



Reports

The Inscriptions of Senwosret III at the Dal Cataract

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Over the last two seasons (2014 and 2015), following the work at Jebel Doshā (Davies *et al.*, this volume), the SARS epigraphic team, with the permission of the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums, has continued the project of recording rock-inscriptions in the Batn el-Hajar, visiting a number of sites, among them Tina Island (Tinānarti) in the Dal Cataract. Here we were able to locate the two Nile-level inscriptions dated to Year 10 of King Senwosret III of the late 12th Dynasty, first discovered during the Archaeological Survey of Sudanese Nubia (ASSN) in 1968, one of them recently published in an archival photograph.¹ Situated on the north-east tip of the island, facing downstream, and still in reasonably good condition, they are incised into the vertical face of a substantial granite boulder (max. height: 1.25m; max. width: 2.68m), with a large flat slab of stone (a convenient platform) located just in front of it (Plates 1 and 2). In advance of a full report on the results of the ASSN,² I present here briefly our new record of these short but interesting texts.³

There are two complimentary inscriptions (A and B), placed next to each other, both arranged in horizontal lines, reading right to left, the workmanship of varying quality, with some signs only cursorily formed (Plate 3). Parts of the

¹ Edwards and Mills 2013, 15, pl. 14; cf. Vercoutter 1966, 164; Bell 1975, 238, 244-246, 258; Vercoutter 1976, 154-155; Delia 1980, 39-42, 78-79, 99; Obsomer 1989, 60, 99; Vercoutter 1994, 325, n. 30; Vandersleyen 1995, 62, 93; Obsomer 1995, 327-328; Seidlmayer 2001, 76, n. 52; Tallet 2005, 43-44; Krauss 2006, 370; Obsomer 2007, 67; Favry 2009, 85; Tallet 2014, 145; Valbelle 2014, 106-107.

² Under preparation by Dr David Edwards of the University of Leicester (see Edwards *forth.*), to whom I am grateful for much relevant information.

³ The copies of the inscriptions were made in the 2014 season by Bert Verrept, Ikhlas Abdel Latief and the present writer. They were checked in 2015, with the additional assistance of Julien Cooper. With regard to logistical matters, we are grateful to our driver/cook, Osman Dafalla, for his diligence under often-demanding circumstances and to Ahmed Mohammed Ahmed Idriss for generous local hospitality and for vital help with boat-transport for the expedition.

inscriptions have suffered from weathering and from water erosion (water having polished the stone surface, which is very uneven, and scoured out the internal patina of some of the hieroglyphs), but they are perfectly legible when examined close-up *in situ*. The rock is still seasonally submerged, though it was well above the prevailing river-level, when we visited in late November 2014 (Plate 1), and even more so in early December 2015. The primary inscription (A, on the left, Figure 1, Plates 3 and 4), containing the king's cartouche with *prenomen*, consists of three lines, the first line about 520mm in length.⁴ The shorter inscription (B, on the right, Figure 2, Plates 3 and 5), an abbreviated version of A, though including additional matter, consists of two lines, the first line about 450mm in length. B was not as carefully done as A and appears to include two errors (see below). The long narrow line incised underneath A might possibly have been



Plate 1. Tina Island, northern end, rock with inscriptions.

intended to mark the approximate level of the water on the date in question but, more likely in this case, served simply as a rough base-line for the inscription.⁵ B records the prevailing (maximum) depth of water as only four cubits (amounting to approx. 2.09m).⁶ The inscriptions read as follows:

⁴ The top of the first sign is about 800mm above the bottom of the rock.

⁵ In contemporary 12th Dynasty examples from Semna-Kumma, the water-level, when marked, is indicated by a horizontal line running through the first sign, *r* (Dunham and Janssen 1960, 139, RIK 1, pl. 95,C; RIK 3, pl. 96,A, 145, RIK 29, pl. 98,B; cf. Vercoutter, 1966, 135-36, fig. 6, pl. x,b); 1994, 318; Hintze and Reineke 1989, I, 99-100, 150, nos 373-375, 503, II, pls 128-130, 208; De Putter 1993, 267; for an interesting variant said to be from Naga el-Deir, Elsassier and Fredrickson 1966, 64; in general, Seidlmayer 2001, 73-80, with n. 52; Uphill 2010, 70, 72-3).

⁶ Edwards and Mills 2013, 15, note: 'When recorded in mid-April 1968, when Nile levels would have been near their lowest, the bottom line of the text A lay 3.47m above river level'. David Edwards informs me (*pers. comm.*) that the river-level at the time was apparently recorded at 178.8m asl at Sarkamatto (east bank, opposite Dal).



Plate 2. Tina Island, Bert Verrept examining main inscription (A).

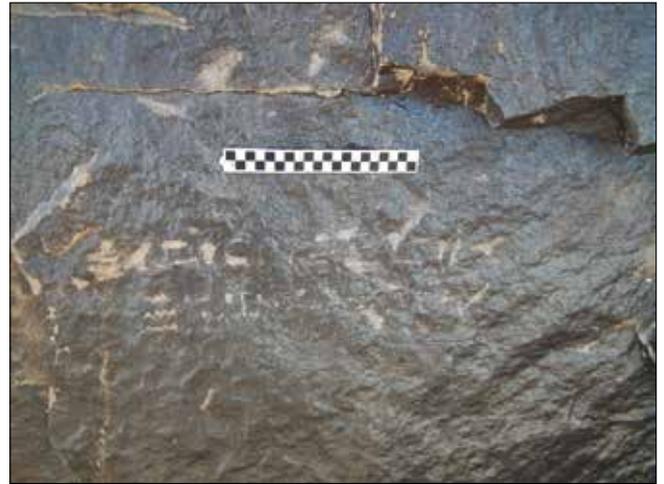


Plate 5. Tina Island, inscription B.



Plate 3. Tina Island, rock face with two inscriptions, A and B.

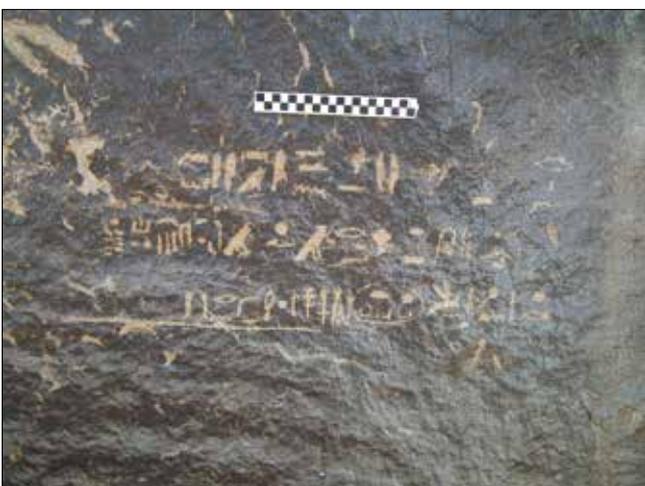


Plate 4. Tina Island, inscription A.

A '(1) Level of the inundation found upon the banks⁷ of Ishmyk (2) when passing by it⁸ going northwards in Year 10, month 3 of Akhet, day 9, (3) under the person of King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Khakaure, given life, stability, dominion, like Re eternally and for ever'.

B. '(1) What was found upon the banks⁹ (of Ishmyk) when passing by it going northwards (2) in Year 10, month 3 of Akhet, day 3,¹⁰ under the person of this god:¹¹ four cubits of water'.

These inscriptions, closely dated and *in situ*, are of historical importance. Located within the Dal Cataract, over 80km upstream of Semna-Kumma, they are the most southerly attested pre-New Kingdom inscriptions of their kind.¹² They were evidently inscribed on the occasion of the Egyptian fleet passing through the cataract in Year 10 of Senwosret III, returning downstream probably from a foray against Kush, during (the equivalent of) late January. They

⁷ Reading the three horizontal signs following *hr* as *idbw*, 'banks' (*Wb.* 1, 153, 2ff; Hannig 2006, 130), which is consistent with the location: the inscriptions are actually situated on a bank (the northern bank of the island).

⁸ The toponym *Ishmyk* is treated syntactically as masculine (cf. Gardiner 1957, 69, §92, n. 7).

⁹ Written with four notional *idb*-signs, the fourth sign incorrectly substituted for the *n* of A.

¹⁰ The '3' here is presumably a mistake for the '9' of A, perhaps arising from an error in, or a misunderstanding of, a hieratic original. Note that '3' is represented in the hieratic manner, the units 'laid on their side' (Gardiner 1957, 191, §259, with n. 7; cf. Möller 1927, 64, nos 658 and 664).

¹¹ The 'god' in question is of course the king, already specified by name in A; 'this' here has the sense of 'the aforementioned' (cf. Davies 2009, 144, n. 14).

¹² The most southerly known Nile-level record is located much further upstream, on Tombos Island, and dates to the 18th Dynasty; see Davies 2012, 33-34, fig. 4, pl. 8.

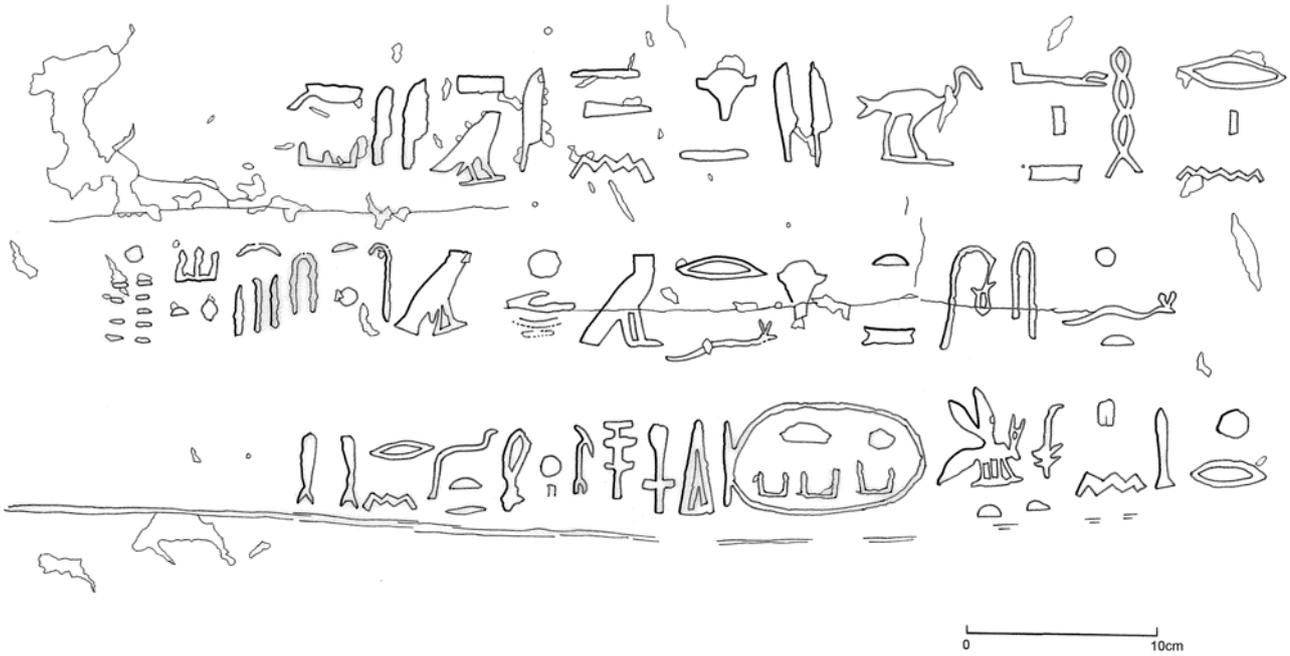


Figure 1. Tina Island, inscription A, copy (scale 1:4).

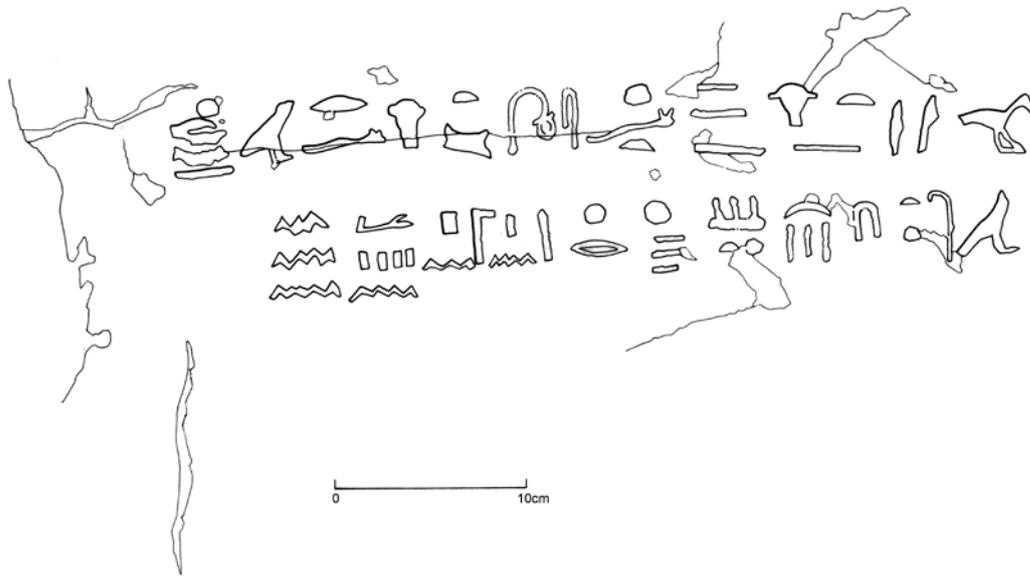


Figure 2. Tina Island, inscription B, copy (scale 1:4).

confirm that the toponym Ishmyk,¹³ known also from the same king's Year 19 inscription from Uronarti,¹⁴ refers to the region of Dal. The prevailing water-depth, recorded as four cubits, was clearly significant in the context of the expedition, perhaps highlighting the fleet's achievement in successfully navigating the cataract at a time of year when the reduced

river-level posed difficulties for traffic.¹⁵

Our survey of the Batn el-Hajar is revealing that numerous inscriptions – some previously known like the Tina pair, others new to knowledge – are still accessible and available for study.¹⁶ Further work is required, possibly as a matter of some urgency, especially in the region of the Dal Cataract, since the construction of a new dam in the area has been mooted again in recent official literature.¹⁷

¹³ Zibelius 1972, 155-156; Obsomer 1995, 326-328, fig. 49; El-Sayed 2011, 261-262, L. 327.

¹⁴ Dunham 1967, 33-34, no. 5, pl. xxv, A-B (now Khartoum, SNM no. 2683; Hinkel and Abdelrahman 2002, 157, 02683); cf. Vercoutter 1976, 155; Delia 1980, 77-79; Obsomer 1989, 60, 61, fig. 4, 63, 99; Obsomer 1995, 327-328; Vandersleyen 1995, 94; Tallet 2005, 48-50, fig. 6; Obsomer 2007, 68-69, fig. 11, 75, n. 97; Gratien 2013, 97; Valbelle 2014, 106-107.

¹⁵ Cf. Vercoutter 1976, 155; Obsomer 1989, 99; Vercoutter 1994, 325, n. 30; Obsomer 1995, 328; Vandersleyen 1995, 93; Tallet 2005, 44; Obsomer 2007, 67.

¹⁶ Davies 2014, 39-41; 2016, 83-89; cf. Edwards and Mills 2013, 15-16.

¹⁷ Abdelrahman Ali Mohamed, Fawzi Hassan Bakhiet, and Muawia Mohamed Salih 2014, 87-88.

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