

SUDAN & NUBIA

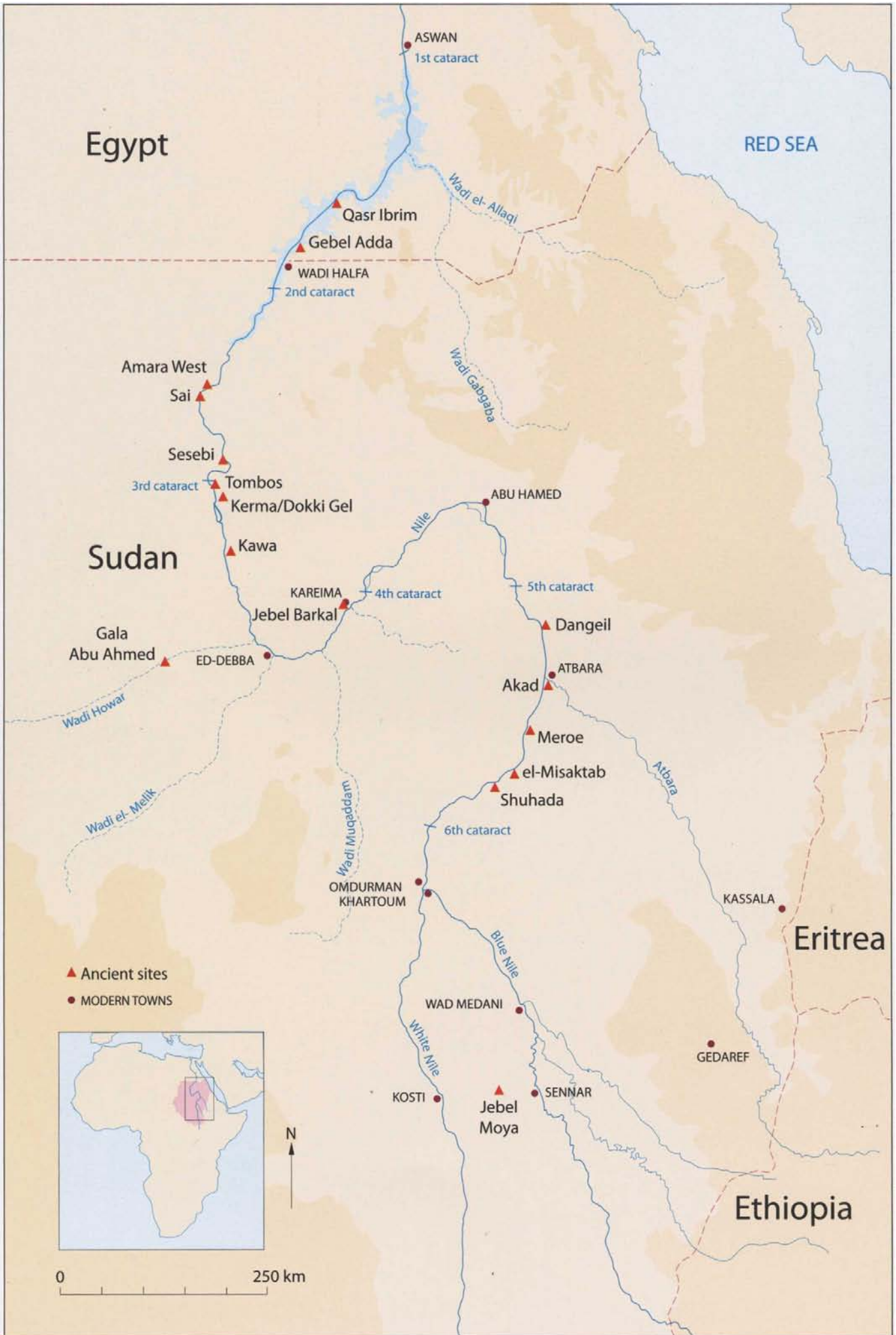
The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



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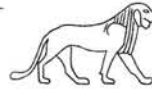
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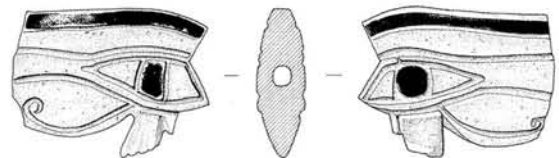
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Front cover: The head of a Kushite king, excavated in 2008, from the Amun temple at Dangeil. It has been tentatively identified as Aspelta (593-568 BC) based upon comparisons with statues of this king discovered at Jebel Barkal and Dokki Gel-Kerma. (Photo © J. R. Anderson, Berber-Abidiya Archaeological Project).



Districts, towns and other locations of medieval Nubia and Egypt, mentioned in the Coptic and Old Nubian texts from Qasr Ibrim¹

Joost L. Hagen

The textual material discussed in this paper was discovered up to almost half a century ago, from the 1960s onwards. Most of the texts to be mentioned are as yet unpublished and were 're-excavated' in archives and museums within the last five years. Qasr Ibrim in southern Egypt, where the manuscripts were found, was a very important Nubian town, especially during the medieval, Christian period, which is the subject of this article. Nubia today extends from southern Egypt into northern Sudan; locations and districts in both countries are mentioned in the texts to be discussed below.

Introduction

After the recent attention devoted to the Merowe Dam project in the region of the Fourth Cataract, and the important work done there, it might be useful to look once more at that other dam, that other lake, which in the 1960s made the name of Nubia famous throughout the world, and to realize that many of the finds from that rescue campaign have not yet been properly published. The effort of building the Aswan High Dam and creating Lake Nasser/Lake Nubia was paralleled by the effort of the many international expeditions sent to rescue from drowning the most important archaeological remains of Lower Nubia, between the First and Second Cataracts of the Nile. The general public is well aware of the salvage operations aimed at Pharaonic-era remains such as the famous temples of Philae and Abu Simbel, both of which were successfully removed to higher ground; but also many Christian remains were rescued. The best-known examples of these are Nubia's medieval wall paintings, like those of the great cathedral at Faras brought to light by a Polish team, removed and now divided between Khartoum and Warsaw.

It is to another, equally important site of Christian-period Nubia, Qasr Ibrim, and to its Coptic and Old Nubian manuscript texts rather than wall paintings, that I want to turn in this contribution, in order to look at what this hitherto un-

¹ This article is a somewhat adapted version of the paper I presented at the London SARS colloquium in May 2009; its subject will be more elaborately treated in a part of my doctoral dissertation on the Coptic (and some other) texts from Qasr Ibrim devoted to 'the topographical dimension of the corpus'. An overview of preliminary results of my research will appear in the proceedings of the 11th International Conference of Nubian Studies, Warsaw 2006: 'A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid: Progress report on the Coptic manuscripts from Qasr Ibrim.'

explored material can tell us about the 'Christian topography' of late-antique and medieval Nubia.

Nubia's Christian period

In Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, Nubia was part of the Christian continuum of North-East Africa, situated as it was between Coptic Egypt and Christian Ethiopia.² Both of these are still very much alive today, but in Nubia Christianity disappeared after a golden age of about a millennium, roughly between the 5th and the 15th century. At the beginning of this period, there were three large kingdoms in northern Sudan and southern Egypt, south of Egypt's traditional border town, Aswan: Nobadia, with its capital at Faras, Makuria, with its capital Old Dongola, and Alodia/Alwa, with its capital Soba East. The 'official' Christianisation of these kingdoms took place in the 6th century. From the first half of the 7th the armies of Islam overran Egypt and attempted to expand further south, but the Nubian cavalry and archers managed to keep the Arabs at bay and after two battles at Dongola both parties concluded a treaty called the *Baqt*. Around the beginning of the 8th century, Makuria incorporated the territory of Nobadia but retained the former kingdom as a separate province with its own viceroy, the *Eparcb*, who represented the king of Dongola and was responsible for Nubia's official and increasingly intensive contacts with Egypt. Nubia's northern neighbour was gradually Arabised and Islamised, and in the 14th century, the processes of Islamization and Arabization also took hold in Nubia, within a relatively short timespan conquering more ground than they ever did in Egypt. The three great Christian kingdoms had apparently collapsed somewhat earlier, being replaced by smaller realms, some already Muslim, some still Christian. Lower Nubia became part of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. Even after the disappearance of Christianity, many Nubian traditions persisted and continue until the present.

In its heyday, Christian Nubia was characterised by both Coptic Egyptian and Byzantine Greek influences on its native African culture: Byzantine influences especially in the sphere of the state (e.g. an elaborate system of Greek court titles), and Coptic ones especially in the field of the church (part of the patriarchate of Alexandria, and inspired by Egyptian monasticism). The four (written, and to some extent also spoken) languages of medieval Nubia were Greek, Coptic, Arabic and Old Nubian, its native tongue. Christian-period Greek (there are also manuscripts from earlier periods, for example copies of Homer from Qasr Ibrim) is almost exclusively literary in scope, and includes important parts of the church liturgy, whereas Christian-period Arabic, used for Nubia's contacts with Egypt and the wider Islamic world, is exclusively documentary (there is also later Ottoman Arabic and Turkish). Old Nubian, the Nubians' own language, was used between the 8th and 15th centuries for texts of both literary and (from the 10th century) documentary character.

² For a general introduction to Christian Nubia, see Welsby 2002.

Finally, Coptic appears to have been Nubia's main language for documentary texts before the rise of Old Nubian, as well as an important language for literary manuscripts (Biblical, homiletic and other ecclesiastical works). It certainly was not in the first place used exclusively by Copts, but was also adopted by Christian Nubia's secular and religious elites.

Christian Qasr Ibrim

Qasr Ibrim was an important centre of Nubian culture, one of the country's key cities in the late-antique and medieval era, as in earlier and later periods.³ Being the part-time residence of the viceroy or *Eparch* of Nobadia (together with the former capital Faras) as well as the cathedral town of a major bishopric, Qasr Ibrim was at the administrative and religious heart of Christian Lower Nubia. The name Ibrim is the Arabic form of Greek Primis and Coptic Phrim; in Old Nubian its name is Silimi. The word *Qasr* (Arabic for castle) refers to the citadel in the centre of town, on the east bank of the Nile, before the creation of Lake Nasser elevated more than 60m above the river and also isolated from the desert plateau and thus defensible on the landward side. Other parts of the city were Lower Ibrim, at the water's edge, and Ibrim West, on the opposite bank of the river. Flanking the citadel to north and south were two lower-lying *wadis*, occupied by cemeteries. Two of the most important buildings on the site, apart from structures tentatively identified as the residences of *eparchs* and bishops, are the so-called Taharqo Temple, built by one of the Kushite kings in the 7th century BC and converted into a church in the early Christian period, and the cathedral, built in the 7th or 8th century AD, which was later converted into a mosque.

An important date in the history of Qasr Ibrim, and indeed of Nubia as well as Egypt as a whole, was the fall of this Christian stronghold and ecclesiastical centre to Shams ed-Dawla, the brother of Saladin, in 1172/73. Later, the *qasr* was occupied by an Ottoman garrison until its abandonment in the early 19th century. Excavations at Ibrim, conducted by the Egypt Exploration Society, commenced in the early 1960s and continued into the early 21st century. The citadel covered an area of some 150 by 175m, dominating the Nile Valley from the top of the cliff. After the construction of the Aswan High Dam and the filling of Lake Nasser, Ibrim West, Lower Ibrim and the wadi cemeteries have disappeared and Qasr Ibrim itself has become a small island, no longer the mighty cathedral fortress it used to be.

Thanks to its high and dry position, everything ever present and kept on the site has been remarkably well preserved, and finds are of an astonishing quantity as well as quality. For example, in the 1978 excavation season alone, 20,000 fragments of textile and 200,000 fragments of pottery were found, and on average, one cubic metre of excavated material yielded dozens to hundreds of manuscript fragments, in the above-mentioned medieval languages as well as others,

³ For a general introduction to medieval Qasr Ibrim, see Adams 1996.

from small unreadable scraps to complete pages or even quires from books. As stated earlier in this article, many of these finds still await proper scholarly treatment, let alone publication, and acceptance among both specialist and more general audiences.⁴

Locations mentioned in the Coptic texts from Qasr Ibrim

As far as the Coptic texts from Qasr Ibrim are concerned (the subject of my Leiden doctoral dissertation), the thousand-year period of Nubian Christianity is bracketed by the three Coptic letters written to the Nubian tribal chief Tantani (5th century?) and the Bohairic and Arabic ordination documents of bishop Timotheos (1371). These are among the few Coptic texts from Qasr Ibrim to have been published so far.⁵

To begin with our survey of locations in the Coptic (and, as we shall see below, some of the Old Nubian) texts from Qasr Ibrim, the three Tantani letters were probably all sent to Ibrim from the north, from the area near the Egyptian-Nubian border: in two of them, Aswan and Philae are mentioned, and both Asyut in Middle Egypt and Talmis (Kalabsha) in Lower Nubia are mentioned once. The Timotheos scrolls came from even further afield: they were written in Cairo, where the new bishop (of the joint see Ibrim-Faras?) had been ordained by the Coptic patriarch in the Hanging Church at the fortress of Babylon and taken to Nubia through Egypt, where Timotheos had been enthroned near Naqada in the presence of several Egyptian bishops. So the manuscripts at the chronological beginning and end of this survey of locations already clearly illustrate the close relations between Nubia and Egypt in the Christian period.

Christian Nubia, Muslim Egypt and the Blemmyes/Beja

Very important new sources concerning the political, economic and religious contacts between Egypt and Nubia are to be found in a group of four Coptic papyrus scroll letters, found together with an already published Arabic scroll, a letter from the Abbasid governor of Egypt to the king of Makuria and Nobadia, written in November 758.⁶

Of the Coptic documents, probably all from June and July 760, three seem to have been sent by 'the curator', probably a representative of Christian Nubia residing at or near Aswan and responsible for relations with Egypt, to 'the great *Eparch*', either the *Eparch* of Nobadia at Qasr Ibrim or a very high official in the royal palace at Dongola (in the latter case the scrolls were probably 'kept' at Ibrim by the *Eparch* of Nobadia, who then is not mentioned in the text). The fourth

⁴ For a general introduction to the textual finds from Qasr Ibrim (albeit up to date until the late 1970s only), see Adams 1979. Preliminary reports about all excavation seasons have been published in the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*.

⁵ Tantani letters: Pierce and Török 1998; Timotheos scrolls: Plumley 1975.

⁶ For the Arabic letter see Hinds and Sakkout 1981.



document clearly is a letter to the same person (probably the *Eparch* at Ibrim), written by someone in circumstances comparable, if not identical, to those of the writer of the other letters.

In the largest and most complete of the Coptic scrolls, mention is made of a letter, sent by the hand of an envoy, from the governor of Egypt to the king of Nubia, *i.e.* from Cairo to Dongola (this would be a letter sent at least 18 months after the Arabic letter actually found at Ibrim referred to above). The messenger is said to have travelled to the Egyptian-Nubian border at Aswan/Philae, where he was well received by the Muslim *Amir* of Aswan. The *Amir* then entrusted him to ‘the curator’ (the writer of the Coptic letter, probably a Nubian), who in turn entrusted him to someone called Jakobos. This man, apparently an experienced traveller, had to take good care of him ‘in every district’ and in the presence of the local ‘authorities’, until envoy and epistle safely reached the addressee, probably at the *eparch*’s residence in Ibrim, where the texts were discovered, more than 1200 years later. (As mentioned above, the Nobadian viceroy was also associated with Faras, which seems to be mentioned in the one Coptic letter not written by ‘the curator’.)

In the same letter, imprisoned Egyptian merchants, fugitive slaves, a certain Abu Sergios the Persian and the Nubian royal family – king, queen (*i.e.* queen mother?) and the king’s father – are referred to in the context of ‘the palace’, probably in the Makurian capital, Dongola.

In order to persuade his correspondent, the *Eparch*, to put an end to Nubian-Egyptian hostilities, ‘the curator’ informs him of an apparently recent event in which the *Amir* of Aswan, a representative of Nubia’s rival, Muslim-Arab Egypt, had shown he was able to deal with another of the Nubians’ enemies, the nomadic tribe of the Blemmyes or Beja. According to the letter, a group of these ‘cursed people’ had gone southwards from Qena in northern Upper Egypt (a known place of Blemmye activity, close to their traditional homeland, the Eastern Desert), ‘in order to spread from The Miles northwards in the west’ and to ‘despoil and lay waste and kill and destroy and capture’. At the moment, I do not know which location is meant by the name ‘The Miles’; to judge on the basis of the present context, it must have been somewhere in northern Upper Egypt, not too far from Qena, and possibly on the west bank of the Nile.

The *Amir* of Aswan was informed of these nomads’ intentions, went northwards with ‘the Saracens of Aswan’, and defeated them at a place referred to as Ombos. Now this, again, is not entirely clear: it could be either Ombos near Naqada, not far south of Qena (but the Beja wanted to go north, not south, from The Miles, in the west, south of Qena), or it could be Kom Ombo, north of Aswan. The former seems likely when looking at what the Blemmyes did, but the latter seems equally possible when looking at what the *Amir* and his army did. They must have met somewhere between Qena and Aswan.

When he had defeated them, he forbade them to take

even ‘one young goat from The Miles northwards’, and if they were to ‘take one dog from Quban northwards’, he threatened to sell their women and children as slaves (and, apparently, to give the profit to the Nubians!). Now, ‘The Miles’ suddenly seems to be parallel to Quban, which is in Lower Nubia, about halfway between Aswan and Ibrim! Instead of it being somewhere in the middle of Egypt, we now get the impression this unidentified place-name might refer to the area south of the Egyptian border earlier called the Twelve Miles Land, the Dodekaschoenos! To complicate matters even further, instead of the Beja having to stay south of Quban and The Miles, in their own land, and not being allowed to go north from there, into other territories, with their own goats and dogs, the text might also mean that these dogs and goats were not to be stolen from the area to the south of the nomads’ own land, and not to be taken north across the Quban/‘Miles’ border when they returned home!

The *Amir* then claimed to be able to deal with the defeated group of Blemmyes and their ‘land’, and even threatened to ‘go to Noubt’, where he would be able to deal with their ‘king and his people’. This seems to be a unique but clear reference to the site of Khor Nubt in the Sudanese Eastern Desert, thought by some to have been the Blemmye/Beja heartland and possibly the location of their royal tombs (see Krzywinski, forth.).

Finally, in two of the four Coptic letters in this 8th-century dossier, an envoy (the same as mentioned above?) is said to be travelling to ‘the place where the kings are’ – Blemmye kings (plural!) at Noubt or the Nubian king and his vassals (?) at Dongola? This messenger travelled via a place called Enor, which is as yet unknown to me; but in the 12th-century Old Nubian lists of church estates discussed below, this location is also mentioned, and listed as being in the district of Kouttikke or Kouttousse, which probably was somewhere between Qasr Ibrim and Qurta (near Korosko?).

Be that as it may, it is clear that this group of one Arabic and four Coptic texts from Qasr Ibrim forms a very important addition to our knowledge of 8th-century history and topography, and presents us with a very vivid image of relations in the area between the Nubians, Egyptians and Blemmyes.

Letters from north and south

There are two further unpublished Coptic letters mentioning locations both in Nubia and in Egypt; in this case, both of them clearly come from an ecclesiastical milieu.

The first, a letter of a bishop Elijah (the name of his diocese is lost) to bishop Anthony of Ibrim (not yet known from other sources) refers to the latter expecting to hear ‘news of the south’ from the former, which implies Elijah’s bishopric was located south of that of his colleague at Ibrim; Faras or Sai would be two likely possibilities. The ‘news’ referred to remains unknown; it might have had something to do with the Nubian capital Dongola or some other location in the Makurian heartland. Unfortunately, this document is only dated to the 26th day of the Coptic month Khoiak (roughly

equivalent to December), but it might be from about the 11th century.

The second piece is also addressed to a bishop, probably again the bishop of Ibrim, and was written by a man called Petro or Pero, apparently a Nubian ecclesiastic travelling in Upper Egypt. He wrote:

I suffered a great loss in the district of Egypt, and I cannot pay; therefore, I sold [...]. I came forth from the district of Shmoun, and I sold it in Talmarahe, [...] and [...] Teltoshanou [...].

Shmoun is the modern el-Ashmunein, Talmarahe is el-Maghgha to the south of el-Ashmunein, and I presume Teltoshanou is a place-name as well, possibly still further south (all three have both the Coptic feminine definite article *-t-* and the Arabic definite article *al-* or *el-*). There follows a kind of contract with a list of witnesses to the transaction. Exactly what is being sold here is as yet unclear to me; however, this text can be dated to around the first quarter of the 11th century because of a reference to coins of the Caliph el-Hakim (AD 996-1021).

Five documentary texts and their protocols

The letter of Pe(t)ro, half travel account, half contract, makes a smooth transition to the next group of texts to be mentioned here. In five 10th- and 11th-century Coptic documents from Qasr Ibrim, the so-called protocols at their beginning provide a more or less elaborate dating and mention, next to the name of the reigning king, several other important officials of medieval Christian Nubia, including the queen mother and one of the contemporary bishops. In one piece, it is said about the king that ‘all authorities’ were ‘subject to him, from Tillimaara (mentioned elsewhere but unidentified) to the *kastron* of Pilek (Philae) – the southern and northern boundaries of the kingdom (Makuria-Nobadia?).

Of ‘all’ these ‘authorities’, many are mentioned by name and several have a title combined with the name of a location. Of this category, the state officials listed are the *Protodomestikos* of the palace (in this case the king himself), the *Eparch* of Nobadia, the *Archinotarios* of the king for (or in) the land of Nobadia, the *Domestikos* of Pachoras (Faras) (in this case not the same person as the *Eparch* of Nobadia, as is often the case in already known Old Nubian texts of a later period), the (Vice-?)*Eparch* of Terpekkil, and three *Exarchs*: the *Exarch* of Talmis (Kalabsha), a well-known office, as well as two *Exarchs* of locations hitherto unknown, Ptou-kouttouke (the district of Kouttikke / Kouttouke, also mentioned elsewhere in this article?) and Adom[...].

Church officials are ‘the bishop of the most distinguished metropolis’ (Faras?) and several bishops of Faras, Ibrim and Qurta. An example of how church and state in medieval Nubia were not separated might be the case of ‘David, the priest of Doukkeos’, who was ‘*Archikephalaites* of the camp’ (a military title?).

Bishop, king and patriarch; about the kingdom of ‘Dotawo’

The final Coptic text in which names of locations occur is a kind of counterpart to the 14th-century Letters Testimonial of bishop Timotheos mentioned earlier: a letter of the Nubian king Moses George to patriarch Mark III of Alexandria, written in September 1186 in recommendation of a bishop Iesou.⁷

In the secondary literature, this king Moses George is mostly referred to as ‘king of Dotawo’. The name ‘Dotawo’ occurs in several sources from the Late-Christian period, but it is unclear what or where exactly this location was. Some scholars link it to, or even equate it with, the town of Gebel Adda, between Qasr Ibrim and Faras, and state this was the capital of a small successor-kingdom of Makuria. Others claim it is more likely that it is a Nubian name for the ‘United Kingdom’ of Makuria and Nobadia, maybe even including Alodia (and more?) as well. In my opinion, this seems more likely, because if Gebel Adda, which is in Nobadia, ‘is’ Dotawo, how is it possible for several Old Nubian texts to state that So-and-so was the king of Dotawo, followed by the phrase: ‘And in Nobadia, So-and-so being bishop of [...]’? This would suggest that Nobadia is in Dotawo rather than the other way round! On the other hand, it might also be that the ‘kings of Dotawo’ (if indeed this does refer to the area around Gebel Adda) actually were kings of the entire kingdom of ‘Greater Nubia’ as well, but did not bother to say so in their documents produced locally in the area of Qasr Ibrim. Evidence for this might be that in some Old Nubian documents, the ruler is said to be ‘king’, and ‘also’ (sic!) king of Dotawo, e.g. in text no. 30 referred to below: ‘I, Moses George, called King, and sister’s son of David the King, who also hold the kingship of Dotawo, as well as the office of *Eparch* of Palagi [...]’. Hopefully, this problem can be solved in future, as more evidence becomes available.

To return to the 1186 recommendation for bishop Iesou: here the writer is called ‘king of Alodia, Makuria, Nobadia, Damaltia (!) and Axioma (Axum)’, and the addressee: ‘archbishop of the great city of Alexandria and the city of Babylon (Cairo), and Nobadia, Alodia, Makuria, Dalmatia (!) and Axioma (Axum)’. It has been claimed that the titles of king and patriarch were mixed up here, because the Coptic archbishop was the only one who could legitimately claim jurisdiction in Egypt (represented by Alexandria and Cairo), Nubia (Nobadia, Makuria and Alodia) and Ethiopia (Axum). Be that as it may, seen together with the evidence referred to above, this document might be another proof for the idea that ‘Dotawo’ refers to something like ‘Greater Nubia’.⁸

Finally, concerning bishop Iesou himself. Strangely enough, the name of his future diocese does not seem to be

⁷ A preliminary translation of this text was published in Adams 1996: 227-229.

⁸ The exact identification of ‘Damaltia’/‘Dalmatia’, of course more likely to refer to Tolmeta/Ptolemais in Libya than to Dalmatia in modern Croatia, need not bother us here; this might indeed very well have been wrongly incorporated among the king’s titles.



mentioned in the letter, unless the phrase ‘ordain him Bishop of the Tabernacle (Teskene) forever’ contains a reference to a location, which seems unlikely.

Three Old Nubian lists of church vineyards

Last but not least in this survey of locations mentioned in the medieval Christian manuscripts from Qasr Ibrim (so far all of them in Coptic), mention must be made of three Old Nubian documents in the Egypt Exploration Society’s excavation archive, formerly kept in Cambridge but now in the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan at the British Museum (with one small fragment in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo). Although these documents might at first sight appear to be relatively uninteresting, consisting as they do of lists of mere names and some numbers, their significance amounts to a genuine revolution in our knowledge of the Christian topography of late-medieval Nobadia.

The three manuscripts, each containing more or less the same text, are lists of districts, most of them within the diocese of Ibrim, and of locations within these districts which are identified by the names, not of people who might be the owners, but of saints, e.g.: ‘At Ibrim: Peter of Downstream, The Twenty-Four (Elders), The (Four) Creatures of the Town, Mary, Gabriel, Mary of Amparae.’ That these names do not refer to saints as such but to churches to which they gave their name is shown by the occurrence on the lists of ‘The Cross’, a well-known object of devotion in Nubian Christianity. In all, a total of 83 churches is mentioned, of which, as far as I am now aware, only 27 were known before and a staggering 56 are new.⁹ Again, these churches are not listed as actual buildings, but as the owners of certain plots of land, which are located in the districts referred to above.

This becomes clear when comparing these three documents with some of the items already published by Gerald M. Browne in the third volume of his *Old Nubian texts from Qasr Ibrim*, namely ten land sales and a couple of related pieces. Most of these are from the 12th century, and mention some of the same land-owning churches and, probably, some of the very same plots of land. One of them (no. 39; Browne 1991, 18-19, 58, 91-92) seems to mention as a source of authority or information ‘the great survey of the *Eparcb* Chael’ (alternatively, of a person called Chael-Songoj); another one (no. 60; Browne 1991, 35, 74, 105-106) is a list of estates owned by the Jesus Church of Tougilli (location unknown) ‘that are in Nobadia’ (which suggests either that Tougilli itself was not in Nobadia, or, alternatively, that the Jesus Church also owned land outside of Nobadia).

One of the ‘new’ documents lists only the districts and estates, but the other two (one of them only partly preserved and with an Arabic letter mentioning Aswan and Quban on the other side) contain numbers (either 1 or 2) after some of these names, and the more complete of the two, which

⁹ I made use of the list in Adams 1996, 252, supplemented by the information provided by Lajtar and Van der Vliet 1998, 40-53, and Van der Vliet 1999.

shares with the names-only list the ‘title’ of the document, ‘The yield (?; Old Nubian *sag*) of the Apostles’, before the first number contains the word *komi*, which is a liquid measure.

What liquid is involved here becomes clear when studying another already known Old Nubian text from Qasr Ibrim (no. 30, quoted above; Browne 1991, 3-4, 39-40, 79-81), a royal decree of king Moses George (whom we met before), dated to August 23, 1156. This document was apparently written in order to ‘free’ the Epimachos Church of Ibrim West from the ‘servitude’ which obliged it to deliver a certain amount of wine to the bishop of Ibrim once a year, in the month of Thaboti (unidentified; at the time of the grape harvest?). The exact details of the proceedings are far from clear, but it seems logical to conclude that the churches of the diocese had to contribute from the produce of their estates to an annual donation of wine (a transaction in which also the *Eparcb* and the *Silentiary* of Nobadia were somehow involved), and that they apparently could ask the king to relieve them of this duty.

The best interpretation of the three documents presented here, therefore, is the following: they are lists of the church estates which had at some point delivered this wine to the cathedral (quite possibly before August 23rd, 1156, because the Epimachos Church is still listed as having contributed its two measures of wine, unless the king’s decree was ineffective). So the *komi* mentioned in the lists is a measure of wine, and the plots of land listed are vineyards. Interestingly, at Aniba in the district of Ibrim West, vine branches with grapes still on them were unearthed at the beginning of the 20th century (see Maspero 1911, 161).

These three lists of churches are not complete: from already published documents,¹⁰ names of other locations and of other churches in given locations are known, which proves that the lists were not meant to be exhaustive surveys of all churches in the diocese, but rather served as an overview of how much which estate had contributed to the yearly supply of wine for the bishop.

The districts mentioned in the lists are: Silimi (Ibrim), Ibrim West, Mosmosi (Masma), Kouttikke / Kouttouke, Aloue, Qurta East, Dendur East, Pori, Toshka, Arminna, Arminna West, Pourgoundi (Furmundi) and Tamit. As far as I have been able to identify them, these districts appear to be located in the southern part of the bishopric of Ibrim, from Furmundi and Tamit about halfway between Faras and Ibrim and probably close to the border between the two dioceses, to Ibrim and Ibrim West closest to the cathedral church in the citadel itself. The three as yet unidentified districts Kouttikke / Kouttouke, Aloue and Pori, therefore, are likely to have been in the northern half of the bishopric, downstream, in the area of the bends of the Nile, in the direction of the northerly diocese of Qurta. Kouttikke / Kouttouke could be the same as the district called Qatta in Arabic, which is indeed located here; Pori might now be called Fur, but it seems impossible that this would refer to Darfur, or that Aloue would be Alwa / Alodia. However, two locations are mentioned which

¹⁰ See footnote 9.

cannot have been under the direct jurisdiction of the bishop of Ibrim: Qurta East and still further north Dendur East, which intriguingly also do not seem to be estates named after churches dedicated to saints, but rather named after their human owner (one of them possibly the *Eparch*, or a man called Songoj).

Within the districts, most of the estates are identified by a single saint's name only, whereas a few seem to be identified by a further 'place-name', probably indicating either a small village or a natural feature in the landscape, e.g.: 'At Toshka: Jesus, Litharkuel, Merkos of Pash, Mary of Tirmane, [...].' This probably means that the district of Toshka had only one Jesus and one Litharkuel Church, but at least two churches dedicated to Merkos (Merkourios), one of them at 'Pash', and at least a further two dedicated to Mary, one of them at 'Tirmane' (cf. 'The Four (Creatures) of the Town' at Ibrim). Also in some cases these locations might have been part of the designation of the saint: (the church of) Merkos-of-Pash; cf. 'Mary' and 'Mary of Amparae' at Ibrim.

The complete list of these smaller locations is as follows (when I was able to find a meaning for these words in the dictionary, I have translated them, otherwise I have retained them as names, but this probably is an artificial distinction):

Ibrim:

- The Town (Dipp)
- The Downstream End (Sap)
- Amparae

Masmas:

- Ngaj Koulmin ('The Mountain-Cave?')
- Tounda (= Tounde, 'The Fig Tree?')
- Toude (sic!)

Kouttikke/Kouttouke:

- Enor (also mentioned in the Coptic letters of summer 760)
- (The Downstream End of) Jokos ('The Cotton-Field')

Toshka:

- Pash
- Tirmane

Arminna:

- D[.]sha/Sh

Tamit:

- Tirman Sha (= Sha of Tirma? Cf. Toshka and Arminna!)

With the many previously unattested saints, churches, villages, districts and other locations, the three Old Nubian documents discussed above are arguably some of the most important texts 're-excavated' from amongst the many treasures from Qasr Ibrim. It should be stressed that the present survey, involving as it does only the Coptic and some of the Old Nubian finds, is far from complete; an exhaustive list of place-names in all of the published and unpublished texts in all medieval languages would probably be at least twice as long.

Conclusion

The four Coptic letters from the summer of 760 and the three 12th-century Old Nubian lists of church vineyards are only the highlights of what amounts to a considerable corpus of texts from Qasr Ibrim mentioning names of districts, towns and other locations in Nubia and elsewhere in Sudan and Egypt. These finds provide important new evidence for the history, culture and administrative and ecclesiastical organization of late-antique and medieval Christian Nubia. It is to be hoped that with all the material brought to light as a result of recent archaeological fieldwork, the unexplored backlog of results from previous campaigns will not be forgotten.

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