



Rediscovered, a ‘Lost’ Meroitic Object: The Hamadab Lion

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Though it is undeniable that current archaeological missions to Sudan contribute significantly to the disclosure of its past – not least in the form of rescue campaigns trying to save its cultural heritage from the threat of dam building projects and the irreversible destruction of historic settlement areas – another perspective has largely dropped out of sight. I would like to call this Museum Archaeology, referring to the fact that many objects recovered in the course of archaeological missions from the beginning of the 20th century found their way into various museums and private collections in Europe and the Americas having been given in recognition of financial contributions to the fieldwork. A proportion of the finds also remained in Sudan, most of them nowadays kept in the Sudan National Museum in Khartoum.

Several objects dating from the Palaeolithic through to the Islamic periods were, however, transferred to local Sudanese museums upon their discovery, and lack any documentation produced by the excavators. This can be highlighted in the case of the campaign in the Royal City of Meroe conducted by Liverpool based John Garstang between 1909 and 1914. Except for one monograph (Garstang *et al.* 1911), the results of his excavations were poorly reported in brief summaries in the *Liverpool Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology*. It was only much later that László Török, in his opus *Meroe City. An Ancient African Capital. John Garstang’s Excavations in the Sudan*, compiled the records and published many of the field photos taken by Horst Schliephack, most of which had remained unknown since the time of their production. As Garstang’s documentation is far from complete and only one division list is preserved in the archives of the School of Archaeology and Oriental Studies (SAOS) at Liverpool University, having survived the bombing of Liverpool during the Second World War, the present whereabouts of many objects is still undetermined.

This came to mind when I visited Wadi el-Neel University Museum at ed-Damer in 2016 (Plate 1), which has been referred to in the literature only recently (Abdelrahman Adam 2017, 106 and pl. 8). Displaying numerous objects (including two Meroitic mortuary stelae) (Zach 2017), the collection contains the sandstone statuette of a couchant lion, according to its label, of unknown origin (Plate 2)¹ In fact, it was photographed by Schliephack upon discovery and published by Török (1997b, pl. 197.1000-11) for the first time. The glass negative is kept at SAOS and I am grateful for permission to publish the image (Plate 3). According to Török who consulted Garstang’s excavation diaries, the statuette originates

¹ I am indebted to Abdelrahman Ali Mohamed, Director General of the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums, for the permission to publish the statuette.



Plate 1. Wadi el-Neel University Museum (photo: M. H. Zach).



Plate 2. Lion statue from Hamadab in Wadi el-Neel University Museum (photo: M. H. Zach).

from temple M 1000 at Hamadab: he states that its present location is unknown (Török 1997a, 232-234). This deficit can now be resolved, adding another building block to the research on Hamadab.



Plate 3. Garstang photo M.744 of the lion statue from Hamadab (image courtesy of The Garstang Museum of Archaeology, University of Liverpool).

A comparison between Schliephack's image and the present condition of the statuette reveals a major difference. The field photograph shows that the object was broken in two pieces with the head, part of the back and the left forepaw broken from the rest of the body. Both fragments were fixed together at a later date and during this process the lost part of the base also was restored.

The shape of the statuette in the form of a reclining lion, with crossed forepaws and head turned at right angles to the body, corresponds to well-known monumental statues from New Kingdom Egypt. Two examples recovered in Sudan (EA 1 and EA 2) nowadays flank the entrance to the Egyptian collection of the British Museum, namely the so-called Prudhoe lions originating from Soleb, and produced in the reign of Amenhotep III. Appropriated by the Meroitic king Amanislo (mid-3rd century BC), whose name was carved in rather faint and amateurishly depicted cartouches on their chests, they were transferred to Napata and re-erected in front of Temple B 1200. It was from there that Lord Prudhoe took them, a gift from the Egyptian viceroy Muhammad Ali, to the United Kingdom (cf. Taylor 1991, 36, fig. 42; Quirke and Spencer 1992, 72, fig. 52; for their discovery see Ruffle 1998) (Plate 4). The British Museum also houses another comparable statuary originating from Athribis, dating to the reign of Ramesses II (EA 857) (Plate 5).



Plate 4. Prudhoe Lion (EA 1) (photo: M. H. Zach).

This kind of representation is not often attested in Meroitic plastic art. A comparable, but smaller, lion statuette was unearthed in front of the entrance to the Apedemak temple at Musawwarat es-Sufra (Hintze 1962a, 451 and 475, Taf. XIb; 1962b, 185 and Pl. LVb; Buschendorf-Otto 1993, 272-3, F. Kat. 6 and Bild 46), erected in the reign of Arnekhamani in the third quarter of the 3rd century BC (Plate 6). A reasonably close parallel can be seen in building Naqa N 351, the so-called Roman Kiosk or Hathor Chapel, where two pairs of almost identical couchant lions are antithetically represented in its decoration (Plate 7). On the basis of a limestone architecture model originating from Egypt exhibited on loan in the State Museum of Egyptian Art in Munich (Anonymous 1983, 209 and fig. 12) (Plate 8), dating to late Ptolemaic or



Plate 5. Lion of Ramesses II (EA 857) (photo: M. H. Zach).



Plate 6. Lion statuette from the Apedemak Temple of Musawwarat es-Sufra (Sudanarchaeological Collection & Archive, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, HU-SUD-028) (image courtesy of The Sudanarchaeological Collection & Archive, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin).



Plate 7. Antithetic lions from N 351 (photo: R. Ruzicka).

early Roman times, Inge Hofmann (1985, 101) convincingly pointed out that this corresponds well to the attribution of N 351 to the reign of King Natakamani (mid-1st century AD) according to a contemporary Egyptian pattern adopted by Meroitic stonemasons. In this connection, a lion statue origi-



Plate 8. Limestone model (State Museum of Egyptian Art, Munich) (photo: M. H. Zach).

nating from building Meroe M 195 (erroneously called Royal Bath) must be mentioned. It is positioned on the podium of the water basin, also having its forepaws crossed, but its head is not turned at a right angle towards the viewer (Plate 9).



Plate 9. Lion statue from M 195 (photo: M. H. Zach).

Minor art reveals several decorative ornaments made of gold in the form of the Hamadab lion as, e.g., in the treasure of Queen Amanishakheto from her pyramid Beg. N.6 (Berlin 1665-1668: Schäfer 1910, 155 nos 246 and 247, pl. 30 nos 246a, b, 247a, b; Priese 1992, 23 fig. 15 – both stress their close resemblance to the Prudhoe lions). Another example purchased by Henry Walters in Egypt in 1930 is kept in the Walters Art Museum (Baltimore) sub inventory number 57.1560 (Plate 10). Though of unclear origin, the bushy mane below the snout is a Meroitic feature (Garside 1979, 43, cat. 117). An amulet of blue paste has been found in Beg. W.571 (Boston MFA 23.864; Dunham 1963, 291 [23-3-305] figs 176/12/2 and 176/14) and a pendant of ivory in Qustul grave Q 154 (Cairo 89905; Williams 1991a, 249 fig. 65a; 1991b, 5).



Plate 10. Decorative gold amulet (Walters Art Museum 57.1560) (image courtesy of The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore).

The motif is also to be found on a signet ring from Faras grave 804 (Griffith 1924, 170 and pl. LX/16; 1925, 107) and in the form of a bronze fitting to a wooden box from Gammai grave E 3 (Bates and Dunham 1927, 80 R79a, pls 34/1 H, 34/2 B, 34/3 B and 66 fig. 17 C-E).

As demonstrated, in-depth research on museum collections housing Meroitica is essential for revealing the present whereabouts of so-called lost or untraceable objects recovered in the course of excavations dating back to the beginning of the last century. Also, given the often incomplete, or even a total absence of, documentation, smaller museums housing Egyptian antiquities (to which Napatan and Meroitic objects were attributed) which do not rely on specialists on Sudan are unaware of the importance of these objects, frequently removing them in favour of exhibiting ‘more attractive’ Egyptian ones. Tracing their original findspot enables a study of the object (not only on the basis of incomplete records or faint field photos) and detailed analysis. However, it must be added that this can only be considered part of the story, as many finds were distributed to private sponsors, leaving their present location unknown. What is required is an initiative to create comprehensive documentation of Sudanese objects kept in collections worldwide for the benefit of Meroitic Studies.²

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² For one such initiative see http://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/departments/ancient_egypt_and_sudan/circulating_artefacts.aspx

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