“The Murals from The Augustus Temple, Meroe” by P.L. Shinnie and R.J. Bradley was definitely the outlier in this week’s readings. The article, for the first time, published watercolors by Schliephack of the murals Chapel M 292 from Meroe found in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. In an effort to provide more context to the find, I have attached the text, figures, and plates associated with the excavation of this building by Garstung and will summarize some of them below.

The walls of the *third building*, which dates from the Middle Meroitic II period, were plastered and painted with scenes. The wall paintings were damaged after the excavation when a storm tore away the roof built by Garstung to protect the site. It is believed that the paintings, at least the watercolors by Schliephack, were located on the east wall. The image of the king standing on the lotus flower is believed to have been copied from the West Wall. The recently published (1997) excavation report of Garstung by Torok gives the following description of the scene reconstructed by the negatives:

“At either end of the wall there was the representation of an enthroned god holding a *WAS* sceptre. The two enthroned gods faced each other in a most remarkable manner. The god at the N wall end was shown wearing a kilt and anklets, the god at the S wall end an ankle-length robe (?) or a kilt (?). The S throne was decorated with the image of Bes, while the N throne bore the symbol of the Unification of the Two Lands. Behind the N throne stood a goddess wearing an anklelength, tight-fitting skirt. A similar figure was probably standing behind the S throne. The feet of the enthroned deities rested on foot-stools bearing the images of kneeling, bound prisoners. Facing the S-side god, stood a male figure wearing ornate sandals (ibid. figs 2, 3) and an ankle-length piece of costume (probably a tunic and, above it, a mantle) of a dark colour. Before the N-side god stood a female figure wearing ornate sandals and an ankle-length robe painted white (?). From her royal mantle was preserved a pendant end of the tasseled cord. This latter detail indicates that the represented person was a ruling queen and thus the female and male figures adoring the enthroned gods were co-regents. Between the male and female royal figures were standing, facing S, five smaller male figures wearing a knee-length tunic and a transparent ankle-length overkilt.” (149)

Torok suggests that it is probable that the scenes represent Natakamani and Amanitore, as iconography exists of the couple elsewhere in Meroe. It is possible that the “iconographic equality” could suggest a c-regency between the two, but similar scenes known from Temple F at Naqa in the 2nd century BC are thought to not have the same political nature. Torok and Garstung see the relationship between Temple F and the Amun temple at Naqa as synonymous to the relationship of Chapel 292 and the Amun temple at Meroe.

The contexts of these paintings add nicely to the work we did last week in class in finding evidence for the nature of Meroe and Napata as“states”, identifying both their similarities and differences. I think this article illuminates a couple areas for further inquiry: What is the frequency of wall paintings and in which contexts are they found? What comparisons can be drawn from pictoral and iconographic evidence from the same site and from different sites? How are these murals being used functionally, if they are, and what does their existence mean about religion and ideology during this time period?