

SUDAN & NUBIA

The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



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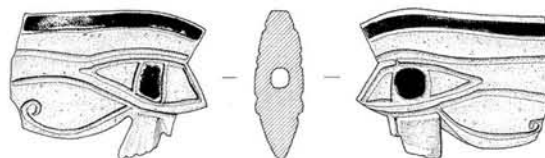
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Contents

Reports

- | | | | |
|--|----|---|-----|
| <i>Talatat</i> Architecture at Jebel Barkal:
Report of the NCAM Mission 2008-2009
<i>Timothy Kendall</i> | 2 | Gebel Adda 1963 and Meroitic stela G19
<i>Reinhard Huber and David N. Edwards</i> | 100 |
| The New Kingdom Town on Sai Island
(Northern Sudan)
<i>Florence Doyen</i> | 17 | Akad Rescue Project Season 2008
<i>Mohamed Faroug Abdelrahman</i> | 103 |
| The British Museum epigraphic survey at Tombos:
the stela of Usersatet and Hekaemsasen
<i>Vivian Davies</i> | 21 | Shuhada Rescue Archaeological Project (SRAP) and
el-Misaktab in the Shendi region
<i>Mohamed Faroug Abdelrahman, Ahmed Sokary
and Murtada Bushara</i> | 107 |
| A name with three (?) orthographies: The case of
the 'king's son, overseer of southern foreign
lands, Penre'
<i>Tamás A. Bács</i> | 30 | Districts, towns and other locations of medieval
Nubia and Egypt, mentioned in the Coptic and
Old Nubian texts from Qasr Ibrim
<i>Joost L. Hagen</i> | 114 |
| Fieldwork at Sesebi, 2009
<i>Kate Spence, Pamela Rose, Judith Bunbury, Alan Clapham,
Pieter Collet, Graham Smith and Nicholas Soderberg</i> | 38 | | |
| Cemeteries and a late Ramesside suburb
at Amara West
<i>Neal Spencer</i> | 47 | Towards an archaeology of social organisation at
Jebel Moya, 5 th – 1 st millennium BC
<i>Michael Brass</i> | 120 |
| Petroglyphs under the sand – A preliminary report
on the field season 2008/09 at the fortress Gala
Abu Ahmed
<i>Friederike Jesse and Robin Peters</i> | 62 | | |
| Houses and Pyramids at Kawa, excavations 2008-9
<i>Derek A. Welsby</i> | 72 | Miscellaneous | 126 |
| What are these doing here above the Fifth Cataract?!!
Napatan royal statues at Dangeil
<i>Julie R. Anderson and Salah eldin Mohamed Ahmed</i> | 78 | | |
| Petrography of Pottery from Meroe, Sudan
<i>Robert B. J. Mason and Krzysztof Grzymski</i> | 87 | | |
| The Meroitic Necropolises of Sai Island.
First Season at the Meroitic Cemetery 8-B-5.A
<i>Vincent Francigny</i> | 92 | | |
| First report on ceramic material from Meroitic
Cemetery 8-B-5.A
<i>Romain David</i> | 97 | | |



Front cover: The head of a Kushite king, excavated in 2008, from the Amun temple at Dangeil. It has been tentatively identified as Aspelta (593-568 BC) based upon comparisons with statues of this king discovered at Jebel Barkal and Dokki Gel-Kerma. (Photo © J. R. Anderson, Berber-Abidiya Archaeological Project).



Gebel Adda 1963 and Meroitic stela GA19

Reinhard Huber and David N. Edwards

The primary purpose of this brief report is to publish photographs of a late Meroitic grave stela, from the now destroyed site of Gebel Adda, in Egyptian Nubia, in conjunction with some brief comments on the conduct of the important fieldwork carried out at the site in the early 1960s, by one of the original team members, Reinhard Huber.

Whilst the existence of this stela was known from a description in Nicholas Millet's published doctoral thesis, in which a transcription was presented (Millet 1968, 314-319; text GA19) and more recently in a posthumous publication, relating to Meroitic texts found at the site (Millet 2005), in the absence of published illustrations, this text has yet to be registered within the *Répertoire Épigraphique Méroïtique* (REM). The publication here of photographs of the stela will facilitate its registration and hopefully be of assistance to future studies.

The excavation team of the American Research Center in Egypt, under the direction of Dr Nicholas B. Millet, first arrived at Gebel Adda in January 1963, for what were to be four excavation seasons. Its concession extended from Wadi el-Ur in the north to Gebel el-Shams in the south, a distance of *c.* 800m and from the shore of the River Nile to the eastern end of Cemetery One, approximately 500m. In the northern part of the concession, built on a hill, was the imposing Citadel (Plate 1). To the west of the hill, a steep cliff ran down to the bank of the river, providing natural protection for the Citadel (Colour plates LI and LII). The picturesque landscape between the Citadel and Gebel el-Shams was often breathtaking.



Plate 1. Gebel Adda: Cemetery One, looking west towards the citadel (photo Reinhard Huber).

Excavations started in Cemetery One, which contained numerous tumuli, extending over *c.* 450m, from the southern end of the concession to north east of the Citadel. Work began in the south of the cemetery and about 127 tumuli of the late X-Group period were opened and recorded. In the same area, amongst the tumuli, approximately 30 medieval (Christian) graves were also found, thought to date to the earliest period of the Christianisation at Gebel Adda.

In Cemetery One, four examples of the double-domed mud-brick tombs of the Islamic period (Plate 2) were also excavated. Due to shortage of time, excavations did not



Plate 2. Gebel Adda: Cemetery One looking north east (photo Reinhard Huber).

continue into the northern part of Cemetery One and subsequently were moved to Cemetery Three, lying below the east side of the Citadel. There, the foundations of several Meroitic pyramids were found (Plate 3) and a large cemetery, thought to date to the early X-Group period. That cemetery included some hundreds of tombs, cut into the bedrock and alluvium, usually with vaulted mud-brick sub-structures. The cemetery also included numerous Islamic graves. This



Plate 3. Gebel Adda: Meroitic pyramid foundations in Cemetery Three (photo Horst Jaritz).

cemetery appears to have only come into use in the very late Meroitic period, and then remained in use throughout the post-Meroitic period. While no detailed description of the site has been published, some 400 graves were identified within that cemetery (Millet 1967a), the vast majority of which seem likely to be of 'post-Meroitic' date. Some uncertainty, evident in the initial, published, interpretations of the cemetery, may have reflected the unfamiliar nature of the very late Meroitic/transitional post-Meroitic pottery and other material culture encountered in the burials there. This led to an assumption (probably mistaken), by the excavators of the widespread re-use of the (very late) Meroitic graves, notably the large pyramid-covered tombs (Millet 1967a, 125-26). Excavations were not completed there in 1963 and were continued in the following season 1963-1964.

Towards the end of the 1963 season, problems were encountered in storing the large quantities of skeletal material recovered from the cemeteries, once the purpose-built store-room became full. In the absence of a team anthropologist some basic anthropometric recording of the human remains was begun by Mr Martin Minns (the assistant director) and Reinhard Huber. Mr Minns had previously worked as field assistant for Prof. W. B. Emery, at both Buhen and Qasr Ibrim, and had some experience of such work. With the permission of their Egyptian Inspector, Girgis Daud and Dr Nicholas Millet, these two remained at Gebel Adda for an additional two weeks, after the departure of the rest of the expedition, to accomplish this task.

On the last day of their stay, while burying some waste material near the western end of Cemetery Three, Reinhard Huber encountered an intact Meroitic stela (Plate 4), subsequently registered as inscription GA19. The stone was found lying face down in loose sand *c.* 400mm below the surface and lacked any stratified context, although Millet subsequently noted that the findspot was near Tomb 293, not far from Pyramid 5 (2005, 9). Minns and Huber were able to securely pack the stela and transport it across the Nile to Ballana and, having asked the Antiquities Department of the Cairo Museum to inform the officials of the find, transported the stela to Cairo and delivered it to the Cairo Museum. Although it was impossible to make a hand-copy of the stela at the time, some photographs were taken and Dr Millet was subsequently able to make a transcription of it. His first reading was published in his PhD dissertation (Millet 1968), with a later version included in his posthumous publication of the Meroitic inscriptions from Adda (Millet 2005), but in neither case were illustrations included.

Stela GA19 (reg. 63:4:356)

Stela GA19 was one of at least 13 Meroitic stelae (and potentially several others represented by small fragments) found at Gebel Adda. To accompany the photographs taken in 1963 provided by the first author, the chance is taken here to provide a (slightly revised) transcription of the text with a few additional comments, bringing together essential



Plate 4. Meroitic stela GA19
(original photo Martin Minns, restored by Reinhard Huber).

information relating to the text. Millet's readings of the stela can also be compared with the images, but in general terms it does not seem that any significant changes may be suggested to his original readings, apart from a few minor corrections. Further lexical research in the future may, however, suggest some further minor corrections, especially with regard to the commonly problematic signs. A simple reading of the two columns of the stela is presented below, drawing on Millet's earlier readings, with the addition of a few minor amendments.

Millet recorded the dimensions of the sandstone stela as 510 x 400mm (x 75mm thick). The stela is most unusual in incorporating two separate commemorative texts, apparently relating to two generations of a family. The palaeography appears consistent with a 3rd century AD date (Rilly's Tardif A), but probably not into the 4th century, according to Rilly's chronological schema (Rilly 2007, 340-351). Millet noted that the text of the stela is problematic in a number of ways, being carelessly carved ('the worst executed' at Adda) with several apparent 'errors'. Further complications arise when it had clearly proved problematic to include all the required text of the left-hand inscription in the available space within the inscribed guide-lines created for the right-hand column. Another curious feature of the stela is the presence of what appears to be a carved footprint in its upper left part (Plate 5). It would seem likely that this relates to a later re-use of the stela.

Right column

wos wetneyi :
neqeli : sori ge



trri : qodoqe
 neqowi : pmete
 terikelo : wi : wo
 msmdeto : mdetowi
 lowi : amḥye :
 mokelowi : aqo :
 bili : qelowi : a
 to mḥe psiḥekese
 at mḥe piḥrke
 tni mokelowi :
 ḥteri : yesds
 towi ato mḥ psi
 ḥekese :

1.1. The presence of a word divider at the end of the line, omitted by Millet, seems clear on the photographs.

1.15. The initial ḥ forming part of the word *psiḥekese* seems secure, although its placing some distance from the original margin of the block would suggest that this corner of the stela had already been chipped before the text was inscribed.



Plate 5. Detail of Meroitic stela GA19 (photo Reinhard Huber).

Left column

wos wetneyi :
 neqeli sori qe
 trri : qomeḥi qo
 wi : abrite : pme
 te : qowi : tyesi : yet
 dḥeḥebkwi : ssemri
 pesetoliliti terike
 lebkwi : steqete
 b : yersḥini ye
 riteḥebkwi : tro
 tiḥi qore mḥolit : a
 ḥidesḥini aḥilowi ḥ
 tede atoti : sklye
 tek : ḥ moqelowi :
 ase : tkereketms
 ḥ ni mokelowi : d

The left-hand column with the second inscription was significantly longer than the first text, necessitating the compression of the final two lines of text below the last framing line at the end of the text.

1.14-16. In his last transcription of the text (2005, 9-16) Millet suggested the presence of two numerals (5), while his original

transcription (1968, 316) suggested a reading of only one (in l.16). It is suggested here that a reading of an *n* may in fact be more probable, perhaps in both instances, the forms of the signs appearing very similar to those seen in l.9, and l.12 in the right-hand column.

1.16. As Millet suggested (2005, 10), the isolated *d* at the end of the line 16, may well represent a correction/addition to the end of the previous line.

We would like to thank Martin Minns and Horst Jaritz for their assistance with this brief article and for providing photographs.

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Colour plate LI. Gebel Adda citadel (photo Reinhard Huber).



Colour plate LII. Gebel Adda citadel (photo Reinhard Huber).