between Qasr Ibrim and Gerf Hussein include their apparently rather unimpressive nature, as well as a general poor state of preservation. Both the chapels of Qasr Ibrim and the temple of Gerf Hussein were rock-cut. Similarities between Abu Oda and Gerf Hussein include the poor quality of the sandstone. Abu Oda was also rather small. However, Abu Oda and Gerf Hussein are described in very different ways in most literature. Whereas Abu Oda is most often described as having been very elegant and beautiful, Gerf Hussein is described as rather visually unappealing. This could be due to the rather Nubian character of Gerf Hussein when compared to Abu Oda, which may have been frowned upon by the archaeologists of the 20th century.

This unappealing nature of Gerf Hussein may have been a factor in the process of decision-making. Other factors may include a lack of funding and the poor quality of the sandstone. All these factors result in the fact that besides the courtyard, only 22 blocks of reliefs and one single statue were rescued.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Throughout the history of archaeology, there have been many excavations and a fair number thereof have been rescue operations. However, none of these have been as big as the very first rescue excavation: the International Campaign for Safeguarding the Nubian Monuments. This campaign, which took place in the valley of what is now Lake Nasser, is responsible for rescuing many monuments, chief among them being the temples of Abu Simbel and Philae. In addition, a large number of monuments were documented, including those that could not be saved such as the famous temple of Ptah at Gerf Hussein

1.1. Research question

The decision of which temples to save and which temples to leave must not have been an easy one, that led to many debates in the confidence that UNESCO likely did the best they could under the circumstances, I still believe it is important to critically examine the decision ultimately made by the people involved, as I think it is important to remain aware of which influences played a part in the decision-making process. To this end, this paper will focus on the following research question:

What factors influenced the decision made by UNESCO and the Egyptian Ministry to not rescue the temple at Gerf Hussein during the International Campaign for Safeguarding the Nubian Monuments?

To answer the research question, several sub questions will also need to be considered:

What is the historical significance of Gerf Hussein?

This first sub question is important, as this could explain the priority UNESCO assigned to the relocation of the temple at Gerf Hussein. If the temple was considered less important than other sites, such as Abu Simbel, that could explain why it was only partly rescued. Furthermore, this might also mean that time would have played a role in the decision made by UNESCO, as, if Gerf Hussein was low on the list of priorities, it could mean that UNESCO was simply not able to start work on the temple in time to rescue it completely.

Were any excavations ever done at the temple at Gerf Hussein and how were these documented?

Besides historical significance, the site may also have had archaeological importance due to excavations and documentation thereof. By assessing the quantity and quality of potential

excavations, further insight into the priority of the temple at Gerf Hussein, given by UNESCO, will be gained.

Are there any other temples that were not or only partially rescued and if so, are there any similarities between these temples and the temple of Gerf Hussein?

This question is important to consider, as it could provide a glimpse into the thought process of UNESCO when deciding which monuments to save and which to leave. If there are other monuments that were left by UNESCO then this would create the possibility for a comparison between the temple at Gerf Hussein and these monuments. Any similarities that might crop up could then be used to get a better understanding of UNESCO's motivations when they made the decision to partly leave the temple at Gerf Hussein in the valley.

1.2. The International Campaign for Safeguarding the Nubian Monuments

In 1954, a survey had been conducted in Nubia, which was aimed at finding and documenting monuments in Nubia that may be in danger of submersion due to plans of the Egyptian government to build the Aswan High Dam[1]. Four years later, in 1958, this resulted in the conception of the International Campaign for Safeguarding the Nubian Monuments. The Egyptian Minister of Culture, Saroite Okasha, met with the Assistant-Director of UNESCO, René Maheu, to implore them to take action against the potential destruction of so many valuable monuments[2]. UNESCO agreed.

However, there was a major problem with funding, as neither UNESCO nor Egypt had enough funds for such a big project. The project was thus mostly reliant on donations from UNESCO's member states and private donations[3]. In exchange for excavation privileges, such as getting to keep 50% of all excavated objects for their own museums, several Member States set up expeditions in the valley. The possibility of donating a temple or other monument to these participating Member States as thanks was also considered, an offer that would later be confirmed by Okasha[4].

Some political issues rose as well. The campaign having been organised at the start of the Cold War, it was perhaps to be expected that the United States and Russia would have been at odds with one another. Both countries refused to provide funding for the campaign[5]. Despite this, several American universities did send expeditions to Egypt[6]. As other countries had started paying their voluntary

[1] Okasha, S., 'Ramesses Recrowned: The International Campaign To Preserve The Monuments Of Nubia, 1959-68'. *Offerings to the Discerning Eye* 2010, 224.
[2] Hassan 2007, 79.
[3] Fahim, H.M., *Dams, People and Development,* Pergamon Press, 1981, 35; Hassan 2007, 83.
[4] Save-Söderbergh, T., *Temples and Tombs of Ancient Nubia* 1987, 69-70.
[5] Desroches-Noblecourt, Ch. *La Grande Nubiade* 1992, 236.
[6] Desroches-Noblecourt 1992, 233.

contributions at this point as well, the 'loss' of official funding of the Soviet Republic and the United States did not delay the campaign by much[7].

The campaign was a first of its kind in several aspects. It was the first ever large-scale rescue campaign undertaken by UNESCO, as well as the first instance of a country or state asking for outside help in preserving its monuments. Before this campaign, it was often considered the responsibility of the state to care for the monuments that might be located within its borders[8].

As the building of the Aswan High Dam was set to start in 1960, some urgency was necessary. In 1959, during their 54th session, the Executive Board of UNESCO confirmed their support for the campaign. A team of experts was subsequently sent to Nubia to gather information on the best course of action. They came up with a number of immediate points. For example, they recommended that an office be set up that would be solely focused on safeguarding the monuments of Nubia. They also recommended the taking of aerial photographs of Egyptian Nubia, as well as another meeting of experts in Nubia to be held later that year. During that meeting, held in October 1959, Okasha revealed the temples that would be available for donation to the States making the highest contributions to the campaign. These temples were the temples of Debod, Taffa, Dendur, Derr and Ellesiya[9]. A number of statues and reliefs were also put up for donation. During that same meeting, the most effective rescue methods were debated for each site, for which they followed the reports of the previous expert missions to Nubia. A worldwide appeal for help followed this mission, which was a tremendous success. Finally, in the summer of 1960, the work in Nubia began with the dismantling of the temples of Debod and Taffa, as well as the kiosk at Qertassi.

The period between 1961 and 1963 was the least active of the campaign, as both engineers and campaign leaders were still trying to figure out how to best dismantle and move certain temples, and actual funding proved slow to come in[10]. With German aid, the temple of Kalabsha was dismantled and rebuilt in 1962. In 1963, the final decision was made in regards to the dismantling of the biggest temple of all: Abu Simbel. Work here was started in 1964, the same year in which the waters that were created by the Aswan High Dam slowly started to rise. Also in 1964, during the summer months, the work on Gerf Hussein was started and completed, the forecourt was transferred to safer place and some of the reliefs taken out. From 1964 onwards, the campaign was officially a race against the water. Work on Abu Simbel would last until 1968. The Aswan High Dam was finished a

[77] Desroches-Noblecourt 1992, 236-237.
[8] Save-Söderbergh 1987, 68.
[9] Of these five, all but one were eventually actually donated. The temple of Derr, for some reason, remains the exception.
[10] Save-Söderbergh 1987, 100.

year later, in 1969. However, the campaign was not finished yet. In 1968, the Committee greenlighted the project of rescuing the temples of Philae. Work on these temples was not started until 1972, as it took a while to get the desired funding. By 1977, reconstruction of the temples of Philae on the island of Agilkia had started and 1980, after this was finished, the campaign was officially at an end[11].

The aftermath of the Campaign was many-fold: the principle of 'world heritage' received a lot of positive attention following the UNESCO Campaign, culminating in the establishing of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in 1972. Furthermore, the campaign greatly increased interest into Nubian archaeology. The International Society for Nubian Studies, established in 1972, is a good example of that. It also brought the attention of the world to the negative side-effects of building projects such as the Aswan High Dam[12]. Countries became better aware of their heritage. For Egypt, this was demonstrated during the building of the Merowe Dam, which started in 2002. However, before the building of the dam was even started, an archaeological expedition had already been sent to the area that was to be flooded to rescue the archaeology located there[13]. Other rescue operations were also started because of the success of the UNESCO Campaign[14][15].

[11] Save-Söderbergh 1987, 185.
[12] Hassan 2007, 89.
[13] Paner, H., *Nubian Rock Art,* Oxford University Press, 2021, 1094.
[14] Hassan 2007, 89.
[15] A summarized version of the timeline of the campaign can be found under Appendix 1.

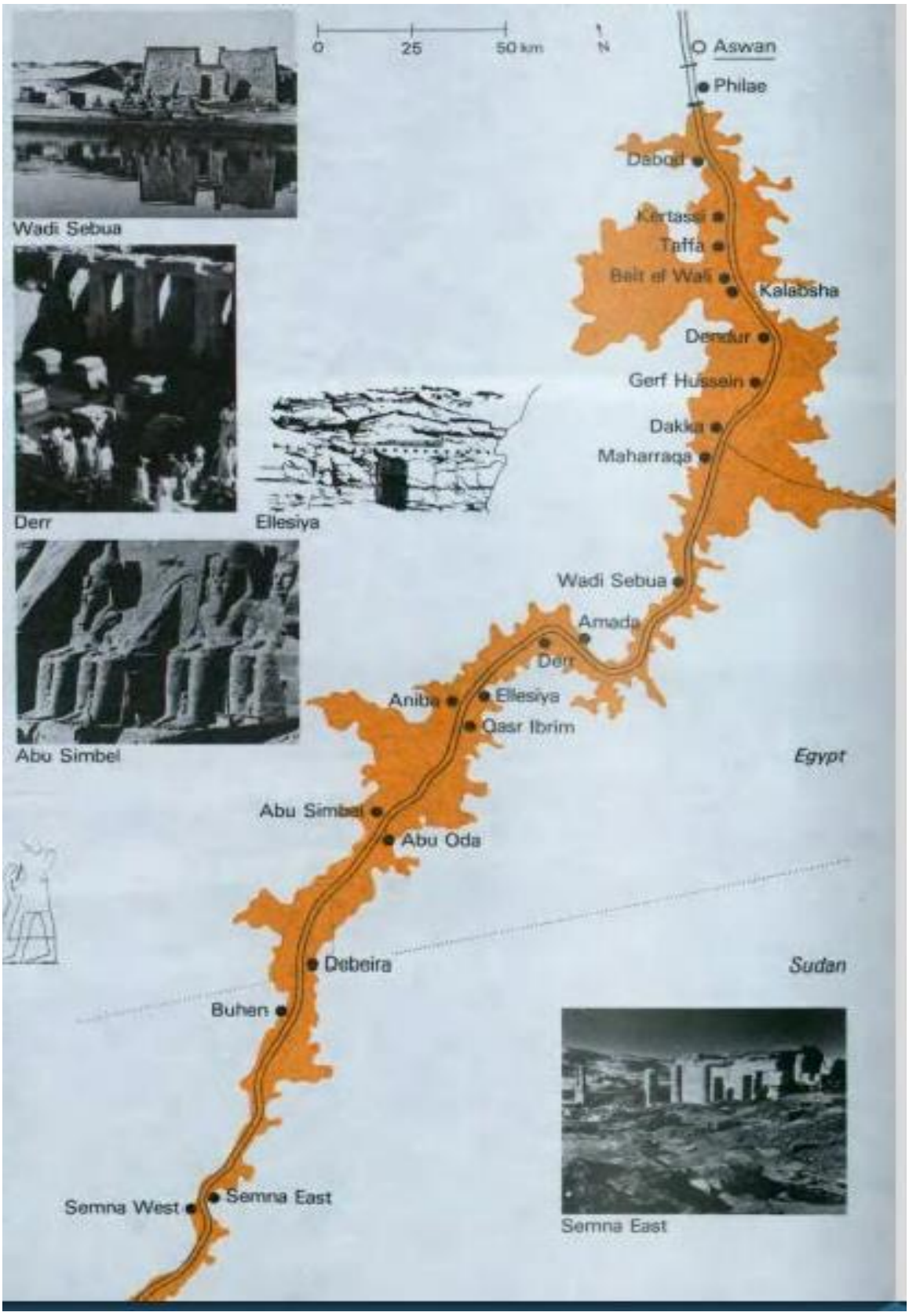

Figure 1: A map of the monuments threatened by the rising waters. (Mohamed, S.A., Victory in Nubia: Egypt*, in The Unesco Courier 1980 33, 14).*

2. The temple of Ptah

2.1. Description of the site

The temple of Ptah at Gerf Hussein was originally located on the left bank of the Nile, 87 kilometres south of the First Cataract (Figure 1). The temple was about 30 metres wide at its widest point and about 60 metres in length from front to back[16].

It was built by Viceroy Setau of Nubia, in honour and dedication of pharaoh Ramesses II[17]. The temple had a free-standing courtyard and a rock-cut inner sanctuary and was dedicated to four separate deities: Ptah, Ptah-Tatenen, Hathor and Ramesses II[18]. Seated cult statues of these four deities could be found at the back of the sanctuary chamber[19]. These four were not the only deities depicted inside the temple. Scenes on the walls of the temple show Ramesses II standing before a variety of deities, including Horus, Amon, Mut and Khnum[20]. The temple was oriented east-west, according to the traditional Egyptian way[21]. A row of sphinxes lined the pathway leading to the temple[22]. However, the temple also shows traces of non-Egyptian cultures[23].

Only one full excavation of the temple was ever done. In 1960, the Centre de Documentation et d'Etudes sur l'Ancienne Egypte (CEDAE)[24] undertook a large-scale campaign aiming to document the entire temple. This documentation campaign lasted until 1964. They reported that the state of preservation of the temple made complete excavation impossible, although they rescued as much as they could before the temple was claimed by the waters of Lake Nasser[25]. It seems El-Tanbouli focused more on the reliefs and drawings inside the temple than on excavating outside of the temple, so the only excavating done during the campaign was done with the purpose of rescue in mind. From the temple, the entire courtyard, as well as 22 blocks of the best-looking reliefs and a

[16] Tadema, A.A., B. Tadema-Sporry. *Operatie Farao's: Egypte's tempels gered!* Bussum, 1977, 126.
[17] Tadema and Tadema-Sporry 1977, 124; Waziri 2019, ix
[18] The Egyptian name of the temple is *pr ptḥ*, which is why I will only be referring to it as the temple of Ptah (Tadema and Tadema-Sporry 1977, 124).
[19] Waziri 2019, ix; Wilkinson 2000, 219.
[20] El-Tanbouli 1965, 22.
[21] Hein, I., *Die ramessidische Bautätigkeit in Nubien* 1991, 9.
[22] Desroches-Noblecourt, *Le secret des temples de la Nubie* 1999, 255
[23] El-Tanbouli 1965, 13. Unfortunately, he does not mention what kind of traces he means. Further on in this paper, this topic will be discussed further.
[24] In English: Centre on Documentation and Studies on Ancient Egypt, or CSDAE in short. As the French title is the original one, I will be using that in this paper.
[25] El-Tanbouli, M.A.L., 1965. *Garf Hussein*, 1-2.; Tadema and Tadema-Sporry 1977, 124.

single Osirian[26] statue of Ramesses II were rescued (Figure 2). These parts of the temple now stand at New Kalabsha[27], while the reliefs were to be put on display in the Nubian Museum at Aswan[28].

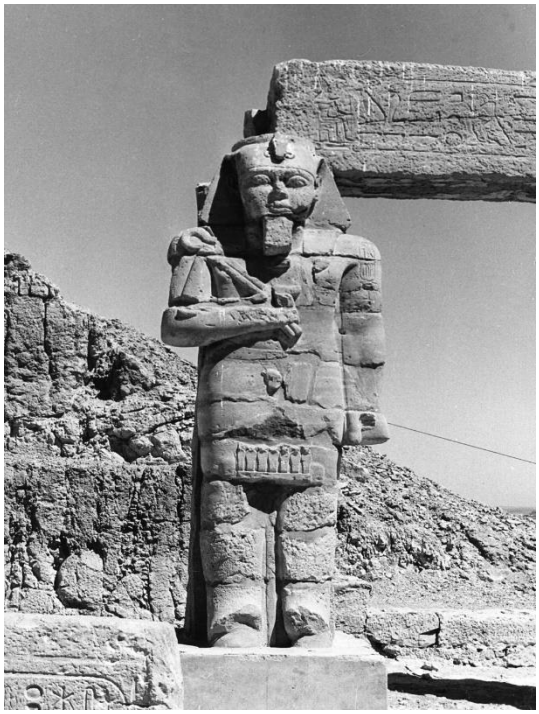

Figure 2: the rescued statue of Ramesses II, that once stood in the courtyard of the temple of Gerf Hussein.(https://en.unesco.org)

[26] Osirian here points to the position the statues were in, which was evocative of statues of Osiris (Desroches-Noblecourt 1999, 255).
[27] El-Tanbouli e.a. 1974, 14-15; Tadema and Tadema-Sporry, 1977, 124.
[28] Waziri 2019, ix.

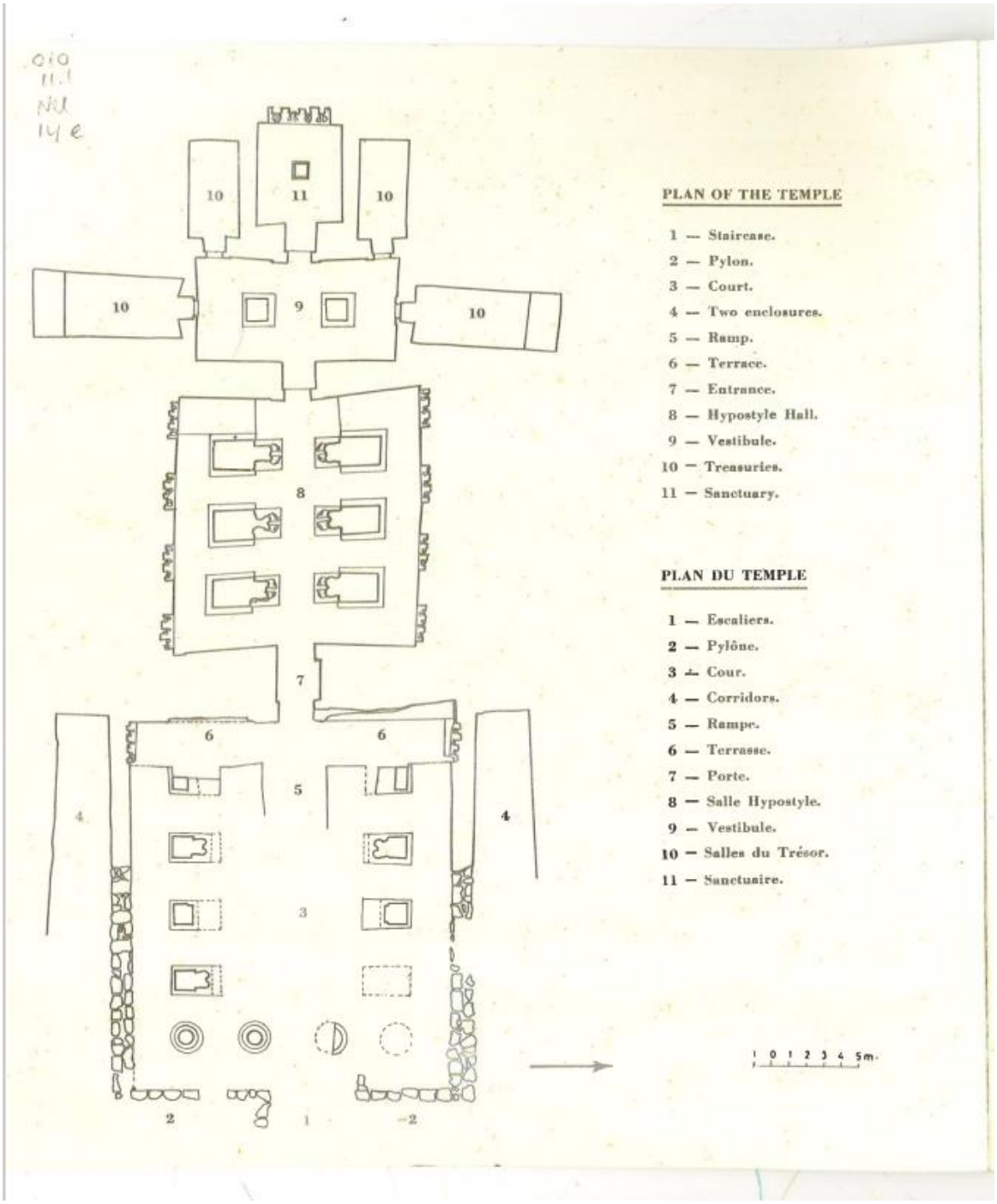

Figure 3: the lay-out of the temple of Gerf Hussein. (El-Tanbouli 1965, 1).

2.2. Description of the temple

Thanks to the CEDAE, a very detailed description of the interior of the temple at Gerf Hussein can still be reconstructed.

2.2.1. The courtyard

The courtyard, indicated by number 3 on the lay-out in Figure 3, is the only part of the temple rescued in full, and now stands at New Kalabsha. Two enclosed areas flanked the courtyard in the north and the south and traces of a staircase in front of the entrance can still be seen. The first thing a person would see if they were to enter the courtyard would be a row of four pillars, topped by a ceiling that shows scenes adorned with hieroglyphs. There are three other groups of pillars on the other sides of the courtyard[29]. All contain hieroglyphs and scenes, as well as traces of statues. Unfortunately, a lot of these scenes too badly eroded for the researchers to decipher clearly[30].

The scene on the architrave surmounting the pillars shows Ramesses II subduing a captive (Figure 4). The other scenes show Ramesses II in the company of several divinities[31]. For example, the hieroglyphs on the inside of the abacus show the king, Ramesses II, standing with Ptah-Tatenen. Because the hieroglyphs were on the inside, El-Tanbouli theorized that the temple had an open roof[32]. On the western face of the abacus a cartouche of Ramesses II can still be seen, though any other decoration has eroded[33].

Figure 4: Ramesses II subduing a captive. (El-Tanbouli 1965, 35).

Behind the row of pillars stands the court, with two rows of six columns on either side. Three of those columns still contain remains of statues of Ramesses II, of which the one resting against the first southern column is the most complete. Of the others, only the legs remain. It seems reasonable to assume that the remaining columns also had statues of Ramesses II resting against them. Cartouches of the king adorned the statue's shoulders and belt[34]. The column itself shows two scenes. The upper scene shows Ramesses II offering to the god Amon. The king is recognizable through his *khepresh* crown, his name is engraved next to him. The lower scene shows Ramesses II

[29] El-Tanbouli 1965, 17.
[30] El-Tanbouli 1965, 17.
[31] El-Tanbouli 1965, 17.
[32] El-Tanbouli, M.A.F. and A.F. Sadek, *Garf Hussein II: la cour et l'entrée du speos,* 1974, 2.
[33] El-Tanbouli and Sadek, 1974, 3.
[34] El-Tanbouli and Sadek 1974, 3.

again, this time offering bread to Ptah-Tatenen[35]. Other columns show similar scenes, with different divinities, although most are significantly eroded.

At the back of the court stands a ramp leading to the terrace. The ramp was flanked by two niches. In the niches stand rock-carved statues. The southern niche shows Ramesses II standing between Ptah and a goddess who was probably Ptah's consort. This niche is shown in Figure 5. The northern niche is of a similar style as the southern niche[36].

Figure 5: the niche on the south side of the terrace. Only the legs of the statues remained. (El-Tanbouli 1965, 36).

2.2.2. The hypostyle hall

Behind the terrace stands the entrance to the temple, the scenes around which were badly damaged[37]. Behind the entrance, the first rock-cut part of the temple can be accessed: a large chamber filled with pillars. The hall measures about 6.4 metres in height at the highest point and 7.4 metres in width. The ceiling is divided into three distinct sections, a higher area in the centre and two bays to each side[38].

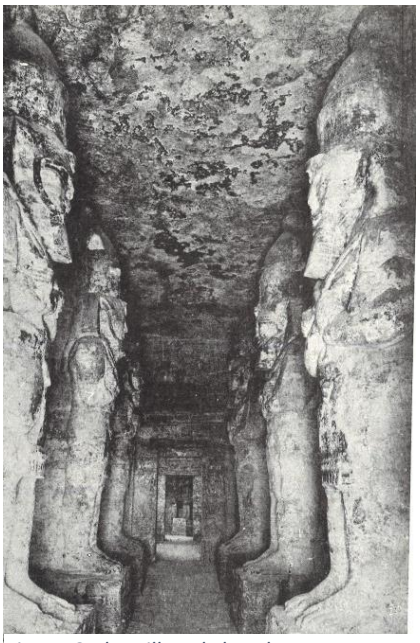

Figure 6: the pillared chamber or hypostyle hall, with the rows of pillars. (El-Tanbouli 1965, 43).

The hall contains six pillars, standing in rows of three. All pillars have statues of Ramesses II in front of them, all in the same position. The king is pictured wearing the *nemes* and the double crown that signify him as a pharaoh. In his hands he holds the symbols of Power and Protection and his name is once again inscribed on his belt buckle[39]. All statues seem to pitch forward slightly, though the reason for that is unknown. This leaning is also visible in a picture El-Tanbouli's team took of the hall, which can be seen in Figure 6. El-Tanbouli mentions that the leaning of the statues could be because of the nature of the rock[40]. These statues seem to have been made in the same style as the ones in

[35] El-Tanbouli and Sadek 1974, 4.
[36] El-Tanbouli 1965, 17-18; El-Tanbouli and Sadek 1974, 12-13. El-Tanbouli further described the style of the statues as *fruste*, meaning 'crude'. It can be assumed the statues were not in the best state.
[37] El-Tanbouli 1974, 19.
[38] El-Tanbouli, M.A.F., Ch. Kuentz and A.A. Sadek, *Garf Hussein III: La Grande Salle (E). Mur Est – Piliers et colosses*, 1975, 1.
[39] El-Tanbouli 1965, 17-18; El-Tanbouli e.a. 1975, 1-2.
[40] El-Tanbouli 1965, 18.

the courtyard, though El-Tanbouli mentions that one of them seemed to be 'better-looking' than all the others, which led him to believe that that one was at least refined by an artist, though why none of the other statues seem to have had this treatment is unknown[41]. The statue can be seen in Figure 7. He also remarks that the form seems more reminiscent of what he considers 'primitive local Nubian art' than 'pure Egyptian art'. More statues can be found in four niches situated along the north and south walls of the hall, each containing Ramesses II standing between two divinities[42].

Figure 7: the 'better-looking' statue. El-Tanbouli draws attention to the details in its face. (El-Tanbouli 1965, 44).

The hypostyle hall seemed to have been in a terrible state. The entire surface area was covered in a layer of filth, due to a large number of bats, insects and birds having made their homes inside the temple for many years at the point of El-Tanbouli's documentation. Even after cleaning, a large number of holes and cracks remained along the walls, ceiling, statues and pillars and most of the plaster layer had fallen off[43].

Fortunately, a fair amount of the decorations was still recognizable. The walls of the hall were decorated with sunken reliefs and inscriptions, all decorated with various colours which were still preserved. On the eastern wall two scenes could be distinguished. On the scene to the right of the gateway, Ramesses II could be seen standing between Amon and his wife Mut[44]. The vulture that represents Nekhbet can also be seen behind the crown of the pharaoh and the deified version of Ramesses II also makes an appearance[45]. The scene was badly preserved, with the right upper part being completely destroyed. A large crack runs through the vulture and the head of the pharaoh. Amon's arms also show cracks in multiple places[46].

The second scene, on the other side of the gateway, shows Ramesses II offering incense to Re-Harachty. The goddess Ma'at and the deified version of Ramesses II can also be seen standing between them[47]. The image of the king is well preserved, with the colours still vivid. Ma'at also

[41] El-Tanbouli 1965, 18.
[42] El-Tanbouli e.a. 1975, 2. Irmgard Hein also mentions in her book how these niches demonstrate a design difference between Gerf Hussein and the other temples built by and for Ramesses II, which did not have these niches (Hein 1991, 10).
[43] El-Tanbouli e.a. 1975, 2-3.
[44] El-Tanbouli 1965, 18.
[45] The pharaoh is depicted wearing the khepresh, or 'Blue Crown'. Interestingly, it seems to be coloured red in this scene and blue in the scene on the other side.
[46] El-Tanbouli e.a. 1975, 4-5.
[47] El-Tanbouli 1965, 18.

seems to have fared pretty well, as only part of her head has been destroyed. The rest of the scene is in less good condition, as six cracks run through the upper part and the right part is also badly damaged[48].

The southern wall shows a number of scenes on the upper part, each starring Ramesses II and a god. The gods represented include Amon, Atum, Thoth, Ptah, Ptah-Tatenen and Re-Harachty[49]. The scenes are damaged by a network of cracks running downwards from the ceiling and the plaster had fallen off, revealing the rock beneath it[50]. The cracks continue down the lower part of the wall, which contains the niches mentioned earlier, as well as scenes of Ramesses II offering to the divinities depicted in the niches, which are Amon and Mut, Horus in two separate forms, as lord of Baki and Buhen[51], Ptah-Tatenen and Hathor and Ptah and Sekhmet[52].

Figure 8: a line-drawing of the scenes on the northern wall. (El-Tanbouli 1965, 63-64).

The northern wall is practically identical to the southern wall, both in the scenes depicted and the sustained damages[53], though the divinities change. The upper register shows Ramesses II offering to Khnum, Horus of Edfu, Wepwawet, Horus Lord of Seshemet and Herishef. A line-drawing made by El-Tanbouli's team is visible in Figure 8. The lower register once again contains four niches and scenes in-between. The divinities represented are Harachty and Iusa'as, Isis and Horus of Mi'am[54], Nefertem and Satef and Khnum and Anuket[55].

[48] El-Tanbouli e.a. 1975, 9.
[49] El-Tanbouli 1965, 19.
[50] El-Tanbouli, M.A.F., H. de Meulenaere and A.A. Sadek. *Gerf Hussein IV: La Grande Salle (E). Murs Sud, Nord et Ouest – les niches,* 1978, 1.
[51] Both of these forms of Horus were considered 'Nubian forms' of this specific divinity. Perhaps this is one of the 'non-Egyptian' influences mentioned by El-Tanbouli.
[52] El-Tanbouli 1965, 19.
[53] El-Tanbouli e.a. 1978, 15.
[54] Horus of Mi'am is once again a 'Nubian form' of this divinity.
[55] El-Tanbouli 1965, 19.

Finally, the western wall contains two scenes, each to one side of the gateway to the vestibule. On the left of the door stood a scene showing a triad consisting of Ramesses II wearing the Crown of the South, Ptah-Tatenen and Hathor, who was depicted with a cow's head. Right of the entrance a scene was depicted showing Ramesses II, this time wearing the Crown of the North and holding the symbol of justice, standing in front of a shrine in which Ptah, Sekhmet and the pharaoh himself were depicted (Figure 9). This scene seems to have been very well preserved and more beautiful than most of the other scenes in the temple[56].

Figure 9: the scene on the right side of the doorway, with Ramesses II standing before Ptah, Sekhmet and the deified Ramesses II. (El-Tanbouli 2019, pl. XXXIII)

2.2.3. The vestibule and sanctuary

The vestibule that lay behind the hypostyle hall contained the entrances to four lateral chambers, which El-Tanbouli theorizes were probably treasure rooms, and the sanctuary that contained the statues of the deities the temple was dedicated to. The east wall of the vestibule contained two scenes of the pharaoh burning incense for a variety of deities. On the left, Ramesses II is seen burning incense for Hathor, Ptah, Ptah-Tatenen and a deified version of Ramesses II. On the right, he is seen offering to Onuris-Shu, Sekhmet and Nekhbet, as well as a deified version of himself. Traces of colour can be found on both of these scenes[57].

Two pillars stand in the room, each decorated with various religious scenes. The upper reliefs once again showed the pharaoh in the presence of several divinities, while the lower reliefs showed worshippers taking part in cult ceremonies[58]. The ceiling of the room is divided into the same three-part structure as the hypostyle hall, with the middle being higher than the rest. Some traces of plaster with yellow and red paint are still visible on the middle part. On the other two parts some traces of lines can still be found[59].

The sanctuary, located at the very back of the vestibule, measures about 5.4 metres in length and 4.4 metres in width[60]. The east wall of the sanctuary, shows two scenes, one in which Ramesses II is

[56] El-Tanbouli 1965, 19-20.
[57] El-Tanbouli 1965, 20; El-Tanbouli 2019, 34-36.
[58] El-Tanbouli 1965, 20.
[59] El-Tanbouli 2019, 42.
[60] El Tanbouli 2019, 1.

received by the goddess Mut, and the other in which he is received by Sekhmet. The second scene is badly damaged. Above the doorway a winged sun disk with two uraei is depicted. No paint is left on this part of the wall except for a few black lines[61].

The south wall shows Ramesses II in front of the sacred bark. Unfortunately, it is badly preserved, with large parts of the scene having been completely destroyed and part of the wall missing in its entirety. Some traces of paint are however still visible. It also seems that the artist tried to create layers in the sunken relief of the scene, with the main figures being in deeper sunk relief than the subsidiary figures[62].

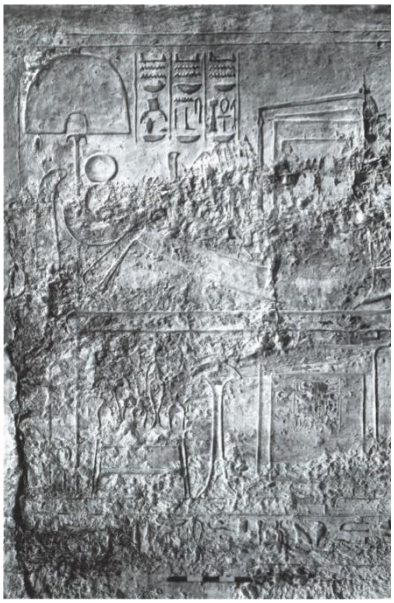

Figure 10: the relief of the sacred bark on the north wall of the sanctuary. (El-Tanbouli 2019, pl. 79).

The north wall also shows Ramesses II with the sacred bark. The scene shows similarities to the scene on the south wall, but is in a much better state of preservation[63] (Figure 10). It is possible that, like in the hypostyle hall, the scenes were supposed to be identical, but as such a large part of the south wall is missing, that cannot be said for sure.

The back wall of the sanctuary contains a niche with four seated statues (Figure 11). These statues depict, from left to right, Ptah, a deified Ramesses II, Ptah-Tatenen and Hathor. Three columns of inscriptions can be seen on the bottom of the seat between the different gods and each statue has two holes in the shoulders, which may indicate that they used to have necklaces. The background of the niche is very irregular, which indicates it was difficult to cut the scene from the rock. Another indication is the sloping of the surface of the seat between Hathor's statue and the wall. The statues seem fairly well preserved. Only the head of Ptah's statue has been destroyed but

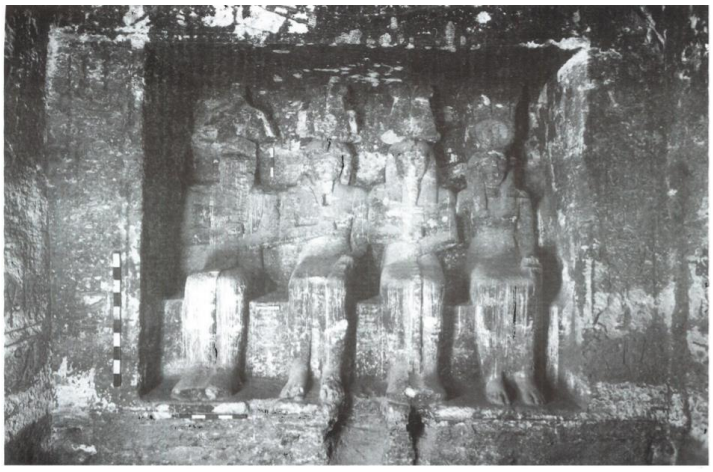

Figure 11: the niche at the back of the sanctuary. (El-Tanbouli 2019, pl. 80).

[61] El-Tanbouli 2019, 46-47.
[62] El-Tanbouli 2019, 48.
[63] El-Tanbouli 2019, 49.

its outline is still visible[64]. It is possible the statues were once covered with gold plates, of which traces could be seen on the statues of Ptah-Tatenen and Hathor[65].

2.3. Research at the temple

Despite the inability to rescue the temple in its entirety, extensive research still took place, both by way of excavations and by way of other types of archaeological research.

2.3.1. Excavations

The first known excavations at Gerf Hussein took place as early as 1908. It was conducted by George Reisner and his team, as part of an archaeological survey of Nubia. However, this excavation focused on the graveyards found in and around the settlement of Gerf Hussein, instead of the temple. What was found in the cemeteries still provides valuable information for the history of the settlement. Pottery dates the cemeteries surrounding Gerf Hussein from the Predynastic Period all the way until the Late Byzantine Period[66]. Firth, who wrote the reports on theses excavations in Reisner's place, initially posed in the report of this excavation that this could show a continuous occupation of the site. However, as there were no graves found at the site for the period between the New Kingdom and the Ptolemaic Period, which was when the temple was built, this theory was discarded rather quickly[67]. Instead, he speculated that the temple might have been built by people who were not local to the area, as such a big project could not have been undertaken by only a small group. It is interesting to note that Gerf Hussein does not seem to be the only settlement in Egypt where this strange interruption in the cemeteries occurred. The same situation seems to have happened at Wadi Sedua and Abu Simbel. In both cases this happened with temples dedicated to Ramesses II[68].

After this excavation was completed, it seems the area of Gerf Hussein was largely left alone until the CEDAE started the rescue excavation of the courtyard and certain blocks of the best-looking reliefs during the UNESCO Campaign.

2.3.2. Other research

Besides the excavations, other research was carried out at the temple as well. In the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century a number of travellers and Egyptologists stopped by the temple. Unfortunately none of these travellers seemed inclined to do more than record some incidental

[64] El Tanbouli 2019, 50.
[65] El-Tanbouli 1965, 21.
[66] Firth, *Archaeological Survey of Nubia 1908-1909,* 1912, 2.
[67] Firth 1912, 79.
[68] Firth, *Archaeological Survey of Nubia 1910-1911,* 1927, 28.

inscriptions and reliefs[69]. This means that the first (and probably only) large-scale documentation campaigns took place as part of the UNESCO Campaign.

During the UNESCO Campaign, it seems two different documentation campaigns were carried out at Gerf Hussein. Firstly, the Institute of Egyptology of Prague University carried out a large-scale epigraphic expedition, which included the temple inscriptions at Gerf Hussein and which spanned two fifty-kilometer wide areas. This research yielded about 240 inscriptions total, from all across the Aswan valley[70].

The second, much larger expedition, ran from 1960 to 1964 and was focused specifically on Gerf Hussein. The CEDAE, together with the *Institut Géographique National* in Paris, conducted a large-scale documentation campaign of the temple, aiming to document the temple in its entirety. The campaign was led by Mohammed El-Tanbouli and consisted of architectural and photogrammetric and photographic surveys, as well as epigraphical transcriptions and line drawings of all the scenes on the temple walls. Coloured casts were also created of some of these scenes. All of these documents were also published in the *Collection Scientifique* by the CEDAE.

2.4. The role of the temple in the ancient landscape

As so little investigation has taken place into the temple, not much is known about the role of the temple in the ancient landscape. Nevertheless, some speculation was still done.

Certain scholars speculated that Gerf Hussein, and temples like it, were used as a means of political propaganda by the pharaoh. This theory is believed because the divinities worshipped at Gerf Hussein as well as other temples like it, all seem to be one or more of the deities often associated with the power of the New Kingdom under Ramesses II[71]. This argument, however, does not really hold up in the case of Gerf Hussein. The lack of cemeteries from the New Kingdom that was marked by Firth in his archaeological report seems to suggest that the area around the temple was empty then, which would seem a strange place to build something politically significant. The temple at Gerf Hussein was also not built by Ramesses II, but for Ramesses II, by a Nubian viceroy. This means that if the temple played a political role, this role would probably have counted more as the Nubians trying to curry favour with the Egyptians than the other way around. This could also be why the temple seems to contain Nubian forms of Egyptian deities, such as was the case with Horus.

[69] G. Mokhtar and Ch. Desroches-Noblecourt, in El-Tanbouli 1965, 12. These travellers included for example Champollion and Lepsius.
[70] Verner, M., 'Highlights of the Archaeological Expedition: Taffa, Kertassi, Wadi Qitna, South Kalabsha'. *The Unesco Courier* 1980,42.
[71] Desroches-Noblecourt, Ch., 'The Magic of Abu Simbel'. *The Unesco Courier* 1980, 56.

Graffiti found in the temple shows that it was known to the Egyptians since ancient times, and it seems that the site had some sort of religious function even before the temple was built there. The graffiti, consisting of drawings, names of gods and the names of high officials, dates all the way back to the Prehistory. Despite this, it seems that the only visitors to the temple may have been the workers from the gold mines nearby[72].

[72] El-Tanbouli 1965, 15.

3. The temple now

3.1. The state of the temple

It seems the temple was in a rather poor state by the time the team from the CEDAE started their documentation campaign. El-Tanbouli mentions several times in his reports that the walls were covered in animal droppings and full of holes[73]. The *dromos* which would have led to the courtyard and the entrance of the temple had completely eroded and a large part of the courtyard itself had collapsed[74]. The statues inside of the temple were also in various states of disrepair, with the statue of Ptah in the sanctuary being the worst off. This, as well as the generally poor state of the temple may have been caused by the low-quality sandstone everything had been carved out of. The presumed lower quality of the sandstone is a factor that was mentioned a few times by El-Tanbouli in his report as well and may also have been a factor in UNESCO's decision to rescue only what they considered to be the best-looking parts[75].

However, after the cleaning of the walls had been finished in 1961, the large layer of animal droppings was revealed to actually have preserved a large part of the original colours of the scenes[76]. This prompted El-Tanbouli and his team to create coloured line-drawings and a number of coloured plaster casts of the walls of the temple. Some of the drawings made it into the publications. However, it seems unlikely that all of them did. The casts, as well as cut-outs of some of the 'best-looking' reliefs, were supposed to go on display in the yet-to-be-built Nubian Museum in Aswan. For unknown reasons, they were never actually put on display. Between the building of the museum and the submersion of Gerf Hussein exists a period of about thirty years[77]. It stands to reason that the reliefs were placed in storage somewhere during that time, where they most likely still remain. What this means for the current condition of the reliefs is unclear.

3.2. Comparisons to other temples

Gerf Hussein and Abu Simbel are compared a number of times across several different sources. Both were among a series of temples constructed by or for Ramesses II across Nubia[78], though Gerf Hussein is the only one of these that is considered to be directly inspired by the design of Abu

[73] El-Tanbouli 1975, 3.
[74] El-Tanbouli 1965, 12; Tadema and Tadema-Sporry 1977, 124
[75] Okasha 2010, 238; Save-Söderbergh 1987, 136.
[76] Tadema and Tadema-Sporry 1977, 124. They make a point of mentioning the rather primitive nature of the colours.
[77] Hassan 2007, 87.
[78] The others were built at Beit el Wali, Wadi es Sebua, Aksha, Derr and Amara (Emery, W.B. *Egypt in Nubia* 1965. London, 194.)

Simbel[79]. El-Tanbouli writes that Gerf Hussein seemed like a 'heavier version of Abu Simbel'[80]. When considering the lay-out of the two temples, they do show a lot of similarities. For example, the sanctuary, with its four seated cult statues, is named as one of the similarities[81]. In both cases, as can be seen in Figure 12, the sanctuary is also the middle chamber of three chambers located at the back of the temple. Both Abu Simbel and Gerf Hussein share the characteristic of having an open courtyard with statues of Ramesses II and a rock-cut inner sanctuary and pillared chamber or hypostyle hall. An important difference that must be noted here, however, is the fact that the temple at Gerf Hussein was built with Ramesses II in mind, whereas at Abu Simbel the face of Ramesses II had been carved over the face of a different pharaoh[82]. There are also some differences in the designs of the two temples, for example in the hypostyle hall. In Gerf Hussein there were niches carved into the wall, whereas these niches were absent in Abu Simbel[83].

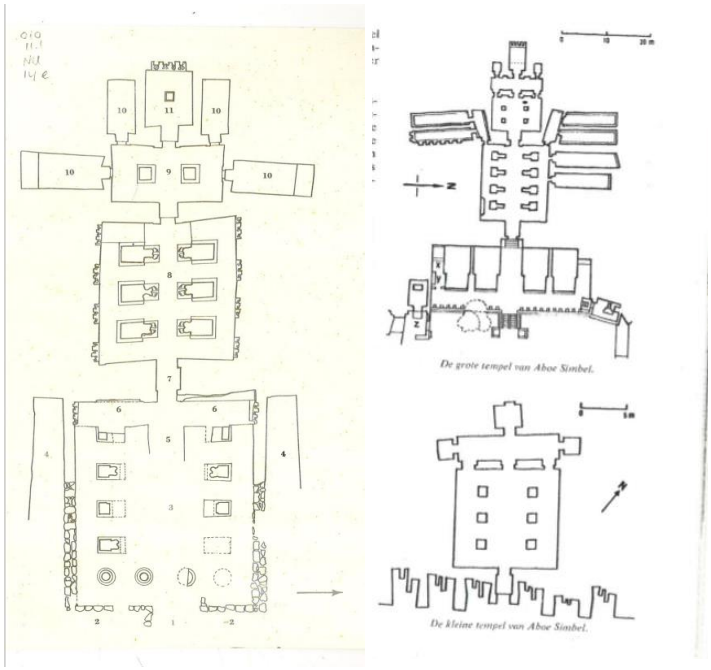

Figure 12: the lay-out of Gerf Hussein and both temples of Abu Simbel. The similarities are especially obvious with the larger of Abu Simbel's temples. (El-Tanbouli 1965, 1; Tadema and Tadema-Sporry 1977, 81).

Because of these similarities, there are some sources[84] that claim that the temple at Gerf Hussein was viewed as a 'test case' for the removal of the temple of Abu Simbel. As the temple of Gerf Hussein was in such a bad state already, mistakes would not have mattered as much and the process could be perfected before the 'real work', the dismantling of Abu Simbel, would start. This is certainly an interesting theory, especially considering the similarities between the two temples. However, it was probably not the case. Tadema and Tadema-Sporry, who pose the theory in their book, do not provide any sources for this theory, which seems rather accusatory in nature[85]. They based most of their book on eye-witness accounts of people who had worked at the sites they describe, which

[79] Emery 1965, 201.
[80] El-Tanbouli 1965, 12.
[81] Wilkinson 2000, 219.
[82] El-Tanbouli 1965, 23.
[83] Hein 1991, 10.
[84] These were compiled by Tadema and Tadema-Sporry in their book, though the exact origin of this theory is unclear.
[85] Tadema en Tadema-Sporry 1977, 124.

means that it is impossible to now find out who first posed this theory. None of the other sources that discuss Gerf Hussein even mention this as a possibility, which leads me to believe that this theory can be discarded.

Another comparison that is made by J. Jacquet and Irmgard Hein is that of Gerf Hussein to Wadi es-Sebua. Unfortunately, I was unable to access the original work by Jacquet, who apparently considered the similarities significant enough to theorize that both temples might have been built by the same people. He also mentions the corridors on both sides of the forecourt as similarities between the two temples, as well as mentioning that Wadi es-Sebua does have the niches added to the hypostyle hall as well[86]. The similarities between these two temples were also noticed by Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt. Unfortunately, she did not elaborate on this further[87].

[86] Hein 1991, 10.
[87] Desroches-Noblecourt 1999, 162.

4. Qasr Ibrim

Since so few monuments were ultimately left beneath the rising waters, it seems interesting to investigate the potential similarities and differences between these monuments, and especially their similarities and differences in comparison to Gerf Hussein. The first of the monuments that will be looked at is the chapel of Qasr Ibrim. The site of Qasr Ibrim was first excavated by Walter Emery, who concentrated mostly on the cemeteries found near the fortress. When the waters of Lake Nasser threatened the fortress he returned, at the behest of the Egypt Exploration Society, to further investigate and excavate the cemeteries. In the same year, an epigraphic expedition was started by Ricardo Caminos, with the aim to document all the inscriptions found around Qasr Ibrim[88]. The town near the fortress was excavated by Martin Plumley[89]. Qasr Ibrim is a bit of a special case, because it was built so high on a rock, it could be excavated for a long time after the waters of Lake Nasser had already risen. Even today, a small island is still visible in the spot where the imposing fortress once stood.

4.1. Description of the site

Qasr Ibrim was a small fortress site about 235 kilometres south of Aswan, near Ellesiya (see also the map in Figure 1). The exact starting point of its occupation remains uncertain. Traces of 18th Dynasty shrines were found, though no other contemporary evidence for habitation exists. Some tomb shafts, as well as the remains of a fortification wall, suggest that the site was at least occupied from the end of the New Kingdom or Third Intermediate Period onwards[90]. The fortress was occupied by the Kushite until the end of the 25th Dynasty, after which there seems to have been a small hiatus. The next evidence for occupation dates to the Ptolemaic Period, during the time of Roman Egypt, when Qasr Ibrim was alternatively overtaken by the Kushite and the Romans, who fought over the stronghold. When the Romans were eventually forced out, it seems Qasr Ibrim fell under the rule of Meroitic Kushites for a long period of time[91]. Qasr Ibrim was an important centre for pilgrimage, and it remained that way after the conversion to Christianity in the 6th century AD. The fortress was briefly occupied by the Ottomans as well. During this time period, it seems the fortress was steadily becoming less important[92]. Qasr Ibrim was then finally abandoned in 1812[93].

[88] Caminos, R.A. *The Shrines and Rock Inscriptions of Ibrim*. 1968, 23.
[89] A report of Emery's excavations can be found in Christophe 1977, 55-60. A preliminary report of Plumley's excavations can be found in Christophe 1977, 141-144.
[90] Rose, P.J. 'Qasr Ibrim: The Last 3000 Years'. *Sudan & Nubia* 2011, 5.
[91] Rose 2011, 6.
[92] Rose 2011, 7.
[93] Plumley, J.B. and R.D. Anderson. Highlights of the Archaeological Expeditions: Qasr Ibrim, *The Unesco Courier* 1980, 41.

4.2. The chapels

The chapel that seems to be best-known, is the temple of Taharqa. This chapel was rebuilt a number of times during its use-life, eventually ending up as the base of a Christian church[94]. As such, most of the elements of the ancient temple were found scattered throughout the Christian building. The sanctuary of the temple was left mostly intact and included two wall-paintings of the pharaoh (presumably Taharqa) standing before various deities. One of these paintings was destroyed when the waters of Lake Nasser rose once again in the period 2000-2002, the other was brought to the Nubian Museum in Aswan, to undergo restoration and to eventually be put on display[95]. Though this seems to be the temple that received most of the attention, several other chapels were found as well.

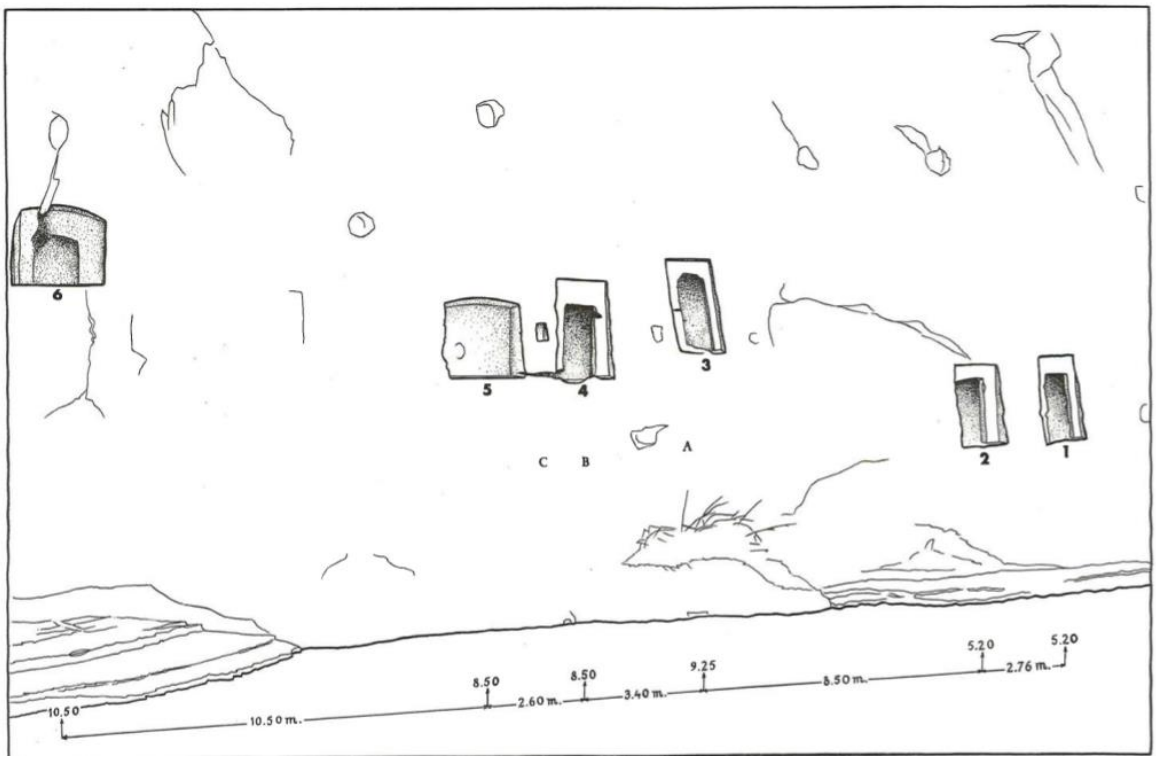

Figure 13: the position of the chapels as found on the cliff face. (Caminos 1968, pl. 5)

These rock-cut chapels were found on the west-side of the central cliff of Qasr Ibrim, facing the river. Caminos was unsure as to why this particular cliff was chosen as the building site for all of the chapels, but he gave two explanations he considered plausible: first, that the chapels were built on that exact cliff due to its location being directly across the town of Aniba, where many high-ranking Egyptian officials settled. His other theory was that this specific cliff was chosen because it was the cliff dedicated to Horus of Mi'am[96]. Their positions on the cliff can be seen in Figure 13. They were

[94] Wilkinson 2000, 223.
[95] Rose 2011, 4.
[96] Caminos 1968, 29-30.

excavated and described by Ricardo Caminos. He writes that there were six chapels, of which only four were dateable to the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasty[97]. The final two, chapel 5 and 6 seemed unfinished. It is unknown why these chapels were left in such a state. The chapels were rather small, only consisting of a single chamber, with reliefs on the sides and a group of three statues in a niche at the back. Figure 14 shows the lay-out of chapel 1. This lay-out does not vary much in chapels 1 to 4. Only chapel 5 and 6 form an exception to this lay-out. The walls in these chapels were left blank and the ceilings were also different in architecture from the other four chapels[98].

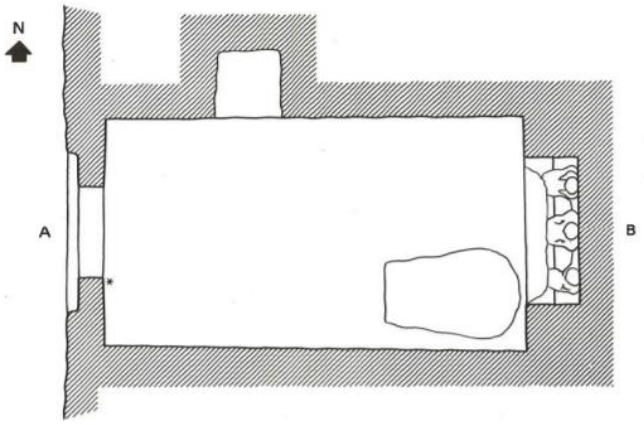

Figure 14: the lay-out of chapel 1. The other chapels looked very similar. (Caminos 1968, pl.6)

The chapels are briefly mentioned by Irmgard Hein, who follows Caminos and writes that there were six separate rock-cut chapels on the western side of Qasr Ibrim, two of which were impossible to date. Another rock-cut chapel could be dated to the reign of Hatsepsut and Thutmosis III, yet another one to the rule of Thutmosis III and the final two could be attributed to Amenophis II and Ramesses II respectively. She also mentions that the primary deity worshipped in these chapels was Horus of Mi'am[99]. As Qasr Ibrim was part of the district of Mi'am, this would make sense[100].

Tadema and Tadema-Sporry, in their book, name 5 different chapels. One built by Nehi, who ruled between 1508-1490 B.C.. A second built by Setau, the same person who built the temple of Gerf Hussein. The third chapel was dedicated to Tutmoses III and queen Hatsepsut. Interesting in this chapel is that it was built with the two of them in mind, but it seems that Hatsepsut's name was removed in multiple places after Tutmoses III started ruling on his own. The fourth was built for Amenhotep II, and shows the same blend of Nubian and Egyptian aspects for the deities. Amenhotep II is shown surrounded by Horus of Buhen and Horus of Mi'am, as well as the goddess Satet[101]. Unfortunately, nothing is really known about the fifth and final chapel, as no reliefs were left in it anymore[102].

[97] Caminos 1968, 24-25.
[98] Caminos 1968, 25.
[99] Hein 1991, 30.
[100] Caminos 1968, 6-7.
[101] Mi'am was, as we have seen before, a more Nubian aspect of Horus. Satet was the protectress of the First Cataract.
[102] Tadema en Tadema-Sporry 1977, 93.

Unfortunately, none of these chapels are so much as mentioned by the other two archaeologists who worked on the site during the campaign: Walter Emery and Martin Plumley. Emery does not even mention the temple of Taharqua, as he was focused on the cemeteries. Plumley seems to have done investigations into the temple of Taharqa, but not in any of the chapels mentioned by Tadema and Tadema-Sporry in their book. The chapels are mentioned by Save-Söderbergh. He first writes that only fragments of the chapels could be rescued[103], though later in the same book claims that the chapels were rescued completely by an archaeological team led by A. Lutfi. Unfortunately, he does not elaborate on this, nor does Lutfi seem to have published any reports on the supposed rescue of the chapels[104].

The fourth chapel is briefly discussed by Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt, who writes that the chapel was built by Nehesy, vice-king under Amenhotep II, for Amenhotep II, and that the chapel had been hewn out of the rock of Qasr Ibrim[105]. She also alludes to the temple being rather small, and again it seems logical to assume that the other chapels were of similar size. Unfortunately, she does not mention anything about the condition of the chapels.

4.3. Qasr Ibrim and Gerf Hussein

Despite the size differences, there are still some comparisons that can be made between Qasr Ibrim and Gerf Hussein. It seems that all chapels were rock-cut, like the temple of Gerf Hussein. From this, it can be theorized that the same technical problems which played a role with the removal of Gerf Hussein, may have applied to the chapels of Qasr Ibrim as well. Perhaps these problems were even more prevalent with Qasr Ibrim than they were at Gerf Hussein, as the chapels of Qasr Ibrim are located in the middle of a cliff face that would have been difficult to get to. It is perhaps also possible that Qasr Ibrim had a lower priority, as it would become clear that the site would not be as affected by the rising waters as some lower sites[106]. Save-Söderbergh classified the site as '1st priority' in his book[107]. Perhaps this level of priority was lowered after it had become clear that Qasr Ibrim would not be as affected by the flooding, though Caminos does mention that all chapels were partly or completely submerged by 1966[108].

[103] Save-Söderbergh 1987, 10.
[104] Save-Söderbergh 1987, 136.
[105] Desroches-Noblecourt 1999, 68.
[106] Rose 2011, 3.
[107] Save-Söderbergh 1987, pl.1. Though Save-Söderbergh also seemingly classified Gerf Hussein as a temple meant as a grant for other countries, which did not pan out. It is uncertain, therefore, how correct this map ended up being.
[108] Caminos 1968, 23.

Even if Qasr Ibrim itself had a higher priority than Gerf Hussein, that level of status might not have extended to the chapels, which seem to have been rather unimpressive compared to some of the other monuments. One (or two) of the chapels had no inscriptions or decorations left at all. It seems that the chapels were all in various states of disrepair, as repeated flooding had severely damaged three of the chapels. Chapels 3, which was located slightly higher than the others, and 6 were the only ones unaffected by the repeated flooding of the Nile[109]. In chapel 6, the entire west wall had caved in and chapel 5 had a large fissure run through the entirety of the chamber. Chapel 5 and 6 also appeared unfinished. Almost all of the chapels also showed signs of damage caused by people living inside the chapels at a later date. Considering all this, the condition of the chapels can be considered somewhat comparable to that of Gerf Hussein, albeit in a different way. The poor preservation of the chapels, as well as their rock-cut nature, might have made it impossible or otherwise undesirable to push funds towards lifting them from the rock completely.

[109] Caminos 1968, 31.

5. Abu Oda

The other temple that was not rescued in its entirety was the chapel of Horemheb at Abu Oda[110]. This rock-cut chapel is situated close to Abu Simbel, and measures about 20 metres in width and 15 metres in length[111]. It was built by Vizier Pa-Ramesses, in honour of Horemheb[112]. The chapel is oriented with the entrance to the east, as was Egyptian custom. It was partly rescued in 1964, when several blocks of reliefs were cut out of the rock and transported elsewhere. Abu Oda was also part of a Yugoslavian expedition that worked especially on removing some Christian murals from the chapel of Horemheb[113].

5.1. Description of the site

The rock-cut chapel of Horemheb was built around 1275 B.C. It was dedicated primarily to Amon-Re of Karnak and Thot of Hermopolis. It was rather small, but the reliefs were well-preserved[114]. The chapel consisted of a central chamber and three side-chambers (lay-out visible in Figure 15). Similarly to Gerf Hussein, the sanctuary of Abu Oda was located in the chamber at the back. This chapel also marks the first time that Seth has appeared in an Egyptian temple in Nubia, as his image is shown on the south wall of the central chamber[115]. The chapel shows more instances of Nubian and Egyptian cultures mixing as well. Horus once again appears in both Egyptian and Nubian forms. The goddess Anouket also makes an appearance, as she is shown nursing Horemheb on the wall to the left of the entrance. It seems, in fact, that most of the deities shown in the chapel were Nubian rather than Egyptian[116]. The chapel

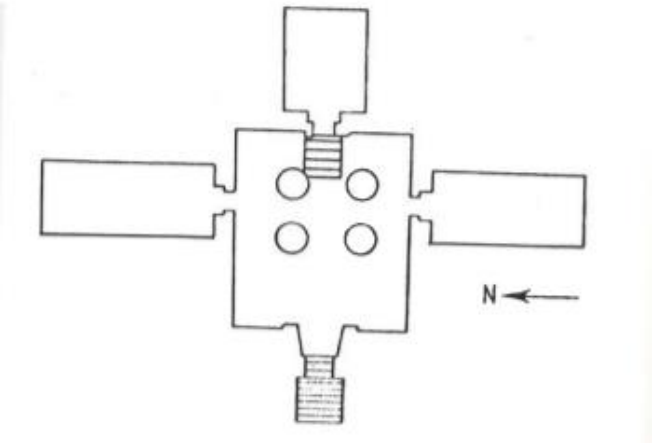

Figure 15: the lay-out of the chapel of Horemheb at Abu Oda (Tadema and Tadema-Sporry 1977, 61).

[110] Save-Söderbergh 1987, 10.
[111] Tadema en Tadema-Sporry 1977, 60.
[112] Desroches-Noblecourt 1999, 165.
[113] Medic, M. 'Highlights of the Archaeological Expedition: Wadi es Sebua, Abu Oda, Sheikh Abd el-Gadir, Abdallah Nirqi'. *The Unesco Courier* 1980, 45.
[114] Tadema en Tadema-Sporry 1977, 59.
[115] C. Desroches-Noblecourt 1999, 165. Tadema and Tadema-Sporry, in their book, consider the appearance of Seth a sign of goodwill from the Egyptians to the Nubians, as they claim that the Egyptians saw Seth as a source of evil (Tadema en Tadema-Sporry 1977, 60). I will, however, follow Desroches-Noblecourt, who believed that Seth was represented here due to Pa-Ramesses' connection with Seth, as he was from the Delta, where Seth was worshipped (Desroches-Noblecourt 1999, 165).
[116] Tadema en Tadema-Sporry 1977, 59.

was later converted into a Christian church by the Copts, who painted over a lot of the reliefs with crosses and more Christian imagery[117].

5.2. Abu Oda and Gerf Hussein

UNESCO itself cites technical and financial reasons as being the decisive factors for only partly rescuing both Gerf Hussein and Abu Oda. Despite these similar reasonings, both temples are described rather differently in most literature. Where Gerf Hussein was constantly compared negatively to Abu Simbel, and even called 'ugly' by a number of archaeologists, Abu Oda was seen as 'beautiful and elegant'[118]. Tadema and Tadema-Sporry decried the 'sullying' of the inscriptions on the walls of Abu Oda with 'strange angels' and 'floating saints'[119], while in the same breath calling the painted reliefs in Gerf Hussein 'tastelessly applied'[120]. This problem continues throughout most works discussing one or both of the temples. Desroches-Noblecourt cites the poor quality of the stone as the reason Abu Oda was never completely rescued. A number of the reliefs were also damaged when the chapel was transformed into a church. Despite this, it seems that most of the reliefs were carved out and carted away to a safer destination. This does lead to the question of whether the 'better-looking' state of the reliefs would have led the researchers to try harder to save the reliefs of Abu Oda than they had tried to save the reliefs of Gerf Hussein.

[117] Tadema en Tadema-Sporry 1977, 60.
[118] Desroches-Noblecourt 1999, 167.
[119] Tadema and Tadema-Sporry 1977, 61.
[120] Tadema and Tadema-Sporry 1977, 126.

6. Discussion

6.1. Issues with funding

The International Campaign to Safeguard the Monuments of Nubia ran into quite a number of issues when it came to funding. The relocation of so many monuments required a tremendous amount of money. Rescuing Abu Simbel, which was one of the main goals of the campaign, would cost many millions of dollars, and this was not even factoring in the rest of the monuments threatened by the building of the new dam. After the campaign ended, UNESCO estimated that the entire campaign had ultimately cost 80 million dollars. To get this money, UNESCO was almost completely dependent on donations[121]. As such, they made an appeal to their member states. To make the deal sweeter, UNESCO decided to pick a number of the better-looking temples and offer them up as gifts to the member states that donated the most money. This of course is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, it would mean additional costs in order to 'ship' the temples to their new countries. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it would mean that these monuments would be removed from Egypt and Egypt's jurisdiction. The same would apply to any smaller 'prizes' UNESCO would make available for smaller contributions. Egypt as a country had always tried its hardest to protect its own legacy, and to this day there is a lot of discussion on this subject, as well as a rising demand for such objects and monuments to be returned to their countries of origin. This discussion not only pertains to Egypt, but is a worldwide issue.

Another issue with the funding of the campaign being entirely dependent on donations is that the amount of money would dry out, perhaps sooner than they would have liked the campaign to end, with no real hope of replenishing it. This ran the risk of projects needing to be abandoned halfway through. It also probably resulted in UNESCO focusing most of the available funds on the 'most important' projects, such as the relocation of the temples that were to be donated, as well as the preservation of the bigger temples such as Abu Simbel and Philae. As Gerf Hussein was not in either of these categories, this probably meant that the temple ended up rather low on the list of priorities, meaning less effort would be put into preserving and researching the site in depth.

6.2. The importance of aesthetics

The concept of aesthetics is something that is traditionally more discussed in art history, rather than archaeology. However, in the 20th century, how nice an object looked still had some importance to the archaeologists researching it. The beauty of an ancient monument, then, is something that is very subjective and also subject to change. The question remains how much the perceived beauty of an

[121] Hassan 2007, 83-84. A more detailed break-down of the funding can also be found here.

ancient monument can influence the decisions made during research. None of the researchers who wrote on Gerf Hussein seem to have been able to refrain from comparing the temple, often unfavourably, to other contemporary temples. It also seems that the more aesthetically pleasing temples of Abu Simbel and Philae were always chosen whenever the importance of the campaign needed to be discussed. Save-Söderbergh even went so far as to call Abu Simbel 'the flagship of the Nubia Campaign'.

What may also point towards the suggestion that aesthetics played a role in the decision of the archaeologists who worked on Gerf Hussein, is the fact that they all tend to point out that the 'Nubian art-style' of Gerf Hussein is not as impressive as the 'Egyptian art-style' of other, contemporary temples. This might have something to do with the theory El-Tanbouli posed, namely that the statues and reliefs in the temple of Gerf Hussein were made not by artists but by regular workmen who would not have been specialized in the way the artists in Egypt would have been. Unfortunately, he never really elaborates on what he considers to be the Nubian elements in the reliefs and statues. This leads me to believe that there is something bigger at play here. The Egyptologists had a rather negative view of Nubian culture, to the point of racism bleeding into their theories whenever they came across Nubian artefacts[122]. This racism seems to permeate many of the sources on Gerf Hussein. El-Tanbouli, first, seems to mention the Nubian elements of the temple exclusively in a negative light and never explains what these elements are. This is illustrated especially when he discusses the statues in the hypostyle hall. One of these statues he considered more beautiful and refined than all of the others, and he immediately came to the conclusion that it must have been made by an Egyptian artist, while all the other statues were simply made by Nubian workmen. The racism is even more prevalent in the book written by Tadema and Tadema-Sporry, who go so far as to question if Setau could actually have been proud of his own work, considering how ugly the temple turned out to be. If this was the general opinion of the archaeologists who went to visit Gerf Hussein, then it seems reasonable that this would have been mentioned in reports as well and thus explained why UNESCO did not try harder to save the temple.

This racism further becomes apparent when discussing the rock chapel of Abu Oda, which, though it also had Nubian elements, was considered beautiful and elegant[123]. Tadema and Tadema-Sporry write how the temple honoured the Nubians by including so many Nubian deities and praise the 'gestures of goodwill' that were made towards the Nubians in the building of the chapel [124]. Perhaps

[122] Crawford, K.W. Critique of the "Black Pharaohs" Theme: Racist Perspectives of Egyptian and Kushite/Nubian Interactions in Popular Media, in *The African archaeological review* 2021 38(4), 699.
[123] Desroches-Noblecourt 1999, 167.
[124] Tadema and Tadema-Sporry 1977, 59-60.

the reason Abu Oda got all these compliments was that Abu Oda was built by an Egyptian Vizier, instead of a Nubian vizier. And even though the inclusion of Seth was probably due to Pa-Ramesses' connections to the Delta-region, instead of a sign of him wanting to get into the Nubian's good books, like Tadema and Tadema-Sporry claim, it still seems worth noting that Abu Oda receives so much praise for the inclusion of Nubian deities, whereas Gerf Hussein does not.

All that being said, it is uncertain how much this preference towards Egyptian culture actually factored into the decision made by UNESCO, as Abu Oda was not rescued in its entirety either. However, I do still believe it could have been a factor in the decision of which reliefs were worth rescuing, which would have been decided by the archaeologists working on the temple. Perhaps more than 22 blocks would have been rescued if the temple had been considered more aesthetically pleasing.

6.3. The problem of sources

In research, it is always preferable to gain information from primary sources, rather than secondary sources. Though both can provide value, primary sources come closest to painting a mostly objective picture of the subject that is being researched. However, in the case of Gerf Hussein, not a lot of primary sources are available. The only source that can be considered a primary source is the series of books written by El-Tanbouli. Even then, it is impossible to check the truth in El-Tanbouli's statements, as the temple he and his team were researching has been submerged and is now forever inaccessible. Any other primary sources used, such as the biographies written by Okasha and Desroches-Noblecourt, either do not mention Gerf Hussein at all or only mention the site very briefly. The account written by Tadema and Tadema-Sporry is based on eye-witness accounts and therefore probably not very objective, as has been demonstrated a number of times throughout this paper already. Desroches-Noblecourt's *Temples de Nubie* does provide some information on Gerf Hussein, as well as Abu Oda and Qasr Ibrim, but it is a lot less detailed than El-Tanbouli's work and as such, only the broader concepts of that report can be compared. The same goes for the report written by Irmgard Hein, which also provides only a small amount of information on Gerf Hussein and Qasr Ibrim and gives no information at all on Abu Oda. Her report is also mostly based on other sources, so whether it can even be counted as a primary source is uncertain. None of the secondary sources that discuss the campaign in detail do more than mention Gerf Hussein as one of the temples that was only partly rescued. As I have already stated, most attention in those works, for example those written by Hassan, Save-Söderbergh or Keating, goes to larger, more impressive-looking temples like Abu Simbel or Philae. The books written by El-Tanbouli and his team thus contain the only (mostly) complete documentation on the temple of Gerf Hussein that was ever done, and will forever be the only books containing such a documentation.

Because it is rather impossible to check El-Tanbouli's work, both in regards to the written text and images provided, anyone researching Gerf Hussein in any detail would be almost completely dependent on that single series. This means that any works published on the temple will be influenced by the picture painted by El-Tanbouli, and even though he probably has tried to be as objective and thorough as possible in his documentation of the temple, some opinions and inaccuracies undoubtedly snuck into his work, as well as any subsequent works that would have had no other choice than to use his books as source. After all, it would have been impossible to document each square centimetre of the temple in detail, nor would he probably have seen any reason to. It is also quite possible that he might have rushed through some of the documentation because of the threat of the rising water, as the Aswan Dam was already quite far along into the building process by the time the archaeologists got around to Gerf Hussein in the summer of 1964.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, I set out to investigate the potential factors that could have led to UNESCO deciding not to rescue the temple of Ptah at Gerf Hussein. After looking at the temple in detail, as well as comparing it to other temples that were only partly rescued, a number of factors have come to light. The first factor would have been the quality of the sandstone making it impossible to remove the inside of the temple in a way that would have ensured it remained intact. Another factor was probably that less of the available funding went to the rescuing of Gerf Hussein than to bigger, arguably more impressive temples like Abu Simbel or Philae. This ties in to the third and perhaps most important factor: the relatively unappealing appearance of Gerf Hussein. The archaeologists who worked on the temple were not all that impressed with the temple. El-Tanbouli only had positive things to say about a single statue, which he theorized must have seen the 'expert touch of an Egyptian artist', in contrast to the other statues which were made by the 'inexperienced hands of Nubian workmen'. Other authors were even less positive. Tadema and Tadema-Sporry even went as far as to claim that there was no way Setau could have been proud of the temple he built. However, as the more aesthetically pleasing Abu Oda was also not rescued in its entirety, I am hesitant to claim that the opinions of the archaeologists were the deciding factor in this matter. Nevertheless, the topic is prevalent enough in literature on the temple that it is worth keeping in mind whenever the campaign is brought up.

7.1. Further research

For further research into this matter, it would be interesting if the official UNESCO documents from during the campaign could be looked into. These documents include meeting notes from the various boards involved in the decision-making process and can nowadays only be accessed through visiting the official UNESCO archives in Paris. Perhaps these documents could shed some extra light on the decisions made during the campaign.

Unfortunately, when it comes to the temple itself, I believe that El-Tanbouli's works will forever remain our only access to an idea of the inside of the temple. Even if it were possible to dive down to the location of the temple underneath the waters of Lake Nasser, I do not think that enough of the temple would be left to make any excavations conducted there now a worthwhile endeavour. Especially if the quality of the sandstone is as poor as the old sources claim, the water would have destroyed most recognizable features by now and all of the paint will undoubtedly have washed away.

7.2. Legacy of the campaign

The International Campaign to Safeguard the Monuments of Nubia left behind an impressive legacy. It is to this day still the largest rescue campaign that has ever been mounted and responsible for the mounting of a large number of rescue campaigns. The campaign resulted in a growing awareness of the cultural heritage of the different countries of the world and the need to protect them. The campaign also was indirectly responsible for the creation of the World Heritage List, which now has more than 1000 monuments on it from more than 150 states. And even though the campaign did have its problems, chief among them the donation of the temples to the helping states, it remains an important mark in the history of archaeology. However, it is important to always remain aware of the problems associated with campaigns like the International Campaign for Safeguarding the Nubian Monuments, if only to ensure that these problems can be avoided in all coming rescue campaigns.

Bibliography

Caminos, R.A. *The Shrines and Rock-Inscriptions of Ibrim.* London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1968.

Christophe, L. -A. *Campagne Internationale de l'UNESCO pour sauvegarde des sites et monuments de Nubia.* Paris: UNESCO, 1977.

Crawford, K.W. "Critique of the "Black Pharaohs" Theme: Racist Perspectives of Egyptian and Kushite/Nubian Interactions in Popular Media." *The African archaeological review* 38, no. 4 (2021): 695-712.

Desroches-Noblecourt, Ch. "The Magic of Abu Simbel." *The Unesco Courier*, 1980: 53-57.

Desroches-Noblecourt, Ch. *La Grande Nubiade: Le parcours d'une Égyptologue.* Paris: Stock-Pernoud, 1992.

Desroches-Noblecourt, Ch. *Le secret des temples de la Nubie.* Paris: Stock-Pernoud, 1999.

El-Tanbouli, M.A.L. *Garf Hussein.* Caïro: Centre de Documentation et d'Etudes sur l'Ancienne Egypte, 1965.

El-Tanbouli, M.A.L., and A. A. Sadek. *Garf Hussein II: la cour et l'entree du spéos.* Vol. II. Cairo: Centre de Documentation et d'Etudes sur l'Ancienne Egypte, 1974.

El-Tanbouli, M.A.L., A. A. Sadek, and Ch. Kuentz. *Garf Hussein III: La Grande Salle (E). Mur Est – Piliers et colosses.* Vol. III. Cairo: Centre de Documentation et d'Etudes sur l'Ancienne Egypte, 1975.

El-Tanbouli, M.A.L., A. A. Sadek, and H. de Meulenaere. *Gerf Hussein IV: La Grande Salle (E). Murs Sud, Nord et Ouest – les niches.* Vol. IV. Cairo: Centre de Documentation et d'Etudes sur l'Ancienne Egypte, 1978.

El-Tanbouli, M.A.L. *Temple of Gerf Hussein: Vestibule (G), Sanctuary (I), Treasure Rooms (K-M) and Side-Rooms of the Sanctuary (O-Q).* Vol. V. Caïro: Centre de Documentation et d'Etudes sur l'Ancienne Egypte, 2019.

Emery, W.B. *Egypt in Nubia.* London: Hutchinson, 1965.

Fahim, H.M. *Dams, People and Development.* Pergamon Press, 1981.

Firth, C.M. *The Archaeological Survey of Nubia: Report for 1908-1909.* Vol. I. Caïro: Government Press, 1912.

Firth, C.M. *The Archaeological Survey of Nubia: Report for 1910-1911.* Caïro: Government Press, 1927.

Hassan, F.A. "The Aswan High Dam and the International Rescue Nubia Campaign." *The African Archaeological Review* 24, no. 3/4 (2007): 73-94.

Hein, I. *Die ramessidische Bautätigkeit in Nubien.* Vol. 22. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1991.

Keating, R. *Nubian Rescue.* London: Hale, 1975.

Medic, M. "Highlights of the Archaeological Expedition: Wadi es Sebua, Abu Oda, Sheikh Abd el-Gadir, Abdallah Nirqi." *The Unesco Courier*, 1980: 45.

Okasha, S. “Rameses Recrowned: The International Campaign To Preserve The Monuments Of Nubia, 1959-68.” In *Offerings to the Discerning Eye: An Egyptological Medley in Honor of Jack A. Josephson*, by S. D'Auria, 223-244. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Paner, H. “Nubian Rock Art.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Nubia*, by G. Emberling and B. Williams, 1091-1126. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Plumley, J. B., and R. D. Anderson. “Highlights of the Archaeological Expeditions: Qasr Ibrim.” *The Unesco Courier*, 1980: 41-42.

Rose, P.J. “Qasr Ibrim: The Last 3000 Years.” *Sudan & Nubia*, 2011: 1-9.

Save-Söderbergh, T. *Temples and Tombs of Ancient Nubia.* Paris: UNESCO, 1987.

Tadema, A. A., and B. Tadema-Sporry. *Operatie Farao's: Egypte's Tempels Gered!* Haarlem: Fibula-Van Dishoeck, 1977.

Verner, M. “Highlights of the Archaeological Expedition: Taffa, Kertassi, Wadi Qitna, South Kalabsha.” *The Unesco Courier*, 1980: 42.

Waziri, M. 'Preface', in M.A.L. El-Tanbouli (ed.). *Temple of Gerf Hussein: Vestibule (G), Sanctuary (I), Treasure Rooms (K-M) and Side-Rooms of the Sanctuary (O-Q)* Vol. V. Caïro: Centre de Documentation et d'Etudes sur l'Ancienne Egypte, 2019.

Wilkinson, R.H. *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt.* London: Thames & Hudson, 2000.

List of figures

Appendix 1: Timeline of the campaign

Reference: https://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/173

1959 *April/ October* The Egyptian and the Sudanese Governments request independently from each other UNESCO assistance to save the sites and monuments of Nubia threatened by submergence as a result of the Aswan High Dam.

November/ December The 55th session of the Executive Board adopts the principle of an appeal for international cooperation to assist the Egyptian and Sudanese Governments and authorizes studies preparatory to the work of safeguarding Abu Simbel and archaeological investigations of the sites in Sudanese Nubia to be undertaken as a matter of urgency.

1960 *January* Official inauguration of work on the Aswan High Dam.
March Director-General of UNESCO launches appeal to the international community for the preservation of the monuments of Nubia.
16-18 May First meeting of the International Action Committee in Paris.
22 May First meeting in Cairo of the Consultative Committee for the Campaign.
Summer months Dismantling and transfer of the temples of Debod and Taffa and the kiosk of Qertassi by the Egyptian Antiquities Service
November 11th session of General Conference of UNESCO authorizes the continuation and extension of the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia.

1961-3 Dismantling, transfer and reconstruction of the temple of Kalabsha by the Federal Republic of Germany.

1962 *February* Experts meeting on the safeguarding of the monuments of Sudanese Nubia.
November-December 12th session of the General Conference. Creation of the Executive Committee of the International Campaign.

1962-5 Dismantling, cutting and transfer of the temple of Beit al-Wali and Wadi es-Sebua and of the Tomb of Pennut at Aniba with a financial contribution from the United States of America; dismantling and transfer of the temples of Dendur, Dakka and Maharraqa under the supervision of the Egyptian Antiquities Service.

1963-7 Dismantling, transfer and reconstruction in Khartoum by the Sudanese Antiquities Service of: - the remains of the temple of Aksha with a financial contribution from France. - the temples of Buhen with a financial contribution from the United Kingdom and the United States of America - the temples of Semna East with a financial contribution from the Netherlands, and Semna West with a financial contribution from Belgium.

1963 *June* Egyptian Government chooses the project to cut and transfer the two temples of Abu Simbel.
November Meeting in Cairo of the Executive Committee of the Campaign and representatives of donor states. Signing of agreement for carrying out the project of cutting and transferring the temple of Abu Simbel.

1964 Spring Evacuation of population starts. Excavations finished up to Second Cataract.
April Beginning of work to save the temples of Abu Simbel.

Summer months Cutting and dismantling of the temple of Derr. Cutting of fragments of the temple of Gerf Husein and the chapels of Qasr Ibrim. Work carried out by Egyptian Antiquities Service, which also assisted Italy to cut the chapel of Ellesyia.
September-October Waters of the lake created by the Aswan High Dam begin to rise.

1964-65 Dismantling of the pronaos of the temple of Amada and transfer on rails of the sanctuary by France.

1965 End of the excavations in Egyptian Nubia.

1968 *Summer months* Egyptian Government chooses the project of dismantling the temples on the island of Philae and re-erecting them on the neighbouring island of Agilka.
22 September End of work at Abu Simbel.
6 November 15th session of the Executive Committee. The Director-General launches an appeal to the international community for the safeguarding of the temples of the island of Philae.

1969 End of the construction of Aswan High Dam.

1970 Director-General is authorized to sign agreements with the Egyptian Government and donor countries for the safeguarding of the monuments of Philae

1972 Beginning of the work to safeguard the monuments of Philae; leveling and widening of the island of Agilkia.

1973 End of excavations in Sudanese Nubia.

1977 Beginning of reconstruction of the Philae monuments on the island of Agilkia.

1978 20th session of the General Conference of UNESCO; the Executive Committee of the International Campaign is re-organized.

1979 *August* End of the work of transferring the Phiale monuments.

1980 *10 March* End of the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia.