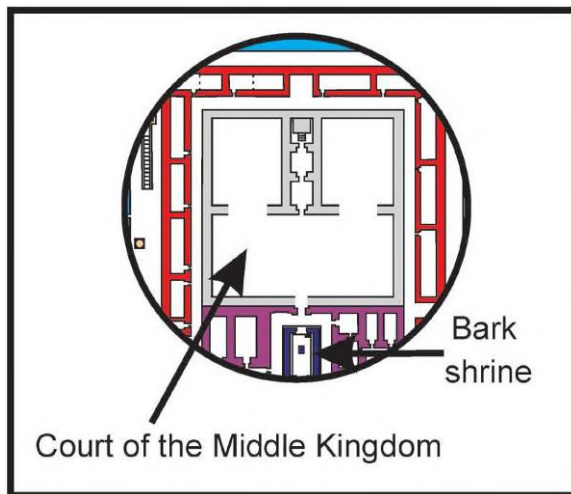




### 1.7. The court of the Middle Kingdom



Behind the bark shrine lies an open space, now called “the court of the Middle Kingdom”. This is where originally the oldest part of the Amun temple stood, build during the so-called Middle Kingdom (approx. 2.000 BC).

This part of the temple was constructed from limestone. In later days, the limestone of ancient monuments was large scale prospected: broken into lumps of convenient size, and then heated in ovens to turn it into fertilizer. Luckily enough, most of the rest of this temple was constructed from sandstone...



*The dark rectangle in the middle of the picture is the (added) backdoor of the bark shrine. In front of it lies the “court of the Middle Kingdom”.*



We are now standing just behind the bark shrine, looking out over the Court of the Middle Kingdom. The large boulders in the middle area are granite “doorsteps”: the only parts of the Middle Kingdom building that were not of limestone, and that have therefore survived. The rest of that small temple has been so thoroughly destroyed, that its plan can no longer be determined.

In the background we see the “Akhmenu”: a relatively well-preserved part of the complex. We now leave the area of the Amun temple proper, though.

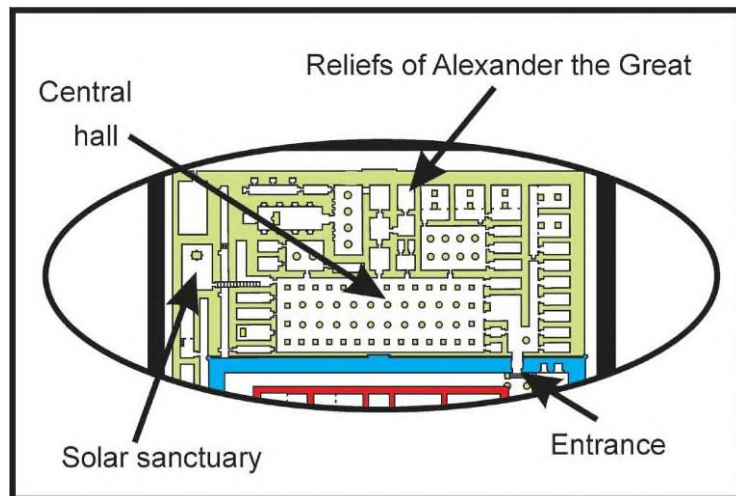




## 2. The Akhmenu

“Akhmenu” means: “Splendid in monuments”. The full name of this building by Thutmosis III was: “Thutmosis III is splendid in monuments”.

The true meaning of this remarkable complex is not entirely clear, but whatever its specific function: it was certainly personal, and private. Its location is secluded: behind the temple proper. And its form and decoration reveal a personal style.



The Akhmenu's orientation is at a right angle to the main temple axis. Its entrance was a small, two columned portal to the side, with two king's statues on either side of the doorway.



The central hall has an elevated middle nave, like the Great Hypostyle, be it of much more modest proportions. As this middle nave predates that of the Great Hypostyle

by about a century and a half, it is possible that Ramesses' architects got their idea from this hall.

The columns supporting the elevated part of the roof have a remarkable shape, unique to this building: it is derived from tent poles. Thutmose III led dozens of military campaigns, both in Nubia in the south and in Syria-Palestine in the north. This means that he spent a considerable part of his life in tents. It seems then that he selected this particular column shape out of nostalgia.

It appears that Thutmose III was not only a general, but also something of a botanist. On his travels, he saw many plants and animals that were unknown in Egypt, and he apparently was fascinated by their exotic shapes. In a special room of the Akhmenu, he had them carved on the walls, carefully arranged as in a catalogue. That is why this room has become known as the Botanical Garden.







In another room of the Akhmenu, probably once a shrine to the god Amun, we find these exquisite reliefs. In this particular version, they date from the period of Alexander the Great. But in addition to his cartouches, we still find some of Thutmose III on these walls.



The cartouches of Thutmose III. The anachronistic spelling of "sa Re" gives away that this part of the inscription was also made in Alexander's time.



Right alongside the Akhmenu, this stairway leads up to an elevated solar sanctuary. Here, offerings were presented to the sun.



→  
Through a window in its eastern wall (part of its sill visible in the back) the light of the morning sun gently touched the offerings on the altar (the block of stone in the foreground).



On the sides of the alabaster altar, portly offering gods - pictures of abundance - carry in ever more provisions.