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Author

Kuckertz, Josefine

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Josefine Kuckertz

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MEROE AND EGYPT

مرّوي و مصر

Josefine Kuckertz

Meroe und Ägypten
Méroé et l'Égypte

The Meroitic Period, which lasted from the third century BCE to around the mid-fourth century CE, comprises the second of two phases of Kushite empire in the territory of what is today Sudan, the first phase comprising the Napatan era (c. 655 – 300 BCE). While Meroitic culture reflects both Napatan influence and that of periods of Egyptian colonization (during Egypt's New Kingdom, c. 1550 – 1070 BCE), it is characterized by the emergence of indigenous cultural elements. These include an indigenous script as well as ideological features such as concepts of kingship, burial customs, and the introduction of indigenous deities into the old Egypto-centric pantheon. Meroitic rulers were buried in cemeteries in the regions of (Gebel) Barkal and Meroe. The shift of burial grounds from the vicinity of Barkal to Meroe has led scholars to designate the period and culture as "Meroitic." There was, however, no cultural break with former times, but rather a continuation and development of prevailing cultural features with the addition of new elements. Special focus is laid on the border area between Ptolemaic and, later, Roman Egypt and the Meroitic Empire, in which both power structures had interests. The politics of both states in Lower Nubia—today territory held by Egypt and Sudan—were of varied intensity during the c. 650 years of the Meroitic Period. Documentation of Meroitic history is hindered by our as yet insufficient understanding of Meroitic texts and thus relies heavily on archaeological data and the factual remains of art and architecture. In general, our knowledge is uneven: some periods are well documented, while for others we have little to no information.

الفترة التاريخية المعروفة بالمرّوية، هي تلك التي استمرت من القرن الثالث قبل الميلاد إلى حوالي منتصف القرن الرابع الميلادي، والتي تشمل المرحلة الثانية من مرحلتي الإمبراطورية الكوشية في المنطقة المعروفة حالياً بالسودان، المرحلة الأولى والتي تشمل الفترة النبتية (655 - 300 ق.م). بينما تعكس الثقافة المرّوية كلاً من التأثير النبتية وتأثير فترات التوسع المصري (خلال عصر الدولة الحديثة المصرية، حوالي 1070-1550 ق.م)، حيث تتميز بظهور عناصر ثقافية أصلية. ينعكس ذلك في مفاهيم الملكية، عادات الدفن، في النص المحلي، وفي ظهور الآلهة المحلية. دُفن الحكام المرّويين في جبانات بمنطقتي جبل بركل ومرّوي. دفع انتقال المقابر من محيط جبل بركل إلى مرّوي بعض العلماء إلى تسمية تلك الفترة والثقافة باسم

"مروى". ومع ذلك، لم يكن هناك فاصل من الناحية الثقافية مع الفترات التاريخية السابقة، بل كان هناك استمرار وتطور للسمات الثقافية السائدة، مع وجود إضافات جديدة. كانت المنطقة الحدودية بين مصر (خلال العصر البطلمي والروماني) وبين الإمبراطورية المروية منطقة كان لكل من تلك القوى مصالح خاصة فيها. كانت السياسات في كلتا الدولتين - الأراضي التي تقع داخل حدود مصر والسودان حالياً - متفاوتة الحدة وذلك خلال العام 650 من العصر المروى. تُنشط علمية توثيق التاريخ المروى بسبب عدم كفاية فهمنا للنصوص المروية، وبالتالي يعتمد ذلك بشكل كبير على البيانات الأثرية وبقايا الفن والعمارة.

Contacts between Egypt and regions to the south, with their various cultural groups, existed even prior to the Old Kingdom. For Egypt, southern lands constituted a source of desired goods and commodities, like precious metals, animals, and slaves, though powerful entities in the south also posed a consistent threat. Indeed, provocations by the Kingdom of Kerma (c. 2400 – 1450 BCE) in Upper Nubia, for example, compelled Egypt at the beginning of the 18th Dynasty to conquer Nubian territory up to Kurgus, located between the Fourth and Fifth Cataracts (fig. 1), resulting in Egypt's implementation of an independent colonial administration there. With the later decline of Egyptian domination in the eleventh century BCE, indigenous groups, especially around (Gebel) Barkal (Napata) (see fig. 1), gained strength. By the eighth to seventh centuries these Early Napatan rulers succeeded in conquering Egypt, ruling there as Dynasty 25 (cf. Pope 2019). Conflicts with local Egyptian dynasts and Assyrian attacks, however, resulted in their withdrawal into their Nubian homelands. In the subsequent period (c. 655 – 300 BCE; cf. Pope 2020) contacts were not always peaceful, as is revealed by the 593 BCE campaign of Saite ruler Psammetichus II, who presumably reacted against still-vibrant Kushite aspirations toward Egypt (Sauneron and Yoyotte 1952; Török 1997a: 371-374; Gozzoli 2017: 45-61). The consequences of the Egyptian campaign against (possibly) Aspelta were the loss of Kushite influence in Lower Nubia coupled with, perhaps, the southward transfer of the Egyptian royal residence to

Meroe, whose location at the crossroads of trade routes, in a densely populated zone where rainfall supported both agriculture and livestock, provided good economic opportunities (see fig. 1).

Kushite history from the ninth to eighth centuries BCE onwards is conventionally divided into two succeeding phases, the Napatan and the Meroitic, designated according to the royal burial places of their respective rulers (cf. Welsby 1996; Török 1997a; Edwards 2004; Rilly 2017a). No cultural break is expressed therewith, but rather a consecutive development with some distinct new cultural traits in Meroitic times (e.g., indigenous script and deities; female rulers). The beginning of the Meroitic Period (c. 300 BCE – 330/350 CE) is characterized in scholarship by the fact that the royal burial ground was moved from the Barkal region to Meroe, first to the Southern Royal Cemetery, Begarawiyah South ("Beg S"), and after some decades to the Northern Royal Cemetery, Begarawiyah North ("Beg N"). This change of burial place presumably reflects a changeover of power to ruling families based in the Butana (see fig. 1) (cf. Török 1997a: 421-423; Edwards 2004: 141, 143; Rilly 2017a: 193-194). Having prior ties (of marriage, etc.) with Napata, these clans presumably gained in influence at the beginning of the third century. At about the same time the Ptolemies in Egypt implemented a traditional Hellenistic dynasty, beginning with the former satrap Ptolemy I (305/304 – 282 BCE). Cultural impetus from Ptolemaic Egypt, generated by diverse contacts (i.e., through trade), impacted the Kushite realm.

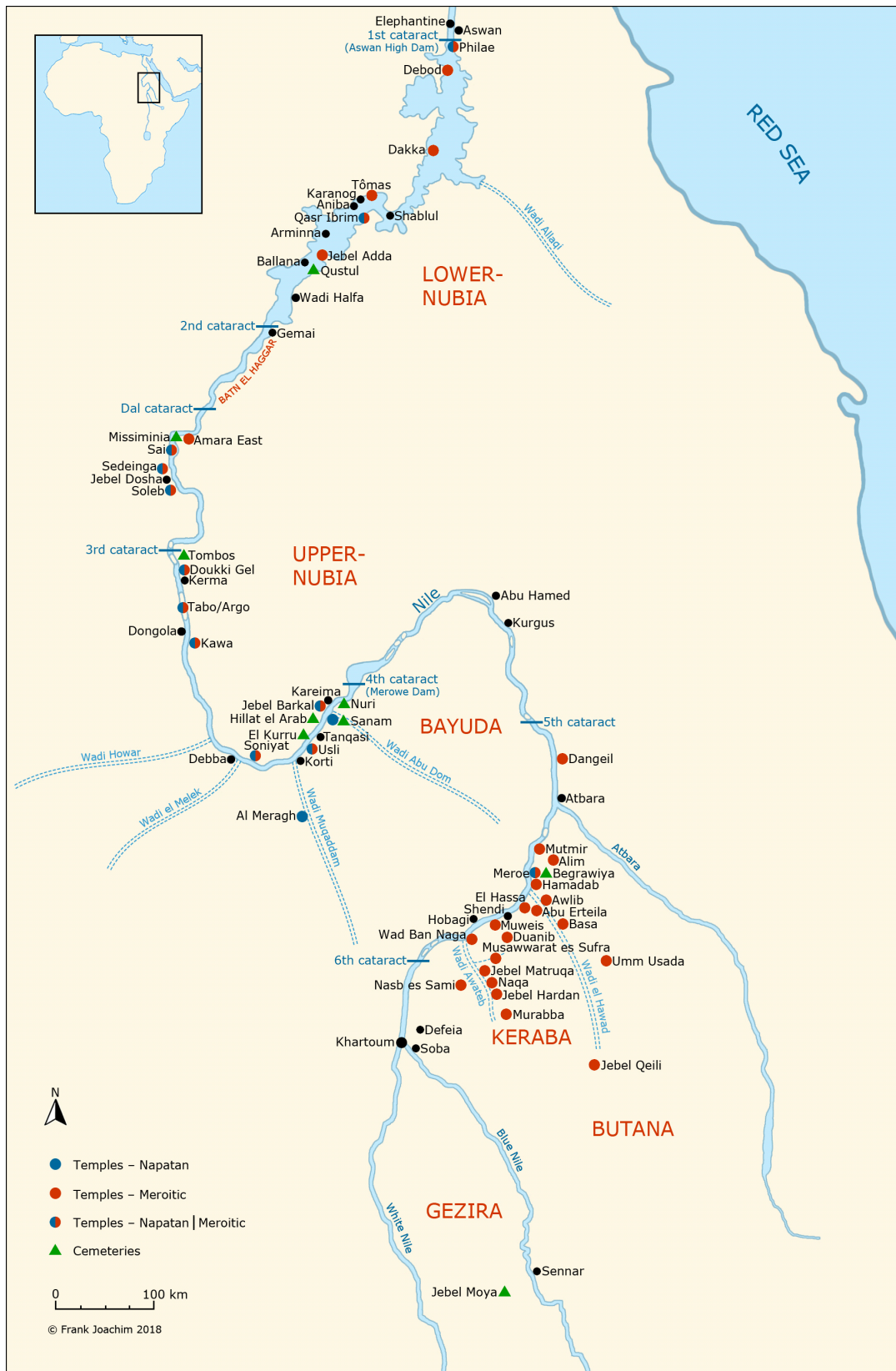


Figure 1. Upper and Lower Nubia in Napatan/Meroitic times (c. 300 BCE – 350 CE).

In earlier scholarship, the occasional burial of Meroitic rulers at Barkal (“Bar”) led to the assumption that two different royal lines existed, one at Meroe, the other at Barkal (Reisner 1923: 63-64; Hintze 1959: 22-23; refuted by Wenig 1967: 9-23). This assumption has since been abandoned; today the choice of burial place is considered to have been based on the ruler’s preference to be interred near ancestral kin.

The Meroitic Period is divided into three sub-phases: Early, Middle, and Late (regarding dates see Zibelius-Chen 2006: 285). The so-called “end of Meroe” around the mid-fourth century CE should be regarded as a protracted transitional period of widespread change. The chronology of the Meroitic Period, like that of the preceding Napatan Period, has not been fully substantiated. Indeed, only a single fixed date is available for the Meroitic era. The reign of Teqorideamani (from c. 248/249 CE onward) is dated from a graffito in Philae from year 3 of the Roman Emperor Trebonianus Gallus (*FHN III*: 1000-1010; Pope 2008 – 2009). Indirect data and external reports (for example, by Classical authors), or synchronisms with Egypt and its Ptolemaic or Roman rulers, have proven helpful in positioning some rulers, but only for certain periods—namely, the early Meroitic phase, the last decades of the first century BCE, and (sporadically) later.

Chronology

Our chronology of Kushite history builds upon the work of George A. Reisner, whose early twentieth-century (1916 – 1923) excavation and analysis of tombs in the royal cemeteries included their structure/architecture, size, datable objects found therein, type of foundation deposit, and location preference within the cemeteries. His research resulted in a (relative) chronological order of tombs (Reisner 1923), but his assignment of rulers to burials is not today considered definitive in every case, his dates having been derived from a king’s approximate length of reign, calculated from the average length of reigns of a certain period together with the evaluation of size and wealth of the king’s tomb and monuments.

Reisner’s lists, and those of Dunham (1957) as well, nevertheless remain crucial to later attempts at correcting and refining their conclusions (Hintze 1959; Wenig 1967, 1971; Hofmann 1978; Zibelius-Chen 2006; Rilly and de Voogt 2012). Kushite chronology also benefits from Wenig’s 1964 dissertation (published 2015) presenting the iconography of chapel reliefs, and from Hinkel’s (1984) revision of the architectural typology of tomb pyramids. It is noteworthy that although an heir is occasionally represented in a temple’s relief program (e.g., Musawwarat IIC and IIA, Naga 200), it is only rarely documented that sons of former Kushite rulers succeeded to the throne, prompting the assumption that Kushite sources testify against the designation of kings’ sons as successors (Zibelius-Chen 2006: 289). Recent finds of buildings and objects bearing royal names, as well as research on chronologically sensitive material like inscriptions, ceramics, reliefs, and imports from the Mediterranean, all contribute toward improving the chronology (e.g., Török 1989, 2015; Yellin 2014, 2015; Rilly 2004; 2017b: 144-147), which remains the subject of ongoing discussion. Textual documentation pertaining to the history and rulers of ancient Nubia and Meroe is compiled in the second and third volume of *Fontes Historiae Nubiorum* (*FHN*) (Eide et al. 1994 – 2000).

List of Meroitic Kings

A list of 38 to 40 rulers is currently attributed to the Meroitic Period (Table 1). Their data are diverse: some of these individuals are known from a number of documents, including buildings and tombs, while others are only known from a single document, having not even a tomb that can safely be ascribed to them. The designation of “ruler” (male or female) depends on several criteria: the architecture and decoration of tombs; the genre of texts (hieroglyphic being exclusive to rulers and religious texts); the type of benediction formula on offering tables; iconographical features of garments and jewelry; and the (not always present) royal title *gore*. In general, the data on Meroitic rulers, and thus information on their administrative policies, is meager and insufficient, dependent

as it is on their buildings and on stelae naming them, as well as on diverse external sources such as the records of Hellenistic or Roman historians, and sometimes archaeological data. Historical records are very likely present, but as the decipherment of the Meroitic language is still developing, many of the often-lengthy texts remain insufficiently understood. While the script, both cursive and hieroglyphic, was

deciphered over a century ago, the language itself was only recently identified as belonging to the Northern East Sudanic (NES) linguistic family (see Rilly 2010). Future comparison with related languages will add to our understanding of Meroitic. Texts in Meroitic script are cited with their REM-number (*Répertoire d'épigraphie méroïtiques*, compiled by Leclant et al. eds. 2000).

Table 1. List of Meroitic rulers and their Egyptian (Ptolemaic and Roman) contemporaries, adapted by the author from recent research and earlier work (e.g., Zibelius-Chen 2006; Rilly 2017a: 121-122).

Meroitic Rulers ^{1, 2}	Egyptian Contemporaries ³	Tomb (assumed) ^{4,5}	Approximate Dates
Arqamani-qo/Ergamenes I (Arakakamani/Arkamanis)	Ptolemy II Philadelphos (282–246 BCE)	Beg S 6	c. 270 – mid-3 rd cent. BCE
Amanislo (Amanisaraw)		Beg S 5	mid-3 rd cent. BCE
Amanitekha		Beg N 4	2 nd half 3 rd cent. BCE
[...] <i>Šsp-ḥh-n-Jmn stp-n-R'</i>	Ptolemy III Euergetes (246–222/221 BCE)		2 nd half 3 rd cent. BCE
Arnekhamani (Elankhamani)	Ptolemy III Euergetes (246–222/221 BCE)–Ptolemy IV Philopator (222/221–204 BCE)	(Beg N 53)	2 nd half 3 rd cent. BCE (Rilly: c. 240 – 215 BCE)
Arqamani/Ergamenes II	Ptolemy IV Philopator (222/221–204 BCE)–Ptolemy V Epiphanes (204–180 BCE)	Beg N 7	late 3 rd – early 2 nd cent. BCE
Adikhalamani/[...] <i>mr</i> [...] <i>t</i>	Ptolemy V Epiphanes (204–180 BCE)	Beg N 8	1 st half 2 nd cent. BCE
Tabirqo/a		Beg N 9	1 st half 2 nd cent. BCE
Unknown ruler		Beg N 10	2 nd cent. BCE
Ruling Queen Nahirqo		(Beg N 11)	1 st half 2 nd cent. BCE
Taneyideamani		(Beg N 12)	2 nd half 2 nd cent. BCE
Pa[,]khedateqo			end-2 nd – 1 st half 1 st cent. BCE
Ruling Queen, name unknown		Bar 8	end 2 nd – 1 st half 1 st cent. BCE
Nagyriinsan[...]		(Beg N 13)	1 st half 1 st cent. BCE
Teriteqase (Horus <i>K3-n3ht?</i>)	Cleopatra VII ? (51–30 BCE)–Augustus (27 BCE–14 CE)	(Beg N 20?)	late 1 st cent. BCE
Ruling Queen Amanirenase	Augustus (27 BCE–14 CE)	(Bar 4?)	end 1 st cent. BCE – beginning 1 st cent. CE
Ruling Queen Amanishakheto		Beg N 6	End 1 st cent. BCE/ beginning 1 st cent. CE
Ruling Queen Sanakdakhete (Shanakdakhete)		(Beg N 21?)	1 st half 1 st cent. CE?
Unknown king		Bar 2	1 st half 1 st cent. CE
Ruling Queen Nawidemak		Bar 6	1 st half 1 st cent. CE?
Amanakhabale		(Beg N 2)	1 st half 1 st cent. CE?
Natakamani, <i>kandake</i> Amanitore	Nero? (54–68 CE)	Beg N 22, Beg N 1	mid-1 st cent. CE
Sorakaror (Shorkaror)			2 nd half 1 st cent. CE
Amanakhareqerem		(Beg N 16/original?)	end 1 st cent. CE
Amanitenmomide		Beg N 17	End 1 st cent. – 1 st half 2 nd cent. CE

Ruling Queen Amanikhatashan		Beg N 18	1 st half 2 nd cent. CE
Tarekeniwal		Beg N 19	2 nd half 2 nd cent. CE
Aritenyesebokhe		Beg N 34	2 nd half 2 nd cent. CE
Amanitarqide		(Beg N 36)	End 2 nd cent. CE
Takideamani		Beg N 29	1 st half 3 rd cent. CE
Ruling Queen, name unknown		Beg N 32	Mid-2 nd to mid-3 rd cent. CE
Teqorideamani (Taquereramani)	Trebonianus Gallus (251–253 CE), perhaps also Valerianus (253–260 CE) and Gallienus (253–268 CE)	Beg N 28	2 nd half 3 rd cent. CE, accession c. 249
Tamelordeamani (Tamalqordeamani)		(Beg N 27?)	2 nd half 3 rd cent. CE
Talakhideamani + (prince) Maloqorebar			End 3 rd / beginning 4 th cent. CE?
Aryesebokhe		(Beg N 16/rebuilt)	End of 3 rd /1 st half 4 th cent. CE
Amaniyesebokhe (Yesebokheamani)	Diokletian? (284–305 CE)	(Beg N 51?)	End of 3 rd – 1 st half 4 th cent. CE
Ruling Queen, name unknown		Beg N 26	Beginning 4 th cent. AD
King? or Ruling Queen?		Beg N 25	4 th cent. CE?

¹ A number of rulers mentioned in earlier king lists of the second/third and fourth centuries CE (i.e., Amanikhedolo, Mashaqadakhel, Pat[.]rapeamani, Amanipilade) are omitted here, as their status as rulers of the empire in its entirety is not confirmed.

² The succession of rulers, especially in the latest period, is not firmly established.

³ Ptolemaic dates are derived from Hölbl (2004); Roman dates are derived from Kienast (2004).

⁴ A number of pyramid tombs in the North Cemetery, as well as supposed royal tombs at (Gebel) Barkal, cannot be attributed to a definite ruler. They are included here only in instances where an approximate date can be given.

⁵ Beg=Begarawiyah; Bar=(Gebel) Barkal.

Geographical Background

The policies and achievements of the Meroitic Empire coincided, and often conflicted, with those of Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt (cf. Haycock 1972), especially in the contact area between the two entities—that is, in the diverse expanses of Lower Nubia (fig. 2). In Ptolemaic sources the approximately 126-kilometer-long stretch of land from the First Cataract to Hiera Sycaminos/Maharraqa was labeled *Dodekaschoinos* (“Twelve-Miles-Land”). In the mid-second century BCE, Roman rulers expanded the territory to the Second Cataract. Now labeled *Triakontaschoinos* (“Thirty-Miles-Land”), the area as a whole comprised c. 315 kilometers.

Kush had been able to control Lower Nubia from the end of the fifth century BCE onward, as was reported by fourth-century kings Harsiyotef and Nastasen (Török 2009: 368-376; Pope 2020: 15). While settlement clusters in the Meroitic heartlands were mainly

concentrated in certain riverine areas and in various locations in the Butana and Bayuda (see fig. 1), the situation in Lower Nubia was different (cf. Wolf 2019). Varying numbers of habitation sites and cemeteries have been proposed for Meroitic Lower Nubia—from nearly unpopulated regions to areas that were densely inhabited (see the summary of research in Edwards 1996: 48-51). The work of David Edwards (1996; 2004: 156-163) and Bruce Williams (1985, 1991) has revealed numerous sites dating from the second century BCE through the fourth century CE, many showing continued occupation from the preceding Napatan Period. The settlement pattern in the Northern Province, and also in the *Dodekaschoinos* controlled by Ptolemaic and Roman rulers, exhibits habitation only during limited periods, or intermittently. An increase in population in the second to third centuries CE, as argued by Adams (1976, 1977), cannot be substantiated.

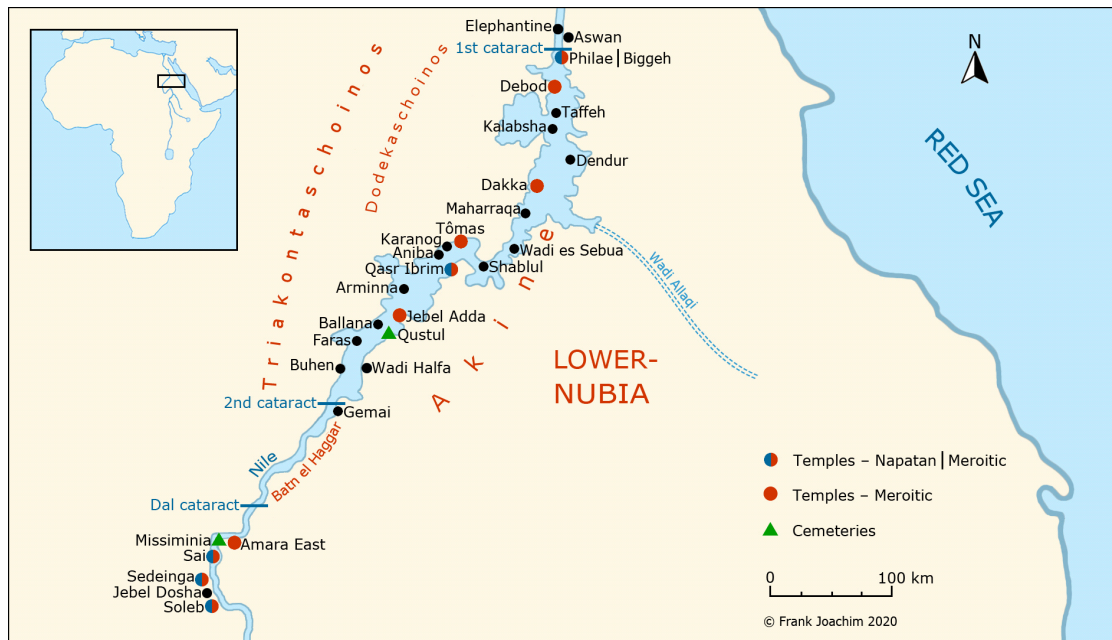


Figure 2. Lower Nubia.

Agricultural resources on flooded islands or sparse strips of alluvial land along the course of the Nile were productive on barely more than a subsistence basis, *saqiya* (waterwheel) irrigation not having been introduced until post-Meroitic times.

Three factors generated a Meroitic drive to gain influence and dominance north of the Second Cataract: unhindered trade, ideology, i.e., access to temples, and security against marauding tribes from areas adjacent to the Nile Valley. The elite (officials and priests) of Meroitic Nubia were involved in trade as well as communications with Egypt. The northernmost significant Meroitic settlement seems to have been at Wadi el-Sebua (Edwards 1996: 75).

It is noteworthy that, although the population of Lower Nubia is generally referred to here as “Nubian” or “Meroitic,” peoples of different ethnicities, who spoke different languages, inhabited the region—e.g., Nubians, Blemmyes, Meroites, and perhaps others. The official language of the administration was Greek in the area controlled by Egypt, and Meroitic in the stretch of territory under the authority of the Kushite Empire.

Meroe and Egypt in the Third Century BCE

Although it is discussed whether some rulers in Meroe from the end of the fourth to the mid-third centuries BCE had contact with Ptolemaic Egypt, these rulers are mostly not included in the list of Meroitic kings (cf. Zibelius-Chen 2006: 295-296; Pope 2014a: 42-46; 2020: 17-20; Breyer 2014: 140-142). This list (see Table 1) begins with Arqamani-qo, who is conventionally identified with Ergamenes (I), whom the second-century-BCE historian Agatharchides (in Diodorus *Bibliothēke* III,6; cf. *FHN II*: 566-567, 639-640) knew as a contemporary of Ptolemy II. He credits him with having been instructed in Greek philosophy and having refuted priestly tyranny and their custom of regicide. Those rather fanciful narrations may reflect the dynastic change that presumably had occurred with Arkamani-qo. He is the first Meroitic king interred in the Southern Royal Cemetery. With the exception of an offering table found by James Henry Breasted (cf. Hofmann 1978: 38-39), his tomb (Beg S 6) is his sole document.

Impetus from Ptolemaic Egypt, combined with Meroe’s intensified contacts with its Ptolemaic neighbor through trade and other

means, are considered decisive for the cultural change that began in the Meroitic Period (Török 1997a: 420). A first Ptolemaic attempt to interfere in southern territory seems to have been undertaken c. 311 BCE by Ptolemy I while a satrap in Egypt (Burstein 2014). His successor, Ptolemy II, conquered Lower Nubia c. 274 BCE (Török 2009: 384-390) with the intent—besides reacting to Meroitic activity there (cf. *FHN II*: 536-538; Török 2015: 61, 65)—to secure access to the gold mines in wadis Allaqi and Gabgaba, and to secure control of the hunting and trading of African elephants (Burstein 2008). These animals were acquired mainly from the hinterland of the Red Sea coast and transported via a chain of ports and various land routes to Egypt. A trail via the Nile Valley was more rarely used (*FHN II*: 575), for which an agreement of sorts with the Meroitic power was necessary. Ptolemaic elephant-trade barely lasted beyond the end of the third century BCE, because—as Ptolemy IV’s narrow victory at Raphia in 217 BCE revealed—the smaller African elephants were not advantageous for battle. How far beyond the Second Cataract the campaign of Ptolemy II reached is unknown; that Kush became a sort of “tributary state” (Burstein 2008: 140) is questionable. A stretch of land in Lower Nubia and thus also its income was dedicated by Ptolemy II to the Temple of Isis (on the island of Philae), which he had begun to substantially extend, integrating and replacing older structures (Haeny 1985: 206-208; Dietze 1994: 69, 91; on Isis temples in Philae and Lower Nubia in Ptolemaic and Roman times see Nagel 2019: 16-162; for an overview of Philae see Dijkstra 2015). Although the Nubian nomes depicted in the Temple of Isis at Philae (of Ptolemy II and VI; see Rickert 2015) include more southerly areas like Napata and Meroe, effective Ptolemaic control did not go farther than the wider cataract area and the *Dodekaschoinos*. The increasing interest in *Aithiopia* resulted in growing numbers of Hellenistic travelers, whose information, especially on geography and settlements, is preserved in accounts of later historians such as Pliny and Diodorus.

Rulers in Meroe in the Third Century BCE

Meroitic King Arqamani-qo’s successor, Amanislo (presumably his son), is, like his predecessor, buried in the Southern Royal Cemetery; his tomb is Beg S 5 (*FHN II*: 568-569). The length of his reign is unknown, as the date of more than 20 years mentioned in Beg S 4 is unsubstantiated. Amanislo’s building activities comprise a temple at Buhen and the renovation of the ceremonial palace Barkal 1200; its two lion figures, originally from Amenhotep III’s temple at Soleb, are now in London (exhibited as “the Prudhoe lions”). A votive plaque from building Meroe 298 may document activities in the early (Napatan) Amun temple there (Török 1997b: 167-168). His name was the prototype for “King Amonasro” in the libretto of Giuseppe Verdi’s opera *Aida*, which harks back to a scenario of Auguste Mariette (cf. Lohwasser 2018).

The lack of space in the Southern Royal Cemetery, housing burials from the pre-Napatan era (eighth century BCE) onwards (cf. Dunham 1957, 1963; Hinkel and Yellin *fc.*), prompted the move by King Amanitekha (Beg N 4) to the Northern Royal Cemetery (*FHN II*: 570-571; fig. 3). Of the 41 pyramid-tombs there (Dunham 1957), at least two belonged to princes and one to a non-ruling queen; many tombs cannot be attributed.

A king whose throne name was Šzp-*nh-n-Jmn stp-n-R^c* is documented only on a fragmentary chapel-entrance block at Meroe that preserved four parts of the king’s royal titulary in Egyptian hieroglyphs; his personal name is missing (Wenig 1967: 8-9; Hofmann 1978: 52-54; *FHN II*: 571-572). This individual appears to be a contemporary of Ptolemy III, who had a comparable Golden Horus name. Such resemblance to Egyptian royal names is considered to hint at contemporaneity between Meroitic and Egyptian (here Ptolemaic) rulers (Török 1997a: 198-199).

The next known Meroitic ruler was Arnekhamani (*FHN II*: 580-586). The various versions of his Son-of-Ra name would indicate that he was a contemporary of Ptolemy III and Ptolemy IV. His reign is thought to have lasted



Figure 3. View from Begarawiyah South to Begarawiyah North.

from c. 240 to 215 BCE (according to Rilly 2017a: 120, 208) or, alternatively, from 235 to 218 BCE (according to Hintze 1959). In addition to the later-destroyed tomb Beg N 53 attributed to him, he is attested at the site of Musawwarat (el-Sufra), which features a large temple-complex, water reservoirs (*hafirs*), and various other buildings. The Lion Temple, with its inscriptions in Egyptian hieroglyphs, is the first visible manifestation of indigenous Meroitic concepts and deities (Hintze et al. 1971; Hintze et al. 1993). Distinctive Philaean influence is detectable in relief decoration and inscriptions. That Ptolemaic workshops were also involved is confirmed by Greek masons' marks, as well as the adoption of Hellenistic metrology and use of the "Vitruvian module" (the measurement of the semidiameter of a column at its base), which from now on became the major measurement unit in architecture (Hinkel 1987, 1990, 1991).

Other buildings at Musawwarat are likewise attributed to Arnekhamani, such as the Great Enclosure IA (fig. 4), the Small Enclosure IB (Fitzenreiter, Seiler, and Gerullat 1999), and temple IIA (Wenig 1984), but his

commissioning of some of them has occasionally been doubted (see Näser 2011). Some iconographic features in a temple building at Naga (Wildung 2018: 263-271) may point to activities there of early Meroitic kings (Arnekhamani?) or to impetus from Musawwarat or, *vice versa*, from Naga to Musawwarat. A sistrum handle with the name of Arnekhamani bears the earliest known datable Meroitic text (Rilly 2017c: 28-29; 2019: 142 fig. 4).

Meroites in Lower Nubia at the End of the Third/ Beginning of the Second Century BCE

The decline of the Ptolemaic elephant-trade at the end of the third century BCE and social upheavals in Egypt following the Fourth Syrian War (221 – 217 BCE) presumably also had a negative impact on the economy of Kush. An interval of weak rulership in Egypt under Ptolemy IV and Ptolemy V culminated in a period of rebellion against Ptolemaic rule in Upper Egypt in the years between 207/206 and 186 BCE, when a power structure reaching from Assiut to Aswan emerged with two



Figure 4. Columns at Great Enclosure IA in Musawwarat el-Sufra (Lepsius expedition).

indigenous Egyptian kings, Harwennefer and Ankhwennefer, reigning at Thebes (Pestmann 1995; Török 2009: 391-393; Veisse 2013). During this period, control over Lower Nubia, cut off from Ptolemaic authority, shifted to the Meroites, who provided troops supporting the Upper Egyptian secession. Whether their spreading influence in the area was accompanied by military advances, as is sometimes assumed (e.g. Dietze 1994: 105, 108; Pfeiffer 2017: 165), is unknown. Commercial contacts with Egypt seem not to have been interrupted during the secession period (Török 2009: 397); less clear are Meroitic re-settlement activities in Lower Nubia. Two Meroitic kings (Arqamani/Ergamenes II and Adikhalamani; cf. *FHN II*: 586-590, 590-596, respectively) were able to invest in the building of Lower Nubian temples. These measures should be understood primarily as the realization of a sort of ritual authority over the temples of the Ptolemaic *Dodekaschoinos*, and only to a lesser degree as the implementation of territorial dominance over the region. The style and

outline of the temple buildings do not differ much from those of their Egyptian models; the kings represented therein are depicted in the manner of Egyptian pharaohs, complete with textual labels written in Egyptian. These rulers apparently cooperated with the Egyptian priests and employed the local workforce. The political situation contradicts the occasionally formulated interpretation of a sort of joint rule between Ptolemies and Meroites (e.g., Griffith 1937: 3; Millet 1968: 4-6).

In Philae Arqamani added to the Arensnuphis temple of Ptolemy IV, which, after the suppression of the Egyptian revolt, was finished by Ptolemy V. At el-Dakka he erected a chapel for Thoth of Pnubs that formed the core of the larger, later temple constructed there. In Kalabsha Arqamani built a sanctuary whose decoration was later continued by Ptolemy IX and Augustus; this structure, re-erected on Elephantine (a gate is now in Berlin), was the predecessor of the large Augustan Mandulis temple. Although often stated, it is not certain whether Arqamani, who

is buried in Beg N 7, is in fact the prince Arka, accompanying his father, King Arnekhmani, in a representation in the Lion Temple at Musawwarat (cf. Zibelius-Chen 2011: 70-71).

In Lower Nubia the temple-building policy of not only the Meroites but also the Ptolemies and Romans (cf. Arnold 1999; Hölbl 2004) focused primarily on promoting the cult of indigenous deities important to the local populations, be they Nubian, Meroitic, or Blemmyan. In addition to Egyptian deities, the gods Arensnuphis, Mandulis, and Thoth (Pa)Nebes (Thoth of Pnubs) were integrated into temple reliefs, or received separate temples.

Arqamani's successor, Adikhalamani, was assumed to be known solely from documents in the north. At Philae a fragment of a stela of his was re-used in the floor of the Isis Temple. At Debod he finished a chapel begun by Ptolemy IV that was later extended to a temple completed by Ptolemy VI. Adikhalamani's tomb was long thought to have been Beg N 9 where, in the burial chamber, another name is written: "Osiris King Tabirqo." This caused Reisner (1923: 75) to assume the king possessed a second, "funerary," name. A new proposal has recently been put forth (Rilly 2017a: 228), hypothesizing Adikhalamani's burial place to be Beg N 8, where minimal traces of his name ([...]*mr*[...]*t*) in Egyptian hieroglyphs, and that of his wife Nahirqo, are preserved (in *FHN II*: 631 [...]*mr*[...]*t* is considered a separate king). It has been established that Beg N 9 is indeed the tomb of King Tabirqo, who was perhaps the next ruler and who may have died early; about him nothing further is known (see also Hofmann 1978: 58-60). The burial chamber of Beg N 9 was recently re-opened (Bushara and Bashir 2018).

Egyptian Lower Nubia in the Second and First Centuries BCE

With the suppression of the revolt around 186 BCE, late in Ptolemy V's reign, the Ptolemaic court slowly regained authority in Lower Nubia. Under Ptolemy VI the terrain of control was enlarged to the Second Cataract, now called *Triakontaschoinos* (cf. Locher 1999:

253-254). Meroitic supremacy in the *Dodekaschoinos* having ended barely two decades before, such expansion presumably was a response intended to inhibit further aspirations from the southern power. Ptolemaic settlements in Lower Nubia were nevertheless sparse, and two newly founded (or re-organized) towns (Philometoris and Cleopatris) mentioned in a Greek inscription of the mid-second century BCE have not been identified.



Figure 5. *Dodekaschoinos*-stela of Ptolemy VI at Philae.

At the Temple of Isis at Philae, Ptolemy VI inscribed, in addition to his Nubian-nome list on the west entrance of the first pylon, a decree of 157 BCE on the so-called *Dodekaschoinos*-stela (Locher 1999: 152, 341-342). Carved upon a granite boulder in front of the second pylon (fig. 5), the stela describes in detail the donation of the "Twelve-Miles-Land" to the Isis Temple. Enumerated in the text were the totality of the land's income, products, and inhabitants, as well as the exemption from duties of specific groups of people. The stela's text essentially repeated and confirmed the land-donation to Isis that had been formulated earlier by Ptolemy II at Philae and Ptolemy IV at el-Dakka (the latter's text adopted there by Arqamani) and that was later restated in decrees of Ptolemies VIII and IX, and of Roman emperors (cf. Dietze 1994: 90-97; Locher 1999: 345-347). The donation of this area signified that the whole territory belonged to the estate of the Isis Temple at Philae and was therefore under that temple's administration. A decree (of Ptolemy V or IX)

on the Famine Stela on Sehel Island (Gasse and Rondot 2007), however, contested the claim, applying full rights of usufruct to the god Khnum, whose prominent and much older temple was located on nearby Elephantine. In this text a levy of ten percent on wares coming from Nubia is featured; presumably the levy was also mentioned in the *Dodekaschoinos*-stela (for different interpretations concerning the *Dodekaschoinos*-stela see Török 2009: 401; Pfeiffer 2017: 165).

The Ptolemies V, VI, VIII, IX, and XII, or their subordinate personnel (e.g., priests, members of the military), invested further in temple construction and decoration at Philae, Biga, Debod, el-Dakka, and Kalabsha (cf. Dietze 1994). The history of the Ptolemaic house, with its constant dynastic struggles in the last two centuries BCE, is complicated and thus the impact of particular Ptolemaic rulers on buildings in the southern territory is not always clear.

Administratively, Ptolemaic Lower Nubia was part of the Thebaid (the southernmost province of Ptolemaic Egypt) and under the control of the *strategos* (later the *epistrategos*) at Thebes. The local population was actually governed by a native non-Egyptian, designated “*eparchos* of the Aithiopians” in Greek, and *mr-mšz* (“district commissioner”) in Demotic texts (Török 2009: 407), later mirrored in the Roman “*tyrannus*” instituted in Lower Nubia. After the mid-second century BCE the Ptolemies gradually lost firm control over the southern part of the *Triakontaschoinos* (Török 1997a: 431-432).

The weakening of Ptolemaic control over Lower Nubia after Ptolemy VI served to strengthen local elites, who gradually gained influence in the region. As a result, administrative power structures were established, first in the southern area, which was under Meroitic influence and had, since shortly after the beginning of Roman rule, been officially under the control of the Meroitic royal house. Soon influential power structures developed among local families, whose authority is later reflected in multiple documents of the second and third centuries CE.

Meroitic Rulers in the Second and First Centuries BCE

Several Meroitic rulers in the late second to mid-first centuries BCE were not interred at Meroe but at Barkal, among them an unknown ruling queen in Bar 8 (cf. Yellin 2014). Likewise unknown is the king (?) for whom Beg N 10 in Meroe was planned (cf. Tomanl 1988; Yellin 2014: 79). In the current king-lists the next ruler is a ruling queen by the name of Sanakadakhete who, according to earlier scholarship, was usually dated to the late second century BCE (cf. *FHN II*: 660-662 with the traditional dating and ascription of documents). Tomb Beg N 11, a large pyramid with the rare example of a chapel together with two courts and two pylons (cf. also Näser 1996), but lacking a name, was traditionally ascribed to her (Hintze 1959: 36-39), as well as the anonymous double statue of a queen and a male figure (CG 684; Wenig ed. 1978, cat. 135). Sanakadakhete’s name survived in Meroitic hieroglyphs at temple Naga 500 in what was once thought of as the first instance of Meroitic script. For paleographic reasons, however, the inscription at Naga 500, according to Claude Rilly (2004), must date to a later period, which now places Queen Sanakadakhete at around the turn of the centuries BCE – CE, or in the first half of the first century CE rather than the late second century BCE.

The double statue CG 684, as well as tomb Beg N 11, are both now attributed with good reasons to Queen Nahirqo (Rilly 2004; 2017a: 229-230; already Reisner 1923: 75; Dunham 1957: 6, 72), whose name had earlier been recognized as that of the wife of the ruler [...]*mr*[...]t, now recognized as Adikhalamani, buried in tomb Beg N 8. Nahirqo presumably succeeded her husband on the throne, exercising rulership on behalf of an heir who was too young to rule, or who had died prematurely—perhaps the enigmatic Tabirqo of Beg N 9 (Rilly 2017a: 230).

Female rulers were a special feature of the Meroitic Period and constituted a phenomenon that presumably arose from indigenous traditions. Women (especially mothers) had decisive influence on modes of

inheritance and succession that can be deduced from some of the royal inscriptions of the Napatan era (cf. Hintze 1999; Lohwasser 2001). Regarding the nine known female rulers in the time between the end of the second century BCE and the beginning of the fourth century CE it is speculated that at least some of them ruled for a minor heir or after a successor's early death (cf. Kuckertz 2021: 285-295).

The next ruler, Taneyideamani (see Table 1), was very likely Adikhalamani's and Nahirqo's son (*FHN II*: 662-672; Rilly 2017a: 236-239). He is named *T[ne]yi* (REM 0052A) in Beg N 11, where he is depicted performing rituals for his mother; Beg N 12 is supposedly his own tomb. His documents testify to the construction or furnishing of temples at Meroe and Barkal, where a large stela, presumably reporting war-like conflicts, stood in front of the Amun temple. He was remembered several hundred years later in an unknown context on a stela in Qasr Ibrim (third/fourth century CE; Edwards 2007: 79-82).

Recently, a rock inscription revealed a hitherto unknown ruler Pa[.]khedateqo. The inscription's paleography dates him to around the time of Taneyideamani (Abdel Rahman and Rilly 2003 – 2008; Rilly 2017a: 241-242).

Little is known of the Meroitic rulers Naqyrjinsan[...] and Horus *K3-n3ht* (*FHN II*: 685 and 686, respectively). Both kings are usually dated to the first half of the first century, or mid-first century, BCE. New research considers *K3-n3ht* to be the Horus name of the slightly later king Teriteqase (Yellin 2015).

A ruler Aqrakamani, mentioned in a graffito at the temple of el-Dakka and hitherto dated to the end of the first century BCE or even the late first/early second centuries CE (*FHN II*: 686-689; Török 2009: 436-437; Burkhardt 1985: 75-76), must no longer be included in the king lists. The recent re-evaluation of a related pair of Demotic graffiti, Dakka 15 and 17 (Griffith 1937: 22-23; Burkhardt 1985: 75-77, 98-99), has revealed that King Aqrakamani and his mother, the female pharaoh (*pr 3t*) Naytal, mentioned in Dakka 17 with a date of year

three, are none other than Natakamani and the *kandake* Amanitore, discussed below (Rilly 2017a: 272-273, referring to the Demotists Michel Chauveau and Damien Agut-Labordère).

The Beginning of Roman Rule and the Conflicts between the Two Powers

That Meroites conducted commercial and diplomatic business within Egypt is reported by Diodorus (*III*,1-3, *FHN II*: 706), who personally met several Meroites during his visit to Egypt c. 60 – 56 BCE. Ptolemaic rule in Egypt ended in 30 BCE, after the Roman victory in the battle at Actium, the seizure of Alexandria, and the suicide of the last Egyptian queen, Cleopatra VII. It is supposed that the relationship of the last Ptolemies with Meroe was not unfriendly, since Cleopatra's son and heir, Caesarion, had tried to flee to *Aithiopia* (Cassius Dio *Romaïke historia* 51:15.5, Cary trans. 1917), but he may have had no alternative.

Octavian, the later Augustus, established Roman rule in Egypt by installing a prefect based at Alexandria. The first prefect was C. Cornelius Gallus, who had supported Octavian militarily, but fell into disgrace around 27 BCE because of *gravissima crimina* ("the gravest of crimes"), the nature of which is unclear (possibly hubris?), and committed suicide in Rome (cf. Herklotz 2007: 230-243; Hoffmann et al. 2009: 6-10).

The area south of Aswan/Philae, the ancient Ptolemaic *Triakontaschoinos*, which stretches as far as the Second Cataract, was secured to the Roman Empire through an agreement with the Kingdom of Meroe, perhaps in response to uprisings such as those in the Thebaid. The Latin and Greek inscriptions on Cornelius Gallus's trilingual stela, erected at Philae in 29 BCE (Hoffmann et al. 2009), document the regulations established at Philae between the prefect and the envoys of the Meroitic king, who was supposedly Teriteqase (see Table 1). The efforts reported in the stela marked the beginning of Roman rule in Lower Nubia (cf. Locher 2002; Minas-Nerpel and Pfeiffer 2010),

accompanied (as it was in Egypt) by Augustus's initiation of an intensive building program, in which Egyptian and Nubian deities were venerated in nearly all the places where Ptolemaic temples had been erected (cf. Herklotz 2007: 145-165; Verhoeven 2008: 239-246; Török 2009: 448-455). Officially part of the Roman province of Egypt, the Lower Nubian territory had a certain degree of autonomy as its administration lay in the hands of a sort of governor (*tyrannus*), who presumably was a member of a prominent local Meroitic/Nubian family. The suggested individual, Qeper/Quper, is known from one of the two stelae at Hamadab (fig. 6) (Griffith 1917: 167-168; 1937: 33; Rilly 2017a: 250, 256). His sons, who drowned in the Nile, were later honored as deified individuals in the Augustan temple at Dendur (Höllbl 2004: 136-138).

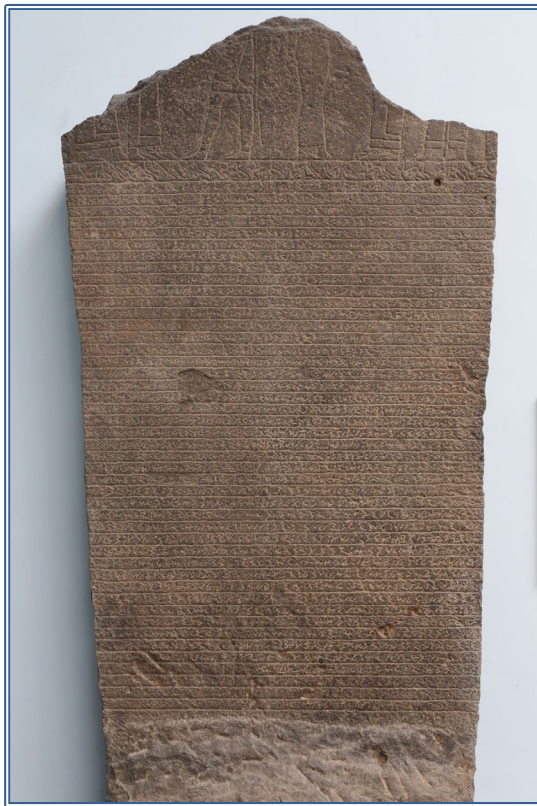


Figure 6. Hamadab stela of Amanirenase and Akinidad.

Just as it had in Upper Egypt, resistance against Roman rule, especially taxation, soon began in Lower Nubia. Moreover, in the autumn of 25 BCE, probably encouraged by

the withdrawal of Roman troops for an Arabian campaign by the second prefect, Aelius Gallus, Meroites raided Aswan, Elephantine, and Philae, plundered the cataract area, and took prisoners and statues of Augustus (Locher 1999: 240-241; Török 2009: 427-435). The bronze head of Augustus found buried beneath a threshold in temple Meroe 292 is believed to be part of the booty (Opper 2014; Matić 2014; cf. also Herklotz 2007: 368-370, 377). The temple is regarded by some as commemorating a Meroitic success, because its wall decoration depicts prisoners, identified as Romans, under the feet of a Meroitic queen—a standard theme in royal iconography, however, and one that usually is not historical. According to a suggested reconstruction of the events (cf. Török 1997a: 448-455; 2009: 441-442) reported by Strabo (*Geography* 17.1.53-54, *FHN III*: 828-835), Augustus (*Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 26.5, *FHN II*: 700-704), Cassius Dio (*Romaike historia* 54.5.4-6, *FHN III*: 882-884), and Pliny (*Naturalis historia* 6.181-182, *FHN III*: 876-882), the Meroitic army of 30,000 men, most likely under the command of a leader named Akinidad, had proceeded from the south in order to help the rebels, but presumably also as an opportunity to establish Meroitic control. King Teriteqase (*FHN II*: 715-718), who can probably be identified with the king *K3-n3ht*, very possibly died shortly thereafter. A Meroitic graffito at el-Dakka mentions him, and Akinidad, as well as the *kandake* (“king’s mother?”) Amanirenase. Teriteqase’s tomb at Meroe may be Beg N 20, where a block with the Horus name *K3-n3ht* was found (Yellin 2015).

In the winter of 25 BCE, and continuing into the spring of the following year, Roman troops consisting of 800 cavalry and several thousand infantry, commanded by the third prefect C. Petronius, met the Meroitic army in a first battle at el-Dakka. Prisoners of war were sent to Alexandria, then to Rome. The request for the Meroites to return the booty from the cataract area was ignored. That Petronius, after the subsequent capture of Qasr Ibrim, proceeded south to Napata and destroyed it is highly unlikely since at this point in the year the prohibitive heat, and the distance of over 700 kilometers, would have been difficult for the

Roman troops to overcome (cf. Hofmann 1977).

Teriteqase's successor, Queen Amanirenase (the former *kandake*; *FHN II*: 718-722) (see Table 1), is likely the "manly woman who had lost one of her eyes" mentioned by Strabo. She attempted to re-establish Meroitic dominance in Lower Nubia and to reconquer Qasr Ibrim, where Petronius had reinforced the Roman garrison with enough supplies for two years (24 and 22 CE). Traces of Roman camps, defence fortifications, and artillery balls have been found at, and near, Qasr Ibrim (Horton 1991; Wilkins, Barnard, and Rose 2006; Derda and Łajtar 2013). Petronius again was able to repel the Meroitic foray. After the negotiations of Meroitic emissaries with Augustus on the island of Samos in the winter of 21/20 BCE, an agreement was concluded that was extremely favorable for the Meroites: the Roman sphere of influence was reduced to the old *Dodekaschoinos* area (up to Maharraqa) and monetary obligations were canceled (on Augustus's policy cf. Wiegels 2015).

Two stela at Hamadab (see fig. 6) (REM 1003 London; REM 1039 Khartoum), commissioned by Queen Amanirenase and Akinidad, most likely contain the Meroitic report on the strife that occurred between 25 and 21/20 BCE (Griffith 1917; Wolf and Rilly 2010: 160-161; Rilly 2014), although that assessment has not found unanimous acceptance in scholarship.

At Meroe, Amanirenase initiated a large temple compound (M 250) (Hinkel et al. 2001) and also invested in the Amun temple at Kawa. She presumably was buried in Bar 4 (Yellin 2015: 11). That Akinidad may have been her son—as has been conjectured from Strabo's report—is far from clear. A powerful person, and of royal descent, he served three successive rulers, King Teriteqase and the ruling queens Amanirenase and Amanishakheto, but never became king himself (fig. 7). The Meroitic reorganization of the southern part of the Roman *Triakontaschoinos*, from which resulted the northern Meroitic province of *Akine*, likely started under his authority during Amanirenase's reign (cf. Kuckertz and Moje fc.). Akinidad's tomb is presumably Bar 5 at

Barkal; its three subterranean chambers are a royal feature.



Figure 7. Inscription at temple Meroe 250 with Akinidad's name and titles in cartouches.

Nubians in Temples of the Dodekaschoinos in the First Century CE

After 21/20 BCE, Roman rule in the *Dodekaschoinos* is manifested in the construction, enlargement, and decoration of temples, not only of Augustus but of later Roman rulers as well (cf. Hölbl 2004). Although Rome had won political control over northern Lower Nubia and established it as part of the province *Aegyptus*, which was administered, as it had been in Ptolemaic times, by the *epistrategos* at Thebes, Roman authorities seem to have maintained the administration of the temples there, while most of the land owned by temples in the new province was confiscated or put under strong Roman control. That local Nubians were also involved in the administration of Lower Nubian temples is reflected in a number of Demotic graffiti, written in the first century CE on the walls of sanctuaries in the *Dodekaschoinos* by individuals with Meroitic names and titles (cf. Burkhardt 1985: 74-77; Ashby 2020: 53-116: phase I). These inscriptions contained *proskynemata* (devotional addresses to a god) and prayers to the deities of the temples, and also frequently reports on agreements made between several parties; thus they exhibited religious, social, and, in a later phase, also political content. In addition to holding some priestly offices and having cult associations, the Nubians bore administrative titles such as agent (*rt*) of Isis, Thoth, Arensnuphis, or the king; and *mr mš3*,

literally “overseer of the army,” but more aptly rendered “district commissioner” (often translated as *strategos*, which is to be distinguished from the Roman “nome *strategos*”). While serving in an Egyptian religious context and within an Egyptian-controlled temple hierarchy, they could nevertheless carry out certain acts in a civil capacity, such as the formulation of agreements concerning priestly offices and the distribution of temple income, and were involved in cultic affairs and temple construction works. It is highly unlikely that the local (civil) administration was entirely in the hands of Meroites (so Hölbl 2000: 17). Securely dated Nubian graffiti of this phase range from 30 to 57 CE; the presumed Augustan dates of other graffiti (Dendur 1, Dakka 29) are questionable. In the following period (late first to mid-second centuries), no Nubian temple-officials are recorded, perhaps due to the stronger Roman military presence, or to administrative changes (Ashby 2020: 91-97). Nubian involvement in the temples became more prevalent once again in the late second to mid-third centuries.

Rulers in Meroe in the First to Mid-Third Centuries CE

At around the beginning of the first century CE, Amanishakheto (fig. 8) succeeded Amanirenase as ruling queen of the Kushite Empire. She is widely documented by stelae at Qasr Ibrim, Meroe, and Naga, and also at Wad Ben Naga, where she erected a palace complex (FHN II: 723-725; cf. Kuckertz 2021, fc. a). She presumably continued the reorganization of the southern *Triakontaschoinos* area; on one of her stelae she expresses a claim to the territories up to the ancient border with Egypt at the First Cataract. She is buried in Beg N 6, famous for the jewelry found by Giuseppe Ferlini in 1821. Similarities in the spelling of a hieroglyphic sign have led Claude Rilly (2004; 2017a: 263) to assume that Amanishakheto and Sanakadakhete are one and the same queen, an idea that is not widely accepted. Since the earlier dating in the late second century BCE can no longer be sustained, ruling queen Sanakadakhete is to be placed before or after Amanishakheto. Sanakadakhete built temple

Naga 500 in place of an older structure (Hintze 1959) and was perhaps buried in Beg N 21 (Yellin 2014: 80-81), a large tomb situated on the northern ridge of the cemetery.



Figure 8. Stela of Queen Amanishakheto from Naga.

The royal succession in Meroe around the change of millennia BCE – CE is controversial. Like Sanakadakhete, the ruling queen Nawidemak (FHN III: 801-804) and her son(?), King Amanakhabale (FHN III: 836-840), are variously dated. They are placed either in the first century BCE, before Teriteqase and after the reign of Amanishakheto in the first century CE, or in the interim (compiled in Kuckertz fc. a). Objects of late or post-Augustan date found in their tombs, Bar 6 and Beg N 2, respectively, support the later dating. Amanakhabale is further known by documents from Kawa, Basa, and Naga, and a broken stela from the Amun temple at Meroe. The stela’s upper part depicts him venerating the deities Amun and Mut; the winged female sphinx

depicted on the goddess's throne testifies to Greek influence.

King Natakamani and his mother, the *kandake* Amanitore, are the most renowned and documented royals in the first century CE (*FHN III*: 896-904; fig. 9). Their building activities (or renovations) reached as far north as Sai, where blocks of a temple were recently identified (Francigny 2015), and perhaps even Qasr Ibrim (on their temples cf. Kuckertz 2019). A large palace (B 1500) at Barkal, and other buildings as well, are ascribed to them (cf. Rilly 2017a: 270-282). Their mother-son relationship has only recently been proposed, with strong arguments based on the above-mentioned graffiti at el-Dakka (Rilly 2017a: 272-273); prior to this discovery, they were often interpreted as married. Amanitore's depiction in regalia and with high-ranking titles is extraordinary and tantamount to that of a ruler. The tombs of Amanitore and Natakamani, Beg N 22 and N 1, respectively, flank the royal cemetery at its northern and southern ends. Both individuals presumably lived in the mid-first century CE and likely reigned for an extended period. They may have been mentioned in connection with an expedition (possibly two) between the years 61 and 63 CE, launched by the Roman emperor Nero, who had sent military officers to search for the source of the Nile (and in all probability to also investigate the terrain for a future military campaign). The *Candace* (here meaning a ruling queen) mentioned by Pliny (*Nat. hist.* 6.186, *FHN III*: 882-888), and "the king" mentioned by Seneca (*Naturales Quaestiones* 6.8.3, *FHN III*: 891-895), are very likely to be identified with Amanitore and Natakamani. In nearly all visual representations the two are accompanied by an adult male, the presumed heir to the throne, whose (familial?) relation to both royals is unknown. Three men are documented (*FHN III*: 904-912). Arikankharor and Arakakhataror (Arikakhatani) died early, leaving Sorakaror to become king; his rulership, however, is occasionally doubted (cf. *FHN III*: 910; on recent finds cf. Kuckertz fc. b). A large rock-carving at Gebel Qeili shows him in king's regalia, triumphing over enemies and receiving bound prisoners and a bunch of

durra (sorghum) from a Hellenistic-inspired sun-deity.



Figure 9. Lion Temple with "Roman kiosk" (Hathor chapel) of Natakamani and Amanitore at Naga.

A king hitherto dated to the second century CE must definitely be positioned after Natakamani, perhaps as successor of Sorakaror. King Amanakhareqerem is known from temples at Naga and el-Hassa and several other documents (see Kuckertz 2018, fc. b). A cursive Meroitic inscription dates him to around 80 – 90 CE (Rilly 2001). It is assumed that he was buried in the original tomb Beg N 16, which was, in a later period, modified into a smaller pyramid incorporating a room (Kuckertz 2018). Found therein were offering tables belonging to "Amanitaraqide" and "Aryesebokhe"—individuals who presumably lived centuries later and whose status as rulers is doubted.

Iconographic similarities of Amanakhareqerem's temple Naga 200 with tomb Beg N 17 reveal that its owner, King Amanitenmomide (*FHN III*: 914-916), most probably succeeded him. Amanitenmomide is otherwise documented by a cursive inscription in the Amun temple at Meroe (REM 1138; Hallof and Hallof 2012). Little is known of the subsequent rulers, i.e., ruling queen Amanikhatashan (Beg N 18; *FHN III*: 935), or King Tarekeniwal (Beg N 19; *FHN III*: 935-936) and his son Ariteneyesebokhe (Beg N 34; *FHN III*: 938-939). The image of a triumphant king slaying enemies displayed on the pylon of Ariteneyesebokhe's tomb is identical to that displayed in his father's tomb. The above-mentioned Amanitaraqide (*FHN III*: 912-913), presumably the owner of Beg N 36, is documented only by his offering table (REM

0816) found in Beg N 16; it is dated on paleographical criteria to the second/third centuries CE (Rilly 2001: 79-81; 2017a: 323-324). Among other finds, King Takideamani's (*FHN III*: 954) tomb, Beg N 29, yielded a Meroitic bronze lamp with distinctly Hellenistic characteristics that can be dated to the first half of the third century CE, testifying to continuing cultural impact from the Mediterranean world. A female ruler in Meroe must be positioned sometime between the mid-second to mid-third centuries CE. Her name is unknown, but the iconography in her tomb (Beg N 32; Dunham and Chapman 1952: pls. 23A-C)—featuring royal regalia and cartouches—points to her elevated status.

Nubians in Roman Lower Nubia in the Second and Third Centuries CE

After the end of the first century BCE the stretch of land we call Lower Nubia consisted of two units, the Roman *Dodekaschoinos*, reaching from Aswan to Maharraqa, and the northern Meroitic province of *Akine*, reaching from Maharraqa to somewhere south of the Second Cataract. Nubian and Meroitic presence and involvement in the *Dodekaschoinos* is documented by graffiti on the temple walls and by funerary inscriptions, with texts in Demotic, Greek, and Meroitic. Three distinct phases of activity can be recognized: the above-mentioned phase I lasts from the late first century BCE to the first century CE; phase II refers to the time when the temples were no longer funded by the Roman rulers; and phase III refers to post-Meroitic times. In phase II (c. 175 – 273 CE) approximately 56 Demotic, Meroitic, and (only two) Greek inscriptions at the temples of Philae and el-Dakka are testimony to activities of Meroite officials and priests in the region (Burkhardt 1985: 77-89; Ashby 2020: 117-204; Török 2009: 427-491).

It has been a matter of debate how intensively Meroitic officials were involved in, or even integrated into, the economic and religious organization of the temples in the *Dodekaschoinos*. A sort of cooperation must have existed between both groups, Roman and Meroitic. The often-expressed idea of a

“condominium” between Roman Egypt and Meroe (cf. Burstein 1998) is to be rejected. The involvement of Meroitic officials speaks instead of Rome’s diminished power (or financial engagement) in the area, to which several factors contributed: the instability of the Roman Empire, which was experiencing internal difficulties and a succession of ephemeral emperors in Rome (the so-called “Crisis of the Third Century,” 235 – 284 CE); incursions of Blemmye tribes in Egypt and Nubia; and several outbreaks of pestilence. Meroitic kings took advantage of the political situation and steadily expanded their influence in the *Dodekaschoinos*. Meroitic administrative titles in the graffiti, like *peseto* (viceroys), *pelmos ato-li-se* (*strategos-of-the-water*), *pelmos adb-li-se* (*strategos-of-the-land*), and *qorene akroro* (a priestly? title of unknown meaning), occasionally transliterated into Demotic, indicate the strong presence of officials from *Akine* who acted as intermediaries between the Meroitic king and the temples of Lower Nubia. The graffiti include reports about activities performed on behalf of Meroitic rulers, reflecting their religious, financial, and political involvement in the temples. As priests (*w^{sb}*, *hm-ntr*, *lesonis*), these individuals were responsible for carrying out the cultic services for the temples’ deities.

The temple compound at Philae was particularly important. Bark processions of Isis and the deities in the *Dodekaschoinos* temples made ritual visits to each other regularly. Festivals for Isis were recurrently performed (i.e., the “Festival of Entry” or the *q*-procession); those for Osiris were often held in the month of *Khoiak* at the end of the inundation, presumably also alluding to funerary (revivifying) rites on behalf of the Meroitic ruler and serving to ascertain his legitimacy as Horus king (Ashby 2020: 173-176, 203).

The largest concentration of Nubian graffiti at Philae is found at the gate of Hadrian (*PM VI*: 254-255; Cruz-Urbe 2016: 36-39), which was the departure point for the procession of Isis to the sacred sanctuary of the Abaton on Biga Island (fig. 10). Occurring every ten days,



Figure 10. Isis Temple at Philae with Gate of Hadrian on left. View from Biga Island. Painted in 1838 by David Roberts (1796 – 1864).

the procession commemorated the death of Isis's spouse, Osiris, whose left leg was considered to have been buried there as a relic. Some of those who participated may have resided at Philae; others came with clan or family members on annual occasions from Meroitic Nubia or even from the court at Meroe. At Philae, the so-called "Meroitic chamber," a room behind the second eastern colonnade, is noteworthy (*FHN III*: 1024-1031). To be granted a special room in the temple precinct documents the importance of Meroitic involvement in temple matters in the mid-third century CE, although the chamber, long out of use, had not served in its original capacity for the performance of purification rituals since Ptolemaic times.

Within the chamber, in a somewhat awkward style, the participants of a diplomatic mission to Philae (fig. 11), usually dated to around 260 CE, are depicted in two processions, some of them several times. A re-

evaluation of a royal name in one of the accompanying Meroitic inscriptions has revealed that this mission was undertaken in the reign of King Talakhideamani (see below). The participants belonged to prominent Lower Nubian families known for generations. For example, members of the influential Wayekiye-family, presumably from Medik (near Wadi el-Sebua) and Gebel Adda (see fig. 2), who held high-level administrative and cultural positions, can be traced over eight generations and nearly 200 years (early second to early fourth centuries CE) (Burkhardt 1985: 89-96; Török 2009: 456-464; Ashby 2020: 120-121, 144-147). Several Nubians bore the title "(great) envoy to the Roman Empire" in Demotic or Meroitic (*apote arome-li-se*, deriving from the Egyptian term *wpw.tj*). They were sent from the court at Meroe to Philae to maintain contact with the Roman authorities in Egypt. Whether those envoys ever went to Rome itself is unclear (on embassies abroad cf.



Figure 11. Participants of a diplomatic mission c. 260 CE, depicted in two processions in the Meroitic chamber at Philae.

Pope 2008 – 2009: 68 n. 1). We do have mention of at least one Roman embassy to the court at Meroe in the early fourth century CE (*CIL III*: 83).

Meroitic Nubia: Province of Akine

South of the Roman *Dodekaschoinos* lay the second territorial unit of Lower Nubia: the northern Meroitic province of *Akine*, extending from south of Maharraqa to beyond the Second Cataract. *Akine* appears to have been (re-)established in its new extent, as noted above, after 21/20 BCE, when the Romans had withdrawn to Maharraqa. The administrative center shifted from Faras to Karanog and Qasr Ibrim. Gebel Adda likewise was an important settlement. *Akine* abuts an administrative district farther south, managed by an official, *sleqene Atiye-te*, at Sedeinga (Török 1979: 147-156). The Meroitic reorganization (cf. Török 2009: 491-513) saw the installation of Akinidad as the first governor (*peseto*). After Rome's withdrawal to the ancient border at Aswan/Philae in the late third century CE, the term *Akine* referred to the whole territory south of the First Cataract. It is assumed in scholarship (i.e., Török 1979: 83; 2009: 498-499; Williams 2002: 496) that a northern Meroitic province existed as early as the late second century BCE and initially encompassed a smaller area (from Faras to Semna).

As mentioned earlier, during the Ptolemaic Period the *Dodekaschoinos*, with all its products and revenues, was donated to the Isis Temple at Philae. Included in the regulations since the time of Ptolemy VI was a stipulation that one-tenth of the net worth of products coming from Nubia should be given to Isis. According to Solange Ashby (2020: 50), this tithe was maintained by the Meroitic rulers who dominated the region during the years of Roman weakness caused by the Theban revolt

(206/207 – 186 BCE) and was indeed continued by subsequent Meroitic kings until the reign of Teqorideamani in the third century CE. Payment of the tithe is corroborated by graffiti of Nubians, the most recent being Philae 416 and Dakka 31, written by officials in Meroitic Nubia in the third century CE. These two examples make clear that “our/my tithe” was collected even from outside of the temples’ own control area.

Rulers in Meroe after the Mid-Third Century CE

A date from the reign of Meroitic king Teqorideamani (*FHN III*: 997-1010) is one of the rare absolute dates in Kushite history. A long Demotic graffito (Philae 416) at Hadrian's Gate, accompanied by a “self-portrait” and a royal figure (Cruz-Urbe 2016: 38-39 and see online-images GPH 976, 977), was written by the “Great Envoy to Rome” Sasan (previously read Pasan) on the tenth of April 253 CE. In his text Sasan states that he made two visits with high-ranking men to the Isis Temple in Teqorideamani's second and third regnal years (252 and 253 CE) in order to deliver royal donations. While there, he reported, the group also attended religious ceremonies and feasted with the local populace (cf. Pope 2008 – 2009; 2014b). The graffito can be directly correlated with the Roman Emperor Trebonianus Gallus, in whose third regnal year, 253 CE, it was written. The beginning of Teqorideamani's reign thus lies at c. 248/249 CE.

Additionally, the *peseto* of Lower Nubia Abaratoye, who had accompanied Sasan during his second visit, and the ambassador Tami left Greek graffiti at Philae (*IGP* 180, 181; *FHN III*: 1020-1024), which are dated to year 8 of Valerianus and Gallienus—that is, 260 CE. These examples were written during a mission some seven/eight years later than Philae 416, perhaps in Teqorideamani's reign. Testifying to

the king's building activities in Meroe are three inscribed abaci from the Lion Temple M 6, and a similar one from temple M 291 (Hallof 2017). Imported wine amphorae in Teqorideamani's tomb, Beg N 28, one mentioning Tubusuctu in *Mauretania Caesariensis* (today Algeria), ascertain his dating. If the Meroitic king referred to as *Bꜣw-n-qꜣšj* in graffito Philae 68 (from around or after 265 CE), who ruled for at least twenty years, is Teqorideamani, he would have reigned up to 269 CE (cf. Hofmann 1978: 168, 175-176). His successor, Tamel(q)ordeamani (*FHN III*: 1048-1049), perhaps his half-brother, is attested only by an offering table providing his filiation. His tomb has not been identified with certainty.

The Loss of Roman Control in Lower Nubia

Through increased military presence the Romans had acquired strong control in the *Dodekaschoinos* from the first century CE onwards. Troops were stationed at Aswan, with detachments at Taffeh?, Kalabsha, el-Dakka (the fort there had encircled the Thoth temple since the time of Trajan at the beginning of the second century CE), and Maharraqa (Speidel 1988; Welsby 1998; cf. Burstein 1998: 20, 22-23). Military control weakened, however, in the first two decades of the third century—no garrison is documented after 217/218 CE—and Meroitic influence consistently grew. Roman suzerainty lasted until 298 CE, when Diokletian moved the frontier of the Roman-controlled area from Hieria Sycaminos back to Aswan (Procopius, *De bellis* 1.19.27-37, *FHN III*: 1188-1193), thus detaching the military presence, though allowing unhindered access to Philae. The emperor had personally combatted Egyptian revolts and had marched against the *Aithiopians* (Zonaras *Epitome Historiarum* 12,31B-C, *FHN III*: 1059-1060). The vacuum left by the Roman withdrawal was soon filled by increasing Meroitic control, including the foundation of military settlements at the turn of the third to fourth century. It is barely conceivable that the Meroitic kingdom (time of Amaniysesbokhe?), presumably too weak to occupy the territory, took firm control over the entire area in which Noubadian and Blemmyan tribes had gradually immigrated and settled.

The Last Meroitic Rulers in the Third/Fourth Centuries CE

The last decades of the Meroitic Empire are poorly recorded. Not many rulers are known, either by name or through their building activities. Royal burials at Meroe or Barkal from the mid-second century CE onwards became increasingly poorer and smaller, and their structures less well built, signifying economic decline. Some of the late tombs in the Northern Royal Cemetery are un-inscribed (Beg N 24, 38, 37, 26, 25); for these, owners can be only tentatively attributed (cf. Hofmann 1978: 179ff.).

Two names cited in the Meroitic chamber at Philae, read as “Maloqorebar, child (?) of (a queen) Lakhideamani” at the beginning of REM 0101, were originally understood to denote a Meroitic queen and her child (cf. the discussion in Hofmann 1978: 183-185; *FHN III*: 1042-1043). A cursive inscription on a block from the Amun temple at Meroe bearing the name of King Talakhideamani (Rilly 2017b) allows for the correction of the relevant passage, which should now be read “the child Maloqorebar and the ruler Talakhideamani.” Maloqorebar may perhaps have been an heir for whom Talakhideamani was regent before becoming king. The Philae inscription REM 0101, located in front of the third person from the left in the procession (see fig. 11), is considered to be a letter of one of the mission's participants, who describes the presents given to the deities at Philae and the Abaton and mentions the royal dedicators who had sent the mission (Rilly 2017a: 320). The inscription on the Amun-temple block is paleographically dated by Rilly to the third/beginning of the fourth centuries (Rilly 2017b), but, as the mission is usually dated to around 260 CE, Talakhideamani's reign, or the beginning of it, may have been somewhat earlier.

King Amaniysesbokhe (former Yesebokheamani; *FHN III*: 1049-1051), who reigned from the end of the third or even the first half of the fourth century CE (Rilly 2017a: 322-323), is documented at Qasr Ibrim by a lion statue (Hallof 2003), which perhaps once adorned the Meroitic temple; a stela bearing his name was dedicated in the Lion Temple M 6 at

Meroe. His tomb is unknown (Beg N 51?: Hofmann 1978: 177; Török 1997a: 206; Beg N 24?: Hintze 1959: 32; Rilly 2017a: 122). An offering table of his was brought to Bologna by Giuseppe Ferlini (Davoli and Zach 2003). Two Meroitic graffiti at Philae mention him (REM 0119 and 0120), both applied at Hadrian's Gate above the representation of a king presenting fields, i.e., the income of the *Dodekaschoinos*, to the goddess Isis. The king himself, or an official acting on his behalf, must have attended the rites focusing on the Abaton.

Uncertain is whether the previously mentioned Aryesebokhe was actually a king, since only his mother was of royal blood. His sole document, the offering table REM 0815—the more recent of the two offering tables found in Beg N 16, the script of which is considered to be Late Meroitic (c. 200 – 400 CE, cf. Hintze 1959: 49, 57-58, 67-68)—is dated, based on paleographical criteria, to the second half of the third century (Hofmann 1991: 128) or even the first half of the fourth century CE (Rilly 2001; 2017a: 323-324). If he was indeed a ruler, and provided the late dating is correct, he may have been one of the last kings of the Meroitic Empire. His presumed burial place is the unusual Beg N 16, rebuilt with the chapel inside the pyramid.

At the beginning of the fourth century CE a Meroitic ruling queen of unknown name was buried in Beg N 26, where she is depicted in royal attire (Dunham and Chapman 1952: pl. 23G). It is probable, but not assured, that she can be equated with the *domina regina* (“Lady Queen”) mentioned in a traveler's graffito in Latin (*CIL III* 83) on a wall at Musawwarat (Lajtar and Van der Vliet 2006). The inscription of the Roman Acutus—who was perhaps on a diplomatic or commercial mission—must have been written between the end of the third and the first half of the fourth centuries CE.

Several individuals mentioned solely on offering tables (i.e., Amanikhedolo, Mashaqadakhel, Pat[.]rapeamani, and Amanipilade) appear in various king-lists and in *FHN III* as possible rulers in the second/third and fourth centuries CE (cf. Hofmann 1978: 19-21, 155-157, 182-185; *FHN III*: 953-955, 1073-1074). Their status,

however, is unclear, as are their burial places, because some offering tables with a special set of royal formulae were found in the non-royal Western Cemetery (Dunham 1963)—for which the usual interpretation is that the offering tables had been removed from tombs in the Northern Royal cemetery (Hofmann 1978: 19, 155). These individuals may not have been rulers over the whole country, but rather local princes who held authority at Meroe, or men of elite status who had adopted royal formulae on their offering tables (so Rilly 2001: esp. 80-82; 2006). Amanitaraqide and Aryesebokhe, interred in Begarawiyah North, are occasionally added (Breyer 2014: 153).

The “End of Meroe”

The end of the Meroitic Empire is a subject much discussed in scholarship. It is not marked by a single event, but constitutes a period of changes that occurred in different areas (e.g., the change from pyramid- to tumulus-burials, the abandonment of former settlements, the fading of the administration). Its exact nature is not well understood. The “end of Meroe,” which is concomitant with the breakdown of the royal house and the administration, is assumed to date to around the mid-fourth century CE. No royal pyramid-burials are known in Meroe thereafter; even the Western Cemetery for local kings, royal family members, and high officials was abandoned in the end. Causes for the decline of the empire may have been numerous, including, for example, the massive presence of the Noba/Noubades peoples and conflict in the north, where frequent incursions of Blemmyan tribes from the Eastern Desert into Egypt and Lower Nubia occurred in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. Aggressions of the Aksumite Empire against Meroe, among them the campaigns of King Ezana, seem not to have been decisive as is often assumed (cf. Hatke 2013: 67ff.). In the western Butana (see fig. 1) many major sites were abandoned, most probably due to the waning control over subsistence production. Long-distance trade, formerly controlled by the royal house, declined. The loss of central authority enabled more regional developments.

The Post-Meroitic Period

The post-Meroitic period is marked by the development of distinct cultures that were to become, in the Middle Ages, smaller Christian successor-states. These cultures were grounded in existing traditions with the persistence of certain Meroitic features, though the Meroitic script was replaced by Greek and Coptic. The advent of Christianity early in the fourth century (a bishop was installed at Philae c. 330 CE) ultimately led to the closure of Philae around 573 CE (cf. Dijkstra 2008)—long after temples in Egypt proper ceased to operate. In the north of the former Meroitic Empire the Ballana-culture (the so-called X-group), with burials of kings at Qustul and Ballana, emerged around 370 CE; one of its rulers may have been Kharamadoye, who left a long Meroitic inscription at Kalabsha (*FHN III*: 1104-1107; Millet 2003). The Ballana-culture developed in the late fifth century into the Kingdom of Nobadia, which stretched from the First to the Third Cataract (capital at Faras). A distinct culture-group existing between the Third and Fourth/Fifth Cataracts buried their elite in cemeteries at Tanqasi and el-Zuma. In the sixth century this culture was succeeded by the Kingdom of Makuria (capital Old Dongola). In the south a royal cemetery at el-Hobagi, some 70 kilometers south of Meroe, testifies to yet another successor, the later Kingdom of Alodia (capital Soba).

A general assessment of the Meroitic era acknowledges that elite Kushite culture indeed bears the heritage of long years of domination by New Kingdom Egypt and, later, of input from Hellenistic developments in Egypt and the Mediterranean. But foreign influence was never adopted wholly, to the exclusion of indigenous cultural values; the culture's own

requirements motivated the selective adoption of foreign features. In recent years the focus of research on the Meroitic Period has begun to shift from Meroe's long heritage of foreign influence to more indigenous cultural developments in Lower Nubia and the Meroitic core areas. The extent of the Meroitic Empire during the 650 years of its existence stretched at least 1500 kilometers along the Nile Valley, with ill-defined, sometimes changing, and occasionally vast areas to the west and east. The political concept of governing such a vast territory was not a centralized one with a king ruling from a capital, but rather the binding together of a multi-cultural populace with its various tribes, regions, and local entities by a king who perambulated the diverse population centers ("ambulatory kingship"). Thus the exercise of royal authority in this empire, characterized as a "segmentary state," was in some areas close and in peripheral areas, loose (cf. Lohwasser 2014: fig. 1). Clan membership and familial bonds indicate that kin groups formed the basic structure of Meroitic society and defined the status of each individual. Socio-political relations between different strata of society (ruler–elite, elite–others) were set up by the exchange of luxury items and imported goods.

In the last century it has become increasingly clear that the Kushite Empire, especially in the Meroitic Period, is not to be considered as a remote and insignificant backwater among the powers around the Mediterranean Sea, but as a distinct, well-organized, and enduring state. It is to be hoped that our slowly increasing comprehension of Meroitic texts will further our understanding of Meroe's importance and of its relations with its neighbors and the Classical world.

Bibliographic Notes

The corpus of documents relating to the Meroitic Period is assembled in the second and third volumes of the four-volumed *Fontes Historiae Nubiorum* (FHN) (1994 – 2000). The texts—in Egyptian hieroglyphs, hieratic, and Demotic, and in Meroitic, Greek, and Latin—are translated by Tormod Eide, Tomas Hägg, and Richard Holton Pierce, with commentary by László Török. General elaborations on the history and culture of Nubia and Sudan are provided by Welsby (1996) and Török (1997a). Edwards (2004) focuses primarily on archaeology and anthropological issues. Rilly (2017a) presents a historical overview from Prehistory to the early nineteenth century, but unfortunately without detailed references. In the recently published handbooks under the direction of Dietrich Raue (2019) and Geoff Emberling with Bruce Williams (2021), various authors cover a wide spectrum of Kushite-related material from the Palaeolithic to the Islamic periods. Focusing particularly on Kushite ideology and religion are Török (2002) and Kormysheva (2010). Meroitic religion is also dealt with by Hofmann (1995), Yellin (1995), and Kuckertz and Lohwasser (2019). The prolific writings of Burstein (1998 and 2008 comprising just two examples) cover relations between Egypt, Kush, and the Classical world. Török (2009) describes the contacts between Egypt and Kush from Prehistory to 500 CE. Owing to the work of Francis Llewellyn Griffith (e.g., 1911), the Meroitic script was decoded in the early twentieth century, but the language behind it remained long unknown. Recent attempts at decipherment are Rilly (2007 and 2010) and Rilly and de Voogt (2012); overviews are provided in Rilly (2016 and 2019). Rilly's research on Meroitic texts and the paleography of the cursive script has sometimes generated controversy. Meroitic texts (hieroglyphic and cursive) are compiled by Leclant et al. (2000) in the three-volumed *Répertoire d'épigraphie méroïtiques*; additions up to 2003 can be found in the Digital Meroitic Newsletter: <http://www.meroiticnewsletter.org/>. Questions of chronology have a long history, beginning with George A. Reisner, whose chronological framework, based on his excavations in the royal cemeteries at Barkal and Meroe, is summarized in Reisner (1923). His king-list, with some modifications, has survived to the present day (Dunham 1957; Hintze 1959; Wenig 1967 and 1971; Hofmann 1978; Zibelius-Chen 2006); art-historic considerations also play a role here, e.g., Wenig's 1964 dissertation (published 2015) and Yellin (2014 and 2015). Meroitic settlements are discussed by Edwards (1989, 1996, and 2004), Williams (1985 and 1991), and Wolf (2019). Ptolemaic and Roman temples in Lower Nubia are highlighted by Arnold (1999) and Hölbl (2004). Kuckertz (2019) summarizes Meroitic temple construction and decoration. The multi-volumed *Royal Cemeteries of Kush* covers royal and elite tombs; relevant to the Meroitic Period are Dunham and Chapman's volume 3 (1952) and Dunham's volumes 4 and 5 (1957 and 1963, respectively). The Begarawiyah South Cemetery will be addressed by Hinkel and Yellin (fc.). For private cemeteries, consult Edwards (1989 and 1996). Francigny (2017) deals with burial customs in general. Graffiti inscribed by visitors on temple walls in the *Dodekaschoinos* are a valuable source of not only religious but historical information on the Meroitic Empire. Testifying, in particular, to the involvement of Nubians/Meroites in temple administration are graffiti in Demotic, studied by Griffith (1937) and Cruz-Urbe (2016) (Philae only), and in Greek, studied by A. Bernand (1969) and E. Bernand (1969). Building upon Burkhardt's work (1985) on the graffiti of Nubians/Meroites of the first and second/third centuries, Ashby (2020) enlarges the corpus, adding a third phase in the fifth century, and evaluates Nubian graffiti with a special focus on their religio-political content and placement. The "End of Meroe" and post-Meroitic period, only briefly touched upon here, are discussed more fully in Török (2009), Lohwasser (2013), Weschenfelder (2013), Rilly (2017a), and Edwards (2011, 2018 and 2019), as well as in el-Tayeb (2010 and 2012) and Wyźgoł and el-Tayeb (2018).

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