

SUDAN & NUBIA

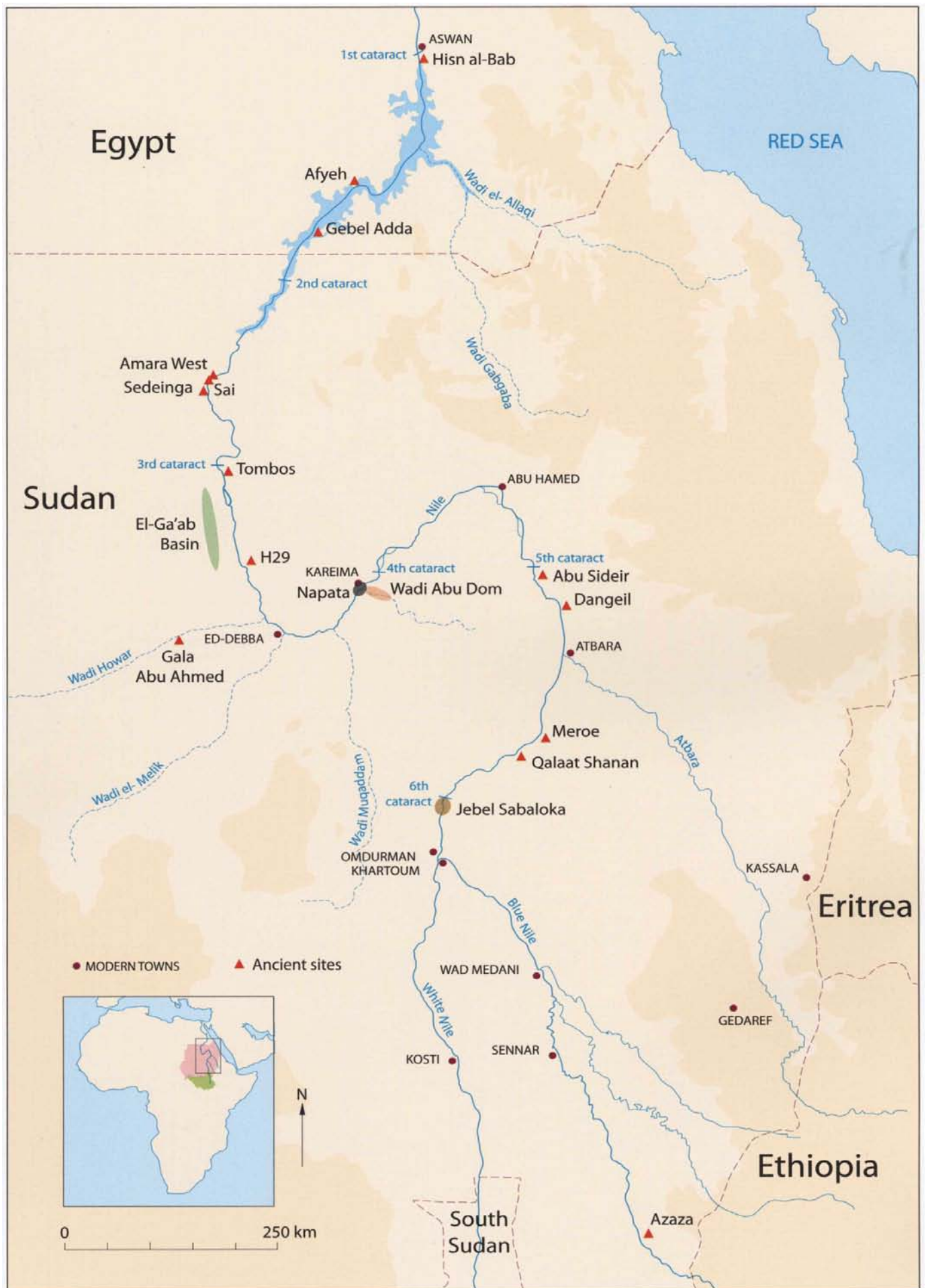
The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



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SUDAN & NUBIA

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Front cover: Excavations in progress in the *Kerma Ancien* cemetery at site H29 in the Northern Dongola Reach (photo D. A. Welsby).

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Merymose and others at Tombos

Vivian Davies

Three of Egypt's 18th Dynasty viceroys are represented in rock-drawings and -inscriptions at Tombos. Two of these have been the subject of previous reports on the British Museum's epigraphic survey, namely Inebny/Amenemnekh and Usersatet, viceroys of Thutmose III/Hatshepsut and Amenhotep II respectively.¹ I publish here two monuments (an inscription and a stela) of the third member of the group, the viceroy Merymose, who served under Amenhotep III; also included are brief reports on a rock-drawing from the same area and on the record of a Nile height-level on Tombos Island.

1. Column of inscription

The inscription is located on the east bank of the Nile, on the northern side of a low-lying boulder of granite gneiss, situated several metres to the north-west and riverside of



Plate 1. Tombos, east bank. Foreground, boulder with inscription of Merymose. Background, centre, sloping boulder bearing stelae of Thutmose I and Merymose respectively.

¹ Davies 2008 and 2009. The survey team over recent seasons has comprised Vivian Davies and Dr Derek Welsby of the British Museum and Dr Ikhlas Abdel Latif of NCAM. Dr Elisabeth O'Connell of the British Museum joined for the latest season, which took place over a week in November-December, 2011. We are grateful to Hassan Hussein Idriss and Dr Abdelrahman Ali, the former and present Director-General respectively of NCAM, for permission to work. Claire Thorne and Dr Renée Friedman of the British Museum gave valuable help in preparing the drawings and images for publication here. Figures 1 and 2 were inked-in by Will Schenck. A version of this report, with an increased number of images, will appear in a forthcoming issue of the on-line journal *British Museum Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan (BMSAES)*.

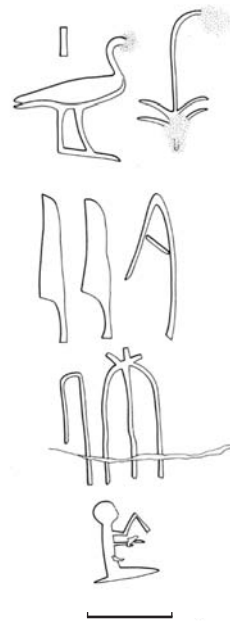


Figure 1. Copy of Merymose inscription (scale bar 100mm).

the great stela of Thutmose I (Plate 1).² It consists of a single column of large hieroglyphs, about 650mm in maximum height, giving the title and name of the viceroy, the signs reading right to left: *s3-nswt Mry-ms*, 'King's son, Merymose' (Figure 1, Plate 2). The hieroglyphs are deeply, and quite skilfully, carved directly into the rock, with no surface preparation. The *s3*-bird, elegantly formed, has internal detail, distinguishing the bird's wing from the body and tail. The lower hieroglyphs, located awkwardly near to the ground, are slightly less assured. The head and beak of the *s3*-bird and the base and upper tip of the adjacent *nswt*-sign have been eroded through repeated modern touching,³ as also have elements of the near-by stela (see below). There is slight damage to the hieroglyphs at the bottom, caused

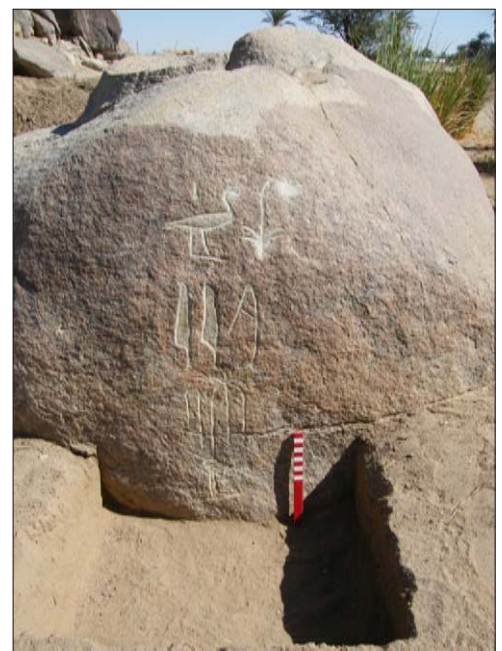


Plate 2. Tombos. Inscription of Merymose.

by a crack and holes in the surface of the stone.

The workmanship on this inscription is considerably more competent than that on the stela-inscriptions (see below). They are surely the work of two different sculptors and may not be exactly contemporary.

² See PM vii, 175; Edwards and Salih 1992, 18, 91/17, d; Harrell 1999, 240-1, 244, Table 2, no. 6, with n. 5, 248, fig. 3; Davies 2008, 25, n. 1, col. pl. v, 91/7, a-d; Osman and Edwards 2011, 293-4, TMB003, d, fig. 8.16.7; Kozloff 2012, 171, 276.

³ By female inhabitants of the area (information as to this local practice supplied by the *gaffir* of the site, Radwan Daoud Mahdjoub).



2. Stela

The stela is located on the northern side of the large, sloping (once upright) boulder of granite gneiss, which bears on its western face the victory stela of Thutmose I (Plates 1 and 3).⁴ It is round-topped with a maximum height of 910mm

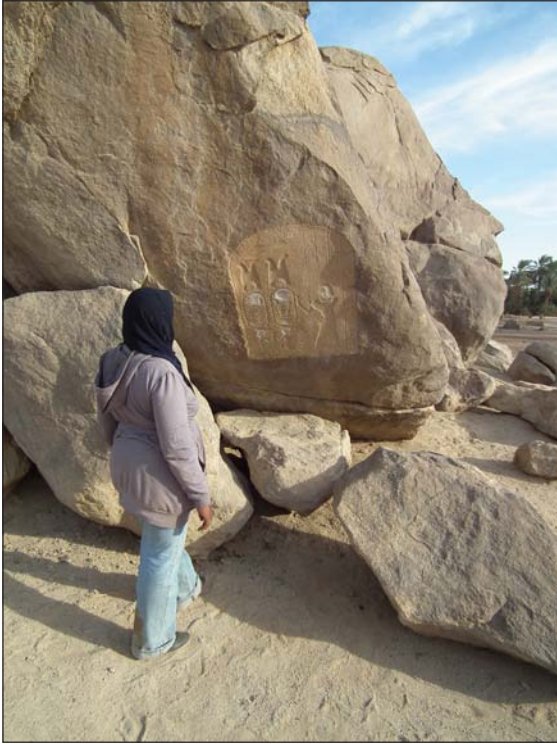


Plate 3. Tombos. Stela of Merymose on sloping boulder.

and width of 670mm. In advance of carving, the surface was sunk slightly below the natural level of the rock and dressed to produce a relatively smooth plane. The decoration, done mostly in sunk relief and incised work, consists of a scene showing a figure of the viceroy Merymose standing, facing left, with hands raised in adoration of two large cartouches containing the *prenomen* and *nomen* respectively of King Amenhotep III: *Nb-m3't-r' Imn-h3p-hk3-w3st*,⁵ 'Nebmaatre Amenhotep-prince-of-Thebes' (Figure 2, Plate 4).⁶ The cartouches are surmounted in each case by a sun-disc⁷ with feathers, the discs in raised relief, and above them the motif of the single-winged sun-disc.⁸ They rest on a narrow platform supported by a rare variant of the *sm3-t3wy* ('union of the two lands') motif, showing two captives, probably a southerner to

the left and northerner, with beard, to the right,⁹ their arms secured behind their backs and bound directly to the stem of the *sm3*-hieroglyph.¹⁰ The *Imn*-element of the king's *nomen*, particularly the *mm*-sign, was damaged by Akhenaten's agents¹¹ and has also suffered from more recent activity, as have the *r'*-sign of the *prenomen* and the heads and faces of the figures of Merymose and the two captives.¹² There is otherwise no sign of deliberate damage or re-cutting on the stela, which is in good condition overall.

Merymose is shown wearing a long skirt with a tie at the waist, an upper garment probably with sleeves, a shoulder-length wig and a conspicuous, bulging *shebyu*-collar rising above the front shoulder, part of the 'gold of honour' awarded by the king.¹³ Internal details, such as the belt of the skirt, the rear arm crossing the body, and the beads of the collar, may have been completed in paint. He is identified in four columns of hieroglyphs, a routine adoration-text, located above and behind him, and reading right to left: (1) *rdit i3w n* (2-3) *nb t3wy sn t3 n ntr nfr* (4) *in s3-nswt n¹⁴ K3¹⁵ imy-r h3swt¹⁶ rswt t3y hw hr wnm¹⁷ n n[sw]t¹⁸ Mryw-ms¹⁹* '(1) giving praise to (2-3) the lord of the two lands, doing obeisance to the perfect god (4) by the king's son of Kush, overseer of the southern foreign lands, fan-bearer on the right of the k[in]g,

⁹ Cf. the representation of the 'northern' and 'southern' captives in the name-rings in Soleb temple (Schiff Giorgini 1998, pls 216-255); the former, as they survive, all have beards.

¹⁰ See Spieser 2000, 52-3, n. 318, and for a contemporary partial parallel, Schiff Giorgini 1998, pl. 334, Sb 47, a-b; 2002, 422; 2003, 257, fig. 251, a-b; cf. also Davies 1908, pl. XIX.

¹¹ As it was also in the name *Imn-r'* in the adjacent stela of Thutmose I, line 17 (not indicated in *Urk.* iv, 86, 12), though the *Imn* of line 9, much higher up on the stela, was left untouched.

¹² See n. 3.

¹³ See Binder 2008, 6 and 210-211; 2011, 45-51; 2012, 3 and 7. Merymose is shown wearing the gold of honour on his statue in Vienna, KM ÄS 36 (Jaros-Deckert 1987, 96; Seipel 1992, 322-3, no. 125), and on stela Cairo CG 34139 (Lacau 1909-1926, 189-90, pl. lvi); see Binder 2008, 313 [106], and Table 13.1, 106.

¹⁴ Written as a bar-*n*, as opposed to a ripple-*n*, the form adopted in every other case here.

¹⁵ The *k*-sign of *K3* has been misunderstood as a *nb*.

¹⁶ The hieroglyph writing *imy-r* and the first sign of the group writing *h3swt* have been mistakenly joined together to form a single sign.

¹⁷ The *hr*- and stroke-signs are transposed here, as are the *m*- and *wnm*-signs immediately below. The *m*-owl is represented with only half a front leg. The determinative of *wnm* represents a combination of two signs, 'forearm with hand holding stick' (Gardiner D 40) and 'forearm with palm of hand downwards' (Gardiner D 41). The bent elbow of the arm is detached.

¹⁸ The writing of *nswt*, 'king', has been badly garbled. Missing to the left of the *t* and *n* is the usual *swt*-sign. The small slightly angular 'sign' in its place may have been a perfunctory attempt at representing the base of the *swt*. In addition, the determinative, which would normally show the figure of a seated king, is malformed.

¹⁹ The *s*- and *ms*-signs are transposed. Note the writing of the name, which is known from another Nubian source (Curto 2010, 95, b9, 103, pls 23 and 25) but is attested only here for the viceroy, whose name is otherwise written as *Mr(y)-ms* or *Mry-ms*, as in the case of the first Tombos inscription. The fuller form may be an error here.

⁴ See PM vii, 175; *Urk.* iv, 1933, 16-19, no. 722; Edwards and Salih 1992, 18, 91/17, a, and 19, pl. iv; Davies and Friedman 1998, 131 and 136; Harrell 1999, 240-1, 244, Table 2, no. 7, with n. 5, 248, fig. 3; Spieser 2000, 224, no. 123, and 320; Osman and Edwards 2011, 71, fig. 3.17, left, 293, TMB003, a, figs 8.16.1 and 8.16.4, pl. 51.

⁵ The *w3st*- and *hk3*-signs are transposed.

⁶ See Spieser 2000, 52, n. 318, 224, no. 123, and 320. For an earlier scene of this general type at Tombos, see the near-by double stela of the viceroy Usersatet and the official Hekaemsasen (Davies 2009, 21-2, fig. 2).

⁷ See Spieser 2000, 42-4; Gasse and Rondot 2007, 162-3 and 500, SHE 268.

⁸ See Derriks 2009, 296 and 298, no. 2.

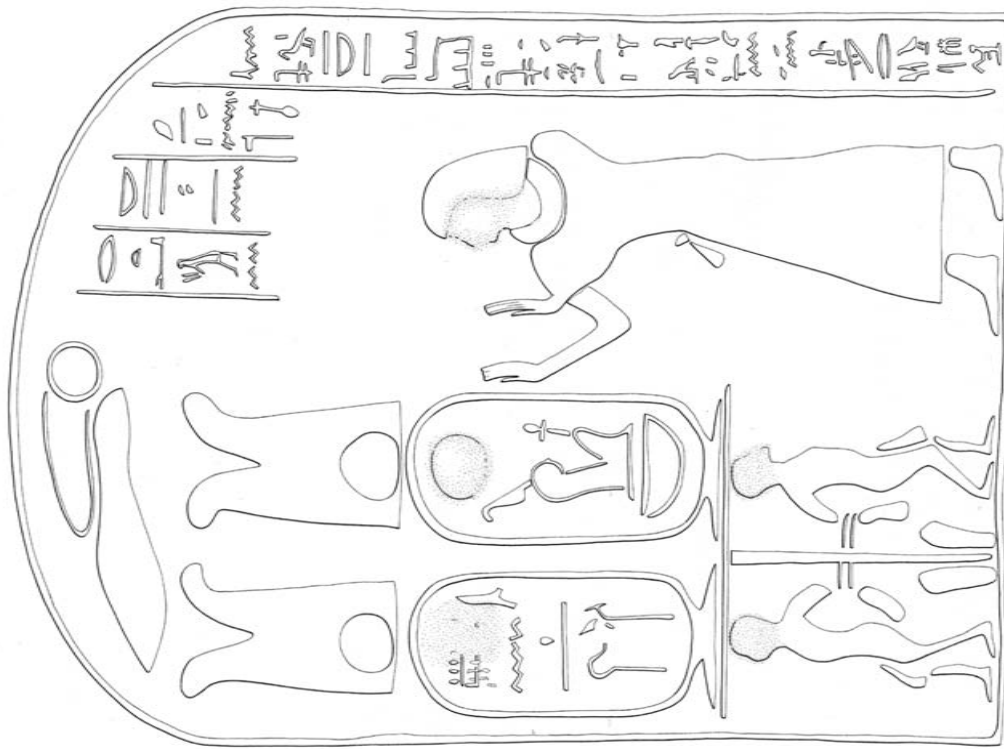


Figure 2. Copy of Merymose stela
(scale bar 100mm).



Plate 4. Tombos. Stela of Merymose.



Merymose.’ Though Merymose held several other titles,²⁰ the three given here form the core vice-regal sequence.

Close inspection of the stela reveals a highly economic mode of sculpting the content and a less than sure grip on the forming of the hieroglyphic signs (Figure 2, Plate 4). Rather than being joined up, parts of a single whole have been consistently rendered as separate entities, a practice most obviously evident in the disarticulated figures of the viceroy and the two captives. The hieroglyphs are similarly treated. In the cartouches the outlines of the *nb-*, *m3^ct-*, and *n-*hieroglyphs are not carried through and parts of the *m3^ct-*, *h^tp-* and *w3st-*hieroglyphs are disconnected. The same tendency is rife in the columns of smaller hieroglyphs, where, as already noted, there are numerous other misunderstandings. Nevertheless, viewed from a little distance away in the raking light of the late afternoon sun (Plate 3), the stela (even in its current inclined plane)²¹ makes for an impressive sight, fulfilling its function as a piece of royal and vice-regal display.

Merymose, so far the only known viceroy of Amenhotep III, may have served the king in that office for much of the reign of 38 years.²² He is attested from a wide range of sources, both in Egypt and Kush, including a considerable number of rock-drawings and inscriptions, like those at Tombos, marking his authority and that of the king over the southern territories and gold-mines of the eastern desert.²³ None of the sources are dated. However, he is represented in scenes in the temple of Soleb participating in the ceremonies of the king’s first jubilee,²⁴ which shows that he was in office by Year 30. Nothing is certainly known of his life or the chronology of his career before that year.²⁵ Probably deceased by the end of the reign or thereabouts, he was buried in a lavishly equipped tomb at Qurnet Marai in the Theban necropolis (TT 383).²⁶ His most important surviving historical monument is the well-known sandstone stela from the temple of Semna.²⁷ The top section is missing but what remains of the inscription records that Merymose organized and led, on behalf of the king, a successful military expedition against the

²⁰ See Pomorska 1987, 114-6, no. 26; Gnirs 1996, 6; Mahfouz 2005, 58-9, no. 2, A-E, 75-6.

²¹ In its original position, when upright, the stela would have been viewed from below.

²² Berman 1992a, 55-6; Vandersleyen 1995, 374-5; Berman 1997, 30; Török 2009, 173, no. 9.

²³ For previous bibliography relating to most of these sources, see Gasse and Rondot 2007, 162-3, SHE 268; Régen 1910. Merymose’s southernmost attestation to date is his fragmentary statue from Jebel Barkal, now in Boston, MFA (Haynes 2011, 43-5).

²⁴ See Schiff Giorgini 1998, pls 57 and 115; 2002, 236-7, R 13 f and 298-9, R 27 B f; 2003, 163, fig. 160 h; see also the stela from the same site, Schiff Giorgini 1998, pl. 330, Sb 82; 2002, 413-4, Sb 82.

²⁵ A close connection with the region of Assiut has been suggested on the basis of the deities named on his statue, Vienna KM ÄS 36 (Jaroš-Deckert 1987, 92-8; see Müller 1977, 326 (the statue referred to as a stela) and Dewachter 1978, 132-5).

²⁶ See, most recently, Régen 2010.

²⁷ British Museum EA 657; PM vii, 155; Edwards 1939, 21-2, pl. xx; *Urk.* iv, 1659-1661, no. 564.

‘enemies of (the land of) Ibhet.’²⁸ Pending new evidence, it remains an open question whether this expedition somehow formed part of the king’s well documented ‘first campaign of victory’ undertaken against Kush in Year 5²⁹ or was an entirely separate, later event.³⁰

The precise location of the Tombos stela is significant (Plates 1 and 3). It is placed just to the side, exactly adjacent, to the great victory stela of Thutmose I, the first conqueror of Kush. It serves both as a tribute to the earlier king and as a statement of renewed dominion by Amenhotep III, a process in which the role of Merymose, shown wearing the gold of honour, is suitably acknowledged.³¹

3. Representation of a shrine

This rock-drawing of a building, previously unnoted,³² is neatly hammered into the northern face of a boulder of granite gneiss, situated not far to the north-east of the stela of Thutmose I (Figure 3, Plates 5 and 6). Damaged in parts because of spalling of the surface of the stone, it has a maximum height of 270mm and width of 320mm, its base approx. 1.4 m above current ground-level. From its form and location there is no reason to doubt that it dates to the same period, the 18th Dynasty, as the other decoration in this area. It resembles a ritual structure of a type familiar, for example, from hieroglyphic writing of the period as a determinative (Gardiner O20) of the word *hm*, ‘shrine’,³³ and the like, here depicted with an entrance façade. Its function is obscure but it may perhaps have served as a boundary-marker, part of a control system delimiting the landscape immediately beyond, and in particular the area surrounding the great stela, as a sacred place.³⁴ Archaeological investigation of the area, a press-

²⁸ On Ibhet, ‘eine Region in der nubischen Ostwüste’, see Zibelius 1972, 35, V d b 100, 74-5; Zibelius-Chen 1994, 412-3, 415-6; Zibelius-Chen 2011, 16-17; El-Sayed 2011, 141-2, L 40.

²⁹ For the relevant documents, see *Urk.* iv, 1654, 14-15; 1661-63, no. 565; 1663-65, no. 566; 1665-66, no. 567; 1793, no. 641; 1959, no. 739. On the king’s two Aswan stelae and the Konosso stela, see now Klug 2002, 418-430, nos 15-17, pls 8, 24, 30, 31, 32; also Beylage 2002, i, 143-155, ii, 639-47; Gabolde 2004, 136 and 146-8.

³⁰ See Dehler 1984; Gundlach 1987, 184-8; Topozada 1988, whose conclusions, much cited, go beyond the evidence; Zibelius-Chen 1994, 413, n. 17; Vandersleyen 1995, 371-3; Gnirs 1996, 134-5; Berman 1997, 30; Berman 1998, 10-11; O’Connor 1998, 264-70; Gundlach 2004, 195-6; Morris 2005, 312-5, 330-2; Konrad 2006, 136-7; Shaw 2008, 112-4; Török 2009, 167; Zibelius-Chen 2011, 80-81; Kozloff 2012, 74-81, 166-7 (dating ‘the second Nubian campaign’ to Year 26, though it is unclear on what grounds), 263-5, 276.

³¹ On the awarding of the gold of honour during the reign of Amenhotep III, see Binder 2008, 241-3, and 2012, 6-7, with evidence of a link in certain cases, including perhaps that of Merymose, with the king’s jubilee-celebrations. Note that there is no hard evidence that Merymose was a son or brother of Amenhotep III (as Binder 2008, 243 and 313 [106]).

³² The existence of this rock-drawing was first brought to my attention some years ago by Dr Vincent Rondot.

³³ Cf. Spencer 1984, 104-8.

³⁴ See Knoblauch 2012, 93, on ‘the makers of inscribed border stones reducing complex information down to essential basics.....Their meaning, undoubtedly derived in part from the context in which they

ing need given the relentless encroachment of the modern village, might yet yield evidence relating to associated activity and the nature of the local ‘colonial’ community’s interaction with the site, about which we currently know nothing.³⁵



Figure 3. Copy of rock-drawing (scale bar 100mm).



Plate 5. Tombos. Boulder with rock-drawing of shrine.

4. Nile-level Record

First documented by the Mahas Survey of the University of Khartoum in 1991 and published as a ‘previously unrecorded Pharaonic graffito’,³⁶ the Nile-level record is located in the north-east corner of Tombos Island high up on the north-east face of a tall granite boulder (Figure 4, Plates 7 and 8).

were displayed, must have been clear enough to their intended audience. For modern observers...the precise meaning of the information they communicate can be difficult to grasp’.

³⁵ On the cemetery of this community ‘pointing to a substantial Egyptian colonial presence in this area’, see Smith 2007, 2-7; 2008, 97-103; cf. Osman and Edwards 2012, 68.

³⁶ Edwards and Salih 1992, 26-7, 91/13, pl. viii; Harrell 1999, 240-41, 244, Table 2, no. 10, with n.5; Davies 2008, 25, n. 3, col. pl. v, 91/13; Osman and Edwards 2011, 83, fig. 3.41, TMB010, 292, fig. 8.16.1 and 297, 299, figs 8.16.22-3. Misled by the lack of cartouche, I previously noted briefly that the inscription comprised ‘a Nile-level dated to Year 10 of an unidentified king’ (Davies 2008, 25, n. 3), a view repeated in Osman and Edwards 2011, 83.

Probably composed by a scribe from the local administration, it consists of a hieroglyphic inscription, roughly but intel-



Plate 6. Tombos. Rock-drawing of shrine.

ligibly hammered into the rock, measuring 510 x 260mm in maximum width and height respectively. Reading from right to left, it records in succinct form the height-level reached by the Nile inundation in regnal year 10 of Amenhotep III, the actual water-level indicated by the horizontal line running underneath. It reads: *rnpt (-sp) 10 Nb-m3^ct-r^c r(3) n mw*, ‘Year 10³⁷ (of) Neb-maat-re, edge of the water’.³⁸ The king’s *prenomen* (Figure 5) is written without cartouche, with a hieroglyph representing a seated, bearded king (*nb*) with a feather (*m3^ct*) on his head and the hieroglyph *r^c* immediately adjacent, a concise ‘sportive’ writing of *Nb-m3^ct-r^c* of a type



Plate 7. Tombos Island. Documenting the Nile-level record (photo D. A. Welsby).

³⁷ For the abbreviated writing of the regnal year, cf. Gardiner 1957, 203, with n. 8. The sign for ‘ten’ here resembles the hieratic form (Möller 1936, ii, 56, no. 623).

³⁸ For the expression *r(3) n mw*, cf. *Wb.* 2, 392, 10; Vercoutter 1966, 135-6; Hannig 2006, 481. The dark area below the *n* is an imperfection in the stone, which the sculptor worked around.



attested in both administrative and more formal documents of his reign.³⁹



Figure 4. Copy of Nile-level record (scale bar 100mm).



Figure 5. Detail of the king's name.

The Tombos Island Nile-level record is of great interest on two counts: it is the southernmost known Nile-level statistic⁴⁰ and is a rare dated example from the 18th Dynasty.⁴¹ For the water-level to have been recorded in this form, it was probably unusually high. How high exactly remains to be determined. It is hoped to obtain an accurate measurement of the level's absolute height in the near future, following which it should be possible to integrate the result with other data from different places and periods and estimate the local and wider implications.

³⁹ See the numerous examples among the document-sealings etc. from Malkata, Hayes 1951, 157- 8, 166-7, figs 25 and 30-33; also Fischer 1972, 21, fig. 28; Morkot 1990, 327, with nn. 34-5; Johnson 1990, 38-9; Berman 1992b and 1992c with fig. 2a; Pamminger 1993, 87, n. 31; Berman 1998, 14; Johnson 1998, 88, with n. 144; Spieser 2000, 218, no. 99, with n. 30, and 313; Morenz 2008, 176-7; Bryan 2008, 36. The Tombos writing in which the king (*neb*) has the feather (*maat*) on his head is a variant of the more usual 'sportive writing' (Hayes 1951, 167) in which the king is shown holding the feather.

⁴⁰ The southernmost otherwise being the series at Semna-Kumma dating to the late 12th and 13th Dynasties (PM vii, 150 and 156; Vercoutter 1966; Beckerath 1982; Hintze and Reineke 1989, 98-102, nos 369-383A, and 149-152, nos 501-511; Seidlmayer 2001, 73-80; Uphill 2010, 70-73 (the latter reference kindly drawn to my attention by Dr Luc Gabolde)).

⁴¹ See Seidlmayer 2001, 71-2; Cottelle-Michel 2003, 348 (N 5), fig. 8, pl. V. b.



Plate 8. Tombos Island. Inscription recording Nile-level.

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Abbreviations

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