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The Sacred Waterscape of Ancient Egyptian Temples - The Example of the Temple of Bastet at Bubastis, Nile Delta (Egypt)

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The temple areas in ancient Egypt were most sacred and characterized by a multitude of elements that emphasized their importance and enabled daily cultic activities. Very specific and important features of such temples were sacred water canals or lakes, the so-called *Isheru*, which provided water for all kinds of purification rites and activities. In addition to textual records, preliminary sedimentological analyses of core drillings and geophysical surveys provided geoarchaeological evidence of a sacred water body at the Temple of Bastet in the ancient city of Bubastis. To further explore the location, shape, or course of the already detected canal and to find evidence on the existence of a second waterway described by Herodotus in the 5th century BCE, 34 drillings and five 2D geoelectrical measurements were carried. Drilling and sediment analyses revealed loamy to clayey deposits with a thickness of up to five meters near the northern and southern enclosures of the Temple of Bastet. 2D electrical surveying confirmed the drilling results, indicating trench-formed layers of low resistivity values. The recovered deposits were interpreted as fluvial sediments, most likely deposited in a very low energy system, e.g. a canal or lake. Evidence of these fluvial sediments in numerous boreholes allows the reconstruction of two separate sacred canals both north and south of the Temple of Bastet. In addition to the course, the width of the canals of about 30 m can also be confirmed according to Herodotus' writings. The presence of numerous artefacts in the fluvial deposits, such as ceramic and limestone fragments, proves the anthropogenic use of the ancient canals. Presumably, these waterways were connected to the Nile via a tributary or canal located west or northwest of Bubastis.