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- Front cover:* Examining the pharaonic inscriptions at Khashm el-Bab on the Korosko Road, November 2013 (photo: D. A. Welsby).
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Kerma in Napata: a new discovery of Kerma graves in the Napatan region (Magashi village)

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and Alrashed Mohammed Ibrahim Ahmed*

In the Napatan region there is little evidence for the presence of the Kerma culture. At Jebel Barkal pot sherds have been recovered dated to the pre-Kerma and *Kerma Classique* (Kendall 2002, 6) and at et-Tameer and Usli also scatters of Kerma potsherds were found (Bushara 2014, 636; Barta *et al.* 2013, 66). Reisner discovered two graves pre-dating the Egyptian New Kingdom at Jebel Barkal (B600). Although there is evidence for occupation before the Egyptians occupied at least part of the region no trace of settlements has been identified (Kendall 2002, 6).

Downstream from Napata on the right bank of the Nile, surveys by the Sudan Archaeological Research Society, the Royal Ontario Museum and the Research Centre for Mediterranean Archaeology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, covered the area between Kawa and ez-Zuma. In the area from Kawa up to Abkur many sites of Kerma date were noted, among them those at Bugdumbush, Abkur and Banganarti (Welsby and Welsby Sjöström 2007, 380-382) while survey further upstream to ez-Zuma revealed important Kushite sites, the temples at Soniyat and el-Hugair (El-Tayeb 2012, 20).

Upstream from the Napatan region in the area of the Fourth Cataract, surveys and excavations were conducted on both banks of the Nile. The Gdańsk Archaeological Museum initially covered 250km on the right bank between Kareima and Abu Hamed (Paner *et al.* 2006, 61; Kolosowska *et al.* 2003, 21), the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM) covered 8km on the left bank from the Dam site to Dar el-Arab (Salah Mohamed Ahmed 2003, 13) and the Sudan Archaeological Research Society covered 40km on the left bank and the islands between Amri and Kirbekan, with other missions working further upstream (Welsby 2000, 51; Borcowski and Welsby 2009, 1). A large number of Kerma sites were discovered. The presence of Kerma sites upstream and downstream from the Napatan region raises the issue of their apparent absence in that region.

Although Kerma was destroyed by Thutmose I, whose campaign is known from the inscription at Tombos, and the location of the Egyptian southern boundary known from as far upstream as Kurgus where two royal inscriptions of Thutmose I and Thutmose III were found on the Hagr el-Merwa (Davies 2001, 46, 57), the earliest evidence in the

Napatan region for an Egyptian presence is the stela dated to the reign of Thutmose III from Jebel Barkal (Reisner 1917, 3). The exact location of the fortress mentioned in Thutmose III's stela at Jebel Barkal, on the wall of which was hung the body of one of the seven captured Asian princes by his successor Amenophis II, has not been identified (Török 2009, 165; Welsby and Welsby Sjöström 2007, 379). Its presence, however, indicates that there was an Egyptian community in Napata or in its vicinity. Recently an Egyptian inscription carved on the east side of the holy mountain of Barkal was discovered (Plates 1 and 2) half way up (facing the Nile and toward Nuri) bearing a royal titulary, the king's name yet to be identified.¹

Although there is little evidence for the presence of the Egyptians in the area between Kawa and Napata especially



Plate 1. General view of the new inscription found at Jebel Barkal (photo W. V. Davies).

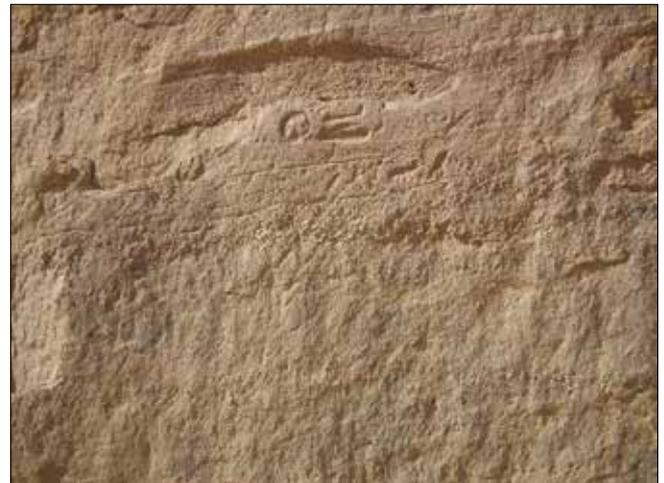


Plate 2. Detail of the inscription (photo W. V. Davies).

¹ This important discovery was made by Hatim Osman Fadel who brought it to the author's attention.

for cult centres, some sites which contain temples have been discovered and excavated in the Napatan region recently. The Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology and the Polish Academy of Sciences discovered two temples situated some 40km from Barkal opposite each other at Usli and Hugair (Zurawski 2003, 26). The Czech Institute of Archaeology, Charles University, carried out excavations at Usli on the left bank while the Jebel Barkal Museum Archaeological Mission worked at Hugair. The excavation at Usli revealed that the history of the site may be dated as far back as the New Kingdom period. The partially excavated temple, containing the base of a royal statue (Barta *et al.* 2013, 67, 68), was typical of Kushite temples.

The temple of Hugair is different from that at Usli as the base of the sanctuary was dug into the sandstone bedrock (Plate 3). It appears that this area was used as a quarry (Plate



Plate 3. Hugair Temple.

4) and then re-used to form the sanctuary. The quarrying technique, with the cutting of a narrow trench around the sides of the block to isolate it and the traces of tool-marks forming a herringbone pattern, are typical of the Kushite period, but was also used earlier during the New Kingdom



Plate 4. The quarry at Hugair Temple.

(Abdelrahman Ali Mohamed 2012, 3, 5). On some blocks appears the name of the Kushite King Aktisanes (Plate 5) who was buried in Bar.11 (Plate 6) and ruled after Nastasen (335-315 BC), the last king to be buried at Nuri (Nu.15) (Welsby 1996, 208). At the site of Hugair was also a typical New Kingdom grave dug into the sandstone bedrock to the north of the temple.



Plate 5. The name of King Aktisanes.



Plate 6. The pyramid of King Aktisanes at Jebel Barkal, Bar.11.

The presence of some New Kingdom sites in the Napatan region poses the question of whether there were also Kerma sites. Recently one site dated to the *Kerma Classique* was discovered at Magashi village and excavated by a joint mission of Jebel Barkal Museum and the Department of Archaeology in the Faculty of Arts and Human Studies, University of Dongola.

The cemetery at Magashi, located 24km downstream from Jebel Barkal on the right bank of the river, was found by chance during the construction of a minaret for the mosque of et-Tiwaimap. During this work some Kerma graves were discovered inside the mosque; most probably this cemetery lies both inside and outside of the mosque. Rescue excavations were conducted and three graves were excavated, all of them dug into the sandstone bedrock within the trench



Plate 7. General view over the 4 x 4m pit dug for the foundations of the minaret.

(4 x 4m) dug to construct the minaret (Plate 7). Some graves were destroyed completely but fragments of human bones and pottery were handed over to the Barkal Museum by the local people.

Grave M1

Located at the west side of the trench, Grave M1 was completely disturbed; only the skull was found at the western edge of the trench facing south. No associated material was noted (Plate 8).



Plate 8. Grave M1; the skull.

Grave M2

Located at the eastern side of the trench, Grave M2 extended further to the east where, as it underlay a structure and Grave M3, we removed only the fill from inside the chamber which was of rectangular shape (1.85 x 1.1m in size). The articulated skeleton of a young adult female was in a flexed position, oriented east-west, head to the east, lying on its right side facing north and with the hands folded in front of the face. Two tulip beakers were found to the north in front of the head, one inside the other, and a small jar was behind the head. The grave was refilled with white sandstone and earth (Plate 9).

Grave M3

Located at the eastern side of the trench to the north of Grave M2, this grave was rectangular in shape, oriented east-west, and had been refilled with sand. The disarticulated skeleton, also oriented east-west, lay on its right side head to the east facing north in a flexed position. The male deceased wore a string of ostrich eggshell beads around the neck and the waist but no other grave goods were found.

Comparing the Magashi graves with those of the *Kerma Classique* in the Fourth Cataract region similarities and differences can be seen. In the Fourth Cataract region most of the sites are multi-period, there is a range of burial pit forms and in the position and orientation of the deceased. The pits were usually oval or circular, but also egg-shaped or set in crevices in the natural bedrock, while the skeletons were crouched or flexed with the



Plate 9. Grave M2 with pottery vessels in situ.

most common orientations being east-west and north-south (Paner *et al.* 2006, 63; el-Nour *et al.* 2005). Other variations are north east-south west and south east-north west (el-Nour *et al.* 2005; Welsby and Welsby Sjöström 2007, 387). The east-west orientation with the head to the east facing north is the canonical arrangement at Kerma (Kolosowka 2003, 24).

At Magashi the shape of the grave shaft was rectangular, the same as the non-royal graves at Kerma (Geus 2004, 279), and this form was also noticed at the Fourth Cataract in Dar el-Arab and at el-Batarin, though there the graves were shallower due to the nature of the region with the bedrock close to the surface (el-Nour *et al.* 2005; Welsby and Welsby Sjöström 2007, 387).

Pottery

Various types of pottery were found, mainly typical *Kerma Classique* tulip beakers; 13 were noted along with a medium-sized jar, a small red jar, a red-polished and black-topped jar (Plate 10) and three globular jars of white colour, two of

which were painted (Plate 11). The three globular jars were imported from Egypt, while the fine pottery could have been imported from Kerma.

Imported pottery from Kerma and Egypt has been identified at the Fourth Cataract dated to the *Kerma Classique* period (Kolosowska *et al.* 2003, 22). Imported pottery from Upper and Lower Egypt was also found in Kerma among which were ovoid/globular jars in *Kerma Moyen* graves (Bourriau 2004, 8).



Plate 10. The assemblage of complete vessels.



Plate 11. The assemblage of complete vessels.

As the majority of the pottery found was handed over by the local people we do not know its exact location in the trench, nor how many graves were disturbed but at least two individuals were recognized from the bones. It is also uncertain whether the pottery was in the same layer as the graves as the depth of the trench reached nearly 3m.

Acknowledgement

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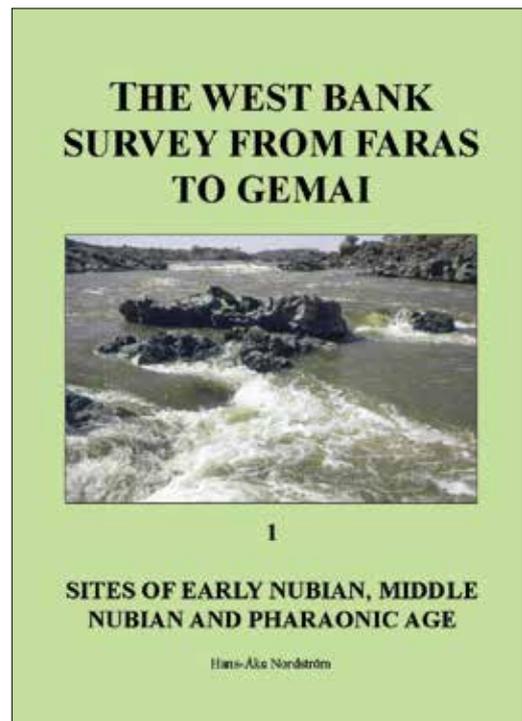
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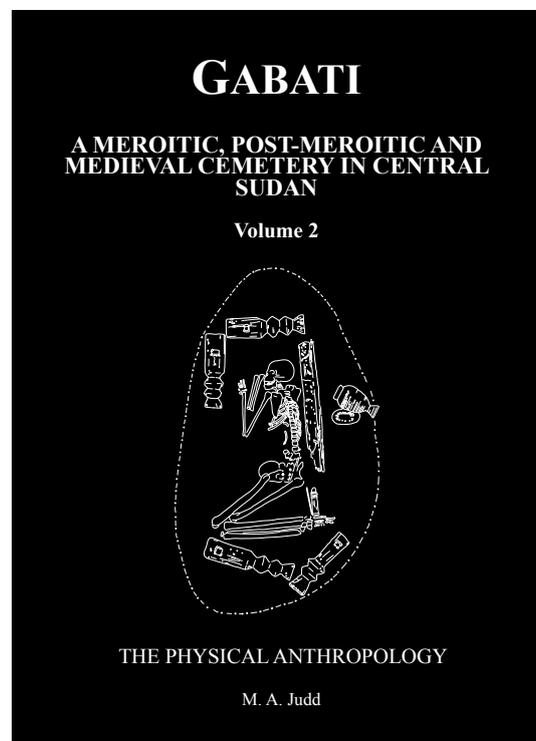
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*View upstream along the Wadi Murrat from the late 19th century Anglo-Egyptian fort.
The pharaonic inscriptions are amongst the trees at the wadi edge in the far centre (photo D. A. Welsby).*



Horus, Lord of the Desert. A natural rock outcrop along the route from Buben towards Wadi Murrat (photo D. A. Welsby).