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 sacred water bodies at the Temple of Bastet in the ancient city of Bubastis, located in the eastern Nile Delta. 34 drillings and five 2D geoelectrical measurements were carried out in 2019 and 2020 in Bubastis to explore the location, shape, or course of an already detected canal and to find evidence on the existence of a second waterway described by Herodotus in the 5th century BCE. Drilling and sediment analyses revealed loamy to clayey deposits with a thickness of up to six meters near the northern and southern enclosures of the Temple of Bastet. 2D electrical surveying confirmed the drilling results, indicating trenched layers of low resistivity values. The recovered deposits were interpreted as fluvial/limnic sediments, most likely deposited in a very low energy fluvial system, e.g., a canal or lake. Evidence of these sediments in numerous boreholes allowed 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 fit Herodotus’ description of the sacred waterways. The presence of numerous artefacts, such as ceramic and limestone fragments or charcoal in the fluvial/limnic sediments, proved the anthropogenic use of the ancient canals. Presumably, these waterways were connected to the Nile through a tributary or canal located north or northwest of the temples of Bastet and Pepi I.

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