A Remark on the 'Akinidad' Stela REM 1003 (British Museum EA 1650)

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Much has been written about the so-called Akinidad stela REM[1] 1003 (Plate 1), unearthed together with its fragmentary counterpart REM 1039 by John Garstang in the course of his excavations at Meroe in winter 1913-14 during which he also investigated the nearby settlement of Hamadab (Griffith 1917, 159). Flanking the left side of the entrance to Hamadab's main sanctuary (H 1000) dedicated to Amun, REM 1003 was transferred to the British Museum and is currently exhibited in the Sackler Gallery, Sudan, Egypt and Nubia (Taylor 1991, 50 f., fig. 64). REM 1039 was left *in situ* before it finally found its way into the Sudan National Museum, contradicting the entry in REM's only printed edition (Leclant *et al.* 2000, 1453) where it is stated that its whereabouts is unknown (Plate 2).

REM 1003 contains one of the longest preserved royal texts in cursive Meroitic and has attracted much scholarly interest since its discovery. Referring to the *qore* and *kdke* Amanirenas as well as the *pqr* and *peseto* Akinidad in its initial sequence, the stela can be dated to the final decades of the 1st century BC. It is not surprising that several interpretations of its text have been offered over the years. On the basis of its first comprehensive publication by Francis Llewellyn Griffith (1917, 160) and his understanding of the text it was generally assumed that the inscription refers to the war between Rome and Meroe (25-24 BC). This view was questioned by Inge Hofmann (1981, 325-328) and her analysis stimulated new approaches by considering it as a donation document or a record of building and religious activities as well as annalistic episodes relating to political events during the reign of Amanirenas (FHN II, 722 f.). Most recently the idea has been put forward by Claude Rilly that it is not REM 1003 but REM 1039 which refers to Roman-Meroitic hostilities since the latter mentions Napata and Primis/Qasr Ibrim (Wolf 2015, 126 f.). As the inventory of Meroitic epigraphic texts does not reveal any inscription running over two stelae, REM 1003 obviously contains a coherent text. REM 1039 does not mention Amanirenas but only Akinidad and also taking into consideration that both stelae differ considerably in size, it must be questioned if they were erected at the same

Plate 1. The 'Akinidad Stela' REM 1003 (BM EA 1650).

Plate 2. Stela REM 1039 (SNM 32200).

[1] *Répertoire d'épigraphie méroïtique.* Begun in 1958, REM is intended to compile all texts in the Meroitic language, assigning to each a specific number according to the date of first publication. In the 1970s several computer based prints were distributed amongst the scientific community working on Meroitic studies. At the same time and later, updates were published in the Paris based periodical *Meroitic Newsletter* from 1968 onwards. Unfortunately, its last issue appeared in 2003 and, therefore, discoveries since then are only documented in recent excavation reports. Three volumes of REM were published in 2000 (Leclant *et al.* 2000).
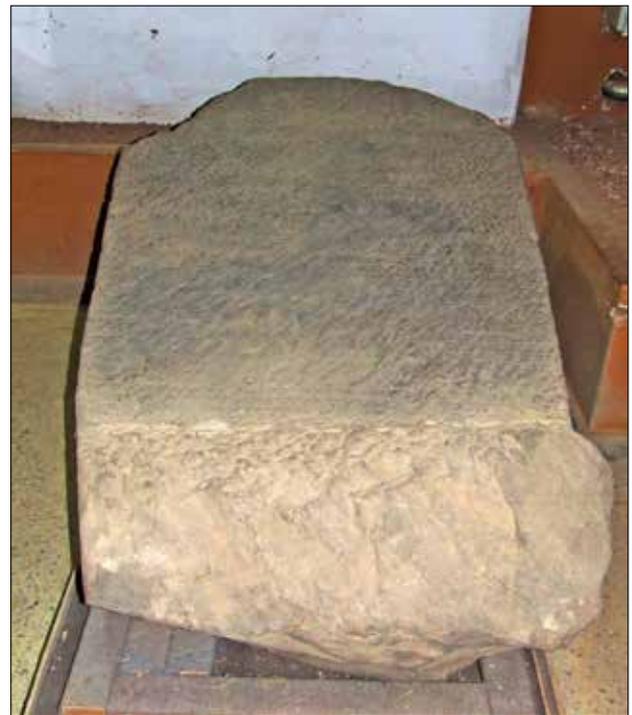
time, contradicting the view of Fritz Hintze (1961, 281) that it contains the second part of the story.

This is not the place to deliver another (tentative) interpretation of the textual contents due to the present weak knowledge of the Meroitic language, but to draw attention to a detail that has never been observed previously. Regularly visiting the British Museum the author had the chance to take a close look at the 'well-known' stela REM 1003, not only considering the inscription but also its shape. From first impressions the surface appears to be completely plain except for some secondary minor damage of later date. However, detailed inspection reveals that this is not the case.

The final sequence of line 26 definitely reveals evidence for deletion and correction of a numeral by a deepening of the stela's surface, demarcated by the preceding and following phrases as well as the horizontal line markers above and below (Plate 3). It is clearly visible that this was due to deliberate

Plate 3. Stela REM 1003. Final sequence of line 26 marking space of eradication.

adaptation, inserting //L‿ʃ‿ʮ‿ʮ (i.e. 10876 according to the interpretation of the numerals on *ostracon* REM 2112 from Qasr Ibrim by Jochen Hallof 2010, 97) into this space preceded by *asr : aḫidebḫ : wi*, which obviously designates the dedication of livestock to the temple (Hofmann 1981, 314-316). The numeral is followed by the name of Akinidad and his titles. According to its epigraphy, comparing it to the rest of the text, the adjustment (correction?) of the passage was conducted as part of the same process as the initial carving of the text.

Inclusion of numerals in Meroitic monumental inscriptions is not unusual and seems to refer to temple donations either in the form of equipment, livestock or servants. The earliest case is documented in the royal stela REM 1044 of King Tañyidamani (Boston, MFA 23.736; Dunham 1970, 34 no. 28, pl. XXXIX; see FHN II, 664-671; Leclant *et al.* 2000, 1462 f.) originating from Napata, predating REM 1003 and 1039 by roughly a century (Dunham 1970, 34 no. 28, pl. XXXIX; see FHN II, 664-671; Leclant *et al.* 2000, 1462 f.).

The stelae of Amanirenas's successor Queen Amanishakheto, REM 1041 – including the fragments REM 1252-1255 – originating from the Amun temple in Meroe (Rilly 2002, 95 ff.; Carrier 1999, 6 f., pl. XVIII-XX) and REM 1141 from Qasr Ibrim (Leclant *et al.* 2000, 1670 f.; Edwards 2007, 82 ff.) also contain numerals in various contexts.

Nevertheless, deletion of a passage apart for REM 1003 can only be traced in REM 1044 at the end of line 10 and the beginning of line 11 on its front side (Plate 4). This was done deliberately in a list of some sort containing theonyms followed by numerals. Inadequately shown in Dunham's publication of the inscription, total removal of the text occurred only in the third quarter of line 10, whereas faint traces of letters can be observed for the rest of the deleted passage. As the preceding word *edḫne* (which in its variants *edḫno/y[i]dḫno*) appears in inscriptions recording donations and taxes (Török 1984, 175-178), we may assume that the sequence may refer to offerings to gods and goddesses. In contrast to REM 1003 the deleted passage was not replaced by a new text, but remained empty. Therefore we cannot conclude at what time this took place. It is mere guesswork to suggest that this may be connected to a subsequent loss of importance of a deity in religious life and/or for royal legitimization, bringing the necessity of documenting the deity, as well as the offerings donated to him/her, to an end. This may be deduced from the fact that the erased phrase is one of 12 identical ones, counting the name of a god or goddess, the respective offering and numeral 1, and represents a *damnatio memoriae*. Though it is impossible to identify this deity, it is obvious that this was done on either royal and/or priestly instruction providing the authority to conduct alterations of monumental inscriptions.

Finally returning to REM 1003, substitution/correction of the numerals obviously concerning a dedication of livestock to the temple of Hamadab seems to have been of some importance for Queen Amanirenas; perhaps she was trying to strengthen her position by inserting a (considerably) higher amount of booty than had been included in the original version. The question arises as to whether this could be connected to the legitimizing of her rule, since she ascended the throne after the death of King Teriteqas, during whose reign her only title was that of *kdke* (i.e. king's mother). On the other hand, Akinidad served as *peseto* (i.e. viceroy of Lower Nubia) and *pqr* (i.e. 'general' *vel. sim.*) consecutively during the reigns of Teriteqas, Amanirenas and her successor Amanishakheto, which has led to the assumption that he might be considered a 'king/queen maker' (Zach 2014, 563). In this connection it must also been pointed out that she was the only Meroitic ruler who in her representations (exterior west wall of Meroe Temple 250, the golden finger ring Berlin 1696 and the walls of her pyramid chapel Beg N.21) rests on a block throne that otherwise was exclusively reserved for deities, which may also contribute to the puzzle (Zach 1999, 690-692 and ill. 3-5). However, this remains nothing more than mere speculation. What definitely can be said is

Plate 4. Deletion of a text passage in REM 1044.

that REM 1003 experienced an adaptation of the inscription, which leaves space for further interpretation.

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