

# Dendur: The Six-Hundred-Forty-Third Stone

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Dedicated to our father and father-in-law Josef Hallof (1926–1998)

**A**MONG THE EGYPTOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS listed in the *Multilingual Egyptological Thesaurus* is the Petrological and Oriental Collection of the Monastery at Banz.<sup>1</sup> Banz is a small village of a little more than one thousand inhabitants located on the banks of the river Main, in a wide valley cut by the river through the Jura Mountains millions of years ago. For almost eight hundred years, the village was the property of the prince-bishops of Bamberg, who founded a monastery on the hill of Banz in 1114. Between 1698 and 1719 the monastery, which had fallen into disrepair, was rebuilt by Leonhard Dientzenhofer (1660–1707), his brother Johann (1663–1726), and Balthasar Neumann (1687–1753), creator of the Würzburg Residence. The present appearance of the building, whose yellowish sandstone is visible at a considerable distance, dates from this time. Like the great pilgrimage church ofierzehnheiligen, also built by Neumann in the mid-eighteenth century and located on the opposite (southern) bank of the river Main, the monastery can be said to be a pearl of the Frankish Baroque.

The Banz monastery was secularized in 1803, and eleven years later it was purchased by Duke Wilhelm of Bavaria as his summer residence. During this time its petrological collection was founded, with fossils that had been discovered on the slopes of the Main valley in the immediate vicinity of Banz. The Banz Oriental Collection, however, was assembled decades later by Duke Maximilian of Bavaria (1808–1888), grandson of Duke Wilhelm of Bavaria and father of Empress Elisabeth of Austria (1837–1898), during his 1838 voyage to the Middle East.

Maximilian undertook that voyage following the deaths of his grandfather Wilhelm and his father, Duke Pius August von Birkenfeld-Gelnhausen (1786–1837) in an effort to forget his personal grief.<sup>2</sup> He tried to travel incognito under the name Banz but was only partly successful.<sup>3</sup> The duke was accompanied by

Friedrich Carl, Baron von Busek (1801–1866); his brother Carl Theodor, Baron von Busek (1803–1860)<sup>4</sup>; Captain Theodor Hügler, a “court-gentleman” of Heusler; his private physician, Dr. Baier;<sup>5</sup> the composer Johann Petzmaier (1803–1884); and the court-painter Heinrich von Mayr (1806–1871).

The travelers began their journey on New Year’s Day 1838. Starting by coach in Munich, they proceeded through Innsbruck and the Brenner Pass to Verona. There they changed to a mailboat, which brought the duke’s party via Venice, Trieste, and Corfu to Alexandria. From there they drove on nonstop to Cairo, where three *dahabiyas* (sailing houseboats) were waiting to serve as their home for the next few months. Equipped with the necessary *firmans* (official permits) granted by the viceroy Muhammad Ali (1769–1894), the party reached the southernmost point of their trip, the Second Cataract of the Nile, two months later. Maximilian remarked in his report with pride that he was the first Bavarian to set foot on the stones of Abu Sir.<sup>6</sup>

On the way back to Cairo the party witnessed the opening of a tomb. Unfortunately, it is not evident from the duke’s report whether the mummy in the collection at Banz came from this “excavation.” From Cairo the duke visited Christian holy places in Syria, purchased four slaves (whom he later baptized in Bavaria), and returned with his traveling party via Malta and Naples to Munich, where he arrived on September 17, 1838.

Two of the travelers published accounts of their experiences and impressions: Duke Maximilian<sup>7</sup> and Heinrich von Mayr.<sup>8</sup> Carl Theodor, Baron von Busek, painted a number of watercolors on the trip, only recently published (see note 4). In none of these reports, however, is there any information about the souvenirs and curiosities collected during the trip—the mummy of a young woman, three mummies’ heads, various animal mummies, shawabti, stones, and stone fragments—which are housed today in the Banz Petrological and Oriental Collection. It is therefore impossible to know who collected the objects and under what circumstances they were purchased.<sup>9</sup> For

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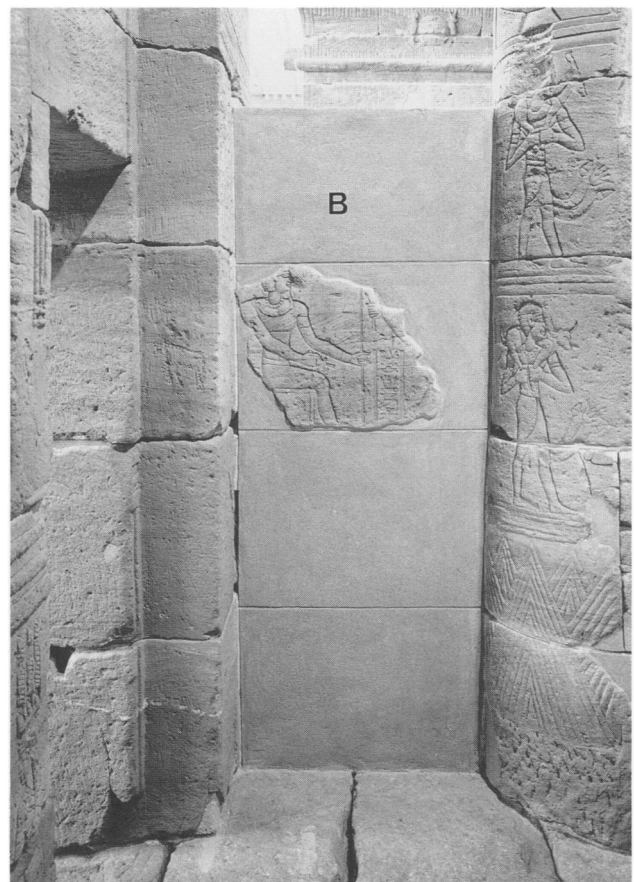
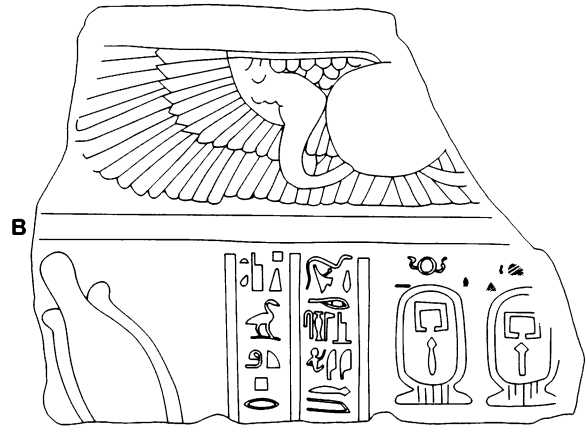
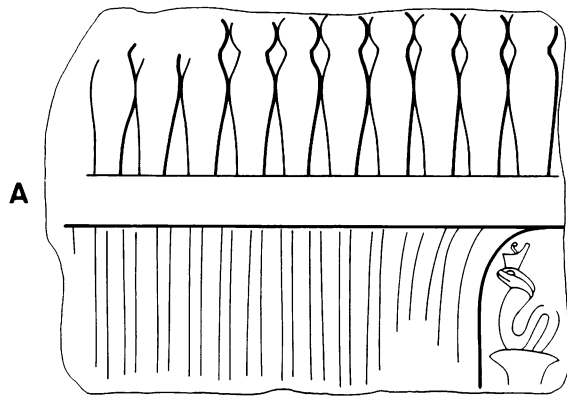


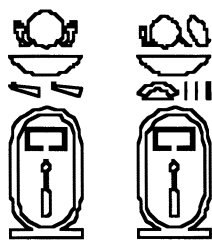
Figure 1. Exterior view of the right screen wall of the temple of Dendur in the Sackler Wing, showing the position of the newly discovered block (A). Early Roman Period, ca. 15 B.C. Aeolian sandstone, length of gateway and temple 25 m. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Given to the United States by Egypt in 1965, awarded to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1967, and installed in the Sackler Wing in 1978, 68.154

Figure 2. Interior view of the right screen wall of the temple of Dendur showing the position of the newly discovered block (B)

an appropriate presentation, a room “in the oriental style” (probably pseudo-Egyptian) was installed by the duke in the Banz monastery. Today visitors can still admire the collection surrounded by furniture of the mid-nineteenth century, as well as by old prints and the original wallpaper. Even the handwritten labels of the last century are still there, although they do not give the kind of information modern visitors like to have.

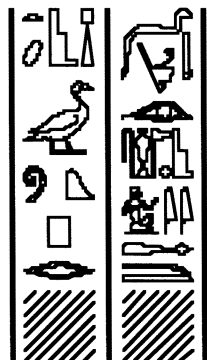
Among the curiosities on display is a block of reddish sandstone, which attracts the visitor’s attention because of its size (42 cm high by 53 cm wide). On its front a frieze of ten rearing uraei with sun-disks on their heads (17 cm high) can be seen in raised relief.<sup>10</sup> They are shown above stylized palm fronds, which form the cavetto. The right border of the palm fronds is flanked by a cobra wearing a red crown and sitting on top of a papyrus umbel, looking left.

The back of the block, which was carved in sunk relief, shows at its top the left half of a winged sun-disk.<sup>11</sup> Below the sun-disk are two cartouches with the king’s title:



*nswt-bitī nb t3wī PR-ᶜ3, z3 rᶜ nb hᶜw PR-ᶜ3* “King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands, ‘PHARAOH,’ Son of Re, Lord of Diadems ‘PHARAOH.’”

The king identified by this title must have stood to the right, probably presenting an offering to a god facing him since the Atef-crown of this god is shown on the left and the god’s name is given in two columns of text engraved in front of him:



(1) *ḏd-mdw (j)n wsjr ḥsy ᶜ3 m [ ... ]* (2) *p-dj-jst z3 qwpr [ ... ]*  
 (1) “Recitation by the Osiris, the highly praised one in [ ... ], (2) Pedesi, son of Kuper [ ... ].”

This information makes it possible for us to know with certainty the provenance of this block and even its precise original location.

- Material (reddish sandstone) indicates that the block must derive from the Nubian area.
- The contents (a ritual scene) tell us that the block was part of a temple.
- The inscription with the name of the god Pedesi restricts the possible provenance of the block to a single monument, the temple of Dendur, since the god Pedesi is known only from this temple.<sup>12</sup>
- As the symbol of Lower Egypt, the uraeus with the red crown is found on the northern part of the temple. For the axis of Dendur this means the right side of a relief-decorated architectural element.<sup>13</sup> The orientation of the snake to the left further limits the possible placement of the block to the right border of a wall.
- This wall must have had an upper border in the form of a cavetto with a frieze of uraei above it. Cavettos can be found in temples on pylons, roofs, and screen walls.<sup>14</sup> Of these elements in the temple of Dendur, only the two screen walls of the temple facade are not intact. The block in Banz must belong to this incomplete section.
- Since the snake with the red crown is preserved on the left (southern) screen wall, the block must belong to the other, right (northern) screen wall.

From these data the block in the Banz Petrological and Oriental Collection can be identified as the right upper border block of the right screen wall of the temple of Dendur.

The temple of Dendur was erected by the Roman emperor Augustus (63 B.C.–A.D.14) and dedicated to the local gods Pedesi and Pihor. For unknown reasons the decoration of the monument was never finished.

Several travelers in the last century produced views of the temple (e.g., Norden in 1737,<sup>15</sup> Legh in 1816,<sup>16</sup> and Roberts in 1838<sup>17</sup>). These views do not show the screen wall intact, either to the left or to the right of the entrance to the pronaos, but they do record a heap of blocks lying between the entrance of the temple and its pylon.<sup>18</sup> A. M. Blackman published the complete temple as part of the survey of the documentation of Nubian antiquities threatened with flooding by the raising of the old Aswan dam, which took place between 1907 and 1912. On plate 33 of his publication, Blackman illustrates a fragment that he assigned

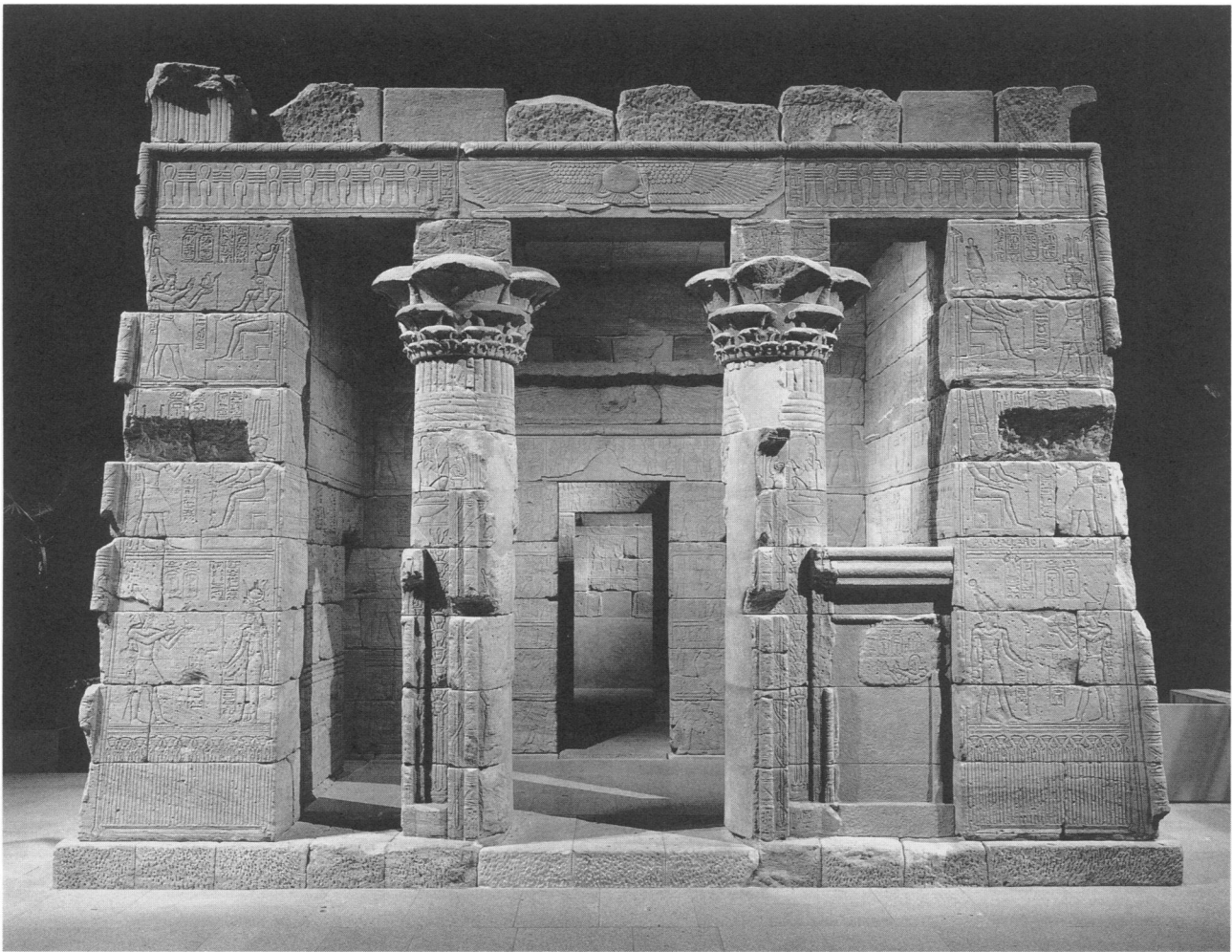


Figure 3. Facade of the temple of Dendur as restored in The Metropolitan Museum of Art before the discovery of the missing block of the right screen wall

provisionally to the southern screen wall, but he gives no information about the provenance of this block.<sup>19</sup> Most likely it was found in front of the temple entrance as debris was being cleared away from the space between the court and the pylon during the photographic documentation of the temple, as one can see on Blackman's plates 31 and 32.

Blackman's fragment was set in the right screen wall during the reconstruction of the temple by the Centre d'Études et de Documentation sur l'Ancienne Égypte, after the temple was rescued in 1962 from the new threat of flooding created by the construction of the High Dam, which had begun in 1960.<sup>20</sup> The stone at Banz can be placed directly above this block, and the northern (right) screen wall can now be fully reconstructed. It consisted of four courses, with a total height of 1.83 meters and a width of 72 centimeters. On the outside the pharaoh is shown offering wine to Pedesi or Pihor, and above this scene is a cavetto with a frieze of uraei. Unfortunately, the newly discovered

block at Banz does not contribute to the identification of the god.

On the inside wall, however, it is now possible to identify clearly the actors of the ritual scene. The king stands in front of the seated god Pedesi and presents flowers to him. This action is described by the line of text in front of the king, in which he addresses the following words to the god:



*ḥnk.j n.k zšn nb pr'm' t3* "I offer you every lotus flower that emerges (from) the earth."

Above the scene is the winged sun-disk, whose span can be calculated as 72 centimeters, which is exactly the width of the screen wall.

Pedesi's headdress—Atef crown with uraeus on a short wig—appears several times in the Dendur temple.<sup>22</sup> The inscription in front of Pedesi can be completed on the basis of parallels as follows:<sup>23</sup>

(1) *dd-mdw (j)n wsjr hsy ʿ3 m-[hnrw hrt-ntr]* (2) *p-djst z3 qwpr [m3c hrw]* <sup>24</sup> (1) "Recitation by the Osiris, the highly praised one in [the necropolis], (2) Pedesi, son of Kuper, [justified]."

The traveling party of Duke Maximilian visited the ruins of the temple of Dendur twice: on March 21, 1838, and on April 3, 1838. In both cases the block was not mentioned in the duke's brief diary-style reports. Under March 21 is the following entry:<sup>25</sup> "The night of this day we spent close to the temple of Meroe,<sup>26</sup> which I just had enough time to visit since the sun had just set. The remains are not very big. The drawings on the wall in pretty good condition. We were right on the Tropic of Cancer." Even shorter is the entry for April 3: "In the evening I visited again the temple of Meroe." Nevertheless, this was probably the day on which the Banz block began its journey to Europe.

To visit the temple today requires a trip to New York City, where the temple has been re-erected in the Sackler Wing of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The temple was offered as a gift to the United States of America by the government of the Arab Republic of Egypt in 1965, and three years later, 642 blocks were shipped from Nubia to New York. More than a century earlier the six-hundred-forty-third block had already traveled in a more or less informal fashion to a small village in Germany, where it passed unnoticed in a curiosity cabinet until now.

## NOTES

1. Dirk van der Plas, ed., *Multilingual Egyptological Thesaurus*, PIREI 11 (Utrecht, 1996) p. 18.

2. "Maximilian, Herzog in Baiern," *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 52 (1906) pp. 258–270.

3. Aloys Dreyer, *Herzog Maximilian in Bayern, der erlauchte Freund und Förderer des Zitherspiels und der Gebirgs poesie* (Munich, 1909) p. 18.

4. See *Eine Reise nach dem Orient mit Herzog Max in Bayern 1838 und weitere Reisen des Freiherrn Carl Theodor von Busek (1803–1860)*, exh. cat., *Kunstkabinett Dagmar Fleischmann* (Munich, n.d.) pp. 7–12.

5. Baier was the only member of the traveling party who did not return home. He died in Syria.

6. Herzog Maximilian in Bayern, *Wanderungen nach dem Orient im Jahre 1838* (Munich, 1839) p. 133. This event took place on March 3, 1838.

7. *Ibid.* This entertaining and exciting traveler's report went through several editions. The description of the pharaonic monuments, however, plays only a minor role in it.

8. Heinrich von Mayr, *Malerische Ansichten aus dem Orient, gesammelt auf der Reise Seiner Hoheit des Herrn Herzogs Maximilian in Bayern im Jahre MDCCCXXXVIII, herausgegeben und Ihrer königlichen Hoheit der Frau Herzogin Louise in Bayern in tiefster Ehrfurcht gewidmet von Heinr. v. Mayr* (Munich, n.d.). This publication reproduces the watercolors of Mayr accompanied by short discussion. Both travelers' reports may be added to those included in the book of Martin R. Kalfatovic, *Nile Notes of a Howaddji: A Bibliography of Travelers' Tales from Egypt, from the Earliest Time to 1918* (London, 1992).

9. It is possible that the initiative came from Heinrich von Mayr, who designed the kiosk after his return to Bavaria and equipped it with fabrics, tools, and ethnographical objects of all kinds from his private collection: see "Heinrich von Mayr," *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliographie* 21 (repr. Berlin, 1970) p. 140. The kiosk was later purchased from the king of Württemberg for the "Wilhelma," his summer residence in Stuttgart.

10. Bernhard Kästle, *Petrefaktensammlung Kloster Banz. Versteinerungen und Orientalische Sammlung*, Bayerische Museen 17 (Munich/Zurich, 1992) p. 79, fig. 1.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 79, fig. 2.

12. We owe this information to the database of more than 8,500 ritual scenes of the Greco-Roman Period, established under the direction of Professor Beinlich at the University of Würzburg.

13. See Dieter Arnold, *Die Tempel Ägyptens. Götterwohnungen, Kultstätten, Baudenkmäler* (Zurich, 1992) p. 42.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16, 61–62.

15. Hassan El-Achirie, *Le temple de Dandour I. Architecture*, Centre d'Études et de Documentation sur l'Ancienne Égypte. Collection Scientifique (Cairo, 1972) pl. 28.

16. *Ibid.*, frontis.

17. *Ägypten gestern und heute. Lithographien und Reisetagebuch von David Roberts* (Erlangen, 1996) pp. 56–57.

18. This accumulation of blocks can best be seen in Norden's drawing: El-Achirie, *Le temple de Dandour I*, pl. 28.

19. Alyward Manley Blackman, *The Temple of Dendûr*, Les temples immergés de la Nubie (Cairo, 1911) p. 21 and pl. 33.

20. F. Ibrahim and Christian Leblanc, *Le temple de Dandour III. Planches photographiques et indices*, Centre d'Études et de Documentation sur l'Ancienne Égypte. Collection Scientifique (Cairo, 1975) pl. 30.

21. This reading after *Valeurs phonétiques des signes hiéroglyphiques d'époque gréco-romaine* (Montpellier, 1988) p. 403, nos. 183–185.

22. This headdress was most probably characteristic for Pedesi: M. Aly et al., *Le temple de Dandour II. Dessins*, Centre d'Études et de Documentation sur l'Ancienne Égypte. Collection Scientifique (Cairo, 1979) pls. 37, 44, 50, 62, 67; see also pls. 7 and 65, where Pedesi is depicted without the ceremonial beard.

23. Blackman, *The Temple of Dendûr*, pp. 83, 92–93. For a possible restoration of the hieroglyphs, see Aly et al., *Le temple de Dandour II*, pl. 67. The restoration is relatively sure: only in this parallel are Pedesi's name and title written in such a way that the second line of text begins with the name, *p3-djst* as it does on the block at Banz.

24. The bottom of the *hrw*-sign can be seen on the fragment of

the screen wall: see Blackman, *The Temple of Dendûr*, pl. 33, 1.

25. Herzog Maximilian in Bayern, *Wanderungen*, p. 120.

26. This confusing name, which has nothing to do with the Sudanese site of Meroe, can also be found in the report of traveler Anton Prokesch-Osten, who called Dendur "Grab-Meroe": *Das Land zwischen den Katarakten des Nil, mit einer Karte, astronomisch bestimmt und aufgenommen im Jahre 1827 von A. Prokesch Ritter von Osten, k. k. Major* (Vienna, 1831) p. 102.