

# SUDAN & NUBIA

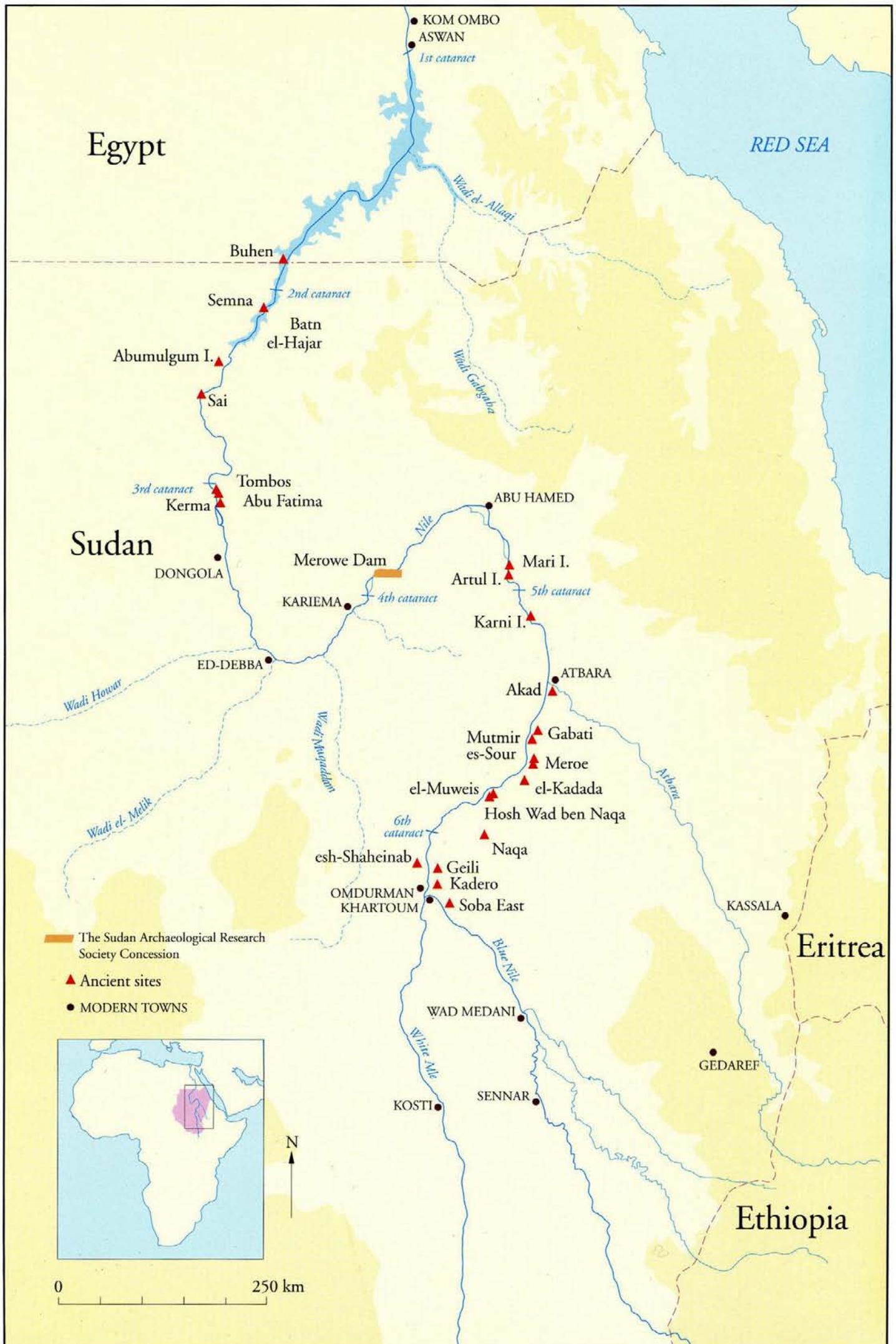
The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



*Bulletin No. 9*

2005





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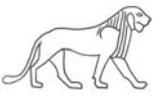
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*Front Cover:* Representation of a bound Kushite from the  
Mortuary Temple of Amenhotep III at Kom el-Hettân  
(photo © Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).



# Recent Discoveries and new Southern Place Names at the Mortuary Temple of Amenhotep III, Kom el-Hettân

*Hourig Sourouzian and Rainer Stadelmann*

Recent discoveries in the mortuary temple of Amenhotep III of representations of Kushites in the form of bound captives are shedding light on relations between Egypt and Kush. This is further evidence for the expansion of Egypt to the south as illustrated by the temples built by the king at Soleb and Sedeinga.

The Colossi of Memnon and Amenhotep III Temple Conservation Project has undertaken excavation and conservation work at Kom el-Hettân since 1999.<sup>1</sup> Up to now, our mission has cleaned and annually defoliated the temple precinct; a modern topographical map has been produced, the Colossi of Memnon cleaned and conservation issues addressed. The second pylon has been uncovered and two colossal statues of Amenhotep III accompanied by the queen consort have been discovered and are under study and restoration; the peristyle court is progressively being excavated and thousands of royal and divine statue parts collected and reassembled. The hypostyle hall is gradually being cleared, revealing older deposits of statues of the goddess Sekhmet.

The scanty remains of walls and columns reveal little of the decorative programme of the temple, whereas the statuary, even though fragmented and dispersed, exposes features which enrich our knowledge of temple infrastructure as well as of royal and divine iconography. Moreover, the colossal royal statuary at the gate of the second pylon and in the porticoes around the great peristyle court bears a decorative programme particularly relevant to Sudan: the plinths of these statues are adorned with representations of foreigners, which include Kush, Irm, Punt and several other neighbours. Such depictions are numerous during the reign of Amenhotep III, in temples, such as Karnak, Thebes/West and Soleb, as well as in private tombs, where they appear on the base of the royal statue shown enthroned in

<sup>1</sup> This project, under the auspices of the SCA and the DAI, started work in 1998, with a grant from American Express through the World Monuments Fund, after the site was included in the list of the « 100 most endangered of the world », by the World Monuments Watch. Since 2000, the project continues mainly thanks to the “Association des Amis des Colosses de Memnon”, and recently, through additional donations by Förderverein Memnon and ARCE/AEF. We thank the SCA and Dr Zahi Hawass for their kind permission to work and strong support.

The aim of the project is to save the last remains of the temple precinct, which are under threat of destruction by irrigation water, salt, vegetation, fire and vandalism.

a kiosk. Those deriving from the mortuary temple at Kom el-Hettân have been known since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, like the granite statue base today in the Louvre (A 18), a fragmentary limestone plinth of a sphinx in a Theban store-room, and a series of northern peoples on the bases of royal colossi now under conservation in the peristyle court.<sup>2</sup> The most recent peoples have appeared at the gate of the second pylon and in the southern portico of the peristyle court.

The Colossi of Memnon preceded the first pylon of the temple, in the east (Colour plate XXXIX).<sup>3</sup> They represent the king seated on a throne and flanked by smaller statues of the king’s mother Mutemuya on his left and the great royal consort Tiye on his right. To the west, 100m behind these colossi, in the zone preceding the presumed second pylon, another colossus of quartzite fallen since antiquity was known from older records since the time of Pococke, who visited Egypt in 1734-35. Up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, reports continue to mention this statue, fragments of which appear clearly in the inundated plain behind the Memnon, in a drawing by David Roberts. Our mission first uncovered this northern colossal statue fallen across the temple axis, then revealed the façade of the northern wing of the brick pylon and discovered a southern colossus previously unknown.

The preserved remains of the temple lie under a layer of 2.5 to 3m of Nile alluvium, now constantly inundated by irrigation water from the surrounding fields. Emerging from the ground the shapeless mass of the north colossus was the object of our research in 2002, when we uncovered the mass of quartzite for documentation and conservation. We were then pleased to discover the submerged right part of the colossus 2m under the actual ground level of the site (Plate 1). Since then, we have continued clearance and conservation, transported the detached parts, the head, the chest and the knee, into a sheltered temporary laboratory for conservation, and started planning a project to re-erect the fallen torso, which weighs 450 tons, replace the detached parts and erect the reassembled colossus in its original place. During the season of 2004-2005, we lifted the torso 3.1m above the level where it had fallen in antiquity; it now lies on an island of gravel covered with sand, on huge wooden beams, awaiting conservation and re-erection (Plate 2).

To the south of this monument, we have partly uncovered the south colossus of the second pylon, which had fallen in the same, south-south-east, direction as its northern companion. This colossus is more damaged and fragmented. The right half of the torso is now partly visible, with the broken right leg of the king (Plate 3). From the

<sup>2</sup> See Edel 1966; Görg 1989 and n. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Called Memnon since visitors in the Greco-Roman Period identified the northern colossus of Amenhotep III, which had fallen after an earthquake, with the Ethiopian prince Memnon, son of Eos, who fell at the gates of Troy.



Plate 1. North Colossus of the Second Pylon after excavation.

circular depression around the fallen torso we recovered thousands of quartzite fragments, which were washed, sorted and stored. The sculptured or decorated fragments, a rather small percentage, were recorded and documented for study. They derive from the throne and the base of the colossus.

During all these operations, we have carefully studied the nature of the stone and iconography of the king. Like the ones of the first pylon, these colossal statues at the gate of the second pylon are also sculptured in monolithic quartzite, with an estimated height of 12m. They also represented the king seated, hands resting flat on the knees. The king wears a *nemes* headdress and a pleated kilt with a triangular apron. On each side of the royal legs stood the statue of a queen. The throne was decorated with the scene of the unification of the Two Lands symbolically bound by two Nile gods.

The plinths of the colossi are decorated with personifications of bound foreign lands, depicted under a one-line monumental hieroglyphic inscription with the titulary of the king divided into two halves on both sides of an axial *ankh*. These representations are displayed on both sides of a median *sema-tawy*, which is carved on the



Plate 2. North Colossus of the Second Pylon lifted.



Plate 3. South Colossus of the Second Pylon during excavation.

front and back of each plinth. The northerners occupy the northern (left) half of the plinth, and the southerners appear on the right half (south) (Plate 4). The northerners are bound with the papyrus plant, as the example of a shaved *Mntm-stt*, a 'Bedouin from Asia', shows on a block deriving from the rearmost left corner of the socle (Plate 5); the southerners are bound with the water lily, the plant of the south (Plates 4, 6 and 7).



Plate 4. Front side of the plinth of the North Colossus with southern peoples.

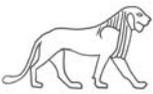


Plate 5. Block from the plinth of the North Colossus with northern peoples.

The foreign lands are represented by their head and arms, which are bound behind them. Each head surmounts a crenellated oval depicting a fortified enclosure inscribed with the name of the corresponding land or province. The bastions of these fortifications are rectangular in shape. All texts and decoration are carved in deep relief, but the heads of the foreigners on the base of the north colossus are more carefully modelled and extremely detailed, especially the ones on the front of the base, where three southerners are well preserved. As the base is broken near the bound heraldic plants, the northerners are not preserved, except for the face of one, the third on the front.

It is worth noting a peculiar detail in the sculpture, observed also on other foreign lists of the Thutmose period in Karnak, as well in every list known from the temple of Amenhotep III here at Kom el-Hettân. According to a convention of Egyptian art, the buttresses of the fortifications are rendered in deep relief all around the cartouche except when they are superposed on the chest of the personage, where they are rendered in shallow relief.

The southerners on the front face of the base are the most striking (Plate 4, Front Cover). Their heads are carved with extraordinary care and skill. Each may be considered a masterpiece of sculpture in its own right. Every one of them reveals individual features. The faces are expressive, with elongated eyes incurved noses, high cheeks, and bulging lips. Some have relatively

large jaws, like the example of the Kushite (Colour plate XL, Front Cover) others have cheeks marked by deep furrows from their scarification. Their curly coiffure is individualized by slight differences in form and volume. The majority bear a feather in their hair. On all heads a large ring adorns the ear. On the right (south) side of the plinth, and from the back, we have recovered several blocks with the continuation of the southern file of foreign peoples. Here the heads are slightly less modelled, nevertheless they bear evident individual features (Plate 6).

The peoples represented on the base of the south colossus are more fragmentary, and the recovered fragments derive mostly from the northern face bearing northerners with baggy coiffures and pointed beards; the faces are not modelled like those of the north colossus, and their facial features are less detailed. However, on the part of the face of the base still lying *in situ*, broken shortly after the first figure of the southern file of people, the personification of the second group which is the land of *Irm*, shows again excellent modelling of the face, a detailed coiffure and an earring, as well as an additional feature in the attire, with a pendant around the neck (Plate 7). Here, the name ring is again equipped with rectangular buttresses. This particular feature has either a chronological value and could be consid-



Plate 6. Right side of the plinth of the North colossus with southern peoples.



Plate 7. *The land of Irem on the plinth of the South Colossus.*

ered as a dating criterion, or the fragments with the circular butressed cartouches belong to the base of another monument fallen here at the gate of the second pylon.

The names of the foreigners as well as their iconography are under study and will be the subject of a thorough publication. Our preliminary observations may be summarized as follows.

These impressive heads surmounting oval name rings represent foreign countries and fortified towns allegedly subdued. Inside the rings are written the names of these countries or towns. This kind of a

graphic representation of subdued countries and towns follows an old schema, already attested on palettes of the Early Dynastic Period.<sup>4</sup> At the end of the Old Kingdom suddenly war scenes appear in private tombs of the Memphite area at Sakkara in the tomb of Kaemheset within the Teti cemetery (Quibell and Hayter 1922) and perhaps a little earlier, in a 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty tomb of a commandant of the royal fortress Jnty at Deshasheh.<sup>5</sup> In both tombs are found representations of a siege of a fortified town outside Egypt. In the tomb of Inty there are two oval ring names beside the scene of siege partly preserved. In one of these rings a kneeling person with tied arms is represented. The names of the towns are not inscribed in the rings but underneath. This kind of representation continues into the First Intermediate Period in private tombs (Jaroš-Deckert 1984, 37-44) and in the decoration of royal mortuary temples at Thebes and in those of the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty in the north.<sup>6</sup> It is,

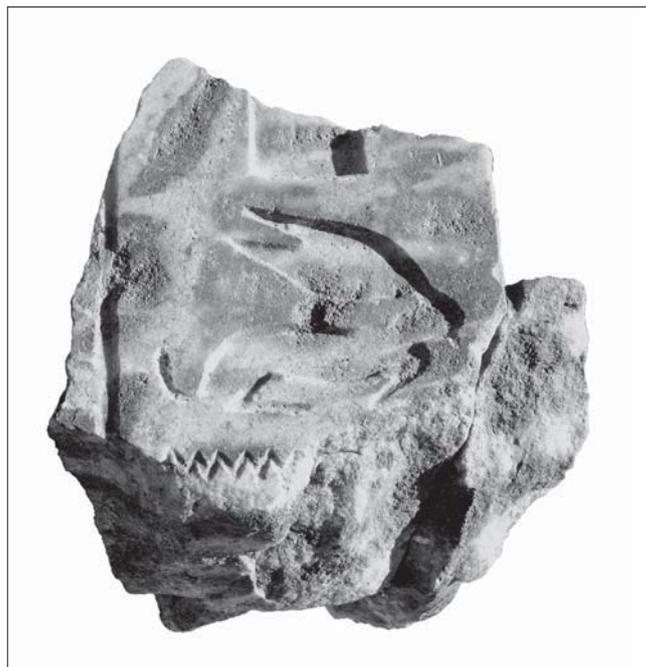


Plate 8. *The land of Punt from the plinth of the North Colossus.*

however, in the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty that these representations on the walls of temples, on the bases of royal statues and sphinxes become part of the triumphant records of the king.<sup>7</sup>

In the mortuary temple of Amenhotep III the fortifications on the pedestals of the colossi and those on the monumental statues in the Peristyle Court show different forms of bastions: square ones and smaller round ones. The smaller type of bastions we had observed previously from the socles of the monumental statues of the western portico of the Peristyle Court. On the plinth of the north colossus of the Second Pylon all bastions are square, while those on the fragments in the immediate vicinity of the south colossus are smaller, and round in shape. Knowing that the smaller round ones were attested on the bases of the statues of the Peristyle, we had thought that the different types depend on the statue type or are of earlier date. However, we discovered the rectangular-shaped bastion to be present also on the part of the plinth of the south colossus still *in situ*. Further finds will perhaps resolve this question.

From the plinth of the north colossus of the Second Pylon only the southern half is preserved, decorated with the Nubian peoples, the kingdoms of Kush – *ḥꜣy*, the 'vile' – and *Irm* – perhaps a new writing for the old land of Jam. Kush and *Irm* are both determined with the sign of a foreign country (Plate 4). Punt is attested among the southern peoples on the north colossus (Plate 8), but we have not yet

<sup>4</sup> For example the 'Cities Palette', Late Predynastic Period, Cairo Egyptian Museum JE 27434 = CG 14238. See Petrie 1953.

<sup>5</sup> Petrie 1898, pl. IV. See also Gaballa Ali Gaballa 1976, 31 and pl. 2a.

<sup>6</sup> Jaroš-Deckert 1984, 44-46. Excurs: Die Entwicklung der Kriegsbilder im Alten und Mittleren Reich.

<sup>7</sup> This kind of name ring is attested in the early 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and becomes common under Hatshepsut (on sphinxes) and Thutmose III as decoration on the pylons of the temple of Karnak, see Martinez 1993, 74-83; Jacquet-Gordon 1981, 41-46



found the land of Shat nor the Medjaw. On the south side of the plinth of the northern colossus there follow the smaller – perhaps dependant – countries or towns, *Trrk*, *Miw Tksr*, and *Gwrs*, partially known from older lists, but not surely identified or located (Plate 6).

The same sequence of Kush and *Irm/Iam* – written here without the sign of ‘foreign country’ – and followed by smaller polities or towns, *G3rs* (*Gwrs*?), *Tidwa*, *Miw*, *Tirwa*, is displayed on some large granite blocks deriving from monumental pedestals and found re-used in a construction east of the sphinx alley connecting the Temples of Karnak with the Mut Precinct (Varille 1936, 203-214, pls I, II). The inscriptions on these blocks mention monuments in alabaster from Hatnub in the mortuary temple of Amenhotep III on the West bank — the blocks could therefore belong to the alabaster colossi of the Third Pylon which are under study. The fortresses surrounding the place names display small bastions in spite of the colossal size of these pedestals. Therefore our first assumption that, in the mortuary temple, ring names with large square bastions could correspond to plinths of the greater seated colossi, and that the round-shaped smaller bastions appear on bases of lesser colossi cannot be upheld.

Other representations of foreigners decorate some newly discovered statue bases and fragments of bases in the peristyle court, which was surrounded by porticoes on all four sides. All statues represented the king, feet together and left arm crossed on the chest holding the royal insignia. Here the royal statues occupied the space between two columns all around the open court. The statues, in the attitude of Osiris, were not mummiform but, for the first time in this attitude in a royal temple court, they showed the king wearing the *shendyt* kilt. The great Peristyle Court is divided by the east-west axis into a north and south half. In the northern half of the court the statues were sculptured in quartzite from Gebel el-Ahmar, a northern quarry, and depicted the king with the red crown of Lower Egypt. On the bases of the northern statues, northern countries are represented: Palestinians, Syrians and Aegeans (see Edell 1966; Görg 1989). In the southern half, all statues were in red granite from Aswan, southern quarries, and showed the king with the white crown of Upper Egypt. Their bases were decorated with southern peoples.

From the southern portico, we recovered several fragments of colossal statues in red granite, among them a pair of feet resting on a base inscribed and decorated in a similar way to the known statue base in the Louvre, A 18. Like the latter, it bears representations of southern peoples on all faces, as the statue was placed in the southern part of the court. Accordingly, the plants of the *sema-tany* bound in the middle of the front face comprise the southern plant on both sides. Converging on this central motive, two tiers of southern peoples are represented by their busts surmounting the crenellated cartouches inscribed with their place names. The buttresses here, as on all of the bases of the

peristyle, are of circular shape. The personifications of the foreigners are slightly different in this part of the temple. They are represented by whole busts surmounting the name rings and not only by mere shoulders as at the second pylon. Their arms are as usual bound behind their backs. The rope around their neck makes a curve behind each head and ends with a water lily. In spite of the different material and the smaller size, the heads are carefully modelled and their features detailed. Here again, the short round coiffures are diversified in their size and form; they wear no feathers. Apart from the characteristic short nose and swollen lips, the individuals have different facial features and scarifications. All have large earrings.

The back part of the base is destroyed, but the list includes six personifications on the front; six others are conserved on the left side, and five on the right side, with the head of a sixth whose cartouche is lost. Of these names, some are well known from former lists, others are completely new and need further study. For the moment the state of our preliminary investigation can be summarised in the following points.

On the southern socles subdued peoples from the South, Nubians or Sudanese, are depicted. On a statue base discovered earlier in the Peristyle Court of the temple at Kom el-Hettân and now in the Louvre,<sup>8</sup> the great kingdom of ‘vile’ Kush leads the list, followed by *Iwntjw-Setj*, the Bedouins of the desert, and the smaller polities, *Trt*, *Ik3jt* (perhaps the land of the gold mines) and *R3b3rw*. On both sides of the base runs a list of 10 ring names preceded by ‘vile Kush’ from right to left. On the rear, Kush and another town closes the list. *Irm/Iam* seems not to be mentioned! We therefore think that the statue base Louvre A 18 lists only peoples of Kush. The bastions are of the small round type.

In the 2002 campaign we discovered a statue base of red granite decorated in a similar way to the Louvre A 18 socle. The front face is divided by the *sema-tany* sign. The first country on the right side is vile Kush followed by *Miw* and *Itrw*, opposed by *Trkr* and *G3rs* on the left side. *Irm/Iam* is not depicted (Colour plate XLI). This supports our theory that within the south portico these two bases represented maybe only peoples of the Kingdom of Kush. As long as the Nubian language remains unknown most of these place names will remain uncertain. Some names, like *Itrw* or *itrw-min*, may be even an Egyptian interpretation of the names of Nubian towns lying near the river Nile.

A limestone fragment of the plinth of a sphinx statue, found earlier in the fields near Kom el-Hettân, also bears a list of southern peoples, which starts with Ta-sety and Kush and continues with Kari and Irem (Bakry 1968, 68, pl. XVIII). Moreover, a little head in terracotta representing a Nubian captive was found in the debris of the West Portico.

<sup>8</sup> Socle Louvre A 18. Varille 1938, 161-171. The statue base, together with a monumental head in red granite, were acquired in 1826 from the collection of the British consul, Salt.

According to our observations, the statue bases of the East Portico were not decorated. We found two undecorated granite bases in the south half of the East Portico and two quartzite ones in the north half. Perhaps there was not enough time to complete the decoration after the enlargement of the whole Peristyle Court. We have now evidence that Amenhotep constantly enlarged his funerary temple towards the east for every new *heb-sed* with new pylons and colossal statues. In front of the third pylon he erected alabaster colossi; in front of the second pylon the newly discovered pair of quartzite statues, and, finally, for his last *heb-sed*, he commissioned in front of a first pylon the greatest colossi in quartzite, 21m or 42 cubits high, now known as the Memnon Colossi.<sup>9</sup> The nearly 5m high pedestals of these gigantic colossi bear only the royal protocol. They probably would have been decorated with personifications of subdued towns and countries but this decoration was either not completed, or was only painted.

As we have seen, these new lists differ from those represented in Soleb, Karnak, and in the wall paintings of private tombs by a distinct iconography and especially by new names. Within the context of relations between Egypt and the southern lands, Kush occupies the first place in these new lists, the land of *Irm* is second at the gate of the Second Pylon. The double attestation of the land of Punt among the southern neighbours, on the south side of the plinth of both colossi at the Second Pylon, will be significant when the other place names are identified and located in their exact position within the list. With a coalition of these southern neighbours now evidenced in the new historic text of the governor Sobeknakht of the early 17<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Davies 2003), the name lists of Kom el-Hettân will shed more light on the iconography and the rank of these countries and places, shown in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty through the eyes of the scribes and artists of Amenhotep III. Perhaps, more than simply a geographical itinerary, they will enhance the importance of each land vis-à-vis their powerful neighbour, and thus provide a list of lands really conquered by 'His Majesty'.

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<sup>9</sup>See n. 3.



*Colour plate  
XXXIX. Kom el-  
Hettân. Aerial view  
of the temple of  
Amenhotep III.  
(photo Theban  
Mapping Project).*



*Colour plate XL.  
Kom el-Hettân. Head  
of the Kushite on the  
plinth of the North  
Colossus.*

*Colour plate XLI.  
Kom el-Hettân. Front  
face of a newly discovered  
base in the peristyle  
court, south.*

